

Val Weston B.Ed Hons, NPQH

I have a passion for bringing people together to sing, to create a sense of belonging, to have fun and make lifelong friends through music.

I have been conducting groups of Musicians for over 40 years, starting with ensemble groups and choirs whilst still at school.

At College I sang with Bulmershe Girls Choir, with Gwyn Arch CBE, and regularly conducted this group.

Since starting my teaching career, I have conducted for the Swindon Young Musicians and as Young Voices conductor I took a choir to perform to represent Swindon at the Millennium Dome in 2000. I conducted Beginners and Intermediate Wind Bands for 20 years and managed the Saturday morning school for 10 years. 2021 saw me returning to SYM as Beginner band MD and now Saturday mornings are full of groups, lessons and bands.

I worked with the Janice Thompson Performance trust for 12 years conducting the Adult group, Concert Choir and Trust's Concerts. The Concert Choir were finalists in the Music for Youth competition 2006 and the opera Little Man in a Tall Hat was an ensemble finalist in 2007.

2024 sees me returning to JTPTrust as Chair of Trustees.

I conducted Swindon Orpheus Choir, Swindon Youth Opera and Swindon Opera Chorus at different times in my career.

In 2011 I was one of the founder members of the Big Sing Thing Community Choir in Swindon.

During 2017 I started working with the Aldbourne Community Singers, initially just running a workshop but then as their conductor. I had a break from Aldbourne when in 2019 I was recruited as the MD for the Lyneham branch of the Military Wives Choir Foundation, a group which I kept going over the Covid lockdown.

2019 was a massive highlight as it was the year I conducted the massed Swindon Young Musicians at the Albert Hall as part of a Music for Youth concert.

During my teaching career I have been a Deputy Head and an Advanced Skills Teacher for Music in Swindon. I received a Teaching Excellence award for my work with music with the children at my school.

As part of the AST role I was responsible for the Choral Festivals for Infants, Juniors and a mixed session for Christmas enabling nearly 50,000 children over seventeen years to make music together.

Since leaving the classroom in 2021 I have been even more involved in making music with people old and young in Swindon and the surrounding area working almost full time for the Music Service as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion and schools outreach worker, coordinating and leading various projects in school and out to engage more young people and their families in music making. This included a collaboration with Yamaha and Hal Leonard to engage young people and a parent or carer to learn a musical instrument together.

I have also been the MD for Guys and Dolls, a four-part choir for the over 50s, for the last three years.

2024 sees BigSingThing growing and going from strength to strength with a sell out Christmas concert and many new and returning members.