

Young Voices Scoop



Interview with Paul Lewis, the Director of Young Voices by the Newshounds of The Grove Junior School, Harpenden.

On Tuesday the 6th of February 2018 the Grove Junior School attended another Young Voices concert. Three children had a fantastic opportunity of interviewing the director (Paul). Young Voices is a family affair, with all three Lewis brothers – Ben, Paul and Ceri – involved in its day-to-day running, with Ben now its managing director and Paul running logistics .

We went backstage and had a small tour of the corridor where we saw pictures and signed artefacts from famous singers including Taylor Swift, The Beatles and The Red Hot Chilli Peppers. After that, we went into an amazing room which was exactly like Narnia! We walked through a wardrobe door and ended up in a room with TVs, tables and huge comfy sofas. We also opened a bookcase and ended up in another smaller room! It was called the “Fab room” it was where all the huge stars hang out when they are on a break or have just finished a concert.

Paul greeted us with a huge smile across his face and was willing to answer all our questions. It was fascinating to find out about his role and the history of Young Voices. He said afterwards, “ It’s been an absolute pleasure to meet you all. When I heard you wanted to interview me I thought that’s exactly the sort of thing we like to see happening in schools!”

This is the interview that took place.

Do you enjoy the Young Voices Concerts?

When you arrive at the O2 you know there is going to be a lot of work happening, but once the children start arriving, the excitement just gets more and more. As more children come into the arena you can feel the excitement from all of the children!

How long have you been associated with Young Voices?

Young Voices was started by my father, 23 years ago so I've been working from Young Voices from the start and I've missed some years when I was studying and when I was living overseas but I've been working for them on and off for 23 years.

Who inspired you to start doing concerts at the O2?

We were actually contacted by the O2 when they decided to build the arena here. They knew we were doing concerts at the other arenas in the UK, in Birmingham, Sheffield and Manchester and they said would we like to come and see what they had built to see whether we would be able to do it here. We were very surprised as it is a very big place to come but we decided to go for it and it's been very successful.

How many people work for Young Voices?

We have quite a small office during most of the year with I would say about 10 people but when we come to the tour then that's when lots more staff come to work. It would be somewhere around 50 or 55 because we have the guys who put the sound system in, we have other guys who put the lights in and then technicians too who make them work and capture all the sounds that the choir are making and make it sound incredible for the audience. We have caterers who come on tour with us and keep us strong through the lovely food that they cook- behind the scenes it's a lot of people.



How do you feel about yourself and your achievements?

A good question!! I feel very proud – it's the last day of our concert tour now and maybe 135,000 children have performed this year alone in Young Voices and it's my job to make sure that when you arrive and when you are in our seats and when you leave that everything works correctly so I feel very happy. I can tell things are going well when I see happy faces on the way back to the coach. I am the Director of Young Voices and my main job is logistics and logistics involves how the schools would arrive to the coach park and how you would get from your coach into the Arena and then also how we seat the choir. Each choir is maybe 40 or 150 and we have this jigsaw puzzle that goes together to form one big choir. At the end of the night we want to make sure you all get home onto your coaches safely and without any incidents.

How does it feel to be in that role?

It's quite daunting sometimes because there are so many schools arriving and each year there are new challenges and things change that I have to adapt to. It's sometimes hard but it's very rewarding when we're successful and we see what comes together.

What is your favourite song that has been chosen his year?

I think my favourite song this year is Africa. I love the way it starts very quietly but when it builds up it builds into this fantastic, powerful song.

If you could have done any of the jobs in Young Voices, which would you do?

Wow! I think we'd all love to be the star on the front of the stage entertaining the audience or even one of the very talented musicians that we have. We're very fortunate and you will see them later. They are incredibly talented and it would be great to be a fantastic singer but I am very happy in my job!

Where is Young Voices based - is there a certain place where it started?

We actually started in Ireland- we used to do adult concerts. Our first concert was 10,000 male voices in Cardiff Arms Park and then when we did a concert in Ireland some children spoke to my Dad and they said why don't you do concerts for children and he said "That's a very good idea!" and that's how it started- in Ireland. Our office is based in Cardiff because that's where my father started the company and so our team is based in Cardiff but I live in West Wales and my brother lives in London so most of the year we're working on the Internet and sending emails and talking over the phone or on Skype.

Did your school encourage singing?

Yes – I went to a Cathedral school so they encouraged singing a lot but the singing was very technical and strict- they didn't really have anything like Young Voices when I was in school. We used to sing I assembly and I always love singing and I'm Welsh so I love the sound of people singing together! My favourite place to sing is at the rugby!

If you weren't working for Young Voices what job would you have liked to do?

Wow! I've been in this job so long now it's hard to imagine myself doing anything else! I'll have to think! You know one thing that came to me during this tour is how amazing teachers are so maybe I would like to be a teacher as working with children is a very powerful thing to do with your life. It's a gift that you give! We know how much work goes into this from a teaching point of view.

How long do you have to practice to put on this event?

Craig, our musical director starts working on the music for the next year almost before the current year is finished. Once he's started working on the repertoire then he'll get the singers and performers into a studio to record the music and I suppose as they're really talented musicians they can actually pick up the music very quickly although I'm sure they practice quite a lot! I'm not sure exactly how long!!

Thank you to Paul from us all for giving his time!! We all had a fantastic time at Young Voices and can't wait till next year!