

## Music and General Practice

I find that conducting the King John Orchestra (KJO) is a great antidote to the stress of a busy Monday in General Practice. It can be a bit tight getting away from my surgery in St Ives to start rehearsing in Cambridge at 7.50pm, but after a few minutes of music the tension and weariness of the day have melted away and I'm feeling happy and energised. This term we celebrated the fifth birthday of the orchestra, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> July we played Schubert's Unfinished Symphony – the first work that the orchestra performed – and to mark US Independence Day – Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever" March, and Gershwin's Overture to "Girl Crazy". There are at least six other doctors in the KJO, possibly more.

I also love singing, and playing my trombone. Last year I sang with the Ascension Singers of Cambridge in Wells and Liverpool Cathedrals. Liverpool was the end of a musical odyssey, the choir having sung in every cathedral in England since its founding in 1987. And, yes, there are several other doctors in the choir. I play trombone in the Great St Mary's Orchestra in Cambridge, as well as the Chamber Orchestra of St Ives.

I relish the challenge of rehearsing and conducting singers and instrumentalists. The aim is to attain the highest standard with the forces available in limited time. There are analogies with GP training. Even though the contexts are very different, many of the principles are the same – good rapport and communication, problem-solving, offering constructive feedback, and trying to inspire people to do as well as they can.

Making music is good for you, and helps to prevent burnout. One obvious mechanism is that music is a social activity, and over the years I've made many friends through choirs and orchestras. Rehearsing and performing music – whether it's singing, playing an instrument or conducting – is pleasurable and exciting, and I'm sure responsible for the release of lots of serotonin and adrenaline, and probably some endorphins and enkephalins too. Music demands concentration, energy and time to rehearse and prepare, thus clearing the mind of worries about patients, diminishing income and consortia.

Music has been an important part of my life since I was at primary school and continues to be today.