

## **Memorial Concert for Linda Collier**

*by Anne Johnson*

Linda Collier, who was a Trustee of the British Suzuki Institute from 2001 and became Treasurer in 2003, died suddenly and unexpectedly in January last year. She was an accomplished pianist who had enjoyed the instrument as a child and took it up again with great interest and enthusiasm as an adult after her children started learning Suzuki piano. She took lessons with Philip Colman at Trinity College of Music and in 2003 was awarded the Associated Board's performing diploma.

However Linda not only enjoyed music herself, she also loved to help others enjoy it. For her three children, Chloe (aged 13), Immy (aged 11 in February this year) and Jamie (aged 6) –this was a remarkable commitment, as, in addition to the piano, this involved Linda taking on a complete quartet with Chloe's flute, Immy's violin and viola and Jamie's 'cello. She regularly accompanied childrens' Suzuki groups and other musicians, both adults and children, who wished for the chance of playing with an accomplished pianist whose motivation was the sheer joy of playing.

Soon after Linda's death, her immediate family and some of her many friends decided to arrange an informal concert, involving both adults and children, to celebrate her life and her love of music. Putney High School generously offered the use of their splendid hall and the concert took place in the afternoon and early evening of Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September. It was a reflection of the affection and high regard that so many people had for Linda that even on a busy Saturday in the middle of term some 300 people came along, many of whom had heard about the concert by word of mouth. The tables in the hall were prettily arranged with fresh flowers and many of Linda's friends had made sandwiches and cakes for everyone to enjoy, with copious tea, throughout the concert.

Linda's family decided that they would like to establish a fund in Linda's name to support the training of music teachers in Eastern Europe, where frequently music teaching is only offered to children singled out as gifted, rather than being available to all who would love the chance to learn.

The 'cellist Annette Costanzi (who teaches Jamie), has offered the following insight into the need in Eastern Europe for music tuition:

"The European Suzuki Teaching Development Trust was set up to train Suzuki teachers in countries where it had otherwise not been available focusing mainly on Eastern Europe. I had been going to Hungary to train teachers there for the time

that I was also working with Jamie and Linda. Linda took an interest in all that was Suzuki and particularly in what was being done to spread the 'good work'. She and I would talk about how easy it is to take things for granted and that working in these places offered a glimpse into our own good fortune. Those Hungarian teachers have all passed their level 3 exams and are doing very well. I am now training teachers in Lithuania. I find the experience enlightening and the teachers there very receptive. Without this fund, such work would not be possible. Linda and I both liked the idea of a 'quiet revolution' through working with families and teachers in the Suzuki way."

Those attending the concert and others who were unable to attend on the day generously contributed in excess of £6,500, with Gift Aid bringing the total to £7,775, which can now be put to such good use in memory of Linda.

There was a wide range of music to enjoy, which was played by Chloe, Immy and Jamie; some of their friends from school and some of the friends they have made through their music. A lot of good practice had obviously gone on over the summer. The items included an adults' choir singing "I Could Have Danced All Night" and "Moon River"; many different duets involving various combinations of instruments - 2 pianos, 2 clarinets, a flute and a clarinet, and 2 violas followed by a viola trio (which one little girl enjoyed so much that she got up to dance); and various quartets, in addition to some solo performances. The latter included Chloe's spirited and prettily played "Le Petit Negre" by Debussy; Immy's moving performance on the viola of Shostakovich's beautiful "Romance from Gadly" and Jamie's playing, with an enormous smile, of a French folk song on his little 'cello.

As a finale, all the musicians took to the stage for "The Toy Symphony" ( a piece which is most commonly attributed to Mozart's father Leopold), and there were even some brave volunteers from the audience to be additional toys. To add to the fun the conductor unexpectedly took it twice as fast as he had during the rehearsal, much to everyone's amusement. The occasion finished with wine and canapés to the accompaniment of adults playing light music and children experimenting with the various musical toys used by the orchestra.

It was a happy occasion, a fitting tribute to someone who derived such pleasure and fun from making music with her friends and family.

Footnote: If any readers would like to, they can contribute to the fund by either sending a cheque, made payable to "European Suzuki Teaching Development Trust", to the Administrator: Birte Kelly, Stour House, East Bergholt, Colchester, CO7 6TF. Alternatively, readers can pay a donation direct to the Trust's CAF Bank Account: A/C No: 00009998 Sort Code 40-52-40. Gift Aid declarations are very welcome and valuable and can be obtained from Birte Tel. No. 01206 299448