

A meeting with the great lady – EUYO Co-Founder and President, Mrs Joy Bryer OBE

Rebecca Humphrey, the EUYO's Communications Assistant, recently caught up with Co-Founder, President and motivational force behind the European Union Youth Orchestra Joy Bryer, now a recipient of an OBE in the Queen's recent birthday list, in recognition of more than 50 years of dedicated and passionate services to arts, culture, youth, education and international relations.



RH: When did you decide to found the International Youth Foundation of Great Britain and then out of that the ECYO, later to become the EUYO and what influenced your decision to do this?

JB: Both my husband and I have always passionately felt that the world would be a better place if there existed an international understanding between the countries, all of the different religions and if the world could bring itself to work together and live together. It was a dual thought that we had and we created the Orchestra because we believed – politically – in what the world should be like and what young people need and want. There was a whole world in front of me and I wanted to see a wonderful world, but really I created the dream with my husband. The dream of Europe took me years to bring to fruition; we started with six countries within the Orchestra and we have now got 28. It became almost an obsession as what I really wanted was to have the best youth orchestra in the world. Nowadays, the two great subjects that all the countries are talking about are education and international understanding and the EUYO is the absolute epitome of that.

RH: Born in America but residing in Europe for over 50 years. Did some of the inspiration for your work come from America?

JB: I think it really came from a great desire to do something important and to see the world. I grew up in Boston on the East Coast of America where people are very interested in education and the arts, especially as Boston is one of the cultural capitals of America. Growing up on the East Coast gave me the opportunity to visit to Europe, and this was vital. I went to school in Paris, I spoke French and I visited many cities in Europe, such as Berlin, Dresden, Rotterdam, Coventry and Cologne that were greatly affected by the war. Personally having seen the destruction and horrors in these cities, I was even more convinced that a European Union was necessary. What I saw and experienced really opened my eyes to how other people live in different countries and I don't think I would have had the same opportunities had I grown up in California at the time.

RH: You are a firm advocator for maintaining the original ideals of a united Europe and have delivered this impassioned message around Europe. How do you feel the EU can best protect the access to culture for young Europeans?

JB: So many young people would be wonderfully equipped for a career in the arts if they were given the opportunity. When you are very poor, you are not thinking about the arts, you might just kick a ball around after school - but if you are exposed to a young person's class or activity through your schooling or a mentor, that might be all it takes to find a love or enjoyment for an instrument. It needs to be made accessible in all areas. These opportunities need to be offered to children when they are very young.



Mrs Bryer with President Chirac & Sir Edward Heath in 1978

we got there it had very recently sadly recently burnt down. So myself and Vladimir Ashkenazy walked around the area and came across a little Spanish church and we talked a local lighting firm into putting lights outside of the church. Soon a performance took place and people gathered to watch it – it was all very spontaneous. The whole Orchestra was then invited to the President’s palace later that night.

RH: You have had extensive experience working with professional musicians throughout your career. What was your most memorable moment or highlight over the last 50 years?

JB: I have many highlights in my years with the Orchestra but a few of these stand out in particular. During one of the Orchestra’s summer tours, an enormous earthquake happened unexpectedly in southern Italy when the Orchestra was due to give a concert but sadly the concert hall had been destroyed in the earthquake. Claudio Abbado – thinking of his people, as he was very patriotic and very concerned went into a cinema that was still standing in the town and gave a concert there. We raised thousands from his concert and used this money to buy instruments to help the young people that were at school.

Another time in 1996, when the Orchestra were due to perform in Paraguay concert hall, however when

RH: What are your hopes for EUYO in the next few years?

JB: Above all, I would like to see the Orchestra continue to travel and perform and unite young players which is what it does best. And I would like to see Europe and the rest of the world working together in peace and harmony in the way that the EUYO does. I would like to see the continents imbue culture into youngsters and to light to earth with education, just as the EUYO does.

RH: Would you like to give any advice to young musicians and creatives of today?

JB: Finding a job as a musician is very difficult. If it were me I would be at the back door of every orchestra at every concert. You have to work harder than ever these days, attend all the concerts, absorb all the music, meet the local conductor and go to the places where musicians gather. I think it’s marvellous when young players form their own quartets and chamber music groups outside of the orchestra (as has happened many times with the EUYO) because they can then go on to continue inspiring audiences with their music. I am always amazed when I look at the alumni from EUYO. Many become famous and have quartets, meet up after school and play together and take on extra jobs. Circumstances might be difficult but it can all be possible when you put your mind to it.



Mrs Bryer with Sir Edward Heath, Herbert von Karajan and Anne-Sophie Mutter in Courchevel, France



Mrs Bryer and Claudio Abbado with Pope John Paul II

Mrs Joy Bryer, President and Co-Founder of The European Union Youth Orchestra, receives an OBE in recognition of more than 50 years of dedicated and passionate service to arts, culture, youth, education and international relations

"Wonderful and richly deserved recognition for a visionary pioneer of musical cooperation in Europe."

Sir John Tusa and Ian Stoutzker CBE, Co-Chairmen IYF Trustees

Mrs Joy Bryer, Co-Founder, President and the most significant motivational force behind the European Union Youth Orchestra (EUYO) has been awarded an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's Birthday 2017 Honours List in recognition of over 50 years of services to arts, culture, youth, education and international relations.

Joy Bryer and her husband Lionel founded the International Youth Foundation of Great Britain (IYF), with Sir Edward Heath KG, as its first President, in 1969. The IYF was the beginning of the couples' vision: an educational charity devoted to promoting international cooperation and understanding amongst the world's young people, particularly in the performing arts. In the years to follow, Joy and Lionel pioneered the "International Festival of Youth Orchestras and Performing Arts" held in Switzerland, which in 1973, expanded to Aberdeen and to London; the "Festival Youth Orchestra" led by conductors including Claudio Abbado and Carlo Maria Giulini. Shortly afterwards Great Britain joined the European Community and Joy and Lionel Bryer founded the "European Community Youth Orchestra" (EUYO). For over 40 years, Joy has been selflessly committed to promoting the EUYO, which provides invaluable support to thousands of young musicians, whilst also representing the European Union's strongest ideal: a community working together to achieve peace and social understanding.

Joy Bryer's work extends beyond the EUYO and she is recognised all over Europe, having influenced the careers of many thousands of musicians, including Francis Cummings (violinist), Colin Currie (percussionist), Gautier Capuçon (cellist), Renaud Capuçon (violinist), Leonidas Kavakos (violinist) Paul Meyer (clarinettist), Paul Watkins (cellist), Tanja Tetzlaff (cellist), to name but a few.

She received the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French Government in 1996, the Officer de l'Ordre Grand-Ducal de la Couronne de Chêne from the Luxembourgish Government in 1997, a medal of honour from President Gil Robles from the European Parliament in 1998 and the Comandante della Repubblica Italiana in 2004. She has been interviewed around the world on radio and television, constantly delivering an impassioned message about the importance of access to culture for all as a fundamental human right, and for the need for continued investment from governments and institutions in Europe's youth.

The strength of Joy's vision and energy from the early years which she shared with her husband Lionel has undoubtedly led to an increase in cultural opportunities for many thousands of young Europeans. She has given over 50 years of inspiration, drive and energy to the arts. Without this, the EUYO and many other musical bodies would not exist today.

Our congratulations to Mrs Bryer: we cannot think of no more deserving a candidate for Royal honour.

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#EUYONewsletter

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