



Monday 12 November 2018

It is with the deepest sadness and regret that the EUYO announces the passing of Joy Bryer OBE, Co-founder, President and inspiration behind the European Union Youth Orchestra, European Community Youth Orchestra, International Youth Foundation, and International Festival of Youth Orchestras and the Performing Arts.

Joy passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on 11 November, aged 88, on the day that her orchestra performed at the Armistice Commemoration at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in front of 70 heads of state, fulfilling her dream of bringing the youth of the world together in peace and harmony.

Joy Bryer spent her life in the service of young people in Europe and throughout the world, believing passionately in culture as a fundamental human right and a means to create peaceful, harmonious and creative societies. She was responsible for the creation of the first international youth orchestra and the first international festival of youth orchestras. Impassioned, determined, indefatigable and highly persuasive, she had the ears of Presidents, musicians and cultural leaders alike throughout Europe and beyond for more than half a century, and was justly decorated many times over.

Joy Bryer never lost her quite astonishing warmth and generosity towards all whom she encountered, and proved to be an extraordinarily significant inspiration, and indeed '*joy*', to the many thousands of young musicians whose lives she affected throughout seven decades. In a fitting tribute to the magnitude of her achievement, the day that she passed away was not only dedicated to world peace, but also saw her orchestra perform at the world's major armistice anniversary event at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris for seventy of the world's major leaders, many distinguished guests and a television and online audience of millions.



Joy Bryer, an American by birth, a European at heart.

In 1969 Joy Bryer and her husband Lionel founded the International Youth Foundation of Great Britain (IYF), with Sir Edward Heath KG, as its first President. The IYF is an educational charity devoted to promoting international cooperation and understanding amongst the world's young, working particularly in the field of performing arts.

The first major project of the IYF was the "International Festival of Youth Orchestras and Performing Arts" held in St. Moritz, Switzerland. The founding idea was to bring together youth orchestras from across the world. Their musical diversity would act as a unifying bond to promote international understanding.

Joy and Lionel Bryer recruited youth orchestras from all over the globe.

The success of the 1969 festival in St. Moritz led the British Tourist Authority to enquire about bringing the Festival to the UK. In 1973, the Festival expanded to Aberdeen and to London. The local support and facilities in Aberdeen led the IYF to make Aberdeen the permanent base of the Festival at that time.

The festivals would conclude with the formation of a combined 'Festival Youth Orchestra'. This newly amalgamated orchestra was led by leading international conductors, including: Claudio Abbado, Carlo Maria Giulini, Walter Susskind and Leopold Stokowski, as well as the then youthful James Judd and Simon Rattle. The 'Festival Youth Orchestra' appeared at the BBC Proms at the Royal Festival Hall, and at the opening concert of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Following the Festival, in 1974 shortly after Great Britain joined the European Community Joy and Lionel Bryer founded the European Community Youth Orchestra. The Orchestra accompanied the evolution of the EEC and was renamed the European Union Youth Orchestra in 1995.

Joy envisaged that the Orchestra would present a 'united Europe' – a group of one hundred and twenty musicians from across all Member States, cooperating to produce collective excellence – the European ideal. Joy understood the importance of fostering international dialogue and co-creation amongst Europe's youth.

The European Union Youth Orchestra first toured in 1978. In 1986, the EUYO was awarded the 'Olympia Prize' by the Onassis Foundation. In 1990 the EUYO won the first ever 'Prix d'Initiative Européenne' and in 1991, the European Media Prize, going to win many further prizes.

Joy's work resulted in the founding of the first Italian, Greek and Asian youth orchestras, and inspired many other new youth orchestras around the world, a role that the orchestra continues today. Her commitment to the education of Europe's finest young musicians, to their scholarship, and to their continued professional development has set her apart from others. She is affectionately known as "Mrs B" by generations of musicians, and over 3,000 alumni who now feature (for the most part) in the world's most successful symphony orchestras. To her they were her family and she took pride in all their achievements, celebrating the fact that many met and married and had children through her work. Joy often talked of herself as the EUYO's 'grandmother', and indeed she was in many ways the 'world-grandmother' of youth orchestras.

Amongst many known classical music ensembles to have been born from the European Union Youth Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe is the most well-known. Acknowledged as "the finest chamber orchestra in the world" (BBC 2, 2011), the Chamber Orchestra of Europe was founded by former EUYO players in 1981. It is their wealth of cultural backgrounds and shared love of music-making nurtured in their EUYO days, which remains at the heart of their inspired performances.

Joy Bryer was commended across Europe for her work in the fields of music and culture. Amongst her accolades, Joy 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 of the European Parliament in 1998 and the Commendatore della Repubblica Italiana in 2004.

Her work, spanning more than 50 years, has impacted on the lives of thousands of Europe's musicians including significant ones such as : Colin Currie (percussionist), Leonidas Kavakos (violinist), Renaud Capuçon (violinist), Gautier Capuçon (cellist), Paul Meyer (clarinettist), Anthony Marwood (violinist), Tanja Tetzlaff (cellist), Paul Watkins (cellist), Zsolt-Thamer Visontay (violinist), Andrew Manze (violinist), Jacques Zoon (flautist), Sergio Azzolini (bassoonist) and Emily Beynon (flautist).

From its conception, Joy Bryer dedicated all of her energy to ensuring the Orchestra's financial stability, and that its ethos remain steadfast. Almost certainly, no other orchestra in the world can claim to have had only one change in management since its foundation. Joy Bryer held the reins of the organisation until January 2013 when it underwent a restructuring and acquired its first CEO. At this point, Joy took on the newly created role of 'President'. Wherever Joy went she took with her an impassioned rhetoric of a united Europe, investing in Europe's youth. She believed and advocated for access to culture as a fundamental human right and pleas to governments and institutions to create the social and economic conditions for this right to be enjoyed by all.

In 2017 Mrs Joy Bryer was 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 is survived by her three daughter Lisa Villiers, Lesley King-Lewis (IYF Trustee) and Tania Bryer, and six grandchildren. Her family would be delighted to hear from members of the Orchestra of their personal recollections and stories of their extraordinary mother whose legacy will no doubt endure for many generations. All recollections should go in the first instance to Riitta Hirvonen at riitta@euyo.eu

Note to Editors

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