

# Leisure Times

## The joys of the Pearls of Africa

by PHIL DENNETT

**C**HILDREN who manage to sing joyfully despite heartbreak in their lives will give a performance in Mid Sussex next week.

The 'Pearls of Africa' choir has in its ranks many youngsters orphaned by the two of the biggest killers in their homeland of Uganda, AIDS and malaria.

As a follow-up to last year's UK tour, the choir of 20 children will sing in Hurstpierpoint College Chapel on Friday September 19 at 7pm.

This 20-strong choir is made up of children from the Molly & Paul Childcare Foundation Schools in Uganda. All the children in the



schools, including these talented young singers, dancers and drummers, come from a background of what organisers call 'unbelievable hardship'.

The children's hour-long performance is described as a high octane mix of traditional African music, dance

and drumming, plus beautiful spirituals and heart-felt dramatisation.

Paul and Molly Wasswa, founders of the Childcare Foundation Schools in Uganda, believe that the annual tour to the UK provides enormous benefits for the children who take part, the schools themselves and,

equally importantly, help to raise awareness of the enormous difficulties presented by daily life in Uganda.

Paul said: "One particularly important part of the choir's itinerary is to visit local schools, where we conduct creative workshops that en-

able local children to join in African songs, drumming and dance; the response is always one of great enthusiasm. Everyone has fun and the children learn so much about each other in the process."

The choir's country-wide tour includes appearances at the House of Commons, London's South Bank, Canterbury Cathedral and the Eden Project. They will also participate in morning service at the United Reform Church in Haywards Heath on September 21. There is no charge for entry to the Hurstpierpoint concert but a retiring collection will be held.

Every penny raised goes directly to the Childcare Foundations Schools in Uganda.

**Pictured: The Pearls of Africa Choir giving a workshop performance at Hurstpierpoint College**

## Bob's distinctive piano style



BLUES and boogie pianist Bob Hall will be appearing on Saturday September 13 as part of the Hurst Festival line-up.

Bob Hall's distinctive and original piano style has influenced generations of piano players and left a lasting legacy.

He first came to fame in the R 'n' B explosion of the 1960s, leading bands with musicians who later went on to play with The Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac and Manfred Mann.

Bob's partner Hilary Blythe's crystal-clear harmony vocals and rock-steady bass playing underpins all his performances.

A diminutive dynamo, Hilary's moving treatment of blues and gospel classics are a highlight of their show.

Many of his finely crafted songs tell a story - often with a humorous sting in the tail, delivered in Bob's disarming, understated vocal style and accompanied by his electrifying keyboard wizardry.

The Bob Hall Show starts at 8pm in Hurstpierpoint Village Centre, Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint.

Tickets cost £8 from The Mint House, 94 High Street, Hurst. 01273 832694 or online from [www.ticket-source.co.uk/hurstfestival](http://www.ticket-source.co.uk/hurstfestival)

## Remarkable women's lives the subject of fascinating book

TWO remarkable women who carved new lives for themselves in Provence before the Second World War are the subject of a fascinating book by Cuckfield author Maureen Emerson.

Escape to Provence is the true story of courageous American Elisabeth Parrish Starr, who left the comfort of her Philadelphia home after a great personal tragedy to carry out selfless work transporting injured and dying soldiers to dressing stations on the Somme in the Great War. She stayed on in France and settled in Opio in the hills above Cannes where she met English writer Winifred Fortescue.

Winifred, who had settled in Provence with her husband Sir John Fortescue to find 'an elegance of life they could neither aspire to nor afford in England' became a widow in the early 1930s and wrote about her experiences in France in *Perfume from Provence*, which became a best seller.

Maureen Emerson, who lives in Church Street, Cuckfield, became interested in Winifred and Elisabeth during the 22 years she spent in France in a neighbouring village to Opio where they had both lived. Maureen settled back in England eight years ago to be closer to her family but Winifred and Elisabeth were never far from her mind and she has just completed her fascinating book on their lives after eight years of research.

Maureen told the Middy: "Two very resolute and unusual women were behind me all the way and I was

never allowed to slacken off for long.

"This is not only the story of two expatriate women who were drawn to Provence in the first part of the twentieth century, it is also about the friends they gathered around them on the hillside, and the fate of those who touched their lives."

Elisabeth Parrish Starr remained in France in the difficult years of Hitler's occupation in the Second World War but sadly died in 1943 before the liberation. Winifred, known as Peggy to her friends, chose to settle for part of the war in Many Waters, an idyllic cottage near Wakehurst Place, Ardingly.

While in Sussex she befriended a badly burned Spitfire pilot called Richard Hillary, one of Archibald McIndoe's 'guinea pigs'. Winifred's popular book *Perfume from Provence* inspired him to write about his experiences as a fighter pilot in *The Last Enemy*, which became a best seller in 1942. After many skin grafts to his hands and face,

Hillary was drawn back to the camaraderie of the RAF and died on active service aged 23.

During her time in England, Winifred also befriended Grace Kimmins, who founded Chailey Heritage Craft School. Winifred visited the school frequently and helped Grace receive Queen Elizabeth and her two young princesses during a royal visit in June 1945.

Winifred invited General Sicé of the French Red Cross to the ceremony and she and Grace helped him to set up his own 'Chailey Heritage' near Paris for children injured during the war. After the defeat of Hitler, Winifred returned to the thyme-scented terraces and olive groves of Opio and died there in 1951.

Escape to Provence by Maureen Emerson is priced £9.99 and published by Chapter and Verse, King's House, 8, Church Street, Cuckfield. For more details contact: [chapterandversebooks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:chapterandversebooks@tiscali.co.uk)

## Here's your chance to become a rock star

ROLL up! Roll up! if you want to be a rock star! Haywards Heath's expanding Rok Skool needs lead singers for new bands it wants to launch.

The school in Bridge Road is holding auditions on Saturday September 20 for anyone who can sing in tune and wants to rock 'n roll.

Founder Hereward Kaye, former member of the chart-hitting Flying Pickets acapella band, and partner and elder son Leon, who is also a professional singer and actor, are looking for bassists and keyboard players too.

They are about to add two new bands to the 13 formed already from Rok Skool's pupils and singers, and musicians should ideally be aged between nine and 16.



The school's 14-week autumn term will end with a live Christmas show when all the bands will get a chance to perform in front of an audience - similar to three previous sell-out shows at Clair Hall.

Hereward said: "We need four or five singers but we also need keyboard players and bassists. Most young people want to play drums or guitar and they don't realise what fantastic fun it is to play bass."

"If they have never played bass before but know their way a little bit around a guitar we can provide the rest."

The auditions for singers, bassists and keyboardists take place from 7pm on Saturday September 13 at Rok Skool in Bridge Road, Haywards Heath.

To take part contact Hereward or Leon at Rok Skool on 01444 484979.

## All singers welcome

SUSSEX CHORUS welcomes new singers in all voices. There is an Open Evening on Monday 15 September, 7.30pm, at St Paul's Catholic College, Burgess Hill, the choir's new rehearsal venue, a chance to join in Brahms's Requiem and meet the members.

Full details of the choir's activities can be found on their website, [www.sussexchorus.org](http://www.sussexchorus.org)

## Deaf author's book on school

PROFOUNDLY deaf Ian Stewart has written a book on the Cuckfield school he went to and its kindly owner Mary Corbishley. Mill Hall Oral School for the Deaf, which existed at Whiteman's Green until 1996, is the subject of an exhibition at Cuckfield Museum.

Mill Hall house was sold in 1949 to Mary Corbishley who wanted to expand her then school for the deaf at Cuckfield House in the High Street.

The museum's exhibition coincides with the imminent publication of Mr Stewart's biography of Mary Corbishley.



Many Water where Winifred Fortescue lived