

## Dr Yip Wai-Hong

*Esto quod es; quod sunt alii, sine quemlibet esse; Quod non es, nolis; quod potes esse, velis.*

Be what you are; let whoever will be what others are; do not be what you are not; but resolutely be what you can be.

This ancient maxim, from which the School's motto traces its origins, has guided the Wells Cathedral School through its long and illustrious history. It is most fitting that the School has chosen to honour Yip Wai-Hong as it marches towards the celebration of its first centenary in its second millennium. The Wellensian ethos of the development of the individual as a whole person – spiritual as well as physical, emotional and intellectual – finds a close parallel across time and place with our honorand's philosophy.

The essence of the Yip's educational experience is premised on supporting each child to grow into well-rounded renaissance women and men through the medium of music. Indeed his dictum is well known:

“Children's music education is not about producing musicians. Rather, it is about achieving the educational goals of a whole person. If one has the 'misfortune' of becoming a musician, it is purely by accident.”

Yip's legacy began 40 years ago when against considerable obstacles he founded the Hong Kong Children's Choir. As he built this choir and the Yip's Children's Choir subsequently, he had the active support of his wife, Choi Ching-Yee, who had been piano accompanist and business manager since. This dynamic duo, whom many in the audience call “teachers”, have been surrogate parents to thousands, nurturing in us a sense of belonging through making music together. Indeed only a few of his choristers and instrumentalists have gone on to become professional musicians, albeit very accomplished ones including his three daughters; many have contributed to society here at home and abroad as doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, journalists and so on. Above all, most have carried with us the camaraderie of being a part of something larger than the sum of each individual.

Our honorand and his pupils have given joy to many large assemblies from Aberdeen to Auckland, from Tuscon to Tibilisi, and from Washington to Warsaw. Appreciation and applause not only came from serious musical connoisseurs, of which there were many. Yip has been a tireless campaigner for classical music to reach ordinary folks before the idea became fashionable. The Pan Asia Symphony Orchestra, which Yip also founded, has been his instrument of choice in this mission since 1976.

Of late, in his eighth decade, he has spared no effort in promoting children's orchestral training with equal zeal to choral activities previously. The Hong Kong Children's Symphony enjoys pre-eminent status among excellent youth ensembles in the region.

*An die musik* (“To music”) fittingly captures our honorand’s lifelong dedication to his art. This Schubert lied was my first solo piece with Yip that has since sealed our personal bond. Thirty years on, the final stanza sums up my feelings best:

*Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!* (O gracious Art, for that I thank thee!)

I present Yip Wai-Hong, “Father of Children’s Choirs”, conductor, scholar, educator and an inspiration to generations of young people in Hong Kong and beyond, for admission to the Fellowship of the Wells Cathedral School Foundation.

*Written and delivered by Professor Gabriel M Leung*

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*Hong Kong*