

The Family Christmas concert started from a joint Harrogate Symphony Orchestra (HSO) / Harrogate Choral Society (HCS) Christmas Concert in the Royal Hall in December 1996. the concert was conducted jointly by Bryan Western and Jeffrey Wynn Davies.

In 1998 we were joined by singers from several Knaresborough Primary schools and the concert featured The Story of Little Red Riding Hood narrated by Jeffrey Wynn Davies.

In 1999 several Harrogate Schools were involved and two of the Co-ordinators – Margaret Knight and Carmel Wake – are still taking part to this day! (although their then pupils will now be at or considering university or working for a living!

In 2000 the HSO obtained a two year sponsorship deal from Homeowners Friendly Society which enabled the concept to grow into the “Family Christmas Concert” in Harrogate International Centre (HIC) with over 300 primary school children taking part from schools in Harrogate and Knaresborough. In 2000 we had some handbell ringers as guests, the following year some dancers from the Katrina Hughes School joined in.

In 2003 Jeffrey asked to step down due to other work and his place was taken by the HCS Deputy Music Director, Marilynne Davies. Marilynne has, together with Bryan Western, contributed a great deal over the years to the concert and also to the musical education of hundreds of primary school children.

Although over 300 children have taken part every year since 2000 it is difficult to work out exactly how many have enjoyed the rare opportunity to perform alongside a full-scale symphony orchestra and a large adult choir, in Harrogate’s biggest concert venue. Some have been lucky enough to take part for several years and it is a wonderful experience for them.