

Earlier this month, 177 Scouts and Guides from across the UK came together in Stourbridge for the annual National Scout and Guide Symphony Orchestra (NSGSO) and National Scout and Guide Concert Band (NSGCB) courses.

The course mostly focused on rehearsals in preparation for the concerts at the end of the week, including rehearsals as a full ensemble and smaller sectional rehearsals. This year the orchestra performed Howard Hanson's Symphony No. 2, Britten's Soirees Musicales, and Sibelius's Karelia Suite. The concert band's repertoire featured a range of music, including Dvorak's Slavonic Dances, Florentina March, Mambo Greats and September, medleys of music by Benny Goodman and Michael Jackson, as well as arrangements from How to Train Your Dragon, Les Miserables, Singin' in the Rain and Indiana Jones.

Older members of the NSGSO and NSGCB had the opportunity to play in either the Strings Ensemble or the Big Band, which also performed during the week. Both ensembles will also be performing in a concert alongside the Royal Corps of Army Music next April at the Guard's Chapel in London.

This year's concerts took place in the Elgar Concert Hall in the Bramall Music Building. The NSGSO performed on Friday and Saturday evening, with two joint pieces featuring the NSGCB, and the NSGCB performed on the Saturday afternoon, with an appearance from the String Ensemble and Big Band. The NSGCB also performed a free community concert at Hagley Road Retirement Village which was attended by many of their residents.

As well as rehearsals and the concerts, both ensembles had the opportunity to participate in social activities throughout the week, which were a great way to get to know more people. Activities this year included a Monopoly Run around Stourbridge, a beetle drive, a quiz and a Ceilidh, as well as a badge swap, craft afternoons and a water fight. The week ended with NSGSO/NSGCB's Got Talent after the Saturday concert, featuring performances from the participants and staff!

Each year a group of returning members are selected to become peer mentors for the course. Their role was to be a point of contact for the participants during the week, as well as expressing any concerns to members of staff. Their role also involved ensuring that everyone is included during the course and making friends, especially the new members of the ensembles.

### **Get Involved!**

Next year, the NSGSO celebrate their 50th anniversary, and the NSGCB celebrate their 10th anniversary, with the course culminating in two joint concerts at Nottingham's Albert Hall and the Birmingham Symphony Hall. The course will run from the 2-10 August 2025, and applications open in September this year. Applications are accepted from all members of Girlguiding between the ages of 12 and 25, including young members, young leaders and adult

leaders or members of SSAGO and Inspire. The minimum standard to apply for the NSGSO is Grade 5, and for the NSGCB it is Grade 4, however there are specific requirements for some instruments. More information can be found on the NSGSO/NSGCB website and their social media page. <https://nsgso-nsgcb.com/>