



## **Nomination of Vivien Pike for Classic FM's Music Teacher of the Year**

**July 2023**

### **Why does your nominee deserve to be named the music teacher of the year?**

Mrs Pike is our singing teacher for Steel City Choristers in Sheffield and she has devoted her whole life to teaching South Yorkshire to sing. She has had an amazing career and is currently in her 55th year of teaching. She continues despite her recent hip replacement and an upcoming knee replacement. Singing is her life, she loves it and she strongly maintains that everyone has a musical instrument which can be developed - the voice. It costs nothing and everyone can be taught to sing!

Mrs Pike was the singing teacher at Sheffield Cathedral and she continued to teach the choristers and some of the adults after the cathedral choir closed unexpectedly in July 2020. Choir families and former Lay Clerks set up Steel City Choristers in August 2020 to enable the children to keep singing together and to make choral music more accessible to broader audiences (see <https://steelcitychoristers.org.uk/>). It was set up very suddenly and by volunteers, so we have really appreciated the continuity of professional support from Mrs Pike. Her experience of running a choir is invaluable to us as she visits rehearsals and offers advice to our Director of Music and Chair of Trustees – and she teaches them to sing too! She has also kindly passed on some of her resources for us to use with our most junior choristers. One-to-one singing lessons with Mrs Pike really help the children develop their voices, which contributes so much to the quality of the sound of the whole choir. She trains her students to have a strong and reliable technical foundation while allowing their natural voice to flourish.

Our choristers regularly enter the David Clover Festival of Singing, which Mrs Pike has been involved in organising every year since 1980. It is the only singing festival of its kind in the country. Their committee is ageing and they lost three members last year to death or ill health, but Mrs Pike has kept it going – even holding a committee meeting in her house only three days after she came out of hospital!

Mrs Pike has worked with singers all over Europe: lecturing, examining singing and choral conducting, and being a Juror at the World Choir Games. She adjudicated at the 2023 Dublin Feis Coeli. Many of her pupils have gone on to have highly successful professional careers in singing, for example Lesley Garrett CBE, Anna Harvey and Ella Taylor. She has impacted hundreds of people's lives: there is barely a choir in Sheffield that hasn't got a former pupil of hers in it!

### Can you describe some examples of great work they have done?

Mrs Pike is loved for the life advice and support she offers, as well as her incredible teaching! She directed the City of Sheffield Girls Choir for 30 years, touring worldwide.

*"Over two decades on I still regard her as one of the most influential teachers in my life. She helped me develop much needed confidence and taught me life lessons and principles that I still use in my life today."* Girls choir member

In 1984 her choir won Sainsbury's Choir of the Year and in 1996 hit 'the highest note ever reached' by singing at a height of 41,000ft on a flight home from the first Melbourne International Choral Festival [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab-Md\\_ZBnJc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab-Md_ZBnJc)

In 1971 Mrs Pike became the first ever council Music Service singing teacher. It was her idea that singing should and could be taught like any other instrument in schools; she worked with determination to make that happen in South Yorkshire. She still is teaching in one school today.

*"Dr Pike has taught singing for us for nearly 30 years and has inspired generations of girls. Her command of technique and ability to uncover the innate musicality of every pupil is unique. The exam results of her pupils are invariably at Distinction level."* Clare Wallace, Director of Music, Sheffield High School

Vivien is the singer teacher for Sheffield Oratorio Chorus, and she has taught the cathedral choir since 2002.

*"We were very fortunate to secure Vivien Pike as a singing teacher at Sheffield Cathedral. The depth of her experience, knowledge, inspiration, tireless passion and a steely determination to achieve the highest possible standard ensured the choir had a solid vocal framework on which to build repertoire for the daily services, tours, recordings and broadcasts."* Neil Taylor, Director of Music 1997 - 2016

In 2010 her pupil Ella Taylor won BBC Chorister of the Year. They now sing professionally, currently at the Royal Opera House.

*"Quite simply, without Vivien Pike I wouldn't be the singer I am today. Not only is she unmatched in teaching technique, but she taught me what performing requires and was a huge support to a very anxious and angry teenager! Her success record speaks for itself, but I can think of no worthier person for this award just for guiding this young soprano not only vocally, but also personally."* Ella Taylor, soprano

Vivien's career of teaching and supporting children and adults continues even well into her ninth decade and we at Steel City Choristers are so glad she is still going!