

Photos and memories of Birmingham Town Hall Mid 1950s to 202, Jane Scheuer

The main photo shows the CBSO (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra) in full evening dress at Birmingham Town Hall in the mid 1950s. Rudolf Schwarz was the conductor at the time - leading the orchestra from 1951 to 1957. My father (Henry/Heinrich Scheuer, third row up, third from the left) played flute and piccolo from the early 50s until his death in 1966 at the age of 47. He was an Austrian Jew who had fled the Nazis in 1938. Interestingly, Rudolf Schwarz was also of Austrian Jewish heritage.

I remember my father taking me to the Town Hall (his daily work place) when I was a young child - I was allowed access to the rabbit warren of little corridors and staircases that the public never saw. I remember the band room and its strong smell of wood from the instruments, and the office of the orchestra's librarian Jim Wedge (weird how I remembered his name!), piled right up to the ceiling with sheet music. I also attach enlarged images of Rudolf Schwarz and my father respectively.

As a teenager in the 1960s I went to quite a few pop concerts, featuring (amongst others) the Rolling Stones and Peter and Gordon (1964), Manfred Mann, the Barron Knights and the Spencer Davis group. At the Rolling Stones gig I saw my first real Mods, ultra-smart, sporting Crombie overcoats and walking sticks. The tickets were 4/6d for seats 'behind the orchestra' - the cheapest available. My school friend Helen - who knew Peter Asher of Peter and Gordon - managed to get my ticket autographed by the Rolling Stones (including Brian Jones). I sold it years later for £250.

In 1966 I attended an 'American Folk-Blues' extravaganza featuring Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Big Joe Williams and Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

Decades later, I've been back to the Town Hall to see the Afro Celt Sound System and Seckou Keita with Catrin Finch, as well as attending a KEHS (King Edward VI High School for Girls) 140th Anniversary Celebration.

I feel like Birmingham Town Hall is part of my personal history.