

## **Rusty Players of Oundle Tour Log**

**This is the log of Captain Hawkins, First Officer of Percussion Deck  
aboard the Rusty Bus bound for Chinon, France**

**Star Date 27th May 2016**

**1.17pm**

Today we embark on the inaugural tour of the Rusty Players of Oundle. Our mission is to try to get to and from France in one piece without getting lost, losing an instrument or breaking anything. Of course due to the nature of an expedition like this, anything can happen and probably will.

I have been picked up by my fellow crew members Kate (a viola player, bless) and Clare (flute) we load the Timpani and luggage into her van. Kate despite her sins as a viola player is also a professional percussionist and understands the delicate nature of specialist transportation and the necessity of always being early and generally last to leave the building, any building, most often the pub.

Scotty, otherwise known as Dawn, (it's a long story) broke the Tele-transporter so we had to resort to 21st century methods. As Doctor Joh commented "we are back in the dark ages" and as Captain on this mission I agree with her.

The day is set fair, and the intrepid travellers are gathered in the car park of the designated departure area. There has only been one near miss so far as a car reversed out of its space perilously close to the snare drums, we've only been here 15 minutes!

The bus arrives and we load everything (honestly I could kill Scotty for the carnage caused to the Tele-transporter) it would have been so much easier for getting us down to France. "Starship Enterprise" did it with whales before, quite a few years ago now and technology has improved so much these days. However the blooming thing is broken and it will take three weeks to fix.

**2.48pm**

We are led on this important mission by Admiral Davy, his personal staff and dedicated committee of higher level brass (literally the Brass Section).

The Ruffians are here too, a small select ninja bodyguard force masquerading as an early music recorder consort. The recorders double as Nunchucks a particularly lethal weapon in the wrong hands. It was during our final exercise that it all went wrong for Scotty...I have never seen a tambour (which doubles as the disc thing with spikes; Shuriken or Ninja Star) fly so fast, that's what did for the Tele-porter - sliced it clean in two!

Nevertheless, we are all on board and mercifully in one piece. We are ready and we are early, it's going to be good!

**Dover.**

The feeling of excitement is palpable, there is a frisson of anticipation sparkling through the rusty bus, its quite nice going vintage for a change; so much easier looking at the scenery, its quite difficult actually when travelling a warp 6, just a bit too blurry.

We have been through passport control and nobody was searched or refused entry and are all back on the coach ready for the off. Tele-transportation would have dealt with all that, hay ho.

However, we are not kept waiting long and are almost on the boat but then we find out we are actually on the way to Dunkirk, not Calais and it's not a joke!

The setting sun is a big red lollipop of colour gently drifting towards its close of business for the day, the sea a gentle giant of silvery blue to guide us safely forward. So what if it's a different port, it's still in the general direction of where we want to go, isn't it?

### **Hmm there seems to be a problem Huston...**

We are now an hour and a half over schedule and arrive at 1am. Blundering into our hotel rooms; I am sharing with illustrious Leader Officer in Charge Number 2, Jane. Douglas the actual Leader of the Orchestra has been sent out on reconnaissance, so hopefully he will turn up later. Jane and I bag a bed each. I begin to mumble incoherently as I can't get the iPad socket charger into the socket and realise I have left the correct lead at home so I can't charge the blooming thing!

### **Elves and Safety**

Our poor drivers need their mandatory breaks, this was not taken into account as we were originally just going to beam up... (not saying anything but Scotty, I'll get you yet) so we are going to be pushed for time later as it means we can't get an early start in the morning. But there is a silver lining. We get a lie in.

### **Star Date 28th May 2016**

I can't tell you the exact time because apparently in this universe the clocks change around and I am now confused.

### **Bravely going where no Rusty Player has gone before.**

I wake to realise my incoherent ramblings last night, were the ravings of a woman on the brink...trying to put the socket into the earpiece of an iPad is never going to work, no matter how hard you try and the lead fitted quite neatly into the correct place without any trouble this morning. It's amazing what a few hours kip can do. Did I mention Scotty had also broken the communicator devices so we have to use the antiquated iPads and mobile phones, can you believe it mobile phones! I tell you we're doomed.

Jane and I (as leaders we have to put our lives on the line sometimes) venture into the unknown and go for an exploratory walk and we find the Hypermarket. Twenty minutes later after exploring the wonderful array of delicious cheeses, fruits and biscuits (necessary rations you understand) we face our first test.

### **Guides on using the self service checkout in France.**

1. Double check your level of ability to understand instructions in French. (It is almost as difficult as Klingon.)
2. Know how to ask for assistance.
3. Leave with as much dignity as you can muster.

We managed to scan everything however there seemed to be an instruction missing to pay with Euros. We had found the only, card only, self service machine in the aisle.

Back at the hotel a delicious breakfast is consumed and we bask in the morning sun waiting for day two of our intrepid tour. We are behind schedule already...

24 hours after our journey began we are at an unknown service station somewhere in Normandy stretching our legs and munching on delicacies purchased from Paul, the French patisserie chain funny enough, that's in London. A hot salmon and spinach quiche is a welcome repast, and the fragrant smells of lunch on the move are wafting round the battle bus.

Chinon is finally reached and the Loire Valley is beautiful. We are however alarmingly close to the nuclear power station.

Checked in and installed in our comfy rooms we change quickly and have dinner. Time is now perilously short and we leave for the concert.

### **Let the games commence.**

Chinon is a lovely typical French town, traditional layout with many lovely little, cobbled streets and narrow roads. Hold that thought.

The French will park their cars in the most interesting of places...unfortunate for a coach full of instruments that need to get up a hillside with 50 odd musicians and the equipment needed to make music.

We begin to consider alternative routes that don't involve large trees and a coach reversing in the town square to the amusement of the locals. However there is only one way, and that involves emptying the coach and ferrying the instruments (remember the Timps?) half a mile, up the hill. A whole new concept for an orchestra on tour.

We are late, very late and scramble on to the very elevated stage as the bemused audience get to grips with the new performance art from the galaxy known as England (staging a full orchestra in under 10 minutes). There is another complication, the wind has picked up and our unexpected outdoor venue causes issues of its own.

Amid the chaos of a squashed kitchen sink department, the Ruff Recorders (the frazzled ninja bodyguard dressed in camouflage, as musicians) and the Rusty Strings; with their music blowing gently up and away from their music stands the audience give us rousing applause.

Have you ever tried to play a bass recorder at an odd angle whilst looking for your leader who is in front and shielding the other players who are behind and can't be seen? Don't, it will not end well. It didn't even start well. However I did remember my French for "I'm sorry, it's a catastrophe". I am grateful it was that word and not the other far shorter word I remembered.

The ninjas lead for this mission by Doctor Ros and joined by First Sound Engineer Sue, Vulcans Abi and Alison (always include Vulcans on a mission, they are steady and tend to be calm in tight situations and very logical) plus Scotty and Doctor Joh; with Scotty around it is always wise to have two doctors to hand. Somehow we got through our pieces, in one piece.

The gods on Mount Olympus must have stopped laughing at us (I think they needed a breather) and let us leave the venue with grace and even guided us towards a brilliant bar to recover. Prosecco, beer and cider flowed and the ice was well and truly broken and we knew the only way was up! Medicine indeed for the almost broken and weeping nervous wreck I am becoming.

However euphoria and relief mixed with Prosecco has further implications. Two wonderfully lost souls trekked 4 miles out of Chinon as they missed the bridge which we had all crossed seconds before. There are a lot of bridges in Chinon. Mind you they got lovely recordings of frogs singing in the moonlight - amphibians I hasten to add. Yes, one of them was Scotty.

### **Star Date 29th May 2016**

We don't have hangovers and we are not sure why, perhaps it's to do with the power station?

Anyway we bundle up our concert gear and are ready for the off to Fontevraud L'Abbaye, the resting place of the some pretty important Plantagenet's, apparently a dysfunctional ruling dynasty. A morning exploration commences and is followed by a superb lunch and we seem to dodge the rain. But not for long, and it's torrential. The coach is now steaming gently from our wet uniforms and we arrive with just enough time for an unhurried set up, change into the correct gear and a moment of calm to ease the nerves. It is at this point I should have checked the Timps.

The Ruffians and Rusty strings survive their respective sets without further incident and are rewarded with a delighted audience. Thanks to Doc Ros who calmed the audience with her gentle voice and authentic French when the recorders got a bit too close to the children in the front row. The RPO love a good audience, especially when they all get involved with the Radetzky March and clap and stomp along, we are beginning to enjoy ourselves and Admiral Davy is smiling.

Then comes the Firebird! A piece that requires a set of Timpani to function normally. I have a screw loose, in fact so loose the pedal lever to change notes is twisted out of recognition and I begin to sweat. I have stopped the orchestra, can feel the eyes in the back of 49 heads boring into me. However, Admiral Davy is looking very calm but has stopped smiling. I have a handful of screws and bolts in my hand with no clue on what to do with them.

Nodding and grinning with a thumbs up I indicate it is safe to continue. I'm sure it will work on just one timp? Meanwhile back on my hands and knees the gods from Olympus again decide to give me a break with 4 bars to go before my entry everything screws back, just, and on time. However I have traumatised Scotty and Doc Joh and between us we forgotten how to count! Just a tad tricky, but I don't think anyone noticed...

We finish with a flourish and the audience give us a standing ovation, a collection which we find out later pays for our wine tasting and a warm fuzzy glow settles over us as we leave the venue all very relieved and ready for a very large drink!

And we do get a large drink and eat more delicacies that will put us all on a diet next week.

Far too excited to go to bed we descend on the hotel lounge and settle down for a nightcap and an exhausted crawl up to bed.

### **Star Date 30th May 2016**

Home time, we are on our way again, bills paid, luggage loaded and alcoholic beverages safely stored. But again time is tight, a knock on effect from the Dunkirk detour and the broken Tele-transporter, we miss the ferry by 3 minutes due to the passport control. No matter we are on the next one and the gale seems to be subsiding...a bit.

Going on deck is exhilarating, and possibly beneficial as a muscle relaxant. The wind and gusty rain is so strong our faces are forced into rictus grins and the muscles are only relaxed on coming

inside to the tranquility of the lounge. Although the concept of tranquility is lost on the rugby club with a passion for the Blues Brothers and a pink guitar.

Doc Joh is lying down with a nice cup of tea, Scotty is experimenting with silly walks as we try and stand upright and negotiate the onboard shop and I hit the brandy. Honestly I have never had one before, but it was a little rocky and my head started to spin (not in a Carrie kind of way) but my equilibrium was definitely sent off balance by the not so gentle rocking motion! Doc Joh is now snoozing gently and is oblivious to the raging seas and lashing rain and Scotty and I brave the decks outside. Actually Scotty is an absolute brick of a gal, a vital link on the percussion deck, along with Glock specialist Doc Joh, armed with big sticks and beaters we hold our own! Oh look, land ahoy!

**Dover.** Everything has stopped spinning and we gently glide into dock as though on a calm millpond. I haven't tried walking yet on steady land but I think the brandy has done the trick.

### **Mission Conclusion**

It has been a blast, we are on the coach home now, its dark and we have all really had a great time. Douglas had forgotten the code to release the Klingon Clocking Device on his ship which he had parked in Chinon, so had to hitch a ride on the coach with us. Tired but happy, we have all had the chance to mix with each other and to actually get to know those from out of our own sections. I know the percussion crew of the Rusty Bus have had a brilliant time and so have the Ruffians (or the recorder ninjas). We have also learnt that when crew percussion Third Officer Doc nods it's not a nervous tick but an indication that it's a cue to come in. Second Officer Scotty is now of a very nervous disposition and needs a holiday. Team Timp would have been lost without the Sherpas, I am indebted to you all (the bar bill is going to be large for a very long time)! I think we completed this mission successfully, but I might need to lie low for a little while just in case I get court marshalled for the timpani debacle!

Live long and prosper!

**Captain Hawkins, First Officer Percussion Deck, Rusty Bus Fleet, Star Date 30th May 2016**

**Log closed 11.58pm**

Dedicated to my dear friends and Ruffians. Joining the RPO was one of the best things I ever did!