GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

# Hilary Tunstall-Behrens

**Aberdovey, 1942**

*Recognised for his commitment to youth education, furthering the Outward Bound movement and establishing one of the world's most respected classical music seminars.*

Hilary Tunstall-Behrens was born in 1927, into a family instrumental in Gordonstoun's early history. His father, Brian, taught horse riding and woodwork at school and Hilary was educated here from 1937, where he sailed on the first training vessel which his father had helped to restore. Also a keen musician, he met the first of two hugely inspirational teachers at Gordonstoun - Frau Susanne Lachmann, a professional violinist and a German-Jewish refugee.

When the school relocated to Plas Dinam during the war, Hilary took part in more seamanship activities, through the inaugural Aberdovey Sea School courses which later became the first Outward Bound Sea School in 1942. These two passions - seamanship and music - ignited during his school years, set the pattern for the rest of his life.

After school, Hilary studied PPE at Oxford University, interrupted by a stint as a Naval Reserve, which he spent minesweeping in Mediterranean waters. On graduating, he became involved in sail training once more, teaching and accompanying cadets on two German four-masted Barques. From here, he moved to Cameroon where he lived for five years, setting up the Man O' War Bay Training Centre which closely followed the principles of British Outward Bound schools.

It was the 1960s before Hilary's music came to the fore once more. Now living and teaching in London, his wide circle of connections in the classical music world led him to a course in Portugal run by the virtuoso violinist Sándor Végh. On hearing him play, Végh took him on as a student, becoming the second strong influence in his musical career.

In 1971, he invited Végh to perform at a festival in Truro Cathedral, and took him to visit his family home in Prussia Cove. Végh was captivated by its wild and remote coastal location, feeling it would provide an inspirational venue for international music seminars. The pair created the International Musicians Seminar (IMS), launching the first seminar in 1972 to provide young, professional players with opportunities to broaden their horizons and make contacts among other players. IMS Prussia Cove is now globally recognised in the world of classical music and remained a driving force throughout Hilary's later life until his death aged 97 in 2024.

Hilary was married for almost 40 years to film producer Tatiana Kennedy, with whom he shared three children. After teaching at Salem and remaining a deep authority on the Hahnian system of education throughout his life, Tatiana recalls his absolute devotion to supporting young people.

**He lived his life with the firm belief that there is always more in you.**

The Gordonstoun motto never really left him, and his passion for youth education came from his conviction that there was a physical element to education, as well as intellectual. He always remained very close to Kurt Hahn and I think his principles resonated with Hilary throughout his own life. He was quite an unconventional father, but very hands on and full of adventure - he believed in being fit, having knowledge of the world around him and always doing one's best.

**The concept of community service was very important to him.**

Another idea he took from his education at Gordonstoun which remained a part of everything he did. After he died, I found a parcel of hugely touching letters from Nigerian men he had trained in Cameroon, telling him just how much the Outward Bound courses had changed their lives. Even here in Cornwall, the IMS has always been about providing opportunities that he felt were lacking for people - both for the musicians themselves and the local community, for whom we put on concerts to share music from established and emerging talent in the classical world.

**Music and the sea were threaded through his life in every way.**

Hilary was a keen lover of Scottish reels, who enjoyed playing ceilidhs and always relished a glass of good Scotch whisky. Similarly, he adored sea shanties and some of my most precious memories are of evenings in Greenwich with folk musician Stan Hugill, where they would sing the whole night long. He just loved his home in Cornwall, and right until the end he remained full of enthusiasm for madcap adventures on the sea or the hills. This was something quite extraordinary about him - he had no concept of age, and with his great physical health and youthful attitude, he was able to connect with young people throughout his life, finding in this endless inspiration and reward.