

Andy Findon

Born London 1956

Flute, sax, clarinet, penny whistle, recorder.

Classical musician + prog rock. Now gives masterclasses and acts as a consultant.

Father was in fashion business and semi- professional sax player who played with Joe Loss, at society balls and functions.

Left Royal College of Music 1976. He had already got depping work on *No No Nanette* at Drury Lane Theatre through a fixer friend of his father's. He was told to 'watch the show', so went to the box office and bought a ticket and sat in the audience - what he was supposed to do was sit beside the person he was depping for, before taking over. Others still make that mistake.

Career high points: playing for the NHS section of the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012; backing Stevie Wonder at Albert Hall and playing with Tony Bennett. Also played at the openings of several Lloyd Webber shows including *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Archer Street was before his time - killed off by the answering machine. He used to go to the Marquess of Anglesey off Drury Lane to hear about work, and musicians would tip theatre doormen who would take messages for them. Often first fiddle would put the band together and act as the fixer.

Andy put together a portfolio career: classical, West End musicals, sessions work and weekend functions. For a while played at three different Pontins holiday camps midweek which filled in the gaps.

"I had to marry a musician". His wife is a trumpet player who worked with the all-female Ivy Benson band.

Pay day was Thursday - in cash. Fixers would appear with brown envelopes to pay musicians in cash. There were Thursday night muggings of people walking around with instrument cases.

In early days West End was dodgy. Ladies (of the night) would ask to walk into posh Park Lane hotels on the arm of a musician, as they wouldn't be allowed in alone.

Lots of drinking, theatre work was very repetitive. Musicians working at the National Theatre would amuse themselves by having a competition to see who could go the furthest for an interval drink and get back in time - with a receipt to prove it.

Doesn't go to pub after gigs any more.

Now: in a medieval prog rock band, Gryphon. They organise their own gigs - off to Miami to join a cruise, and recording Beethoven Symphonies.

Musicians were upset at poor treatment at certain venues including Piccadilly Hotel and Café de Paris - for example, musicians were not allowed to walk in through the front door carrying an instrument case. Musicians Union stepped in and negotiated, so musicians would be allowed in through the front door as long as they were smartly dressed in their bow ties etc.

Started recording at home during Covid lockdown - now, post lockdown, over half his recordings are done at home.

These days, doing rather well recording his 6-year-old grandson singing nursery rhymes.