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VOLUNTARY MUSIC

Concert Promoters' Committee **NEWSLETTER** Winter 2007

IN THIS EDITION

- Lewis Orchard reports on his analysis of the Education Questionnaire sent out in autumn
- More comments from Sue Hudson's analysis of members brochures
- We present two more case studies from the Promoting Societies' Development Project
- Paul Evans gives a profile of *Bromsgrove Concerts*
(Please send your own society profile in 600 words to b.ranby@makingmusic.org.uk)

RECENT EDUCATIONAL WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

50 questionnaires were received representing 13% of promoting membership, including some from festival or dedicated youth music organisations. Replies covered a wide spread from Scotland to Cornwall and Wales to East Anglia.

A majority of 29 said that they engaged in educational work annually, 17 occasionally and 12 rarely. 5 respondents never did (*perhaps others did not fill in the questionnaire?* - Ed).

There was a large variation in the number of events run over the last 5 years by promoters from 1 to 160; the larger numbers being for dedicated organisations of festivals. Omitting the four organisations promoting more than 10 over the 5 year period the average was 5 (i.e. 1 per year).

32 promoters ran events on their own and just 15 with help from 'other sources'. 7 had had help from Making Music.

A clear majority of 44 were educational workshops by professional musicians with 19 composition / performance events for pupils 10, teach-ins relating to a concert and 2 societies gave talks. Some ran more than one type of event.

In 39 cases the events organised by promoters took place at schools/colleges, almost equally split between primary and secondary, with promoters covering both. Only 5 events were at tertiary level and 6 at other levels. 24 took place at the society's normal venue.

The main lasting benefit from educational events was an ongoing liaison with the school / college noted by 29 respondents. 19 indicated increased recognition by the local media and / or community, and 12 reported increased attendance at their concerts.

The average cost to the promoter was split between 20 in the £100-£500 category and 15 over £500. A further 10

What type of artist do you use?

Sue Hudson, CPC Treasurer, analysed the 750 concerts in the 111 brochures you sent in for the season 2004-05. These showed that on average, societies held between 6 and 7 concerts per season.

The committee was interested to know the type of artist used to help with our choices for the CPN brochure.

The answer was, in rounded %:

String quartet, 5et or 6et	19
Mixed Ensemble	19
Pianist or Piano Duo	18
Solo string	10
Vocal solo, ensemble, choir	10
Wind, solo or 5et	9
Piano Trio or 4et	7
Brass solo, ensemble, band	4
Baroque	3
Jazz	1
World Music	0
Ethnic	0

In addition, the Indian Classical Music Society promoted 2 events and there were 11 education / family workshops.

Please keep sending your brochures when requested.

respondents gave the cost as below £100. Financial support was provided by:

- Other sources' - 22
- Making Music - 10
- LEAs and Local Government - 8 & 7 respt.

'Encouragement' was fairly evenly spread - 12 from 'other sources', 10 from Making Music and 6 each for LEAs and Local Government.

11 promoters had found it necessary to have CRB clearance compared with 29 who did not. (4 found this straightforward, 3 difficult).

24 promoters said that it was essential to involve the head of the school/college and 33 that it was necessary to involve particular members of staff; some advised both!

Commentary

Many respondents were intending to continue their efforts in educational work. Some promoters referred to difficulties with finance and/or insufficient society effort available, which restricted or prevented running such events. Among supporting organisations mentioned as helpful were Enterprise Music Scotland and Cavatina, both of which assisted more than one of our promoting societies.

A wide variety of events were listed from full scale festivals to composition classes and workshops at schools often including performance by pupils either at a special concert or within a promoter's concert by professional musicians. Most of these events took place at a school or college but there were a fair number at the promoter's normal venue. A popular combination was a workshop given by professional musicians at a school followed by attendance of the pupils at the promoter's concert given by those artists, which sometimes included a performance by the pupils. The age ranges of those attending such events related closely to primary and secondary school grades. Some promoters had targeted disadvantaged children.

Encouragingly, a majority of 26 respondents said that their events fitted within the school activity. Workshops were held at various

times - morning, lunchtime, afternoon, after end of teaching. 14 respondents said that their events had been an extra-mural school activity; 3 had no direct school involvement.

Question 7 asked whether any benefit accrued to promoters from running educational events. The largest number, 29, said the main or only benefit was in schools liaison and/or increased local recognition. Although 12 claimed increased attendance at their concerts, there was much comment to the effect that such events should be regarded as something that the promoter wished to do for its own sake, or perhaps for PR. Generally, no sustained benefit in concert attendance had occurred. Typical comments were:

- 'a small increase when workshop was before main concert, otherwise none
- workshops are warmly welcomed by the children but so far no child has yet come to a subsequent concert (*look ahead!* - Ed)
- despite considerable publicity and interest at the time there was no discernible long term effect on our society
- we feel they are very worthwhile, even without seeing any tangible benefit'.

'there's nothing like working with young people - take the opportunity'

The final question on advice to those promoters considering involvement in educational work elicited much comment ranging from the enthusiastic to the

cautionary. For example:

- 'junior schools are usually grateful
- aim at primary schools
- use recommended musicians who can work with children
- try to get local music advisors and parents involved
- obtain complete commitment by staff at school for the venture
- be very clear about your purpose and who is to gain most
- be certain you love the job
- be prepared to lose the money
- one person with dedication, enthusiasm and organisational ability is essential'.

Lewis Orchard

The Full Experience - Case Studies from the Promoting Societies' Development Project

Studies show that customers are tending toward "experiential" events - their time is crucial, and they spend it based on the overall experience they will receive as a result.

What experience can you offer? This doesn't have to be about the performance alone or about extra costs. Pre-concert events, friendly faces, comfortable surroundings, participatory opportunities all contribute to the overall event. This can help provide an informal introduction to a performance as well as allowing the audience to meet with the artists.

Hexham & District Music Society

Hexham & District Music Society had booked saxophonist John Barker to perform in January 2005. Concerns were raised that as a young performer, he was not known to regular members, and that the use of saxophone would have a mixed appeal in a classical setting.

John Barker was contacted with the suggestion that he present a pre-concert talk on the history of the saxophone, discussing its mixed heritage from marching bands through the classical, jazz and other musical genres. It was hoped that such a discussion might prove an interesting "ice-breaker" for potential audience members. The talk was free, with a complimentary glass of wine offered to entice attendees.

In addition, a new flyer was designed based on the idea of simplicity - 3 colours, as little text as possible and visually catching. By coincidence, John and accompanist Timothy Sidford had recently produced an impressive range of publicity photographs.

The concert drew an audience of 130, of which 25% were first-time attendees.

CPN Artists 2008-2009

The Concert Promoters' Committee meets in February to select the artists for the next brochure. We hope to have the simple list on our web site towards the end of February or early March, as soon as it is confirmed.

www.makingmusic.org.uk/cpc

Woking Concert Society

Woking Concert Society promoted a concert in May 2005 devoted to music written by women composers, both past and present. It was envisaged that this would be organised in co-operation with and support from local women's groups such as the Women's Institute and Mother's Union.

The Society was highly proactive in identifying their desires for the project process. Contacts were obtained for the Women's' Institute and Mothers' Union through web-based research and initial contact was made with the Surrey WI in early December 2004. A pre-concert speaker was identified by contacting the Royal Academy of Music to discuss the project. PhD student Briony Williams was specializing in women composers for her studies and was approached to give a presentation relating her studies to the event.

A designer was contacted to produce a range of flyer designs for the Society to choose from. In addition it was decided to offer a free interval drink as an incentive to potential audiences. All 500 flyers were posted throughout the locality. A web-advert was posted on the Making Music national site, and the Surrey WI posted a number of flyers to their membership (for a fee).

- The flyer presented new challenges in presentation for potential audiences, emphasising visual information.
- Contact with the Women's Institute and Mothers' Union was a first-step toward a potentially like-minded audience.
- Initial expectations proved rather optimistic and contacts will clearly need to be followed up further.

Promoter's Profile: Bromsgrove Concerts

Bromsgrove is a market town of about 90,000 people 12 miles south of Birmingham.

Bromsgrove Concerts was founded in 1963, at the command of the then Headmaster of Bromsgrove School, Lionel Carey, by Jim Page, then a very junior English master at the school. From small beginnings the society has grown and now enjoys a reputation for warmth, friendliness and a willingness to embrace contemporary music that few other Midlands' societies can match.

Our season is generally eleven concerts, four of which will be contemporary music, the other seven more 'mainstream' classical music. There is some overlap as either series may include works we have commissioned. We try to achieve a balanced mix of music in our mainstream concerts, aiming to include early music, song recitals, solo piano and chamber ensembles. We have a single programme book for our mainstream season, which gives us the opportunity to sell space to advertisers, helping defray the cost. This occasionally gives rise to problems, as it is not unknown for artists and programmes to change after we have published the book!

Over the years we have also promoted themed weekends, in particular a Shostakovich weekend in 1992, Jánacek and the Czech String Quartet tradition in 1994, Housman's A Shropshire Lad in 1996, Beethoven's Quartets in 1998 and most recently a Bartok weekend in 2004. These have attracted music lovers from all over the country, which is most gratifying!

A new arts centre, called *artrix*, was built in the town 2 years ago and we have moved both the mainstream and the contemporary concerts to this venue. As a purpose built theatre seating about 300 it is a huge improvement over our previous homes.

The overall management of the society is by a Committee of ten, with sub-groups

responsible for programme planning, fundraising and publicity/marketing.

At each concert we sell CDs, both of the artists at that particular concert and a more general range. We also sell other musical miscellany and pots of lemon curd and chutney! All these contribute to our funds and add a little interest for our audience.

We have experienced a substantial decline in our subscriber base over the last few years, with numbers falling from about 120 to about 80. This continues to be of some concern to us, but has been compensated in part by more single ticket sales. Clearly people are more inclined to 'cherry-pick' the concerts they attend. Audience numbers for mainstream concerts are on average about 110, with lows of about 80 and highs of about 150. The contemporary concerts have usually between 40 and 80 in attendance.

We receive generous grants and funding from a variety of charitable trusts, but our primary source of funding is Arts Council England, West Midlands. We continue to seek sponsorship or support of individual concerts, from the local businesses, but this does not make a large contribution. We also try to get businesses to sponsor things like the cost of our programme book and decorations to 'brighten up' the stage.

We like to commission new works, and since 1994 we have had 19 such works performed for us. We have also had works specially written for Bromsgrove Concerts and heard numerous 'first performances'.

We try to use our artists to deliver workshops in local schools, but this is not always easy to achieve and it is an area we wish to develop further. Once again, funding can be obtained for this.

Paul Evans, Chairman

www.bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk

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