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CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC

Concert Promoters' Committee **NEWSLETTER** Winter 2008

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(Please send your own society profile in 600 words to b.ranby@makingmusic.org.uk)

PROMOTERS' MEETINGS

Regular meetings of promoters take place in at least three different parts of the country and have done so for many years. This edition describes the different formats of these meetings and hopefully may stimulate others to following similarly. The benefits are self evident and much can be achieved with a little effort by an organising group.

West Midlands Music Societies Meetings

For many years now music societies in the West Midland Region have been meeting twice a year (mid April and mid October), to discuss the state of chamber music promotion, share knowledge and common problems, and generally make each other aware that there is plenty of support from neighbouring societies.

Meetings start with a report from every society represented and the informality of the occasions enables discussion to arise out of these. There may be a guest speaker but generally there are plenty of topics to fill the two hours allotted. At a recent meeting discussion on the group name for Music Societies arose and Making Music's Board decision some years ago that the term "Concert Promoters" should be used for group identity was questioned. A devil's advocate suggested that choral societies were also promoters and very reasonably argued that every concert they give they promote themselves! The argument will no doubt always continue but within music societies themselves there has been the feeling for some time that the term "Music Society" discourages the "general public" from dropping in for just one concert and is too exclusive. Others are worried that "Music Club" is even more exclusive and it has been interesting to see how the names have changed over the years, with titles like "Music at Evesham", "Local and Live" and "Chamber Music Now" being used alongside the official title of the society.

The group has been quite innovative over the years, and it was way back in 1992 that the idea of co-operation between the region's music societies first came to fruition and *Chamber*

Welcome New Members:

Carmarthen Arts
Oxjam Brighton 2007
UnifemUK - Wales Branch
Helensburgh Music Society
Midlands Early Music Forum

New awards Administrator

Following the appeal for volunteers in the last CPC Newsletter, it is good to report that Glynne Stackhouse has taken on the role of Awards Administrator for the Philip & Dorothy Green Awards for Young Concert Artists scheme.

Glynne read music at Oxford and was subsequently Head of the Music Department at the British Council. He is now organist at the Chapel of St Bartholomew, Goring Heath and Secretary and Artistic Director of Music at St Peter's, Wallingford.

But there are still **vacancies** looming for publishing the CPN brochure and chairing the Committee. Mike Alexander and Berkeley Ranby both retire from the Committee this summer, so it is essential that we find their replacements if the Concert Promoters' Network brochure is to continue its valuable work. See contact information on p4 and the current CPN brochure.

Music Choice was born. This is a straightforward chronological list of concerts in the region with the artists as the main heading and full details of the programme given. The first issue advertised 58 concerts and this year's issue has 196 - and what is more the cost of entering a concert into the booklet (£15.00 for MM members, £20 for others) has not increased in those 16 years! There was a period when the VAT man said that the tax had to be charged (something which Central Office shamefully agreed with!) but this was scotched when it was discovered that the supply of advertising to a charity was zero rated - VAT Notice 701/1 Section 6. Entry is not confined to members of Making Music as it is felt that the wider

exposure obtained from organisations like the CBSO and Ex Cathedra listing their chamber concerts is all gain.

It was also the initiative of the Music Societies sub-committee that led to the purchase in 1995, with the aid of generous grants from The Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Lottery, of the Model B Steinway which the region owns and hires out to classical music organisations. This scheme has been very successful and enabled many societies to include a piano in their programme at minimum cost.

Jim Page

North East + Yorkshire Tours Planning

Over the last 40 plus years, the committees of the Northern and Yorkshire regions and, before them, their Regional Arts Associations, have organised annual meetings. These have been aimed to encourage group co-operation in arranging tours by musicians and ensembles that bring mutual benefits to the societies, in lower fees and travel expenses and to the performers, in reduced travel, reductions in rehearsal times, and co-ordinated concerts.

These we have done by means of an annual planning conference in a mutually central, and well served for travel, venue, latterly on or near the regional borders at Scotch Corner or Darlington. With delegates travelling long distances (from Carlisle, Hull, Grimsby, Alnwick we have always arranged a full day (10.30-3.30) meeting, and a partly subsidised (by the two regional committees) morning coffee and lunch buffet for those attending.

Clubs attending indulge in a brief '*bouquets and brickbats*' session - the best, and worst of their previous season, discuss artists in which *they* have previously shown an individual interest through earlier direct mailing, with a view to drawing up a working list for the conference. At this stage 'interest' can be either a firm booking already made, a firm intent or just a possibility of booking. This is collated into a working list of artists for discussion and circulated to all societies in advance of the meeting.

At the meeting the list is worked through, and tours and expressions of interest are noted in the morning session; discussion and negotiation takes place during lunch with the afternoon session firming up tours and single bookings. These the coordinator draws up into a list, advising agents of tours of three or more dates so they can follow up quickly with the promoter concerned.

This list is then sent to all MM promoters in NE/Yorks and Cumbria so that further action can be taken by anyone wishing to link with a tour or join with an individual promoter. The lists are also forwarded to a few local non MM promoters and for consideration by *MM North West, and Enterprise Music Scotland's own Planning Conferences* a few days later.

Over the years, Tours Planning has collectively saved promoters thousands of pounds in fees and expenses, raised the quality of music and reduced the need for larger grants. It is surely now imperative that all regions of Making Music at least test the market for tour coordination - there's always something to be saved - and beat the dead hand of Central Government and the Arts Council's antipathy to the Arts.

Dave Robson

North West Classical Music Tours (Preston)

North West Arts Association used to run a chamber music touring scheme but about 20 years ago they 'privatised' this and passed on the scheme, with its subsidy, to the MM NW Committee. There have been changes over the years but in recent years about 35 - 40 concerts each season have resulted.

Ultimately, with the centralisation of ACE funding the scheme has ceased. However, the NW RDO is trying to find funding so that it can continue, so it is worth describing how it operates.

The basic idea is that societies make suggestions or recommendations of whom they would like to appear in an informal brochure and a small group narrows this down to about 17 - 20 artists. An administrator then approaches the artists and obtains background information and fee details for a single booking and successively reduced fees for three, four and five bookings. The brochure is produced and circulated to North West promoting societies in August.

Societies then submit bids for who and when they would like to engage particular artists and in the first week of November a planning meeting is held when this information is displayed. All the artists are discussed and a certain amount of re-arrangement can take place so that for example a particular quartet obtains three bookings and a reduced fee rather than three different quartets being engaged at the single concert fee. Promoters then contact the agent and arrange their own events.

The grant has paid for the administration and production of the brochure plus a subsidy of 20% of the artists' fee. For a three year period ACE also provided money for development grants and piano subsidies, which was administered by the same subcommittee.

The annual planning meeting also provides a excellent forum for an exchange of information about the highs and lows of previous seasons and a general discussion of matters relating to chamber music societies.

Berkeley Ranby

Agent's Column: Brenda Bradley

eXalt Entertainment Group was founded in 2005 in response to the need for combined musical advocacy and business representation. While on the Board of Directors for the Jazz Network Foundation, I was acquainted with the urgency of preserving the art form and gained experience presenting internationally renowned jazz artists, such as Mulgrew Miller. As a fan, I developed a genuine passion and devotion for the brilliance and uniquely uplifting nature of jazz.

Another aspect of my progressive involvement was performing as a jazz vocalist at events like the Ford Detroit International Jazz Festival. Aside from my musical interests, I also had a well developed corporate business background.

I highly respect the technical aspects of the music, but at least equally, revere the triumphant spirit that arose from themes of West African art and culture and bloomed via U.S. descendants. It is with pride and joy that I offer an array of gifted jazz professionals ranging in influences and style.

Winard Harper, internationally renowned jazz drummer and bandleader, and co-founder of the acclaimed Harper Brothers has led his own vibrant sextet for over a decade. His talent was recognized early and honed by artists such as Dexter Gordon, Betty Carter, and Dr. Billy Taylor. Marcus Belgrave, trumpet officianado, educator, performer and former member of the Ray Charles band, is acknowledged by contemporary jazz lions, such as Geri Allen, Regina Carter and James Carter, as mentor. New Orleans' native daughter, composer and pianist, Courtney Bryan has been granted the prestigious DMA Composition Faculty Fellowship at Columbia University. Her works have been commissioned by major institutions. She has shared the stage with greats, including Curtis Fuller and Gerald Wilson. Theo Croker, grandson of the legendary bandleader Doc Cheatham has blazed paths uniquely his own with his internationally acclaimed first release, *The Fundamentals*. His performance credits include New York's Rubin Museum, the JVC Jazz Festival, Windsor Jazz Festival and Aspen Snow Festival, having shared the stage with artists such as Louis Hayes, Clark Terry and Frank Wess.

www.exaltjazz.com

Promoter's Profile: Leamington Music

For many years, Warwick Arts Society was a rather odd and rather large member of Making Music. At its zenith half a dozen years ago, it was putting on over 200 events a year - three festivals, three concert series and an enterprising education programme. Its downfall was not necessarily caused by - but was actually not ultimately helped by -, winning back £100,000 of VAT following the fall-out of the famous Customs & Excise v London Zoo case. This certainly lulled its Board and staff of six into a false sense of security.

The insurance arrangements were always a trump card with the Treasurer, but it was the contribution on the chamber music front that had brought the Society firmly into the Making Music camp. When it was announced that Warwick Arts Society would cease trading at the end of 2005, an enormous, black musical hole loomed in South Warwickshire. This was avoided with the setting up of Warwick Music Live, which continues to provide a token amount of what the Society had offered and then, as a result of unhappy tensions between generations, Leamington Music was created.

A new committee and new organisation, originally set up to ensure the continuation of the annual winter series of string quartet concerts in Leamington, decided to go ahead at a meeting in July 2006 and the new season opened at the beginning of October. A year later, having become a registered charity early in 2007, Leamington Music could boast of having put on over 30 concerts in the area and started an education programme.

Now some months into its second season, an even bigger number of events will be promoted. In the winter this includes the monthly string quartet series on Fridays, Music in the Round on Sunday afternoons plus a number of special one-offs. In May and June 2008 there are plans for a Leamington Czech

Music Festival Weekend and a Warwick Bach Weekend, plus some excursions into local village churches.

How was it possible for Leamington Music to mount a first season with a turn-over of more than £85,000, with only half of the income derived from the box office? It is primarily due to the loyalty factor built up over twenty five years to Warwick Arts Society by a very dedicated core audience of enthusiasts for chamber music. This resulted in fifteen individuals giving donations ranging from £250 to £1800 towards specific concerts, added to which, significant monies from trusts & crucial local authority support, since it was realised just how valuable to the music provision in the area, Leamington Music could be.

Of course it was valuable for Leamington Music to have the couple who had made Warwick Arts Society the force it had been around, bringing an administrative machine and data-base to the table, but this would not have happened without grass-roots support. Early 2007 saw the launch of The Friends of Leamington Music and over 250 people joined and helped to raise many thousands of pounds.

Originally this article was supposed to be about lessons that might be learnt by Making Music promoters for their own organisations. It was very difficult to write because trying to run a small chamber music club putting on five or six concerts each winter is obviously much more challenging when it comes to fund-raising than a larger organisation where the concept of festivals and bringing in bigger names is part of the scheme of things. However, if it is possible to do what Leamington Music has done, so quickly, it does surely show that a rather more ambitious approach might pay off, if some people with vision can inspire those Making Music committees.

Richard Philips

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Copy deadline for next issue: 15 March

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