



SUPPORTING &
CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY MUSIC

Concert Promoters' Committee **NEWSLETTER** Autumn 2007

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

CONCERT PROMOTERS' AGM

It was a pleasure to welcome representatives of 28 societies to the AGM (11 apologies). Sue Hudson retired as Treasurer by rotation. She has been replaced by Glynne Stackhouse. Peter Marchbank and Tomasa Sherwood were elected to the committee; Lewis Orchard has subsequently had to resign and Ken Griffin has been co-opted. We are very grateful for the contributions of our retiring members and the willingness of others to come forward.

The Chairman's report covered the calendar year 2006. The Committee has continued to monitor its work around a Three Year Development Plan, now in its third year.

Analysis of the Network for 2005-6 season showed over 140 bookings (91 previous season) and savings of £51,000 (£30,000 previous season). Ten artists had 6 or more bookings; two artists achieved 16 bookings and 25 out of the 28 artists received one or more booking. Over 80 societies used the scheme.

The Network brochure (2007-08) was again produced 'in-house' by Mike Alexander. The brochure was produced in full colour for the first time and in the new Making Music house style colours, hence cost more, but, as the advertising rates were increased, we still made a profit that covered the cost of production of the brochure and all the committee activities.

We held an extensive survey of the educational work carried out by members and published details of the results in the newsletter. Over 50 responses were analysed and showed that many societies found it to be a worthwhile activity although the direct benefits were rather intangible.

The web site www.makingmusic.org.uk/cpc has been extended to include copies of the newsletter and advance notice of artists for the brochure. Three editions of the newsletter were produced.

The committee continues to make a surplus on its activities.

VOLUNTARY MUSIC SECTOR?

We call ourselves the Voluntary Music Sectorand it just so happens that there are some wonderful opportunities to volunteer for at present!

LISTENERS

Enjoyable! - hear and report upon artists applying to be in our brochure. More information:

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NETWORK CO-ORDINATOR

Fascinating! - editor/publisher of Concert Promoters Network brochure. More information:

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CHAIRMAN

Absorbing! - Chairman of the Concert Promoters Committee retires by rotation next AGM.

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AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR

The Philip & Dorothy Green Awards Administrator at Central Office can essentially be **done from home**. More information:

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Manchester Conference Review

Is the traditional chamber concert format dying?

Concert promoters often have to take a back seat when it comes to the annual conference. So it was good to have the chamber music concert as one of the main themes this year. There are around 400 promoting club members of Making Music. They range from those struggling to survive to those in the enviable position of having a waiting list of potential members. One of the morning sessions, after the official welcome and AGM, focused on how to stop the traditional recital format from going into terminal decline. The only snag, of course, was that going to it inevitably meant missing the sessions on 'taking music into the community' running in parallel.

Each of the four panellists was allowed precisely ten minutes to present their case and they all had one thing in common. They all spoke passionately about the intimate art of chamber music.

First up was William Howard, pianist and founder of the Schubert Ensemble. He warned groups not to be persuaded by their funders to be 'all inclusive' and try to 'stretch themselves out of shape'. Yes, try to encourage young people into the concert hall, but don't worry if you seem to be attracting a disproportionate number of older people. After all, audiences have to go to the right concert for them, at the right time and in the right place.

David Pyett, chairman of the Ilkley Concert Club, told us he represented 'the dinosaur's view'. Over thirty years ago they decided that if they were in fact dying, they would 'go out with a bang and not a whimper' so promoted the idea that the club was a thriving and successful concern. And it worked. Twenty-five years ago, with a venue capacity of 476, they were able to put up a House Full notice 'Sold out on Subscriptions' and have never looked back. Not exactly the traditional 'dinosaur' image!

Judith Serota has run the Spitalfields Festival since 1988. She fell in love with chamber music when she attended the Manchester mid-day concerts as a student. Her message was never to stand still, but seek out new ways of

presenting music of all kinds - in local schools, hospitals - and always relate to your community. She also admitted that her pet hate was performers who wear tails.

Simon Webb, freelance arts administrator and a Clore Cultural Leadership Fellow, disagreed with her attitude to tails, but agreed that it was essential to evolve, never to be static. Find extra ways of giving value for money - offer free coffee in a church hall, present jazz in a bar, folk in a pub. Hold open rehearsals and even ask the rehearsal audience the best way of playing a particular phrase. Above all, be open-minded. Who are we to say that music of an unfamiliar genre is rubbish?

So, what was the conclusion? In the 'breakout' sessions which followed, the answer was that promoters felt they were definitely not a dying breed, but to survive in the present environment, when the choice of entertainment is wider than ever before, they have to evolve and above all to think positively.

In the afternoon, after the opportunity for 'networking' over lunch, I went to the concert promoters' AGM (as secretary my choice was somewhat limited!). But I missed the opportunity to try out harmony singing barbershop style, and by going to the session entitled 'Who's afraid of new music' I didn't get an insight into the history and current life of the Indian Classical Music Society.

In between all the sessions we were entertained by students from the Royal Northern College of Music, demonstrating one of the benefits of the venue. Perhaps the highlight of the whole day, though, was the Philip and Dorothy Green Award Winners Concert. Diana Galvydyte and Jakob Fichert, violin and piano, Daniela Lehner and José Gayo, mezzo-soprano and piano and Amandine Savary, piano, all gave the clearest indication yet that the art of chamber music is definitely thriving in the safe-keeping of the next generation of artists.

Rosemary Allen
(Chairman SW committee, Secretary CPC)

**Answer -
No, but must
keep on evolving**

AN EASY ON-LINE ANTI-CLASH DIARY

How often have you found that despite your own careful planning, someone else in the area has gone and arranged a concert on a date for which you have had one booked for months and months? Perhaps your local library or town council office - or even a diligent individual keeps an events diary - but does anyone use it? Having to go somewhere to consult it, or even to telephone the diary-keeper can be quite a deterrent!

Wallingford is small town but it has a thriving musical life and many musical events take place throughout the year. Organisers have been doing what they can to consult one another, but even so, clashes occur.

There's now an easy way for organisers to consult one another on-line and keep up-to-date with what everyone is planning. It's a Google Calendar. Just "google" that, and you will get there and be able to set up as many calendars as you like. I've set one up called "Wallingford Music Diary" and in the first week of its existence about 10 other organisers and planners signed up to it. (I've also set up a private diary, and make use of the option that sends me an email early each morning with my engagements for the day, but I don't use this option for the Music Diary.)

You can limit who has access to the diary, and what they can do. To give people access you put their email address into the permitted user list, and Google sends them an email inviting them to sign up. I have set ours up so that everyone who agrees to supply information and consult the calendar when making their own plans is a permitted user and can read the diary on their own computer screens, but only I can enter or change the information. Other users send information to me and I put it in. Once you're set up, this takes only a few seconds. It is possible to let all users enter and change information, but I like being in control!

But I'm not pretending to be a "permission-giver"! If someone finds something is already being organised on a date they want to use, they will have to decide whether to go ahead or look for an alternative. They could even contact the other organiser to see whether negotiation is possible. But at least planning

can be done with a degree of "intelligence" (in both senses!).

I send everyone an email about every three months reminding them to send me their planning information. Because of the limited readership even tentative dates are useful, and full details of events aren't necessary at the early stage. We have our likely summer concert dates identified through until 2009, and they're in the diary now even though artists are not yet identified. I shall work out the 2010 dates later this year, and put them in as well.

It's up to the diary manager to decide how far to extend the diary, musically and geographically. I'm hoping, for example, that a local jazz promoter and a blues festival organiser will join in as well as the "classical" brethren. If they don't I can still take their information from their websites and other publicity, but they won't be able to see the diary when they're planning. Geographically we are half-way between Oxford and Reading, but at present I don't intend to extend the diary as far as these towns. Oxford in particular is swamped with music!

The Wallingford Diary is intended for organisers of concerts open to the public, so I don't plan to list church services however fine the music might be, or meetings of a local rehearsal orchestra that doesn't give concerts. I can however put in one-off events if I know about them - for example, a couple of organ recitals that are coming up. The diary is not a means of publicity, so it isn't open to the general public. If you put "Wallingford Music Diary" into the Google search engine, you won't find it because of the access limitations.

There are no costs for anyone involved, and our users are delighted by the simplicity of the system. The initial set-up was quick and easy, up-dating is a matter of seconds, so the demands on my time are insignificant. Obviously I had to send fairly detailed emails to prospective members about the proposal and the rules, but there was a common core to each message, so I was able to copy it in.

Glynne Stackhouse
Wallingford Chameleon Arts

Promoter's Profile: Roseland Music Society

The Roseland Peninsula is a very rural area on the east bank of the River Fal between Truro and the sea in Cornwall. The area is remote, and includes up to seven villages and numerous tiny hamlets. It is a retirement area, with a high percentage of and a correspondingly limited (and aged) winter population.

In 1998, about a dozen people gathered in a front room to discuss the possibility of forming a Music Society in the area. (This meeting included a lively octogenarian immigrant, John Beach, who had had experience of such an organisation in the Bristol area. He is now President of the Society and an active nonagenarian member of the committee.) Doubts were expressed as to the viability of a fully-fledged Concert Society so a small group agreed to meet in each other's homes to play recordings on specific themes.

The opportunity arose to run a concert in a local church with a newly-formed village choir and the attendance of 45 encouraged 3 local worthies to formalise the foundation of The Roseland Music Society.

Four concerts were staged during the first half of 1999, four in the 1999/2000 season and five in 2000/2001 with mostly local performers. Attendance during this time remained fairly constant at about 35 except when a choir was engaged when the figure jumped to about 100 possibly explained by the number of choir followers.

March 2002 proved to be a turning point when one of the members presented the Society with a fine upright piano. To celebrate the acquisition, Richard Baker agreed to share an evening with the people of the Roseland and christen the instrument. The local village hall was bursting at the seams for the occasion which had a dramatic and lasting effect as attendances climbed steadily so that, since September 2003, audiences have averaged 90+ overall. From 4 concerts in 1999, the annual programme has grown to 9 concerts plus a

Garden Party and a Ploughman's Lunch in 2006/7. The Society also supports concerts during the fortnight of the Roseland Festival in late October. Membership of the Society was 49 in 2000 and 185 in 2006/7.

These concerts take place in the Memorial Hall in Portscatho, a venue which most of our visiting artists seem to think is worth travelling hundreds of miles for. It is small enough to be intimate but large enough to cater for 120, if necessary. For small ensembles we usually use a podium in the body of the hall so that no member of the audience is more than 15 metres from the performers, a situation popular with audience and musician alike.

Since September 2004, the Society has been sponsoring, with help from Making Music, workshops in 9 local schools, which are almost inevitably very small, with budgets which would not run to such luxuries. In that time, 11 musicians, or groups thereof, have visited 2 or 3 schools in a day and an estimated 2,500 children have taken part in the scheme, sometimes performing their compositions before the Society Concert in the evening. Our Members contribute to "Roseland Youth Music" to subsidise the venture which is now highly organised. (Our thanks to Hebden Bridge Society for their help!!)

So, that's where we are. Writing this after a highly successful concert (and workshops) from the Segovia Guitar Trio, there is a danger that complacency sets in. I am sure that our problems are everyone else's, an ageing committee (especially important for a society which has to set out, and put away all the chairs at every concert), the sheer distances involved and the difficulty in organising tours. We try to broaden the appeal, with choir, jazz and folk offerings, but the focus is always on quality, the best we can provide. We look forward to celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2008 in an appropriate manner.

Greg Williams

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