

BROMSGROVE CONCERTS

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees have pleasure in submitting their report and the financial statements for the year ended 30 April 2018.

Principal Activity

The principal activity is the promotion of the art and science of music by the presentation of concerts and other activities.

Trustees

The Trustees who served during the period were as follows:

J Upward	Chairman
B Hall-Mancey	Secretary
J Sampson	Treasurer
B Baker	
A Cook	
C Cooke	
J Croft	
D London	
R Sugden	

At the Annual General Meeting on 29th June 2017 Janet Upward, Bernard Hall-Mancey and John Sampson were re-elected as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and Bill Baker was elected as a committee member.

Review of the Year

We have just completed another exciting season of live music, featuring outstanding artists and a great range of music. This was well demonstrated in Craig Ogden's guitar recital in January that attracted our biggest audience of the season - Craig is a renowned international artist and his followers in this country are always keen to hear him live. His concert ranged from Bach to a work composed by his fellow Australian Nigel Westlake in 2010. His performance showed how a great musician can lead the audience through a work none had heard before and communicate its spirit.

Our other soloist in February was Leon McCawley, also returning like Craig after several visits in previous seasons. Like Craig his concert included pieces by a twentieth century composer not often included in live performance- the Austrian Jewish refugee Hans Gal - who found a second home in Edinburgh. Leon has recorded all of Hans Gal solo piano works so this was a rare opportunity to hear three short preludes played with intimate understanding. Leon's recital also included a Haydn sonata, Beethoven's fiery and dazzling set of variations in C minor, and ended with one of Schubert's expansive sonatas. A very fulfilling concert.

The season opened September 29th with the Castalian String Quartet, an outstanding young group winning prizes and making a name for themselves. They brought us Thomas Ades The Four Quarters and commented in our visitors book that we were an ‘incredibly attentive audience - one of the best for the Ades’, as well as appreciating our pre-concert catering for them. In turn several of audience members thought their performance of one of the outstanding string quartets of all time - Beethoven’s Opus 132 Quartet - as one of the best they had ever heard. The following concert was given by the experienced cellist Florian Kitt playing classics from the cello repertoire as well as a piece written specially for him by the Japanese composer Takemitsu.

The November concert saw a complete change with Ensemble DeNOTE whose group is centred around a reproduction fortepiano and period clarinet and strings. The sound of the fortepiano may not be to everyone’s taste, after the full sonorities of a modern grand piano, but others relished the opportunity to hear Mozart’s and Haydn’s music as they might have heard it and the greater balance and clarity these instruments bring to the music.

The Kodaly Quartet from Hungary celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2016 and brought a programme in December featuring Hungarian composers, including Dohnanyi’s second quartet, inexplicably not heard very often in concert performance. The Quartet demonstrated how a mature quartet can communicate the music so fluently both between themselves and their audience.

Unfortunately our March 2nd concert with the Eblana Trio had to be cancelled because of snow, but it has been re-programmed for our next season, so we have the pleasure still to come of hearing a string trio, not so often heard in live performance, in a wide ranging programme from Purcell to the contemporary composer David Matthews

Our final concert brought five players to Artrix with Charlotte Bonneton the viola player from the Castalian Quartet (who opened the season) joining forces with the Van Kuijk quartet from Paris to play quintets by Mozart and Brahms to bring the season to a great conclusion.

Our only regret is that our audiences do not grow, despite our best endeavours to improve our marketing and publicity online. We still have a secure grant from the Elmley Foundation for another two years, but grants are increasingly difficult to get, so we must continue to explore ways in which we can make our concerts more attractive.

Audiences and ticket sales

Concert	Audience Head count
Castalian String Quartet 29.09.17	91
Florian Kitt & Carlos Rivera-Aquilar 202.10.17	62
Ensemble DeNote 17.11.17	103
Kodaly String Quartet 01.12.17	82
Craig Ogden 19.01.18	135
Leon McCawley 09.02.18	74
Eblana String Trio	Concert cancelled
Van Kuijk String Quartet With Charlotte Bonneton 16.03.18	84

We no longer have data on our customers' buying habits owing to data protection issues. Overall, subscriptions held up with new subscribers replacing some of our older members who can no longer attend. We have sold more Rover packages as people take advantage of the discounted ticket prices.

Ensemble DeNote attracted a good audience of patrons who bought full-priced tickets as did Craig Ogden although not as many as on his last visit. The audiences for the Kodaly String Quartet, Leon McCawley and the Van Kuijk String Quartet were all disappointingly below the average we have begun to expect.

Membership and mailing list

Our policies and procedures have been updated and we have taken advice from the ICO helpline. We now comply with the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulations and written permission has been collected for the keeping and marketing use of emails from our members and a large percentage of our audience. We also comply with EU directive on electronic marketing and privacy. We have retained old postal details for mailing out next year's leaflet since we include a return to sender address if recipients wish to unsubscribe.

Marketing and Publicity

We have continued to engage Karen Fletcher of Archery Communications to help us with on-line marketing social media. She has increased our on-line visibility through listings sites and has issued press releases widely online for each of our concerts to music media. Our Twitter account now has over 330 followers with 270 "likes", a more than six-fold increase from when we began actively to manage it. Karen has also done much research to identify advertising and feature article opportunities in local and regional life style magazines which are widely distributed, as well as investigate the possibility of household delivery of our leaflets in Bromsgrove. She also set up a distribution through an agency to get our leaflets into Birmingham music venues but committee members when visiting these places did not see any of our leaflets on display.

We continued with routine publicity, including distribution of our leaflets to outlets in Worcestershire through a distribution agency, and through Artrix distribution to Bromsgrove outlets. Concerts are regularly publicised either through editorial or paid for advertisements in local papers and magazines, including What's On in both Birmingham and Worcestershire, and we sent out leaflets to 259 people on our mailing list.

Our website give full information about forthcoming concerts with direct links to the artists websites and to the Artrix box office site for ticket sales, as well as reviews of previous concerts and news of Bromsgrove Concerts. The website has received a technical make-over. This update was unavoidable because of the changes in the underlying technology but we have taken the opportunity to make some significant improvements. The web-pages have been designed to be 'responsive' to the screen width they are being viewed on so that the experience for the viewer is satisfactory whether she is using a smart-phone or a desktop monitor. Among a range of technical changes, this involves re-sizing images, scaling text font sizes, and re-positioning elements. The emphasis has been on improving the visual presentation by using images whenever possible rather than just text lists, which also has the benefit of making it easier to use with the finger as a pointing device because there is a larger visual area rather than a highlighted word or phrase.

Finance

We continue to find it difficult to fund our quality programme of good music purely from ticket and trading income. Once again our season was generously supported by The Elmley Foundation's ongoing grant, by support from The Bromsgrove Institute for our Bromsgrove Summer Festival Concert, and by a grant from The Grimmitt Trust towards our season. We also received much more generous donations from our members than usual, and welcome the associated gift aid.

We had decided to continue to spend some of our reserves on professional advice, advertising and publicity aiming to increase our ticket sales and we also decided to engage leading performers who would attract good audiences. The income increases we hoped for did not all materialise, but we will continue our efforts in this direction.

Our venue at Artrix is much appreciated for its very good acoustic and the hirings charges for this venue remain a major factor for us to cover, but have remained fairly level.

Our Programme Book continues to help boost income by more than covering its costs, and the second-hand CD stall selling members' no longer wanted CD's contributes handsomely. Expenses are kept down by committee members who do not claim for expenses when providing travel and hospitality for performers, for postage, travel and other costs.

The overall result for the year was a shortfall of some £4500, of which some £2400 is attributable to the extra spend from reserves noted above, and some to the artists' fees. Our reserves remain healthy, and well able to protect our plans in the case of unforeseen and unwelcome problems arising in any season.

Committee

John Futter had resigned during the year because of family health problems but we were pleased to welcome Bill Baker, who was previously on the committee of the Droitwich Concert Club which closed the previous season. We are very pleased that Alastair Moseley has agreed to become chairman when Janet Upward steps down after eight years in the post at the 2018 AGM.

Our committee is dedicated to the future of Bromsgrove Concerts and would very much welcome new blood to bring new ideas and energy to their efforts.

Links and Outreach

Artrix has continued to provide our box office function, front of house and technical support on concert evenings, and we thank the staff for this support. Our website links with the Artrix website for on-line bookings, and details of our concerts appear on their website and printed brochures.

We attend meetings of the West Midlands Music Societies which provide a valuable interchange of ideas and sharing of problems and successes. We are also members of Bromsgrove Arts Alive, contributing a column about our activities to their twice-yearly magazine.

We exchange publicity information with the Orchestra of St John.

We continued our link with the Bromsgrove International Musicians Competition and we sponsored a recital concert for the 2016 prize-winner Toby Hughes, double bassist, as part of the 2017 Bromsgrove Festival. We hope in future years we can either integrate this recital for the competition finalists and prize winners into the Competition schedule or into our season

We continue our membership of the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust. This enables us to offer free tickets to all young people, although take-up of this scheme continues low as we have not yet found a way to more actively promote chamber music to young musicians in Worcestershire.

Reserves Policy

The policy of the Trustees is to maintain reserves so far as possible at a level that approximately equates to next year's expenditure. The Trustees deem this to be necessary in view of uncertainty over the level of financial support from outside bodies. This means we need to be able to underwrite committed expenditure for booked artists and venue for the following season before we start to get ticket income or know our grant income.

Risk Management

The Trustees actively review the major risks that the Charity faces on a regular basis and believe that maintaining reserves at current levels, combined with an annual review of the controls over key financial systems, will provide sufficient resources in

the event of adverse conditions. The Trustees have also examined other operational and business risks faced by the Charity and confirm that they have established systems to mitigate the significant risks. No serious incidents have occurred.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are required under the Charities Act 1993 to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year (unless the Charity is entitled to prepare accounts on the alternative receipts and payments basis). In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- (a) select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- (b) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- (c) state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures and explained in the financial statements;
- (d) prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the Charity and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with applicable law and regulations. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

Approval

This report was approved by the Trustees on 26th June 2018 and signed on their behalf.

Janet Upward
Chairman

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