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Newsletter January 2016

The Season

2016 is already under way and we are half way through our 53rd season of Bromsgrove Concerts. The first two concerts with the Carducci Quartet and Leonore Trio were well attended and reflect the national reputation of the artists. We are proud to be included in their schedule of other prestigious venues such as London's Wigmore Hall and Kings Place where Katie Stillmann and her playing partner Simon Lane had also recently played. Katie delighted us with an extra set of lollipops by Fritz Kreisler, but it's a shame that the audience was not bigger to hear the Colin Matthews pieces. Simon illustrated each piece with examples. The audience, made aware of what it would hear, received the performance with warm applause.

The Carnival Band attracted the best audience so far for the last concert of 2015. Their arrangements of old carols, traditional folk songs, feasting songs and dances were characteristically bucolic. The period wind instruments included recorders, shawms and Flemish cornemuse and were used very effectively to support the quintet's excellent singing. The sound set-up did not achieve a balance between microphone-aided stringed instruments and the wind band. Ringing amplification, feedback whistles and a chest vibrating woofer made some of the audience yearn for an acoustic set from the group. However, most of the audience went home happy.

Pleasures still to come include a return visit from Craig Ogden (5th February), Richard Jenkinson and Benjamin Frith playing cello/piano music by Beethoven, Britten and Ian Venables (4th March). The Benyounes Quartet brings the season to a close with Mozart, Debussy and a quartet by Ian Venables.

Our audiences

The membership numbers and the number of patrons buying full-priced tickets is holding up. We are hoping for a strong second half to the season and no inclement weather to keep our patrons indoors. To make us less dependent on external funding (at present crucial to our survival), we need more 'bums on seats'. Since word of mouth is the strongest of all recommendations, if you enjoy coming along, please do spread the word. Flexible Rover 4 tickets will enable you to introduce a friend at a discounted rate.

Fundraising from members and audience

We are sure that you all will send your good wishes to Peter Ward who put on a benefit concert in his home which raised £120. Peter is over 90 and still plays every day to keep his fingers flexible. His programme of pieces from the classical period made for the most enjoyable afternoon as did the home baked cakes provided by his supporters.

The CD stall on concert nights is proving to be a very important element in our fundraising and is still selling CDs bequeathed to us by the late Dr Richard Robinson. The stall's stock has now been supplemented by a gift from Jim Page who has just downsized and moved house.

Individual donations from members and well-wishers also make a very helpful contribution to our finances. In some cases these are generous enough to make a significant contribution to the cost of a particular concert, but donations of any size are very welcome, especially where we can claim Gift Aid.

Support from external funders

We have written before how the box office does not cover the costs of putting on our concerts. This year we have been successful with applications for grants from the Elmley Foundation and from the RWV Trust and have other applications in hand to locally based trusts.

The strength of our applications lies not only in the quality of the artists we engage but also in our adventurous programming, which is giving us a national reputation. We intend to continue this approach, especially as funding support for the mainstream repertoire is becoming increasingly difficult.

We believe that our audiences trust us to put forward 20th and 21st century chamber music. When it is introduced by artists who understand it and are devoted to its performance, it is not scary, but listenable, exciting and enjoyable.

To improve our grant applications, we are writing a three year plan. If you wish to contribute to the development of the society, then please put your comments by email to Richard Sugden at info@bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk

And finally – can you help?

In the short term we would like to recruit one or two more people willing to prepare light suppers for our artists – it doesn't have to be anything very elaborate, but the artists do appreciate home cooking! If you would like to help, please contact Jim Croft at this email address: marketing@bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk

The committee is conscious that it needs to recruit new trustees, if Bromsgrove Concerts is to have a longer-term future than the next few years. Members of the committee (who are also Trustees) are the volunteers who do all the jobs that make the venture happen. There are lots of different jobs to be done. All we ask is that you have a love of chamber music, would like to expand that interest, and have some time – then we will find you a nice cosy niche to suite your expertise. Please reply to this email address: chair@bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk

We have lost two of our long-standing advertisers this year. Advertising in the programme enables us to cover the programme book's production costs and make a small profit. If you know a local company that you think might be willing to support us in this way, please do let us know. At the moment a full-page advert costs £200. Please reply to this email address: programme@bromsgrove-concerts.org.uk

On behalf of Bromsgrove Concerts

Richard Sugden

Janet Upward