

BROMSGROVE CONCERTS

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees have pleasure in submitting their report and the financial statements for the year ended 30 April 2017.

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
A Cook	
C Cooke	
J Croft	
J Futter	
D London	
J Richards	
R Sugden	
G Vale	

At the Annual General Meeting on 29th June 2016 Janet Upward, Bernard Hall-Mancey and John Sampson were re-elected as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and John Futter was elected as a committee member. Georgia Vale resigned from the committee in February 2017

Review of the Year

Concerts

We continue to draw the very best musicians to play rewarding and enjoyable music for us, ranging from the well loved classics of Mozart and Schubert to the modern and contemporary. Our concerts this season have been particularly wide ranging in the variety of ensembles as well as the music played. We are lucky that the Artrix is a perfect space for the intimate nature of chamber music so that the performers' intensity and commitment really involve the audience.

Our contribution to this year's Bromsgrove Festival in June/July 2016 was a cello recital by Jamal Aliyev, the outstanding winner of the 2015 Bromsgrove International Young Musicians competition. We are grateful to the Bromsgrove Institute Trust for supporting this concert.

We welcomed back the Sacconi Quartet and Robert Plane (clarinet) for our opening concert in October. The audience enjoyed the mellow tones of the bass clarinet and Robert did full justice to the clarinet's virtuosity in Weber's quintet.

We were pleased to support Festive Classics Beethoven Fest at the end of the October with the Dante Quartet which attracted an audience from far and wide for the whole weekend of performances and talks.

The Pomegranate Piano Trio whose name reflects the fruitful collaboration of the three soloists who have come together to form the trio, brought a varied programme of Mozart, Schubert and Nicholas Maw, whose modern but lyrical style made a good contrast.

The Spanish baroque group Mi Luna gave us an outstanding and exciting concert in December, with a wonderful flamenco dancer (in a different costume for every dance).

The first concert in 2017 was with the Navarra String quartet in a more traditional concert of Haydn, Schubert and Brahms and Benjamin Britten's third string quartet.

Another highlight was Worcester pianist Mark Bebbington's recital in February. He had given the world premiere performance of living composer Robert Matthew-Walker's jazz infused "A Bad Night in Los Angeles" on Radio 3's In Tune programme the day before our concert. Mark repeated the work in our concert, so we could still claim the first concert performance.

We were glad to offer a performance opportunity to local young performers in our fourth Young Musicians showcase concert on Sunday 26th February. Once again the audience was bowled over by the talent and mature musicianship of these young people. Everyone present wished more people had shared in this experience.

Our concert on 10th March brought two outstanding violinists together as the Retorica Duo. Dedicated to bringing the unexplored wealth and quality of the repertoire for two violins, their programme spanned the centuries from the baroque to the modern.

The Britten Oboe Quartet with Nicholas Daniel on the oboe give our last concert on 7th April, featuring three British composers - Lennox Berkeley, Moeran and Richard Rodney Bennett as well as two works by Mozart and Francaix featuring the cor anglais, neither a horn nor English but the oboe's mellow cousin.

Audiences and ticket sales

Concert	Total ticket sales	Audience Head count
Sacconi String quartet 7.10.16	86	93
Pomegranate Piano trio 11.11.16	79	87
Mi Luna 02.12.16	80	88
Navarra String Quartet 13.01.17	87	93
Mark Bebbington 03.02.17	83	103
Young Musicians showcase 26.02.17	52	65
Retorica violin duo 10.03.17	61	66
Britten Oboe Quartet 07.04.17	77	89

We have data on our customers' buying habits and make plentiful use of the statistics. Overall, subscriptions were down from 61 last year to 55 this season. This was disappointing as we had had a sales drive amongst friends and multiple ticket buyers. We followed up on the non-renewals and learnt that some of our older members had moved away or were in poor health. The sales of full

priced tickets was not as strong as in 2015/16, achieving only 85% of what might have been expected for such a programme. However, over the last 5 years a pattern has emerged of a strongly supported, year followed by a weaker one. Despite the outstanding quality of the performers, the Young Musicians showcase does not attract a large audience although it had a better audience than 2 years ago. The numbers were still low and the prices too heavily discounted for it to be a success

Committee members spent time talking to the patrons of the Beethovenfest and we concluded that festivals and concert series have separate audiences - the former attracting an audience from all over the country, the latter a local audience.

Rover subscriptions continue to be popular as people appreciate their flexibility. The Sacconi String Quartet with Clarinet, the Piano Trio and the Navarra String Quartet attracted the most Rover subscribers.

Mi Luna attracted a good audience of patrons who bought full-priced tickets for the pre-Christmas Show. Although Mark Bebbington's concert was an artistic triumph, only 27 full-priced tickets were sold when we might have expected to sell at least 50. This was doubly disappointing, given the exposure we had for the concert from press coverage, radio and social media.

Development plan

We continued to work on our Development Plan and had helpful meetings with Jill Davies and Chris O'Grady who work in marketing musical events, including the listings publication Chamber Music Plus, and with Rosie Hamilton, then Artrix Marketing Director. We contacted Karen Fletcher of Archery Communications to help us with on-line marketing social media, and we agreed to contract her for three months. She has increased our on-line visibility through listings sites and liaises with committee members who maintain our web-site and promote Bromsgrove Concerts through a Twitter account. We have started to link to artists' websites to our concert listings so that people can learn about them, and listen to clips of their performances. We plan to re-launch the website for smart phone compatibility.

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.

We have encouraged performers to introduce some of their programme from the platform to increase audience involvement. We have re-introduced committee member badges, so that audience members can approach us more easily, and encourage them to promote our concerts by taking publicity flyers. We produced a Christmas newsletter. We hope to find a way of getting more systematic feedback from audiences.

Finance

We submitted our Development Plan to the Elmley Foundation in March 2017 who confirmed a grant of £2,500 for the next three years (2017 - 2020), for which we are extremely grateful.

As part of the Development Plan we increased the budget for expenditure on artists, so that we could engage some larger ensembles to vary our programming in the hope of attracting audiences. We also decided to use some of our reserves on advice and training in the use of social media towards increasing audiences.

We were generously supported by grants and funding for this last season from The Elmley Foundation, the RVW Trust, the Grimmitt Trust and the Bliss Trust. The Bromsgrove Institute Trust again supported our summer contribution to the Bromsgrove Festival. We were also greatly helped by £1000 from the closure of Droitwich Concerts, for which we thank them. Donations by members were welcome, as ever, but modest compared with some years.

On the other hand, ticket income was disappointing – we did not have the occasional very well supported concerts of previous years. Venue costs remain high. We have contained the costs of printing and admin, helped by ‘donations in kind’ when committee members do not claim expenses for travel, postage, and so on. The year’s activities of nine concerts ended with a shortfall of some £2250, but by using our surplus of £1500 from 2015-16 we reduced this to a manageable £750.

The CD stall, selling CD’s donated by members, made a fine contribution of some £750 to our funds. Our Concert Programme book is handsomely produced, and more than covers its costs through sales.

Committee

We were pleased to welcome John Futter on to the committee at the 2016 AGM, and continue work to increase the strength of the committee. A search for a new Chairman to succeed Janet Upward is still continuing.

Links and outreach

We have a positive working relationship with all the staff at Artrix who provide our box office function, front of house and technical support on concert evenings. Our website links with the Artrix website for on-line bookings, and details of our concerts appear on their website and printed brochures. We thank them for this support.

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 continue to offer a recital concert with the prize-winner of Bromsgrove International Young Musicians Competition as part of Bromsgrove Festival

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..

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 28th June 2017 and signed on their behalf.

Janet Upward
Chairman

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