

CHELTENHAM MUSIC SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2015-16

Once again this year we have managed to combine a very successful musical programme with solid financial performance.

As ever, the Takács Quartet gave us a wonderful evening, this year with an entirely classical programme. But their star billing should not be allowed to detract from the rest of a consistently excellent series of concerts. The opening concert by the young Busch Trio was remarkable for the quality of musicianship, which combined with their youthful energy to produce a memorably exciting event. The same combination of qualities was evident in the two violin and piano duos, each with a young violinist – Joo Yeon Sir with Irina Andrievsky and a return visit by Tamsin Waley-Cohen with Huw Watkins. We were pleased that our old friends the Carducci Quartet chose to complete their Shostakovich recital with us, and they brought Julius Drake to add the composer's Piano Quintet as a grand finale. A return visit by the Arcadia Quartet was again excellent, and the Atéa Wind Quintet gave us something completely different and very enjoyable, though the size of the audience for each of those concerts was disappointing.

We resumed the series of Cheltenham Contemporary Concerts (CCC) that Jim Harrison ran for some years; his departure had led to a hiatus. We limited ourselves to two concerts, partly because of the amount of work required and partly because we were not confident about the availability of grant funding. We marketed them alongside our main series, rather than as a semi-detached venture, and this proved very successful: 35 subscribers to the main series also subscribed to the CCC, resulting in a significant increase in audience size. Both concerts were excellent: a very happy evening with the unusual 4 Girls 4 Harps, who attracted far more single ticket sales than we expected, and a delightful concert by the young clarinetist James Noble and pianist Simon Callaghan. We feel very satisfied all round. If you did not come to these concerts, and if the "Contemporary" title is putting you off, let me encourage you to give them a try next season: we heard some wonderful music-making, and even if some pieces are not to your taste (and that is often true for many of us) there is a good chance that you will hear something that is.

As Andrew Ellis reports below, the combination of a second year of more or less stable membership and increased single-ticket sales has left us with a moderate financial surplus. Our confidence in the medium-term viability of the Society is therefore renewed. But your Trustees do not feel that we can relax; the audience survey we carried out at the Takács concert showed that the age distribution of our members is even more skewed than we thought, with two-thirds over 70 and a very small proportion under 60. We will continue to explore ways to bring in new members; as one example, offers of a subscription discount next season for people who had bought single tickets this season appears to be yielding results. The survey again showed that by far the most powerful form of publicity is word of mouth – so please do encourage your friends to come and to join.

The programme for next season again looks exciting. We will be very pleased to welcome Clare Hammond back, this time for a solo recital. The line-up of string quartets is impressive, including the Brodsky and Henschel Quartets as well as the young van Kuijk Quartet who won last year's Wigmore Hall competition. We also have the renowned Trio Dali, and concerts by instrumentalists that we do not often feature, a cellist and a flautist. We will be repeating our two-concert CCC format with a young guitarist, Andrey Lebedev, and a return visit by the Pomegranate Trio, whose concert will be on a Sunday afternoon in a break with our tradition. We found that grant money to support the CCC was harder to obtain this year, so we are not now pursuing the idea of increasing the number of concerts that had been mooted.

There will be some changes to our ticketing and marketing arrangement for 2016-17. We are delighted to have struck a new deal with the Town Hall that results in a significant reduction in the

amount of commission we have to pay; this has allowed us to freeze subscription prices for next year, and will offset inflation in artists' fees and Pump Room hire charges. One consequential change will be that subscribers receive a membership card that will act as their ticket, in place of the familiar printed tickets. We have also completely revamped our brochure, adopting an A5 format that we hope will be more effective as a lure for single-ticket buyers throughout the season. We managed to get the brochure printed in time for the final concert of the season, again as a way of increasing its impact.

Last year I reported that we were starting to plan for our 70th anniversary season in 2017-18, and I invited suggestions for "favourite" artists and donations to a fund to commission a new work. I am pleased to say that the responses to both invitations were excellent. Drawing on your suggestions Penny has put together a splendid programme that will bring back many of the artists who have given us the most pleasure in recent years, helped by the fact that we have been husbanding our resources so that we have extra to spend on this special year. The donations have made a significant contribution towards the cost of a commission, so that we have not had to divert funds from the core programme. We have commissioned a piece for string quartet from Simon Rowland Jones, formerly of the Chilingirian Quartet, which will be given its première by the Carducci Quartet.

As always, I want to record my gratitude on your behalf to those who make the concerts possible. The officers – Penny McCracken, Andrew Ellis and Mike O'Connell – and all the other Trustees play their part, each in their own way, and all put in a great deal of work. I would like to record particular thanks to John Mumford who has given an enormous amount of time to rethinking our approach to publicity and redesigning our brochure. I am also grateful to Jo Miller for organising the refreshments for our artists, and to those members who have distributed flyers for us. We do depend on volunteers to make our music happen, so if you think you could help in any way, please let me know.

I look forward to seeing some of you at the AGM, and as many of you as possible next season.

David Pepper
01242 235122
david@depepper.me.uk

TREASURER'S REPORT

Overall membership was slightly down compared with last season, on the other hand single ticket sales were much better than expected. Although I have not yet received full details of the final concert it does appear that expenditure will be a little higher than anticipated, however we should show a satisfactory surplus. I would like to thank those members who contributed towards the anniversary appeal - a total of £702 was raised. There was a healthy surplus on the two Cheltenham Contemporary Concerts, thanks to charitable grants. However these are likely to be considerably lower next season.

Andrew Ellis

Officers and Committee 2015-16

David Pepper	Chairman	Penny McCracken	Secretary
Andrew Ellis	Treasurer	Mike O'Connell	Membership Secretary
John Beard		John Mumford	
Penny Steer		Lindsay Tyndall	
John Wright			

2016-17 SEASON

Tue 18 October Henschel Quartet

Mozart Quartet in B flat major K589
Schulhoff Five Pieces for String Quartet
Beethoven Quartet in C sharp minor op.131

Thu 17 November Van Kuijk quartet

Kurtág 6 Moments Musicaux op.44
Ravel Quartet in F major op.35
Beethoven Quartet in E flat major op.127

Wed 7 December Clare Hammond (piano)

Bach Toccata in D minor, BWV 913
Beethoven Sonata no. 8 in C minor op.13
Dutilleux Au gré des ondes
Medtner Sonata Romantica, op. 53
Boulanger D'un Vieux Jardin and D'un Jardin Clair
Stravinsky Petrushka Suite

Wed 11 January Juliette Bausor (Flute) and Alasdair Beatson (piano)

Fauré Fantasia op.79
Reinecke Sonata op.167 'Undine'
Widor Suite op.34
J.S Bach Sonata in E major BWV1035
Debussy Syrinx
Franck Sonata in A major

Tue 21 February Trio Dali

Beethoven Piano Trio in E flat major op.1 no.1
Smalley Piano Trio
Mendelssohn Piano Trio no.2 in C minor op.66

Thu 23 March Brodsky Quartet

Schubert Quartettsatz in C minor D703
Webern Six Bagatelles
Zemlinsky String Quartet no.4 op.25
Beethoven String Quartet in C major op.59 no.3

Thu 20 April Michael Petrov (cello) and Alexander Ullman (piano)

Prokofiev Cello Sonata in C op.119
Janáček Pohádka (Fairy Tale)
Carter Fingert for Solo Cello (1994)
Chopin Cello Sonata in G minor, op.65

CONTEMPORARY CONCERTS (Prince Michael Hall, Dean Close School)

Sun 30 October at 3pm Pomegranate Trio

A programme of music by contemporary British composers including Sally Beamish, Nicholas Maw, James Macmillan and Judith Weir.

Wed 15 Feb at 7.30 pm Andrey Lebedev (guitar)

Andrey's programme features music by several contemporary Australian composers, as well as Takemitsu and Peter Maxwell Davies.