



maidenhead music

Chairman's Report for AGM , October 19th 2023

Welcome, everyone. I'd like to thank Mavis Gregson, our Secretary for organising this AGM and her attention to detail in all the secretarial work this year.

Last year was the 76th season of Maidenhead Music . Our survival and longevity is an achievement in which we have all played a small part and of which we can be proud. However, our survival is fragile.

Our audience numbers are down. After an improvement post Covid, our Season ticket and Membership numbers have not increased despite the constant and cheerful efforts made by our Membership Secretary, Peter Griffiths, whom I'd like to thank for keeping this important area viable. Sadly, our loyal membership is ageing. Without a doubt, at 77 years of age, Maidenhead Music needs new blood!

But audience numbers are also down because classical music is in crisis generally. It gets little exposure in the media, and schools are not able to promote it. If you look at the programming of Radio 3 and the Proms and the choices on Desert Island Discs, you realise that the amount of classical music in the media has diminished. At the same time, the pool of talented young musicians is growing. We must find an audience for their work.

It is Maidenhead Music's raison d'être to promote fine classical music. We -or rather our Concert Secretary, Deborah, work hard to make a varied programme which is one of high quality. It is so sad that excellent concerts sell only 80 seats. Our concert revenue is down almost by half.

Like all organisations at the moment, our costs are higher. We think our venue, Norden Farm is ideal; we appreciate their efforts and want to support them. Musicians' fees are another major expense but the musicians must make a living and we are happy that we continue to offer them opportunities. We are eating into our capital because of reduced income and only kept afloat by Win Law's Fund. Win Law left this money to help Maidenhead Music Society achieve its ends, therefore, whilst we

have funds, we are determined to continue to use them to engage excellent musicians.

I'd like to thank Bill Fone, our Treasurer - his papers and reports are the help and support of setting up the concerts. We will greatly miss his quiet presence.

Last year we decided to make the Rising Stars concert free to Members, which is something we will continue in 2023-24. At the October concert, we encouraged Members to bring a friend for free. As word of mouth is the best advertising and also the cheapest, we may well try that again. A growing number of members take advantage of the "meal-deal" at Norden Farm and it is a pleasure to see people in that context before the concert. Any other suggestions of ways to increase our numbers are very welcome.

The committee are a microcosm of the Society – enthusiastic lovers of classical music of a certain age. We are planning for the year ahead, when we will be even older! Not only do we need a larger audience, but also younger members of the committee. Our skills deficit is accounting and social media. However, I'd like to extend my warmest thanks to this wise old committee for all their work.

As always, I very much enjoyed the 22-23 season and am looking forward to this one, but I will leave it to Deborah, our wonderful Concert Secretary and author of those excellent programmes, to speak about it in detail.