

Chairman's Report for AGM Oct 20th 2022

The last season – 2021-22 was our 75th anniversary. The planning period in 2020 had been totally disrupted by the pandemic. Nonetheless, the programme was a triumph – in its quality and variety. These first class performances are possible due to the good relationship between the professional musicians and ourselves, via our Concert Secretary, Deborah Behrman and Robert Roscoe. I will leave Deborah to talk about the concerts themselves, but I will pick out some significant points.

Piers Lane' excellent solo piano concert brought us back to better audience numbers. This is essential to our financial health. We are still well under the number of Members pre pandemic; in 2018-19 we had 80, at the moment we have 65 – so audience numbers are crucial. We took the decision to place our funds in the hands of a professional company, Smith and Williamson, so there has been some loss of investment income in the transition, and the present economic climate. I am grateful to our Treasurer, Bill Fone for his stewardship of our funds. Whilst we must be concerned to remain financially sound, we also need to remember that the funds exist to enable us to present concerts and widen the exposure to classical music, which is sadly getting even less publicity from the media today.

We feel that our brochure and flier design has improved, and think that our designer, Dan Shilladay has found the tone and impact we want. However, increasing and widening our audience is still our major task. This year we are hoping to expand our social media presence with the help of Alex Lane.

The Wihan quartet concert made us experiment with a new venue, the Braywick Leisure Centre. This took us back to the pre Norden Farm days of being responsible for ticketing and stewarding. Though this was extra work for the novices that we are, it brought us into closer contact with all those who attended the concert. I feel strongly that the social nature of the Society is something we should continue and develop. Nonetheless, the arrangement at Braywick was not ideal and has made us even more grateful to Norden Farm for the facilities they offer.

In April Elizaveta Tyun and Anastasia Matskovskaia brought into focus the impact of the Ukraine war and its effect on musicians. Both Brexit and the war in Ukraine have impacted our paperwork. The pandemic made us aware of the precarious lives of professional musicians, here

was yet another manifestation of the way in which contemporary events affect all our lives. The harmony of Elizaveta and Anastasia was a beacon of hope.

The concert by the Kaleidoscope Collective was a very fitting finale to our year and gave us the opportunity to have a small celebratory gathering afterwards. This celebration was a double, of our 75 years, but also of the contribution of Rudi and Ady Sheldon. Ady died in 2019 and Rudi in November last year. The Sheldon family supported the Kaleidoscope concert financially, and Tom Poster of the Kaleidoscope Collective gave a lovely commentary. We owe a tremendous debt to Rudi and Ady for their immense service to Maidenhead's cultural life and the Music Society in particular. Looking through the Society's archives, it is impossible not to realise the energy and commitment they both gave. They are sorely missed.

Their passing is a reminder that those who actively support Maidenhead Music are all ageing. Every organisation requires renewal and revitalisation, and those connected with classical music face an uphill struggle to attract active participation. We invite all Members to attend the Rising Stars concert in January free, so that you can see the pool of talent which is emerging among music students. We urge all Members to bring friends to concerts so they can appreciate the wealth of international talent available. We hope that you may know someone interested in classical music, who would like to join us on the committee, organising these wonderful concerts behind the scenes. Our survival, as an association, not only creates the opportunity for people to hear excellent classical music locally, but we are an essential platform for talented musicians.

I would like to finish by thanking the committee for their hard work and dedication. Bill, our Treasurer, Peter, our Membership Secretary, Deborah our Concert Secretary, and Mavis, our Secretary. I am pleased to announce that the committee has asked Robert to act as Deputy Chairman.