

Sunderland Symphony Orchestra (SSO) Executive Committee Annual Report for 2021 (and incorporating period to 22.03.22)

The orchestra has gradually opened up this past year, initially with smaller sectional rehearsals and then to full orchestra rehearsals. Attendance at rehearsals has been very good. Although we did experience problems in the Omicron wave after Christmas, we are now back to normal, and hopefully will continue that way. Special thanks go to David Milner for organising and constantly adapting the rehearsal schedules around the uncertainties caused by the pandemic. Thanks also go to the committee and its wider group of members who have continued to work hard in support of developing the orchestra.

Membership:

Playing members have increased and remained fairly stable, reaching 50 before dropping to 47. We now boast an orchestra with every section covered, though we do need another trumpet and trombone.

Meetings:

The 2021 AGM was held successfully on Zoom. It was attended by 16 members with 16 apologies. Since then, the executive committee has met at least bi-monthly ; the committee has been ably supported by a number of additional, 'extended committee' members who undertake specific roles within the management of the orchestra, eg website management; hub liaison; social media and virtual productions and by the leader, Judith Thompson and the Musical Director, David Milner (who is an ex-officio member); a sub group has thoroughly investigated the reality of becoming a CIO and the various options to be considered.

An SGM was held on 14.10.21 (17 attendees) at which the committee agreed to finalise documentation for registration as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation); This procedure is almost complete.

Orchestral Events and Activities:

1. The Dec. 21 Christmas concert was a well attended success resulting in some very positive feedback from audience
2. The City Council funded a new composition for the orchestra penned by Phil Jackson. The piece was premiered at the Christmas Concert 21. Its title 'Celebration March 21' celebrates the orchestra's 21st. Birthday Coming of Age (the end of our project) and the twinning relationship between City of Sunderland and its European Twin Towns. A virtual performance of this music is also available on the website and the YouTube channel.
3. The orchestra played at two carol events for voluntary organisations (New Springs Church and Fullwell WI Dec. 21)
4. In February 21, Sophia Pearson produced a Virtual Video of an SSO Auld Lang Syne. This was sent to patrons, members and to former players in SSO.
5. The orchestra WhatsApp group continues to operate as a strong social network for members.

6. The Website has been re-sited under a new host, revamped and carefully maintained by Nikola Zalas.
7. A YouTube Video site has been opened This is under the title, 'Sunderland Symphony Orchestra SSO' (there is an older site which we have been unable to remove as yet).
8. SSO has joined the 'Making Music' Organisation which has proved very cost-effective and gives us access to music scores and a number of other advantages. Librarian, John Harding, has also made a reciprocal agreement with Northumbria Orchestra re exchange of musical scores.
9. A decision was made to trial a different pattern of concert provision. We will hold concerts in Spring, Summer and Christmas. This will allow space to explore more challenging works and accept community outreach opportunities.
10. Members of the orchestra played at The Red Sky Charity Ball on Friday 11th. March 22 postponed from 2020

Finances

The Financial Records are currently being scrutinized by the Independent Examiner and will be available prior to the AGM. The orchestra continues to be in a strong position financially.

We are very grateful to our MD and our Landlord for supporting the orchestra through the lockdown by cutting and reducing fees respectively. Full fees are now reinstated as we are fully operational again.

The committee has negotiated a rise in rent for the West Park Church. Playing membership fees are being reviewed to reflect the inevitable increase in heating costs associated with the venue.

Support:

The orchestra is very grateful to all those (patrons and friends) who continue to support its work. Our Honorary Patron, the Right Worshipful, the Mayor of Sunderland, Councillor Harry Trueman, is thanked for his support and attendance at the premiere of 'Celebration March 21'.

Commemoration:

It was with huge sadness that we learnt of the death of Barnaby Blacker in March 2022. Not only was Barnaby our landlord at West Park Church but also an active orchestra player and a huge friend to us all. Barnaby truly was a special person and will be missed by the whole orchestra community.