

Annual Report

Year Ending 31st December 2017

Established October 1999. Charity Registration Number 1082431

Co-Founders and Vice-Presidents:

John A Lennox, Mark Greenfield, Winifred Lundgren

The Executive Committee present their report with the financial statements of the orchestra for the year ended 31st December 2017.

The Committee met regularly during the year to deal with the necessary business.

Membership matters

There was a total of 47 members at the end of the year (37 playing members, 4 non-playing members and 6 patrons), compared to 45 the previous year. There were also 6 (5) honorary members.

Members who left the orchestra during the year were: Sarah Blackhall (Clarinet) and Jasmine Pickering (Clarinet): We thank them for their service and friendship, and wish them well. Temporary absentees were; Diana Hauber (Violin) with health problems; Kathryn Maclaren (Viola) on maternity leave; Alan Lackenby (Trumpet) following some serious dental work; Laura Payne (Flute) who was travelling widely in connection with her work: We look forward to their return in due course.

We welcomed the following as new members during the year: Sylvia Zalas (Violin), Chua Jes Sie (Jessie) (Violin); Chiu Peng Chong (Lawrence) (Flute).

Sincere thanks are extended to Lloyd Watson for his voluntary work, over several years, in publicising the orchestra by setting up and maintaining our 'Facebook' page. Changes at work now prevent him from continuing with this. We wish him well in his future career.

It is sad to record the passing of one of our Honorary Members. Mrs Margaret Wallace died at the age of 91 years, on 2nd December 2017. She died peacefully in her sleep, following a short illness.

As a member of West Park Church, Margaret became involved with the orchestra from its inception, serving refreshments at concerts, and then also baking for the musician's teas between afternoon rehearsals and evening concerts. Margaret was always regarded as 'the boss' of the refreshment team, although she would never admit to this. Her lovely caring, quiet, nature endeared her to all the members and visitors who met her.

Latterly, when she was no longer able to cook, she would always send a donation in lieu of her baking, towards the costs. For many years, Margaret single handedly cleaned and polished all the upstairs seats and woodwork in the church prior to a concert. She was made an Honorary Member of the Orchestra in December 2012.

Annual General Meeting - Wednesday 29th March 2017.

Following the success of the AGM last year, this year's meeting was held on a Wednesday rehearsal night (7.30 – 8.30pm), followed by a shorter rehearsal. This format will be followed in the future.

The existing committee members were re-elected and Dr. Christopher May re-appointed as independent examiner for the accounts. Membership fees for the forthcoming year were kept at the same level as for the current year, ie £96.00 for a playing member (£63.00 for students), non-playing members (friends) £30.00, and patrons £60.00.

Performances

Concert programmes continued to offer different themes.

The **March concert** - was entitled 'Music from the British Isles', and music from all four countries was played.

The **Summer concert** - 'Music for a Summer's Evening' featured a new piece composed by orchestra member Phil Jackson, entitled 'Suite Petite'.

The **Autumn concert** - 'Popular Orchestral Music' was conducted by David Milner, in the absence of Paul Judson who had recently undergone surgery to his knee. David Milner has played French horn with the orchestra on several occasions, and has conducted many orchestras. We were grateful to him for stepping in on this occasion.

The **Christmas Concert** with the '**East Herrington Primary Academy Choir**' – Forty seven members of the choir, with their musical director Mrs. Nicola Hair, gave some lively seasonal singing on their own, and then joined in with the orchestra, singing 'Walking in the air'.

The orchestra extends grateful thanks to the visiting musicians who played with the orchestra in each concert, when there were otherwise vacant desks.

Other musical activity

The strings section (Nine members) of the orchestra, played in 'The Bridges' shopping centre, Sunderland, on Saturday 1st April, and the woodwind section (Six members) on Saturday 15th April. The event was organised by 'The Cultural Spring'.

On Saturday 15th July, eleven members of the strings section played at the 'Summer Streets Festival' in Thompson Park, Southwick, Sunderland.

On Saturday 2nd September, twelve members of the strings section played at the 'Shingley Art Gallery' Tea Dance, in Gateshead.

It was planned for the strings to play in Park Lane, Sunderland, on Saturday 16th December, as part of the festivities leading up to Christmas. Other musical groups were also to be involved. However, the under-cover facilities promised were cancelled at the last minute, and the performance could not take place.

Thanks to Judith Thompson, Ged McCormack and Paul Judson for organising these performances.

It is planned that the orchestra will assist in a workshop with the Sunderland Youth Orchestra in March 2018.

The orchestra has agreed to be involved with the 'Tall Ships Race' activities in Sunderland, and in the 'Summer Streets Festival' in Sunderland, in the summer of 2018. Details are still being finalised.

The Battle of the Somme Centenary Tour

The orchestra was invited to perform a specific piece of music in connection with the Battle of the Somme Centenary Tour – to be one of 100 orchestras nationwide performing the piece during the year. Much time and effort was put into searching for a suitable venue with suitable projection facilities. Unfortunately, the difficulties involved, together with the available orchestra resources, meant that the offer had to be declined.

Sunderland, City of Culture 2021

Joy Lowther, Judith Thompson, Paul Judson and Mark Greenfield met with the Director of 'Sunderland 2021' to consider how the orchestra could be involved with the bid. Following this meeting, and with the approval of the committee, a document was produced and submitted in support of the bid.

Unfortunately, the City was not successful in gaining the accolade.

Musical Director

Paul Judson has continued to provide entertaining and original programmes for the enjoyment of the audiences. Paul frequently re-writes or arranges parts to make the music more attractive to both players and listeners, and has been able to fill vacant desks at concerts through contacts he has elsewhere in the musical world.

Civic involvement with the orchestra

Councillor Barry Curran, a previous Mayor of The City of Sunderland, showed such enthusiasm for the orchestra, that he has joined as a Patron.

In May 2017, the new Mayor, Councillor Doris MacKnight, consented to be Honorary Patron of the orchestra for the duration of her year of office.

Newsletter

Three editions of the orchestra's newsletter were produced during the year. These were distributed to interested parties and are available for viewing on the web site.

Financial matters

The orchestra has still not found a major sponsor.

The Sir James Knott Trust gave a donation of £1000.00 for the purchase of music.

Community Chest Funding was received from the East Sunderland Area Committee, Sunderland City Council, (St. Michael's Ward Councillors), to enable the purchase of music stand banners for all the desks. (£800.00).

An anonymous sum of £1100.00 was donated to the orchestra for use as match funding towards developing work with young people through the Arts Council Bid, if successful. (See below).

The orchestra again received a number of financial donations, (including an anonymous one of £2,000.00). These are greatly appreciated.

Future of West Park Church (As at 31st December 2017).

The offer to purchase the building, which was accepted by the church authorities, unfortunately did not progress and was withdrawn. This was unfortunate, since the prospective purchaser intended that the orchestra should remain in residence. It is now known that the building will be put up for auction in February 2018.

The committee continues to explore alternative venues, should the need arise to re-locate.

Publicity

Publicity has improved, with details of concerts being on 'Seeitdoit Sunderland', on 'SunFM' and eventually in the 'Sunderland Echo'. Thanks to Mark Greenfield for forging the links with the Sunderland Echo. 'The Vibe', which is distributed to every household in Sunderland, has not always included our concert details, even though these have been submitted.

The orchestra's **web site** has continued to be a popular source of information with the public.

The '**Facebook**' page continues to receive much acclaim for the quality of photographs and the video clips. Lloyd has handed over this work to orchestra member Sophia Pearson, who has since been posting regularly on it.

The committee approved the design and production of two banners, to be used for public display, whenever members perform in the name of the orchestra. These were designed by Sophia Pearson.

Mark Greenfield sponsored the production of ball-point pens for use in advertising for the orchestra.

Arts Council Bid

A working party was established in the early part of the year to consider how to raise the profile of the orchestra in the region, and how to improve recruitment. A substantial sum of money was required to realistically achieve our aims.

Joy Lowther, Judith Thompson and Mark Greenfield met with Arts Council representatives, and with representatives of the 'Sunderland Music Education Hub' (SMEH), to discuss how to make a bid to the Arts Council for funding. They led the working party in their deliberations, and came up with a 'Development Plan' which was approved by the committee.

In connection with the bid, an audience feedback sheet was designed and distributed with every programme at the Summer concert. Mark Greenfield collated the results, which were then used as evidence with the final bid document.

The final bid document was put together by our secretary, Joy Lowther, following discussion by the committee, and included an agreed outline plan for the orchestra's activities for the next two years. This took many hours of work to produce the final document, which was some seventy six pages in length.

We are aware that only forty per cent of applications are successful, but feel that whatever the outcome, the effort has been worthwhile in clarifying the members' vision for the future of the orchestra.

Thanks

The Orchestra once again extends grateful thanks to all the people and groups who have supported its activities over the past year. The volunteer help given by so many is greatly appreciated. Special thanks must be given to the orchestra's Honorary Members, members of West Park Church and family members of orchestra players, who look after most of the 'back stage' work associated with running the concerts.

Donated music scores

We are grateful to David Milner for the gift of some orchestral scores, which were surplus to his requirements. The music in these scores will be of value in future concerts.

David E Mills, Joy Lowther, Brian Naisby, Peter Chapman,
Kathleen A. Mills, Lynne Dakers, Judith Thompson.