

Sunderland Symphony Orchestra

The Executive Committee present their report with the financial statements of the orchestra for the year ended 31st December 2019.

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

Membership matters

There was a total of 52 members at the end of the year (36 playing members, 4 non-playing members, 6 patrons and 6 honorary members), compared to 53 the previous year. (Note – One honorary member is also a playing member).

The Mayor of Sunderland Councillor David Snowdon accepted the position of Honorary Patron for the year.

Annual General Meeting - Wednesday 27th March 2019.

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

The March concert on 23rd March, was entitled *Spring into Jazz*.

The Mayor of the City and her Consort were present at this concert held in West Park Church, which featured 18 year old Megan Robinson as soloist, playing the flute.

The Summer concert on Sunday 14th July, entitled *Peter and the Wolf and Friends*, was a children's matinée concert held at the Empire Theatre, Sunderland.

The Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear was present along with the Mayor and Mayoress of the City.

Pupils from six local schools who had previously been involved in workshops organised by the orchestra, took part. For this concert each school was asked to prepare a five minute performance, on a chosen theme, about how music and drama can help tell a story.

The *Sunderland Youth and Community Orchestra* also took part, playing 'In the Hall of the Mountain King', from *Peer Gynt* which was one of the pieces performed by 96 players at the Big Orchestra Day (see below).

The Autumn concert on 12th October, *Proms at The Point*, was held at *The Point*, a live music and events venue in Park Lane, Sunderland. The Deputy Mayor and the Deputy Mayoress of the City were present, together with *The Jarrow Choral Society*, and *Flaming Tutti Celli* (A group of six local cellists), who were participating guests at the concert.

The link which was developed with John Kefala-Kerr of the University Music Department proved fruitful, and the competition that was set up for students to write a new piece of music for the orchestra proved successful. The winning composition, *Wearmouth's Stories*, by 27 year old Andreas Poupazis from Cyprus was performed at this Concert.

The event also premièred a new composition by orchestra member Phil Jackson, entitled *Sunderland*, specially written for the occasion. The music was received with acclaim by the audience, and was unusual in that it included a choral part and a narration. This was the largest work ever composed by Phil and took over eleven months to complete.

The Christmas concert on Saturday 14th December, *Christmas by Candlelight*, was held in West Park Church, in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress of the City, and featured the St. Anthony's Catholic Girls' Academy Senior Choir from Sunderland.

The programmes and venues for these concerts were designed to comply with Arts Council conditions that we involve young people in our music, and that we are able to take our music to different venues where a wider audience base could be expected, and that we have the facility to encourage the writing of new music.

All seats were 'sold' for the Summer (1000+) and Autumn (270) concerts, admission being free, and West Park Church was not far short of being full to capacity (279).

Collaboration with Nissan UK

The orchestra had been invited to take part in a promenade concert in the Nissan grounds on Saturday 25th May 2019, on a large outside stage. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled by Nissan, due to internal problems within the company.

Orchestral Workshops in Sunderland Schools and a Big Orchestra Day for Young Musicians

As a feature of SSO's "Coming of Age" project, which celebrates the orchestra's 18th year and is supported financially by Arts Council England and the Sunderland Music Hub, orchestral workshops took place in four Sunderland schools during February and March.

Orchestra members provided tuition and guidance.

Altogether, pupils from twenty-three schools participated in the programme of workshops and Big Orchestra Day. Southwick Community Primary School hosted the Big Orchestra Day on the morning of Saturday, 9th March, at which a mixed orchestra of 96 players performed Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King* from *Peer Gynt*, and Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain*.

Emma Mapplebeck, led the orchestral workshops and the Big Orchestra Day was led by SSO Musical Director David Milner.

A further series of workshops were held in April and May, at six of Sunderland's primary schools, at which the instruments of the orchestra were demonstrated in the context of the story of Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, before a total of over one thousand primary school children.

Grants, Donations and Purchases

A grant from the City of Sunderland's Community Chest enabled the purchase of music storage bags for our increasingly large collection of music scores.

A substantial donation was received from Ward Hadaway, a Newcastle based firm of solicitors, for the purchase of music.

A substantial donation was received from The Mayor of Sunderland's Charity Fund, courtesy of Cllr. Lynda Scanlan. This was presented to David Mills and Mark Greenfield at a special event in the Mayor's Parlour in the Sunderland Civic Centre.

A number of donations were received from donors who requested that they be anonymous.

A violin and two violas were donated to the orchestra by Mr. Arthur Ridler, a retired instrument maker and friend of the orchestra.

A set of professional style music folders, embossed with the orchestra's logo, and some additional music stand lights were purchased.

A new water boiler, for use in preparing refreshments was purchased, to replace the original one from West Park Church, which had become unrepairable.

Arts Council Bid and Grant

In connection with the bid, *The Sunderland Music Education Hub/Together for Children* gave match funding re the outreach to children in schools.

Sincere thanks are expressed to Matthew Burge for his enthusiasm in undertaking the role of Development Manager. He has been responsible for organising the workshops and liaising with the schools, and for undertaking most of the organisation of the year's concerts.

University of Sunderland Fresher's Event September 25th 2019.

Five members manned the orchestra's display stand at this event. A great deal of interest was shown and several young people came along to the orchestra rehearsal the same evening, and three have started coming regularly. Two took part in the Christmas concert. This was the second time we have attended this event and we plan to attend regularly in the future.

Sunderland Rotary Club

The Chairman gave an after dinner talk to the Seaburn branch of the Rotary Club in September, outlining the origins, achievements and future plans of the orchestra.

New Springs City Church - Christmas Carol Service at Fulwell, Sunderland.

Seven members again provided accompaniment for the Christmas Carol Service at the church on Sunday 15th December, led by the Chairman. This was the fourth time we had done this, but proved difficult to arrange since the timing was for 10.30am on the Sunday morning rather than the previous 4.00pm.

Financial matters

On-line advance purchase of tickets.

For an experimental period, the orchestra made arrangements with 'Eventbrite' to offer tickets in advance, via the website, to anyone who wished to take advantage of this modern way of purchasing.

This worked very successfully for the Summer, Autumn and Christmas concerts.

Even though we have to pay for the facility, which is fairly expensive, it is hoped that there will be a reduction in queuing at our concerts and that 'front of house' management of events will be simplified.

It is not intended to withdraw the facility of paying at the door.

Newsletter

The orchestra Newsletter was produced twice during the year and distributed to interested parties.

Chairman and Treasurer

David and Kathleen Mills notified the Vice President (Mark Greenfield) in November, that they would not be standing for re-election to the positions of Chairman and Treasurer at the next Annual General meeting in April 2020. Both are now approaching their 80th year and having been involved with the orchestra since its inception, they felt that the time had come to stand down. They both offered to work alongside those who would take over their responsibilities and ensure that the changeover went smoothly.

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 Stockton Road URC Church and family members of orchestra players, who look after most of the 'back stage' work associated with running the concerts.

The goodwill of orchestra members in taking on additional tasks, is also appreciated.

MAJOR RISKS FACING THE CHARITY

Ticket revenue has increased as the audience size has increased but still can not provide sufficient cash to provide for the essential running costs of the charity, and so the orchestra remains dependent on outside sources of revenue to remain solvent.

The orchestra has still been unable to find a sponsor during the year. This matter is being given continuous attention.

STEPS TAKEN TO MITIGATE RISKS

The orchestra continues to provide a varied and innovative programme of concerts in order to attract as wide an audience as possible.

External sources of funding are continually being approached.

A Business Plan to the year 2022 is being developed, and it is anticipated that the work being carried out by the Development Manager will result in larger audiences from a wider area.

RESERVES POLICY

It is intended that the cash balance in the bank at the end of the financial year (December 31st) should be at least one year's (preferably two year's) anticipated expenditure. This was achieved this year.

