



NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CHELTENHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL
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Chairman's Message

The full programme for the 2020 Music Festival will be announced at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday March 11th. General booking begins on April 1st at 10.00 a.m., but booking details for CMFS members are shown on Page 3 of this Newsletter. Tickets are already available for the following four events:

Beethoven at Syde, on Saturday 27th June, and three concerts in the Town Hall;

The Aurora Orchestra on July 3rd; The Philharmonia with Alice Sara Ott on 6th July and The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic with Tamsin Little on 10th July.

The Young Musicians Concerts hosted at Chapel Arts continue through until July. Aaron Le Maistre (St. Thomas Rich's [School) and Edwin Ward (Pate's Grammar School) were the only keyboard finalists in the 2020 Gloucestershire Young Musician of the Year Finals, held in the Pittville Pump Room on Tuesday, March 3rd. Aaron performed for CMFS at Chapel Arts in February, and Edwin will do the same in the autumn. Bill Ko (Cheltenham College) the current Gloucestershire Young Musician of the Year, performed for CMFS on 28th February 2019. Other highlights from the varied programme at Chapel Arts are The Art of the Dance, featuring ballet students and musicians from the Gloucestershire Academy of Music in March, and Elizabeth Pallet's Lute Ensemble from the Birmingham Conservatoire in April. For all details of the exciting series of young musician concerts, please consult the Chapel Arts website.

For your diary: This year's CMFS Lunch and Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 7th July. All details and booking information will be circulated nearer the time.

The Newsletter Editor, Frances Gabriel, asked me to send her some photographs from a recent trip to Uganda in late February when my wife Liz and I visited our youngest daughter Sophie, who is there on a twelve month teacher training assignment. It has been quite a shock returning to Cheltenham's sleet and rain. (*Yes, I nagged, but I thought readers might enjoy this one! Editor*)



May I take this opportunity of wishing all Friends of CMFS happy adventures across a whole spectrum of music making in the coming months – and of course at the 2020 Cheltenham Music Festival in July. *Andrew Auster, Chairman*

Catriona Smith Legacy

Richard and Catriona Smith were well known for being great supporters of the Arts in Cheltenham. Indeed Richard was active in CMFS as Treasurer for many years until his sudden death in 2013. Catriona, despite her ongoing and increasing ill health, continued to support events run by societies across the town. As many Friends will know, she sadly died on 31st December 2018. In November 2019 the Society was delighted to discover that Catriona had left a generous bequest to various organisations, both local and national. Top of the list of Beneficiaries was their much loved Holst Birthplace Museum, with the Cheltenham Music Festival Society in fifth place, to receive 8.38% of her estate. At the time of writing we have received £5,028. More funds may be released in the future when Catriona's flat in Jenner Court is sold – something the solicitors have said is proving difficult in the present market. The CMFS committee is meeting on March 17th and at this meeting will decide how we may best use this generous legacy to support the Music Festival. *Jennifer Stapleton, Honorary Treasurer & Membership Secretary*

Awards for Mary Mackenzie and Ian James



Attendees at last year's July AGM will have heard a wonderful tribute from Jill Bacon about Mary Mackenzie's contribution to CMFS over many years. I am delighted to share the news that Mary Mackenzie has been recognised by the Cheltenham Arts Council for her immense contribution to the Arts in our town. Mary's voluntary service as Secretary to the Cheltenham Music Festival Society was exemplary, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to the post from her work in the Civil Service and dealing with diplomats and Cabinet Ministers. We are indebted to her for her valued contribution to the Society and know she continues to use these skills volunteering both in the

community and the church in her village. Mary will receive a special Citation at the Awards Ceremony to be held at the Cheltenham Playhouse Theatre on Tuesday 24th March between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. CMFS members would be most welcome to attend. At the same ceremony I am also very pleased to announce that Ian James of Chapel Arts will receive the Charles Irving Sponsorship Award. References for Ian highlighted his enthusiasm and generosity for the Arts in general, as well as his support for the local community and young people.

Andrew Auster

(It proved impossible to find a photo of Mary when she wasn't busy doing something – as here, superintending CMFS famous teas! Ed.)



An update from Camilla King

Camilla kindly spared some time from her busy schedule to bring us up to date with the latest news concerning the Music Festival. As we settled down to talk she showed me the just-



arrived proofs for this year's Brochure, which has now gone to the printers. Our Brochure will be available in time for the "Big Reveal" on March 11th, when we can all begin to plan which concerts and events we want to attend in July. Cheltenham Festivals wanted to commission an artist to work on material for all four Festivals this year and, after a challenging selection process, Vicky Scott has been chosen. Camilla says Vicky begins a design on her computer and then uses collage to build it up, using layers of paper and other materials to create the finished effect. I really liked the end product – it's colourful and eye catching, and seemed to me to capture the spirit of the Music Festival. It will be interesting to hear what others think.

Camilla says that while there are lots of great concerts and other events, the total number is slightly fewer this year than last. She said the aim is to have a Festival over ten days that is elegant, that has plenty of interesting things to do, but isn't overdone, and with less overlap. On weekends there will be four events each day, but she has tried to schedule things so that people *will* be able to get to everything if they wish to, or can choose two or three without running into a time clash – or a frantic sprint between venues! I asked whether the "Schumann Square" event, which many CMFS friends enjoyed, will be repeated this year, and the good news is that it will, but this time on the Final Weekend - thus avoiding any clash with events on the Free Stage which some people found difficult last year. Camilla says she has four wonderful musicians lined up for this, some of the kind homeowners who hosted the event last year have agreed to have us back!

As CMFS Friends will know, last year saw a number of changes in the organisation of the Music Festival. Alison Balsom left, and Camilla formally became Head of Programming. Rather than begin to search for a new artistic director it was decided to bring the Music Festival in line with the structure of the other three Festivals, each having a Head of Programming who works with one or more Guest Curators on particular projects. For example, the Jazz Festival has Gregory Porter as a Guest Curator working with their Head of Programming, Dave Gaydon, and his team. The Music Festival now has a similar arrangement, with Jules Buckley as a Guest Curator. Camilla says that for the 2020 Festival, because Jules already had a very busy schedule, he has not been able to have a great deal of input, but they have already begun to discuss ideas for next year. There are ongoing conversations about working together on some commissions, and perhaps a choral project, so it will be interesting to see how these evolve. This year there will be one big Heritage Orchestra event, and Jules will be here for both the opening and final weekends, and perhaps at some other times also. She is hoping to add in a talk, as well as other opportunities for the Cheltenham audience to meet

and get to know him – and vice versa. Camilla thinks we'll find him a very down to earth, modest and friendly person as well as a really knowledgeable musician, not just in the field he's known for, but across the board. I queried (asking for a friend you understand!) whether we might see a little more of a tilt towards Jazz in the Festival, and was reminded that while 98% Classical Music, the programme has always included *some* Jazz events, from Meurig's time as Director up to and including the splendid concert last year with Wynton Marsalis and the young Brass for Africa musicians. The Music Festival is "amazing as it is...it's a formula that our audiences love, and there's no point putting things in the Programme that people won't book tickets for."

This of course led to a discussion about ticket sales. Camilla says that her contacts across the Classical Music field have all seen lower than usual sales in the run up to Christmas, which could be due to any number of things, and our "Early on sale" concerts were also little bit less well supported than had been hoped for. Possibly because we had not done "Early on Sale" last year and people were not expecting it, or were perhaps waiting for the full programme to be announced before deciding which tickets to buy when the main booking opens in March. I wondered how much the disruption due to the coronavirus situation - and Brexit – is likely to affect both ticket sales and travel for artists, but we will have to hope that things settle down as spring progresses. Hopefully when tickets go on sale in March there will be an enthusiastic rush!

New this year is a plan to offer young composers a "Retreat" – a new scheme Camilla has developed and which has been supported very generously by several donors, and which will sit alongside the existing Composers Academy. As Friends will know, the Academy enables people in the early stages of their careers to come here and write something which is then performed at the end of the Festival, and it has been very successful. But having talked with young composers in the last few years Camilla became aware that there is a need for something a bit different. Composers have to eat and pay the rent, and do so by securing funding for specific commissioned projects. This can leave little "space" to develop other creative work. Yes, deadlines can be a spur to creativity, but sometimes ideas need time to develop into a formed piece of work. Camilla came up with the idea of providing for musicians a space to stay in the Cotswolds (which someone has kindly donated to us) where they can have several days or a week in which to work undisturbed and free from family responsibilities. They can go on Retreat individually, as a pair, or as a group, in complete creative freedom and work on their musical ideas, the idea being that they will return the following year with a finished product we can hear at the Festival. This year we have two musicians, Maya and Sarah, who had begun work on a project during a Residency at Snape Maltings, and will use our Retreat to complete it. Their work will be performed at this year's Festival, on July 4th in the Parabola theatre, and it sounds as though it will be really interesting. Camilla's father was an Anglican Vicar and she thinks some of the impetus for this idea may come from knowing that the clergy, who like musicians sometimes need to recharge their inner resources, have found the concept of Retreat a useful way of doing so.

I am most grateful to Camilla for taking the time to bring us all up to date with developments. The Brochure will soon be out, and the task of planning our time – and budget- for the 2020 Cheltenham Music Festival can begin!

Frances Gabriel, Newsletter Editor

Important booking information for CMFS friends:

Camilla advises us that this year CMFS friends will be able to book tickets for the Festival on March 24th, from 10 a.m. Lines will be open for CMFS friends only from 10am until 5p.m. There is phone booking only on that day. CMFS friends who are also patrons will already have received their booking dates from Fiona. The main telephone number for the Box Office is 01242 850 270.

Box Office: There **will** be a "Pop Up" Box Office this year, in the Style Studio at John Lewis & Partners, Cheltenham High Street. This Box Office will be open to all Cheltenham Festival Members, which of course includes CMFS Friends, on March 25th to March 27th from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m. The Box Office will also be open April 1st – 3rd from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., when it will also be open to the general public. Tickets ordered earlier by phone can, if you wish, be collected from the Pop Up Box Office.



COMING EVENTS



Concerts at the Chapel Arts: Please consult the website: www.thechapelarts.com for complete listing of concerts and other events.

Holst Birthplace Museum:

Saturday 21st March 6.30pm

Indian Dance performance by Nethra Academy of Performing Arts plus short talk about Holst & India by Angela Applegate. Southam Village Hall GL52 3NS.

£12 (adults), £10 (HBT members), £2 children 5-16. Tickets now in the museum and online.

Friday 24th April 7.30pm

“Cheltenham – a secret A to Z”: a talk by David Elder at St Luke’s Church Hall

£10

Friday 15th May 7.30pm

A concert by OCTAVO choir at Chapel Arts.

Tickets £15 (adult) or £13 (HBT and CMFS members)

Saturday 19th September: Birthday Concert

Oriel Singers, St Andrew’s Church, Montpellier

Works by Gustav & Imogen Holst, Vaughan Williams and others

Friday 30th October: “Pittville after Pitt”: a talk by Steve Blake

(Joint event with Friends of Pittville) at Pittville School

Cheltenham College Free organ recitals, from 1.15 p.m. to 2 p.m.

April 7th. Rachel Mahon, Assistant Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral.

Music by Mendelssohn and Laurin

May 5th. Hans Hielscher, Organist and Carriloneur, Marienkirche, Wiesbaden, Germany.

Music by Bedard and Gershwin

June 2nd. Luke Bond, Assistant Director of Music, St George’s Chapel, Windsor.

Music by J.S. Bach and W.H. Harris

June 30th. A 25th Recital Celebration. Please note this concert begins at 7.30 p.m.,

Alexander Ffinch, Cheltenham College Organist. Music by Liszt and Wagner.

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