



NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CHELTENHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL
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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



The full programme for the 2021 Music Festival will be announced on May 25th. Booking information for CMFS member can be found at the end of this Newsletter. I am delighted to say that with **your** membership of CMFS and some of the generous legacy of Catriona and Richard Smith, both dedicated supporters of the Cheltenham Music Festival, we are able to help fund the following events at this year's Festival:

Awakening Shadows on Sunday July 4th at 8p.m in the Parabola Arts Centre. The world premiere of this Chamber Opera by Luke Styles, based in part on Britten's Canticles, will be performed by Nova Music under the baton of George Vass. In this work themes of light and darkness emerge in the music and these often align themselves to a shifting view of God and Humanity. Voices sing in the quartet and choral formation to show a united identity. Britten's

Canticles were not composed for the stage, but they deal with dramatic subject matter that is highly operatic, including religion, sacrifice, birth, death, and humanity itself.

The second event sponsored to CMFS will be the BBC 3 New Generation Artists concert given by the *Consone Quartet* in the Cheltenham Town Hall from 1pm – 2pm on Tuesday July 6th which will be broadcast live on Radio 3. The quartet is known for their expressive interpretations of classical and early romantic repertoire and, due to the condensed programme, will be co-sponsored with the Aquarius group.

I would also like to highlight the Festival concert on Saturday 3rd of July at 7.30 pm in the Cheltenham Town Hall. John Wilson writes that *this concert is dedicated to the memory of Gina Wilson, a wonderful supporter of music in Cheltenham, at whose memorial celebration her many friends contributed substantially to the funds of the Cheltenham Music Festival Society, which is now helping to sponsor this event with gratitude or their generosity.* This concert of English music given by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under their conductor Martyn Brabbins, will be recorded for later broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and includes works by Delius, Malcolm Arnold, John Pickard, Walton and Elgar.



It is hoped to arrange a CMFS Festival Lunch Party followed by the Annual General Meeting. Details will be circulated to CMFS members in June.

As in previous years the Chapel Arts has arranged a number of Young Musician concerts in association with CMFS, each lasting circa 50 minutes. Concerts in June will of course have to be socially distanced:

The programme at Chapel Arts includes:

- June 11th at 1pm Hannah Hughes (soprano), and
- June 11th at 7pm the Louis Mander Beaudesert Piano Quartet.
- June 18th at 1p.m Tsukushi Mitsuda (piano),
- June 18th at 7pm Adam Heron (piano)
- June 23rd at 7pm Ashok Gupta (piano) with Malu (soprano)
- June 25th at 1pm Souny Park (cello).
- June 25th at 7pm April Perrott (soprano)

Further details of these concerts can be found on the Chapel Arts Website; <http://www.thechapelarts.com>

This last year has been extraordinary and challenging for the whole world. Let live music making, and the opportunity to be able to attend concerts in person and with friends, provide an inspiration and a tonic for us all.

Andrew Auster

A talk with Camilla about the 2021 Music Festival

Despite being very busy managing her enormous workload - not to mention Smudge, a 7 month old lurcher/deerhound puppy - Camilla was as always very happy to bring CMFS members up to date with the plans for our Music Festival. After the sadness and disappointments of last year, when things so carefully planned had to be cancelled, the Music Festival team Camilla leads were determined to plan a Festival that could go ahead whether or not we are still subject to some form of social distancing. The programme and venues have been decided and will not change, but what WILL possibly be affected is the number of tickets that can be sold for each event. The final decision about which scenario to go with will be made by the Festivals team on May 21st - a few days after the Government's May 17th announcement. Our full programme will be released on May 25th.



The 2021 Music Festival has been planned to keep everyone as safe as possible whatever the rules, and this has required quite a few changes. For example most concerts will be in the Town Hall this year and none in the Pump Room because if we *should* have to stick with social distancing that would simply not work in the smaller venue. However there will be events in Gloucester Cathedral, a Chamber Opera in the Parabola Arts Centre, and some film events at the Playhouse. There will be no Programme book this year in order to avoid a sales desk and money handling. While this is sad in one way, the full information normally found in the Programme book will be available free on the website, and there will probably be an app where people can read the information on their phones before or after concerts. Discussions are ongoing about whether there will also be short programme notes available for each performance, and whether musicians will be able to bring along and sell their own CDs. It is hoped to have tea and coffee available both before and after events. There will be no intervals this year – safety again - so each performance will last approximately 75 minutes, which is roughly the same musical “content” as found in concerts *with* an interval.

Camilla told me that arranging with artists about programming has been more than usually challenging this year because of the uncertainty – the whole “can we/can’t we” thing that we are all experiencing in our own lives in terms of planning anything is especially challenging for musicians trying to rearrange their professional lives after such a long time with no live concerts. For performers, there is an additional factor. From talking to the various artists, she said that that while of course they are really keen to perform for a live audience, many are also feeling rather nervous, not having done so in over a year. Even for those who have given concerts (at the Wigmore Hall for example) those performances were recorded or streamed rather than live, and performing in front of an audience is a very different thing. She noted that while musicians, like actors, can normally get nervous before any performance (even when they are doing it all the time) coming back on stage after such a long gap can result in a whole other type of anxiety, and for many this requires a period of adjustment. There are also practical difficulties for large groups and orchestras, which have not had to deal with the logistics of keeping people safe while arranging group travel and performing in different venues. I said that our Cheltenham audiences can undoubtedly be counted on to give musicians lots of love, gratitude and positive feedback, having been starved of live music for so long!

So....what will be able to hear in July? While it will be a slightly scaled down programme this year, it sounds as though there is still a lot going on. We will be opening with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under their principal conductor Kirill Karabits, giving an all strings programme. With the larger groups of musicians programmes have been planned that will work both with and without social distancing. On the Saturday night we’ve got the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with Martyn Brabbins, doing a gorgeous English Music programme. The Baroque ensemble La Serenissima will present a programme of Italian music, featuring Vivaldi and his contemporaries. Chamber music will mostly be in the Town Hall this year, with a couple of events in Gloucester Cathedral including the cellist Matthew Barley, and the Albion String Quartet. The schedule will (just!) allow anyone who wants to hear - for example - both the Albion Quartet **and** the lunchtime performance in the Town Hall to do so. The slightly slimmed down programme and fewer venues means that there should be no problem with “clashes” this year – in previous years we often had the choice between missing something or a mad dash across town. Some concerts will be in the mornings because this year we have four BBC New Generation Artist concerts being broadcast **live** on Radio 3 at lunchtime from the Town Hall. Previously these have been recorded for later broadcast. I asked about the kind of performers we usually would hear in the Pump Room and Camilla says she has some real treats lined up including the Maxwell String Quartet, Stephen Osborne with an all Debussy programme and Dame Sarah Connolly with Imogen Cooper. Choral singing of all kinds has been very much on hold during the pandemic (and much missed,) so it was good to hear Camilla say that we will have a choir, the Carice Singers, who have been to the Festival in previous years. .

Mixtape will be in Gloucester Cathedral this year. I wondered about managing social distancing during an event that encourages people to move around, but they have plans! The world premiere of the Chamber Opera “Awakening Shadow” by Luke Styles will be performed in the Parabola Arts Centre which Camilla thinks will work well for an opera although not able to accommodate a very large audience.

The Public Stage in Imperial Gardens will again bring live music to the wider community, on the final weekend, and timed so as not to clash with any of the performances in the Town Hall. Camilla has worked on the programme for this with Natalie Simpson from the Festival Operations team (who is a musician herself) and other colleagues. There will be some classical music in the mix this year I am told. We just need to hope for fine weather!

Other events include a musical “Parry Ramble” out at Highnam with George Parris, the Director of the Parry singers. We will have a speaker who will talk about Parry’s life and the influence of Gloucestershire and Highnam on his music, with pauses during the walk to hear samples of Parry’s work. The walk finishes at the beautiful church – and of course with tea afterwards. The Playhouse will be our venue for some music related films, including one about Malcolm Arnold, whose birth 100 years ago is being celebrated across the musical world.

Camilla was keen to stress that the need to keep everyone safe remains paramount, while being able to run the Festival programme as planned despite any hovering uncertainty around what the “rules” might actually be in July. At the end of our chat Camilla said “I have no doubt it’s going to be such a special Festival.” I think we can all agree with her sentiments – the Cheltenham Music Festival each July is a special point in the year for many of us, and its return this year will mark a very welcome return to some kind of normality.

From an interview with Camilla King, Music Festival Head of Programming

From the Chairman of the Cheltenham Music Festival

The 2021 Festival promises to be as close to normal as we could have wished and yet there will be many differences from the format many of us remember from way back in 2019. To accommodate the loss of live Jazz in May, the second weekend in July will be Jazz, with the classical music programme finishing at Gloucester Cathedral to allow the Jazz concerts to be set up in town. As with all other forms of entertainment during the Pandemic, we need to keep telling ourselves how lucky we are to be able to enjoy live music and remain philosophical about any inconveniences.

On a personal note, this will be my last year as Chair as I retire as a Trustee of the Charity at the end of this year. It has been an immense privilege to work with Meurig, Allison and now Camilla. The role of Chair has evolved significantly since we no longer have an external director, Camilla being a member of the Festivals team. The Board will determine how the voice of Music remains loud and clear around the table. We have a terrific group of Trustees – if anyone feels they would like to be considered to join the Board as I leave, please let me know. I would be delighted to have a chat.

So, all being well, it is all systems go as we look forward to July. I very much look forward to seeing you and hope our Festival gives you the best possible experience after such a challenging year. Thank you for your patience!

Edward Gillespie

Outreach and Education from the 2021 Cheltenham Music Festival



In previous years there were two concerts for children – one at the Jazz festival and one in July as part of the Music Festival. Things have had to be a bit different this year because of the constraints created by the Pandemic. However Pip Claridge, the Education manager for Music and Jazz Festivals, has worked with her team to turn these difficulties into opportunities, reaching out to more schools and more children than we were able to do before. There will be a single Concert for Schools, filmed in the Town Hall on July 5th and sent out on July 9th via the Festivals website to schools in Gloucestershire who register for it. Even though this information was only

released a few days ago more students and schools are already registered than were able to attend *both* concerts in previous years. After that, the concert will be streamed on demand, available to schools everywhere. It sounds as though it will be huge fun. Yolanda Brown, herself an accomplished musician, will host the event. Yolanda is probably best known to children through her work as the presenter of “Yolanda’s Band Jam” on CBeebies, while on Jazz FM she presents “Yolanda Brown on Saturday.” On BBC Radio 4 she is a regular presenter on Loose Ends with Clive Anderson, and sits in for Vanessa Feltz and Trevor Nelson on BBC Radio 2. . Pip tells me they are really pulling out the stops to make this a truly engaging event for the children. Those involved include the Gloucestershire Youth Chamber Orchestra under their conductor Glyn Oxley plus 12 local professional musicians, our six current Musicats, and a mix of renowned jazz artists alongside previous Musicats who are now professional musicians. Filmed by Still Moving Media, and with the use of judicious editing, this assemblage will be engaged in all sorts of creative wheezes guaranteed to make the event very enjoyable for the children while also stimulating their interest in music.

Despite the Pandemic and resultant school closures, our Musicats have continued to work busily throughout the year, developing their own skills while helping teachers with their work to engage children with music. This year the Musicats have created a number of digital resource packages. These “Musical Explorers” videos, which are available via the Education and Outreach page of the Festivals website, can be used either as stand alone resources, or developed into a more in depth workshop, according to the teacher’s wishes.

This year’s Musicats are;

Emily Dore (Violin); Emily Hopper (Harp); Holly Greenwood-Rogers (French Horn); Ashton Smith (Jazz trumpet); James Borland (Jazz trumpet); Will Crawford (Classical guitar).

Money matters.....

For the last couple of years, CMFS has donated £10,000 to the Big Give, which is doubled through matched funding. As you will see elsewhere in this Newsletter our donation through the Big Give is hugely appreciated by the Music Festival. We would like to continue with this, since the *raison d’etre* of CMFS is to provide ring fenced funding for the Music Festival. All of us contribute via our annual membership fees and occasional donations; a wonderfully altruistic way that we can ensure our money goes solely to the Music Festival. Over recent years the society has been shrinking, so our membership fees for 2021 raised just over £5,000. This is clearly not sustainable but fortunately we have reserves which we can use to provide the £10,000 that we would like to give for a few years yet. In the meantime, if you can persuade your musical friends and relations to join us as CMFS friends, the Music Festival will be more confident of receiving funding from us. If you are successful in winning them round, you will find a membership application form on the website for them to use.



Jennifer Stapleton (Hon Treasurer)

BOOKING INFORMATION

I spoke with the Festivals Box Office team, who gave me the following information about the date when members of CMFS can begin to book tickets for the Music Festival. As in previous years, a “window” is reserved for CMFS members. **This year that begins at 10am on June10th.**

As Camilla told us it is expected that, as for the Literature Festival, people will choose their seats and book their tickets online via the Box Office page on the Cheltenham Festivals website, which gives full information about what to do. The website “opens for business” at 10 am and most people will be able to get their tickets without difficulty. (I’m not usually keen on online booking but found using the system for Literature Festival tickets quite manageable. Ed.) However, if people are concerned about using the website, or have special needs and concerns, the box office phone line will be “live” from 9am to advise. Their phone number is: 01242 850 270. Please bear in mind that as audience size is reduced this year **and** people are probably extra keen to attend live concerts after our long “drought” it would be especially sensible to book early.

Cheltenham Music Festival Society Committee. (Charity 281044)

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