



NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CHELTENHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL

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www.cmfs.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



There had been plans for the 2020 CMFS Lunch and AGM to take place at the newly refurbished King's Head in Prestbury, and similar plans has been put in place for this year's AGM. Of course due to Covid neither of these events were possible. May it be third time lucky for the 2022 AGM! On everyone's behalf, I would like to thank Rachel Tedd and Jennifer Stapleton for making the necessary arrangements for our AGM to take place via Zoom, and thanks also to all who 'Zoomed in.'

I hope all CMFS friends have enjoyed events at this year's Music Festival, and I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Camilla and her Festival team on overcoming so many logistical problems in order to arrange and execute such a splendid Festival. CMFS were able to financially support both the Awakening Shadows concert and (in association with the Aquarius sponsor group) the Consone Quartet, whose concert was broadcast on BBC Radio 3, live from the Town Hall. I would also like to highlight the wonderful concert given by BBC National Orchestra of Wales which was financially supported by proceeds of the memorial concert for Gina Wilson. Their conductor, Martyn Brabbins spoke so poignantly about the challenges faced by orchestras during Covid, and the joy his players felt about performing for a live audience again. Friends may have noticed that the memory of Graham Lockwood was again acknowledged with the Lockwood family's support for the New Generation concert given - not as advertised by the Mithras Trio, who were unable to attend due to illness, but by the delightful team of Laurence Power (viola) and Huw Watkins (piano) who gallantly stepped into the breach at short notice.

During this year's Festival, at a pre-2022 Festival meeting for Friends and Patrons at the Town Hall Camilla King announced some exciting plans for next year. Congratulations to Camilla for proposing such an enterprising programme; your energy and commitment are greatly admired. For more details about next year, please see the interview with Camilla on page two. Throughout the autumn Chapel Arts continues to host concerts arranged in collaboration with CMFS, and when Covid restrictions allowed 50% socially distanced concerts, the five concerts on June Fridays at 1 and 7pm attracted almost full attendances. The Young Musician Concerts resume from September 24th – for details please see the 'Coming Events' on the last page of this Newsletter. Free Friday 1pm lunchtime recitals by schools all over Gloucestershire also resume from the first Friday in October until the first Friday in December. For full details please see the Chapel Arts website (www.thechapelarts.com) and the Coming Events page of this Newsletter.

Please may I welcome our new members to CMFS, thank those who have retained their membership, and those who have changed their membership to Benefactor status. Your support enables the Society to maintain its level of support to the Festival. The Society stays true to its policy of supporting new music and providing financial support for those Festival needs not readily funded elsewhere. I would like to encourage our loyal current membership to introduce other like-minded people to join CMFS, thereby enabling us to continue our support for the Festival in these challenging times.

The smooth running of your Society is the result of a real collaborative effort from the officers and other Committee members. I would like to record my sincere thanks to Honorary Secretary Rachel Tedd, the Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary Jennifer Stapleton, the Newsletter Editor Frances Gabriel, and to Steve Hudson, who 'stands down' from the Committee after three years of service.

May I make special mention of Edward Gillespie's enormous contribution to the success of the Music Festival over many years. Edward relinquishes his role as Chairman of the Festival in September; this truly is the end of an era. I hope all Friends continue to remain safe and healthy and, when restrictions do eventually end, not just football terraces but concert halls and theatres will return to full capacity too!

Andrew Auster

Interview with Camilla King



I began our chat by thanking Camilla and the team on behalf of all CMFS members for the joy it has been, after such a long “drought,” to hear wonderful music live at the 2021 Festival. To this audience member everything seemed to run like clock work, from checking us all in with our QR codes to the socially distanced seating arrangements but I wondered..... were there perhaps a few “behind the scenes” moments when things got a bit frantic? Camilla said that this year the team were trying to put on a Festival in a time of huge uncertainty. It seems a long time ago now but when the programme was announced and tickets went on sale the news was all about the risks of new variants. In the event the main problem arose via people being “pinged”– staff, audiences, and perhaps most seriously, the Performers. There are always *some* cancellations - people get sick even in normal years. But in this far from normal year the biggest problem arose when the entire Merton College Oxford Choir were “pinged.” Their Director phoned Camilla at 6pm on the Sunday evening and said apologetically that they had all been pinged, and so could not be at Mixtape, where they were due to give the world premiere of a piece of music originally intended for *last* year’s Festival. Camilla was making calls all night! Mercifully, on Monday morning the Carice singers very gallantly agreed to step into the breach, even learning the new piece in time. The composer, Lillie Harris, had come down from Scotland by train and was walking to Broadcasting House for an interview on Women’s Hour when Camilla reached her by phone with the good news. So rather than having to explain on air that the piece she had come to talk about had been cancelled, she was able to do the interview and *just* reach Cheltenham in time to hear it performed in Gloucester Cathedral! Not the only cancellation due to the “pingdemic” but definitely the most stressful.

The team’s prime consideration throughout was that audiences could be confident the Festival was taking no risks with their safety. In the event several people said they went to one event, saw it was safely run, and thus felt comfortable coming to other events. There had been concerns that with the masks and the social distancing, the atmosphere in the hall might feel a little “flat” but I told Camilla that anybody I spoke with felt the Music Festival “vibe” was definitely still there. Yes, we missed the programme book and the opportunity to have a coffee and chat with old friends - and indeed Camilla said that until a couple of weeks beforehand they had hoped this would be possible, but in the end it was deemed just too risky. For many of the performers it was their first live event in a long time, and some were pretty nervous as well as excited to be back in front of an audience again and told her the welcome they got from our Cheltenham audiences was very heartening. The changes due to Covid have been hard for everyone, and both Camilla and I heard a lot of people say that being back in a concert hall listening to wonderful live music, helped give us the feeling that we might just be getting at least *some* parts of our lives back!

Plans for 2022: Camilla says they are hoping and planning that the 2022 Festival can be fully back to normal. For example, socially distancing and other safety concerns, which would have meant seating of only 30% of normal, made Pump Room concerts financially impossible this year, but next summer we intend be back there as usual. Of course, everything depends on how our (hopefully) post pandemic world gets on this winter, not just in terms of the regulations, but how confident people feel about being in large groups. The intention is to open the Festival on Friday the 8th of July with Sheku and Isata Kanneh Mason as well as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic which should be amazing. We will be having our first ever Orchestral Mixtape in Gloucester Cathedral with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. The Gould Piano Trio are coming, and there will be a performance of Mahler’s 8th in Gloucester Cathedral. The New English Ballet Theatre will be performing, probably at the Everyman and we’ll probably have another Musical Ramble, perhaps with a slightly shorter route. Tenebrae will be returning for a big 20th Anniversary concert. In terms of new music, we can expect some really interesting Contemporary Music, including a fantastic piece by Laura Bowler called “Distance,” written for Soprano and Chamber Ensemble, co-commissioned with a Scottish Festival and the Spitalfields Festival. The Chamber group – Talea - are New York based musicians who will perform **in** New York and be live streamed into the venue where the Soprano will sing live. This project grew out of the experiences of the pandemic, which has forced us all to think about how to bring people together in a more sustainable way, without hopping on planes all the time. Another project Camilla says is close to her heart, co-commissioned with Wild Plum Art, is a new song cycle for two singers and Chamber Ensemble by the Northern Irish composer Connor Mitchell. The lyrics are based on text of some moving love letters between Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears near the end of Britten’s life, which Camilla read while visiting the Red House in Aldeburgh and thought they would make a wonderful base for songs

So far, all the good news... now for some bad news; After four years with the Festival, Camilla is (very sadly for us) moving on at the end of October. She said it had been a very difficult decision to move on, as there are projects very close to her heart and it is hard to leave without seeing them realised on stage, but given the long term planning required to put on a Music Festival, that is always bound to be the way of things. Of course, I told her how very much we have appreciated her work here, especially given the uniquely challenging circumstances of the last few years. She will be much missed. Since writing to CMFS to tell us that she was leaving, Camilla has been

offered – and has accepted – an exciting new job as Executive Producer (i.e. Chief Executive) of the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. While this is very much a full time role, Camilla thinks she will be able to continue living in the south Cotswolds and so avoid disrupting schools for her sons. The Eisteddfod’s main auditorium seats around 5,000 people – and interestingly was the place Pavarotti first performed, when he came over as a child with his father. Camilla says the offer was unexpected and will doubtless be an enormous challenge. but very exciting one. The Llangollen Festival takes place during the first week of July, so she is hoping to be able to visit Cheltenham during **our** Festival and see how some of her projects have come to fruition, plus catch up with many friends made here. I wished her well, as I’m sure all CMFS members do.

CMFS on the Prom!

On Saturday 17th September CMFS took part in an incentive organised by Cheltenham Arts Council to celebrate the arts and give the local voluntary arts organisations some publicity We were one of around 25 organisations on Cheltenham’s Promenade on a lovely sunny day (thank goodness!) sharing a stall with the Cheltenham Opera Society. There was quite a buzz around the stalls and three committee members (Andrew, Hugh and Rachel) handed out leaflets and chatted to passers by in the hope that some of them, at least, would become CMFS members. We await the results with interest! Apart from the chance to publicise the vital funding that CMFS provides to the Music Festival, it was lovely to meet like minded people from across the voluntary arts spectrum – everything from local history to choirs, language societies, dancing, art, and much more. We very much hope that Cheltenham Arts Council will repeat the event next year. *Rachel Tedd*



CMFS financial support for the Music Festival:



The Cheltenham Music Festival Society continues its active support of the Festival. For several years, we have contributed to the Big Give which takes place at the end of the year. This enables Cheltenham Festival to access matched funding, which has the effect of doubling our contribution. As usual, we have pledged to give £10,000. So thank you to all Friends of the Music Festival for your annual subscriptions and occasional supplementary donations. Cheltenham Festivals are always very grateful indeed.

Our current annual subscriptions raise approximately £5,000 so we are eating into our reserves. We have enough to last for a few years but if you can persuade your musically minded friends to join in January, the Society and the Music Festival would be very happy indeed. You will find an application form on the membership page of our website (cmfsoc.org.uk) or, if you prefer, phone me on 01242 692 764 and I will post one to you. *Jennifer Stapleton, Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary*

Members reactions to Festival: A small sample

Sadly I have not been able to come to any concerts this year other than Martyn Brabbins on the 2nd July, which was superb. I did miss the Programme book which gives full details of the performances and I found trying to book online defeated me! So I look forward to next year when things might have returned to a semblance of normality. With every good wish. (Nina)

I attended some events over the weekend – all of high artistic standards including the CBSO concert and the Shostakovich event, so many thanks for that. There were however some logistical issues that undermined this, such as seeing a lot of frail elderly people having to queue outside the Town hall before the talks, very limited refreshments at events - with a very unhelpful response from the absurdly named Kudos staff when I queried this. Also the timing of events between the New Generation artist event and the Shostakovich left an insufficient 10 minutes to get from one to the other. I have never experienced these problems in my 20 years plus of attending the Festival and hope this is not a precedent as it will stop me coming. Thanks for all the work you and colleagues contribute in what I realise is a challenging financial environment. (Ian)

On July 5th I attended the Sounding North event - my favourite concert of the Festival – such different music, by turns moving, thought provoking and surprising, mostly by composers I hadn’t heard of, and so beautifully sung by the Carice Singers. Some of it was extremely demanding and they absolutely nailed it. On July 6th I attended the Spanish Rhapsody event, which I hadn’t been sure I would like, but it was a delight. Xuefei Yang on guitar was outstanding, and the interplay between her and the dancer Maria Vega was wonderful . I loved all the flamenco costumes Maria wore. A really joyous event. (Rachel)

Christine Chambers in Cheltenham – a remembrance

Christine will be remembered by many of us as an integral part of the arts fabric of Cheltenham. She sadly died in Edinburgh in late July this year

At various times and for some long periods, she chaired the Friends of the Literature Festival, the Cheltenham Arts Council and the Everyman Theatre Association, was an active supporter of the Wilson and the Holst Museum, and participated in many of Cheltenham's arts-based societies.

Christine was a regular attendee of the Music Festival and supported it in various aspects, including the Festival Academy for young musicians, and most recently as one of the group *Mary MacKenzie, Richard Walton and Friends* sponsoring chamber music concerts.



COMING EVENTS



The Chapel Arts continue to host their Friday series of Young Musicians concerts in association with CMFS.

Free Lunchtime Concerts: all these concerts featuring young local musicians begin at 1p.m. and last approximately 40 minutes. There is no need to book and there will be a retiring collection to support the musicians. The Arts café will be open serving beverages, cakes and light lunches.

29th October; Nathan Thomas (piano) and Katy (voice).

5th November; Pate's Grammar School.

12th November: Rendcomb College

19th November; Denmark Road High school Gloucester.

26th November; Bournside School

3rd December; St. Edwards School

Evening Concerts

5th November at 7p.m. The Beauregard Academy. Tickets £15 or £8 for under 18s

12th November at 7p.m. Leo Sanders and Friends. Tickets £12

18th November at 7p.m. Megan Strachan (soprano) and Barrie Cooper (piano). Tickets £10 or £6 for students

30th November at 7p.m. Kassia String Trio. Tickets £15

3rd December at 7p.m. Adam Heron (piano). Tickets £10 or £6 for students

15th December at 7p.m. A Christmas Concert with Robin Smith and guests. Tickets £15 or £9 students/ under 16

For detailed information please see their website at info@thechapelarts.com : or telephone at: 01242 691141

Cheltenham Music Society:

A series of Chamber Music concerts in the Pump room. Individual tickets on sale from the Town Hall Box Office at cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk or by phone at 01242 528764. For full details of the season see cheltmusicsoc.co.uk Single ticket prices are £20 or £25, & £5 for those under 26.

Tuesday 16th November at 7.30 p.m. The Carducci String Quartet. £20 or £25.

Thursday 2nd December at 7.20p.m. The Perpetuo String Trio.

Saturday 22nd January 2022 at 4p.m. The Takacs Quartet.

The Holst Victorian House

14th December at 7.30p.m. A Christmas Concert by local 9 part harmony group Octavo in Cheltenham College Chapel. Contact events@holstvictorianhouse.org.uk for further details.

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