

SOIRÉES MUSICALES

Autumn 2019 ~ Edition 61



*The Magazine of the BBC
Concert Orchestra's Supporters Club*

President : Ken Bruce

Vice Presidents :

Nigel Blomiley, Cynthia Fleming & Martin Loveday

Editor / Chairman : Brian Crouch

57A Chilvers Bank, Baldock Herts. SG7 6HT

Tel: 01462 892 670

Other Ed and Photos : Jenny Thomas

Treasurer : James McLauchlan

Accounts : Jenny Thomas

Minute Secretary : James Connelly

Membership Secretary : Jenny Thomas

Tours & Visits : John Harding

Website : Stephen Greenhalgh

Orchestra Representative : Marcus Broome

Soirées Musicales is the Magazine of the BBC Concert Orchestra's Supporters Club, which is an independent body set up in 1983 for the purpose of promoting and supporting the Members of the BBC Concert Orchestra. We are not affiliated to the BBC, neither do we receive any financial support from them.

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Cover Pic Club President Ken Bruce



ED LINES

From the Chairman.

People often say things go in threes – well that's certainly true when it comes to Presidents of this Club.

Firstly, we had the well-remembered ROBIN BOYLE, who held the position for many, many years. He was followed by the much loved RICHARD BAKER, who as you know, sadly died last November. Which left us needing a new President.

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that the new President of the BBC Concert Orchestra Supporters Club is KEN BRUCE.

Ken has been a keen admirer and supporter of the Orchestra, and indeed the Club, for many years, and we are delighted that he accepted our invitation to hold this position.

You can read Ken's comments overleaf, and you've probably already noticed the front cover!

Here's hoping Ken will be able to attend one of our Club events in the not too distant future.

Brian Crouch

The Club's Website.
<http://www.cosc.co.uk>

Webmaster Stephen has updated and redesigned our website. What it needs now is contributions from you, yes YOU! - And that includes BBC personnel and members of the Orchestra!

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT, KEN BRUCE

I was delighted and honoured to be asked to be President of the Concert Orchestra Club, and I'm aware that I'm following in some extremely distinguished footsteps indeed. I know it's a hard-fought field in this club, but I think I have a claim to being one of the biggest fans of this Orchestra, whose fortunes I've been following pretty much from the day I first heard them.

I've been around orchestral musicians since I was an announcer at BBC Scotland in the 70s, working (and socialising!) with members of the BBC Scottish Symphony and Scottish Radio Orchestras. Ah, those heady days of multiple BBC Orchestras; in Glasgow alone there were well over 100 musicians on staff. At the time, we full-time broadcasters and musicians felt something of a kinship, being required to perform formally and seriously, live and to order, while suppressing, all too often, an irreverent and mischievous attitude to work.

It was when I moved to London and Radio 2 in the 80s that I began to work with the Concert Orchestra on a number of Saturday Gala Concerts and eventually the opportunity to declaim the words "Friday Night is Music Night" arose in 1997. And I've been delighted to find the friendliness, fun and professionalism of these players to be just as evident as in my previous colleagues. I've been thrilled every time since then to stand in front of these fine musicians and present their work to the listening audience.

As a young man interested in getting into radio, I used to hear the CO in the late 60s and early 70s on programmes like Melodies For You, Torchlight on Music, The Radio 2 Music Club and, of course, on a Friday evening. The repertoire then was light music, show tunes and popular classics and over the years, I've been impressed at how that range of music has vastly expanded to include jazz, pop and rock as well as avant-garde works on Radio 3, all the while remaining true to the high standards of musicianship expected of this great ensemble.

I hope we'll all continue to enjoy the music together for many years to come.

© 2019 Ken Bruce

Following the announcement at the AGM that Ken was our new President, I received the following email: -

"I'm so excited that Ken is our new President – he's wonderful! John"

POSTBAG

A Selection of Letters Received

Dear All

As always, a big “thank you” for all your hard work.
So enjoy the Magazine, but felt exhausted reading the China Tour - especially getting off the train at Shanghai! Well done to all.

Best wishes
Jean Kincart.
Forest Hill.

That is due to Alex, his write ups certainly convey the mood & excitement of these tours.

Dear Jenny,

Enclosing membership renewal

Thank you very much to yourself and Brian for the lovely concerts and outings which we've enjoyed

With best wishes to the Club & its members.

Ann & David Monk
Milton Keynes.

Have your ID ready

Members are reminded that Studio Audience staff ask for ID before allowing entry to Hackney Empire, Watford Colliseum & Alexandra Palace. Please ensure you have your passport, driving licence or freedom pass ready for inspection.

Dear Brian,

First of all, thank you so much for the latest edition of "Soirées Musicales". It's always good to catch up on news of the orchestra and I learn far more from the Magazine than I do from anything Andrew ever tells me! (*Son Andrew Wood Double bass*)

I am sorry to have to tell you that John died in March. For the funeral we wanted a nice rousing piece at the end, and because John loved London so much, we chose Eric Coates' "Knightsbridge March" - played - of course by the Concert Orchestra with Barry Wordsworth conducting. With all good wishes to you and Jenny

Barbara Wood
Epsom

We extend our sincere condolences to Barbara, Andrew & family.

Dear Jenny & Brian,

Many thanks for the wonderful edition of Soirées, packed with most interesting news, views & brilliant articles. The BBC could do worse than sending a camera crew etc, with the Orchestra to show how they travel, how they perform, and how other countries and cultures appreciate this very clever orchestra.

Many thanks – sorry that travelling is getting so difficult – yes, the article from David Daniels is always so interesting and informative. Best wishes to you both,

Lawford Smith
Bury St Edmunds.

If the BBC has already done a good documentary, then it is time to do it again, just ask Alex...! Other Ed.

Dear Brian

Just to say a big “thank you” for arranging the tickets for the lovely concert at Alexandra Palace (April 16th). We all thoroughly enjoyed the show, and it brought back very happy memories for our friends who had worked there with the BBC.

Sorry we won't be with you for the AGM – family commitments I'm afraid!

All good wishes to Club members and thank you to you and Jenny. We hope to see you sometime soon.

Ann & David Monk, Pete & Pat Mathison

Dear Brian

Thank you for arranging the tour of Westminster Central Hall. John did a good job as your deputy, and rounded us all up.

I attended West Greenwich Methodist Church from 1948 until it closed in 1969, so went to many events at Central Hall over the years. Reg joined the Boy's Brigade at West Greenwich in 1949 and we were married there in 1962.

Although I had been to the Central Hall many times, I did not know its history, so was very interested in the tour.

It was a joy afterwards to hear the organ at the concert. Thank you again.

Pat & Reg Scott, Lewisham.

It was thanks to John Harding this trip was arranged. Good to know it was successful. Unfortunately, Brian & I missed it – we were “enjoying” a Transatlantic crossing to New York with storm force winds & mountainous seas! Other Ed.

Malta 2019

By the Orchestra Manager Alex Walden.

What an exciting trip we've just completed. As you know, the BBC Concert Orchestra usually does 1-2 tours a year. Usually, this is to bring a more classical music programme to audiences across the world. This time, it wasn't just the BBC Concert Orchestra being asked to perform overseas. The Maltese Ministry of Culture, along with the Maltese Tourist Board, wanted to bring a Radio 2 and Friday Night is Music Night spectacular to the people of Malta. So along we went, with producer Anthony Cherry, a rhythm section, Hannah Waddingham, Louise Dearman, Bradley Jaden, The Piano Brothers, conductor Richard Balcombe and special presenter, Charles Dance.

Experienced as we are with touring, this was a new challenge. As we started to plan the trip, we realised that there would be significant problems to transport our instruments and equipment to Malta. As we started to work out our logistics we had to consider that if the UK left the EU with no deal we just didn't know if we'd be allowed to drive through Europe with our truck. Would we be able to get insurance? Would we need work permits? The list went on.

We hoped that work permits for the orchestra wouldn't be required but we still needed to work out how to send our gear to Malta. Flying the cargo was going to be difficult. Putting aside the issue of whether we'd need a post-Brexit carnet (a cargo manifest process for customs that is needed when we travel to places outside the EU) we realised that only narrow bodied aircraft fly to Malta. This meant we wouldn't be able to get a large timp, bass drum or other large boxes into the hold.

We decided to ask the help of the Maltese Philharmonic Orchestra and borrowed their timpani, large percussion, music stands, a harp, a contra bassoon and other assorted equipment. We managed to fly some double basses, smaller percussion, music parts to play from (obviously!) and other odds and ends that would fit into small boxes. All these items could pass through a smaller door for the plane hold. Then we booked the seats on the plane for the musicians and staff plus seats for the cellos, tuba, bass clarinet and even one for the banjo (don't ask!)

The theme of the concert was a celebration of film and, in particular, films that had connections to Malta. Many movies and TV series have been shot there including Game of Thrones – hence Charles Dance presenting and Hannah

Waddingham singing - both cast members. The concert was called Lights! Cameras! Malta!

We were to play in a large open space, the Granaries in Floriana, just outside the walls of Valletta. The production team went on ahead whilst the orchestra performed in Hull and then Kings Lynn beforehand. We set off on the Monday morning (15th July). It was a job to get everyone onto the aircraft with violins, violas and other assorted instruments. We had to sacrifice hand luggage to make sure we could get our valuable instruments into the cabin as the hold is just not safe enough.

We arrived in Malta to cloudy skies. It was still hot. We got on the coaches to take us to the hotel and checked in. We were made very welcome with cocktails on arrival for the orchestra. Most were quick to drop off their bags and either try the outdoor swimming pool or explore the town.

On the Tuesday we were due to rehearse in the hotel ballroom from 1030 until 1.30pm. Afterwards the hotel provided a lovely lunch for us. The plan was to rehearse on the outdoor stage at 8pm (it's just too hot in the day - the heat would damage the instruments, not to mention the odd musician). However, we were told of an unseasonal storm that was approaching that evening. Our stage crew couldn't stop the music stands from blowing over. Therefore we had to postpone the rehearsal until the next morning. We had to be finished by midday otherwise the sun would be over the stage and it would become too hot. That meant an 8.30am start and an unplanned evening off for the orchestra.

There was so much to do in Valletta that a free night was very welcome even if it did mean an early start the next day. The musicians were marvellous and all appeared bright eyed that next morning for rehearsal. Maybe I'm biased but we sounded fantastic – which I wasn't expecting knowing how late some colleagues had stayed up the night before enjoying the town of Valletta, mentioning no names of course.

The morning rehearsal went well and we finished around 1130. The concert was at 9pm (again, once it was cooler). It was free to the 11,000 who attended and funded by the Maltese government.

Most musicians went to relax by the pool. The stage crew didn't get much time off unfortunately – they worked really hard. All percussion instruments had to be taken off stage and out of the heat.

By 9pm the sense of anticipation in the audience was palpable. We started our Friday Night is Music Night, special performance – Lights, Cameras, Malta - with the rousing John Williams Olympic Fanfare. We sounded fabulous and the audience loved us. The programme was:

R2 Friday Night is Music Night: Lights! Camera! Malta!

1) Olympic Fanfare and theme – John Williams	BBC CO
2) Midnight Express	Louise Dearman
3) A Million Dreams from 'The Greatest Showman'	Hannah Waddingham
4) Game of Thrones	BBC CO
5) The Da Vinci Code – Main theme	BBC CO
6) Stars (From Les Misérables)	Bradley Jaden
7) Lion King medley	Piano Bros (Pianos only)
8) Out of Africa	BBC CO
9) Don't Rain on My Parade	Hannah Waddingham
10) Shallow from 'A Star Is Born'	Bradley Jaden & Louise Dearman
11) Golden Voyage of Sinbad	BBC CO
12) Let It Go from Frozen	Louise Dearman

INTERVAL

13) Magnificent Seven	BBC CO
14) James Bond Medley	BBC CO
15) Nobody Does It Better – From The Spy Who Loved Me	Hannah Waddingham
16) The Deadwood Stage	Louise Dearman
17) As Time Goes By	Bradley Jaden
18) The Greatest Showman medley	Piano Brothers & BBCCO
19) Gladiator	BBC CO
20) The Place Where Lost Things Go – from 'Mary Poppins Returns'	Louise Dearman & Hannah Waddingham
21) We Are the Champions	Bradley Jaden
22) Star Wars Main Title (With Fireworks choreography)	BBC CO
23) Malta National Anthem (Off air)	BBC CO

The Maltese certainly like their fireworks and we had a few accidental launches during the concert. We weren't supposed to see any until Star Wars at the end of the performance, so I think our Radio 2 colleagues will have a challenge trying to edit out the extra bangs here and there.

The night was special and one to remember. The venue was beautiful at night time, with a church lit up in the dark sky. We were well looked after and the concert promoters held a drinks reception for the orchestra after the show. It was one of my favourite times with the BBC CO.

Anyway, back to the hotel for more celebrations. I know some stayed up beyond 6am – not me though! We didn't have to hurry the following morning which was such a luxury. Normally we're getting on a bus to head to the airport at a very early hour. We had to check out by midday, go for lunch and get on the bus for 2.30pm. Again, many stayed by the pool and just enjoyed the sunshine.

Unfortunately, our flight was delayed three hours so we were held at the airport. Once up in the air we thought we'd have some fun and 10 of our members gave a rendition of 'Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines' – what else could we play at 35,000 feet? The passengers were delighted at such a special treat. We had trumpets, violins, viola and a trombone with the bass line (thanks Dave!) Who else would attempt this other than the wonderful BBC CO?!



We arrived back in London late on the Thursday after what can only be described as a magnificent and triumphant trip to Malta. Who knows, maybe we'll be asked back next year! Listen out in September for the broadcast on Radio 2.

© 2019 Alex Walden

Didn't somebody say in the last Magazine that we should have a good write up of the trials & tribulations of taking the orchestra abroad? Well here you are, and our grateful thanks to Alex for enlightening us all!!

An alternative view

By Marcus Broome

After a very busy weekend for the orchestra with two performances at the Hull New Music Biennial and then straight on to the King's Lynn Festival (nearly 400 miles on the road!), it was an early check in at Heathrow for our flight on Air Malta to Valletta.

There were a few tired faces on the plane as we had only had a few hours at home after King's Lynn before we had to arrive at the airport before 7 a.m. However, once we were on our way, we were very well looked after and upon our arrival at The Grand Hotel Excelsior in Malta, it was clear that we were going to have a good time on the island. That evening the orchestra was free to relax at the pool side bar or take a dip in Mediterranean as the hotel had an excellent outdoor swimming pool and private access to the sea. There were plenty of fine restaurants and bars in the town which was only a few minutes stroll away.

Tuesday 16 July - The next morning we had a three-hour rehearsal in the air-conditioned Ballroom of the Hotel. This was because the concert venue (Granaries Square, Floriana) was in the open air and it would have been too hot and sunny to rehearse there during the main part of the day. Conductor Richard Balcombe was “at the helm” and steered us efficiently through a programme of film music. The show was titled Radio 2 Friday Night is Music Night: Lights! Camera! Malta! It featured song hits from recent 'big hit' movies, together with music from films made in Malta, plus all-time great movie scores and the occasional classical masterpiece. The singers were Louise Dearman, Bradley Jaden and Hannah Waddingham. There was also a duo of pianists called 'The Piano Brothers’

We were due to have another rehearsal that evening on the stage at the venue but as the winds had picked up considerably, this was not possible. It would have been chaos on stage with music and stands flying around, so we were forced to go and enjoy ourselves at the hotel and in town once again! You can imagine our disappointment at not being able to work!!

Wednesday 17 July - The wind had subsided! Oh dear! The rehearsal that we missed the night before was rescheduled to this morning and we were on stage at 8:30 am to play through the music on stage and to give the sound engineers

time to balance the microphones and test the sound system for the anticipated audience of 11,000! We finished rehearsing before the heat had built up too much and then it was time to head back to the pool and sun loungers to rest before the performance that evening.

The concert was a great success and it was a perfect evening to perform in a beautiful setting. Granaries Square looked stunning under the starry Mediterranean sky and our final piece, Star Wars Main Title Music by John Williams, was accompanied by choreographed fireworks.



The icing on the cake was a drinks reception held after the concert in the balmy Maltese evening weather, to which the whole orchestra were invited. It was a perfect way to round off the event.

© 2019 Marcus Broome.

Our thanks to Alex & Marcus for their contributions. Two such differing viewpoints add another dimension. As they say there are always two sides to every story. We've got both! Anyone else wish they had been there?

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The Orchestra has a Facebook page.

Visit: www.facebook.com/bbccconcertorchestra.

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Club members' visit to The Methodist Central Hall, Westminster - Sunday May 19th

It never ceases to amaze me what architectural treasures one can pass without ever noticing their grandeur and beauty; certainly, one such case is Methodist Central Hall, right across from the main entrance to Westminster Abbey (and which provides THE vantage position for media cameras on significant state occasions, when the BBC erects a broadcast booth high above the street).

We were fortunate on this occasion in that our visit coincided with a concert given by The British Association of Christian Brass Bands, and immediately after our tour we were royally entertained by them.



Methodist Central Hall

The following best describes the buildings inception and its raison d'etre, and is transcribed or paraphrased from the hall's guide and history brochure.

'The Methodist movement dates from the 18th century. Its origins lie with the brothers John and Charles Wesley and a group of friends, who gathered daily for Bible study, prayer, and Holy Communion. The name 'Methodist' was accorded to them because of their regular pattern of devotion and disciplined lives.

John travelled to America as a missionary, but failed in his endeavours there. After his return, he travelled extensively, allegedly preaching some 40,000 sermons, whilst Charles became famous for writing hymns (around 6,000). John was responsible for the seeds of ministry which provided the roots of the American Methodist Church. After his death in 1791, the Methodist organisation formally broke away from the Church of England, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church came into being. During the 19th century, several groups broke away, but in 1932 the Methodist Church as we now know it was consolidated. Its current global membership is in excess of 72 million.

At the end of the 19th century, a gulf existed between the Church and the poorest sections of society. The 'Forward Movement' was the response of the Wesleyan Methodists to this issue, and between 1886 and 1900 about 40

Missions were established in major towns and cities; they did much to alleviate the worst effects of poverty. These Missions were often called 'Central Halls' and were intended to be welcoming to those not used to churches. They therefore were designed with little religious symbolism and no fixed religious furniture. Spaces in the buildings could be used for both religious services, but also for secular gatherings like lectures, conferences and concerts; this varied usage continues to this day.



Over the past century, Methodist Central Hall Westminster has fulfilled the role of a major church as well as the headquarters for the national Methodist Church. Its creation arose from 'The Million Guinea Fund' (also known as the 20th Century Fund), which was incepted to celebrate the centenary of the death of John Wesley. The

fund raised £1,073,682 (there are fascinating handwritten ledgers, known as the Historic Roll, some volumes of which are on display, showing the identity of every single donor, including children (who did not have to donate a guinea). From the fund, £250,000 was earmarked to purchase suitable space in London, which is now Central Methodist Hall Westminster. The site of the Royal Aquarium was purchased for £200,000, and the building cost a further £155,000 to erect. This left a deficit of more than £100,000, which took more than 60 years to pay off. The remainder of the fund had been used to buy land for and erect Wesleyan Chapels, Sunday Schools and Mission Halls in the UK, to expand the church's educational work, finance missionaries at home and overseas, and create a Children's Home, which is known now as Action for Children.

The interior of the building is quite glorious, as you can see from the photographs. It



gleams in its marble splendour, and includes a beautiful central auditorium, which can seat 2,300, with an equally impressive organ, and a statue of John Wesley. We were told that when it was relocated within the building and unveiled by The Queen, she remarked that this was probably the only occasion when she was taller than the life-sized statue she was unveiling.



The dome above the auditorium is a tremendous feat of engineering (as well as a thing of great beauty), in that it is self-supporting, and second in size in comparable construction to only the Victoria State Library in Melbourne. The organ dates to 1912 (the year the hall was opened), and boasts 64 stops. Past Directors of Music include the late Dr. William Lloyd Webber; his son Andrew and Tim Rice staged the first public performance of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' on this very stage in 1968.



The Party

After our tour, we reconvened in the central auditorium for the brass band concert. We all thoroughly enjoyed a very varied program of wonderful music

lasting for more than an hour, the content of which ranged from religious music, through the West End, and extending to some stirring marches.



BAND & ORGAN



All in all, a fascinating and highly welcoming venue – one which I had arranged with scant knowledge of the background, and which well and truly exceeded my own expectations. Admittance is free (donations are welcome), and I'd certainly recommend a private visit; I doubt anyone would be disappointed with this gem of a building.

© 2019 John Harding

Thanks John, for arranging & reporting the tour, which was much appreciated by attendees.

**The next Club event will be a
SATURDAY SPECIAL
on Saturday October 5th
at 7.00 pm.
Don't miss out!
*See the back cover for full details.***



PROMS DISAPPOINT BUT CDs DELIGHT!

Every year I always obtain the BBC Proms Guide and the first task is to look up what the Orchestra is performing and I usually manage to make it for one of the concerts. This year my preferred choice of 150th anniversary of Sir Henry Wood was on a Saturday and there is no train back to Doncaster after 10.00pm so I opted for "1969 - The Sound of a Summer" "described in the Guide as exploring the film and popular music of 1969 - the BBC Concert Orchestra under Stephen Bell presents a typically wide-angled view, excerpts from films "Battle of Britain", "The Italian Job" etc.. But no details of pieces and artists other than the Moog Ensemble. Yes, we all got their LP of "Switched on Bach" but it does sound dated now! Only when the "Radio Times" appeared did I find that the bulk of the concert was to be given over to "soul" singers the only piece which appealed was the Walton "Battle of Britain" suite. In the event you may recall that the previous day 25th July was the hottest on record resulting in travel disruption so I did not make it and listened on the radio. I was glad I didn't make it - what a waste of the Orchestra - and the presenter Lemn Sissay (who IS he?) I found irritating in the extreme. What with "Rapp" and "Grime" now featured routinely I fear for the future of the Proms "Dumbing Down" isn't a strong enough description!

If anyone doubted our Orchestra is probably the most versatile in the land you only have to hear 4 new CDs I have come across.

Saxophonist Jess Gillam shot to fame as a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the year 2016 and of course appeared at the last night of the Proms last year. "Rise" is the title of her recording for DECCA (483 4862) with the Concert Orchestra under Richard Balcombe and several principals are featured in a typically wide-ranging programme from the early music of John Dowland, baroque of Marcello through Milhaud to Nyman, Shostakovich, and even David Bowie! Something for everyone in this entertaining collection from a much-loved young lady!

Again, for DECCA (483 4125) the Orchestra this time accompanies opera star Renee Fleming in her album "Broadway! Now often opera singers performing this repertoire ends in something of a disaster however on this occasion it is obvious that Renee Fleming has the feel for this music and also

whilst there are songs from familiar works on this CD like "South Pacific" and "The Sound of Music" there are some new ones (to me) from shows like "Red Hot and Blue" or "Nine" so you may find some new music to enjoy.

Turning to more serious music it appears that there is a resurgence of interest in the works of Walter Braunfels for we are now onto volume 4 of his music with Johannes Wildner conducting the BBC C.O. on DUTTON EPOCH (CDLX 7355) You may recall from previous reviews that Braunfels was born in Frankfurt in 1882 his mother was a niece of Spohr and a great friend of Clara Schumann and Walter had quite a successful career until 1933 when the Nazis dismissed him from all his positions as he was half-Jewish. The works on this record are from the later years (he died in 1954) and are an attractive Suite in E minor, a Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola, 2 Horns and strings and probably his last work "Scottish Dances for Piano and Orchestra" with Australian pianist Piers Lane as distinguished soloist.

Thinking of things antipodean brings me to my last disc and what a find! (well I think so!) I am experiencing a renewed interest in jazz due to our local HMV opening a large vinyl department where you can browse and I have bought quite a few jazz LPs. However, looking at some jazz CDs I came upon a recording made jointly by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio 3 with the great Australian jazz trumpeter James Morrison and the BBC Concert Orchestra with Keith Lockhart in Abbey Road Studios. ABC Jazz (481 5433) "The Great American Songbook" has many old favourites but as you have never heard them before. I recommend you play the last track first- "A Foggy Day in London Town" finds all concerned in high octane mode - I am reminded of the Prom from 2010 when Keith Lockhart ended the concert with "42nd Street" and Alasdair Molloy, Steve Whibley and co. performed with tap shoes on sticks - now that WAS a Prom to remember - for all the right reasons!

© 2019 David Daniels.

Thanks Dave, as always, an interesting and informative article. Just as a point of interest that Prom with the tap shoes featured on the cover of Soirées edition 42 Autumn 2010, View it on our website.

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The Orchestra has a Facebook page.

Visit: www.facebook.com/bbcconcertorchestra.

The 37th AGM in brief,

Well not quite as brief as usual, for the benefit of those who missed it

This year's AGM attracted the lowest number of members ever. This was partly due to the fact we were incorrectly told by the letting person that the only available date was Easter Saturday, when many of our regular attendees had Religious and other holiday commitments, and were unable to attend. So, for those of you who couldn't manage it, this is what you missed!

Chairman Brian welcomed the 22 members attending, and accepted apologies for 25 absentees.

Minutes of the 36th AGM circulated, agreed and signed by Chairman.

Brian was re-elected Chairman, by unanimous vote. Apart from Jan Mentha, who had previously said that although she was willing to continue as Legal Adviser as required, was unable to attend meetings, all other Committee members has expressed their willingness to continue in their posts, and were duly re-elected.

Brian said the ticket allocation remained at 60 per concert. This was adequate as the number of members who were able to attend had reduced somewhat. There were also very few live concerts, but most members had attended at least one in the year. The refurbished Alexandra Palace Theatre was now in use, and hopefully more concerts would be held there.

Jenny said the decline in membership continued, mainly due to health and mobility problems although several had died. The lack of concerts made recruitment difficult too. Membership now stood at 39 single and 67 joint members. A total of 173. Jenny thanked those people who, although unable to attend concerts and events, retained their membership out of loyalty to the Orchestra.

On the subject of the Club Magazine, this had been well received as always and Jenny thanked Dave Daniels, Alex Walden and Marcus Broome for their valuable input.

Treasurer Jim had been unable to attend the meeting, but the statement of accounts had been circulated and adopted. The Club account stood at £5,358 a deficit of £2,548 on the previous year. This had been anticipated due to declining membership and the increased cost of the Magazine. Funds would be adequate for 2-3 years.

Marcus said Alexandra Palace would be the home of the Concert Orchestra after Watford closed in 2020, and 50% of the concerts were planned there. Savings would be required from the BBC Orchestras to cover the cost of the over 75s licences not

being government funded, but Controller of Radio Alan Davie was confident there would not be a major impact on the orchestra, although fewer concerts next year. Radio3 continues to have a greater involvement with British Light Music. Later in the year there will be concerts at Queen Elizabeth Hall and 2 Proms appearances. There will be 6 performances of Porgy & Bess with Grange Park Opera in the summer. Recruitment for vacancies in the Orchestra are ongoing.

Stephen said the website had been operational for 10 years, and was visited about 1000 times a month. Much had been done to update the content and all Club Magazines were now available. He would be investigating the possibility of audio files, possibly sound clips from concerts although copyright would need to be investigated.

Following a very successful visit to the London Palladium in September 18, John hoped that a return visit could be arranged later in the year. He was currently arranging a visit to Westminster Central Hall with Brass Band and Organ recitals. He asked members for suggestions for suitable trips he could investigate.

Following the sad loss of our President Richard Baker last year, an invitation had been extended to Ken Bruce to accept the role. (Ken's reaction was favourable, but at the time of the AGM he had not officially accepted the post) Brian said he was hoping for a Club evening with Anthony Wills and Geoff Bowden to be arranged for a Saturday in the Autumn.

MARCUS & PETER

The meeting was closed at 7.40pm

After a short refreshment break, members were entertained in the adjoining hall with an excellent recital by Marcus Broome and Peter Bussereau.

Their repertoire of violin solos, Bizet's Carmen, Ave Maria, Meditation and Monte's Czardas were interspersed by Duos of Folk Songs from the aptly named "Fiddling Around book 2" "The Wedding of William and Mairi" (Scottish) "Down by the Salley Gardens" (Irish). And "Kemp's Jig" (English). Altogether a remarkable and memorable performance by these two excellent musicians.



The Director has the Last Word – August 2019



So just as Soirees Musicales was going off to the printers last March, the CO found itself in the public (and Private) eye as part of news that Radio 2 was further reducing. Norman Lebrecht in his *Slipped Disc* blog was particularly gloomy, predicting the demise of the orchestra. He did print our Press Release on the subject though: -

A BBC Spokesman said: *'The portfolio of work for the BBC Concert Orchestra has a number of strands which, can and do change over time. We are increasing their workload in some areas while reducing in others – none of this calls into question the orchestra's future. The BBC has made no decision on the free licences for over-75s and as we have said we'll make an announcement in June. Anything beyond that is pure speculation.'*

The spokesman added: *'The BBC Concert Orchestra will still appear in Friday Night Is Music Night, it's just the number of original programmes with the concert orchestra within that programme which will be slightly reduced.'*

As we now know, the BBC has subsequently made a proposal for the over 75s licence fee. If that goes through, any severe reduction in BBC income (that could call into question a huge range of BBC activity, including orchestras) will not happen. Further ahead is the question of what will happen to the concept of the Licence fee itself when the current settlement ends in 2021 and the Royal Charter itself ends in December 2027. Of course, any new arrangements such as a subscription service that sees income to the BBC reduce would again call into question what the BBC actually does.

Another thing which has happened since then was the CO's trip to Malta for special *Friday Night is Music Night*. For some years the BBC has made the *Proms* brand available for concerts outside the

UK and such was the success of Malta that I hope more opportunities will follow. Our next foreign outing is to Paris next March in the new venue *La seine Musicale*, though we do have conversations taking place regarding other possibilities.

www.laseinemusicale.com/spectacles-concerts/bbc-concert-orchestra_e611

The rest of 2019 sees a next series of own promoted concerts at the Southbank Centre alongside some special concerts for Radio 2 and film music engagements at Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls. Beyond the M25 we are playing at Snape Maltings (August 28 and December 21), Derngate Northampton (October 13), Saffron Hall (December 4).

There will also be some BBC Studio Invitations concerts, so do look out for those on the BBC Shows and Tours page.

www.bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/shows/

There are a number of vacant positions in the orchestra and recruitment is ongoing in the viola, cello, clarinet, trombone and harp departments. We are just waiting to formally confirm a new No 2 in the cellos and some of the other vacancies are now down to a shortlist of candidates.

August 29th 2019 will be the 17th anniversary of the last time we played at the Golders Green Hippodrome and whilst we have established a base at Watford Colosseum and Town Hall, to my mind there has always been an air of temporariness about it. As we are definitely not part of the BBC Symphony and Singers' new building at the Olympic Park (aka East Bank), the CO is finally able to develop its own future path. We have been delighted to work in the newly re-opened Alexandra Palace Theatre this past year and I am in the midst of negotiations to make that a permanent location for us. With its BBC history, North London location, diverse local community and an inspiring space to make music in – I believe this is a wonderful venue for the CO to be based. More news when I have it.

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SATURDAY SPECIAL.

Finchley Methodist Church, Ballards Lane N3 1NB

Saturday October 5th 7.00 pm

Doors open 6.30 pm Admission FREE

Members are invited to attend an evening of nostalgia.

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO ROBERT DOCKER

Pianist, Composer & Arranger who regularly appeared on
FNIMN with the orchestra.

Presented by BBC Radio Producer, Anthony Wills
Also

“REVIEWING HIS SITUATION”

An audio visual presentation on the life
and music of LIONEL BART

By Geoff Bowden & David Reed

There will be a refreshment interval.

Getting there.

Finchley Methodist Church is situated on the corner of Ballards Lane and Essex Park. There is limited unrestricted parking in adjacent streets. Buses 13, 82, 125 & 460 stop outside. Nearest underground is Finchley Central on the High Barnet branch of the Northern Line. Exit via the ticket hall. Cross over at the main road, turn right and the church is a 5-minute walk from the station. Alternatively, you can pick up any *DOUBLE* (not single) decker bus from outside Tesco, Church is 2nd stop.

Non-members are welcome to come along, so bring your
friends.

There is NO CHARGE for this event but there will be a
retiring collection in aid of Church funds