

# CHAMBER ORCHESTRAS MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2006, 10.30 – 3.30pm  
CAVERSHAM ROOM, CADOGAN HALL, LONDON



Chaired by Antony Lewis-Crosby *Managing Director, London Mozart Players*

## R E P O R T

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Anthony Lewis – Crosby introduced the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves. He then asked for suggested questions for the speakers later in the meeting.

Russell Jones, *Director, Association of British Orchestras* informed attendees that the annual conference would be held in Manchester this year, hosted by the Manchester Camerata, Hallé, BBC Philharmonic and Northern Chamber Orchestra. Each would hold their own concert. The conference timings had moved back 24 hours and would take place from Thursday to Saturday, mostly located at the Town Hall. There would also be a one day education event at the Royal Northern College of Music called Early Years and Starting Careers.

He then added that the programme went out in the 11 November issue of Classical Music and that the sessions were produced in order for managers to make day trips, saving costs. Speakers would include Peter Hewitt, *Chief Executive, Arts Council England*, who would be discussing his 'Arts in the Core Script' campaign and Charlotte Higgins, *The Guardian* would be chairing. Russell went on to explain that the Early Years and Starting Careers day would establish the relationship between orchestras and conservatoires, whilst also focusing on the outreach work of other sectors. Other key topics of the conference would be Technology, Individual Giving, Branding and the return of Mission Money Models. A middle management academy day would also take place, funded by Arts and Business New Partners and haysmacintyre. Russell highlighted that prices were frozen at last year's rate and that Classic FM had renewed their sponsorship of the conference, also offering bursaries to first-time conference attendees.

### Listen Up! 2006

Owen Mortimer, *Projects Manager, ABO* informed attendees that many felt Radio 3 had more of an impact on this year's festival, as it seemed like a broadcasting project. Edward Blakeman spoke at the ABO board meeting and stated that Roger Wright feels that there is not enough support from the orchestras to continue on with Listen Up! In a positive light, the month of broadcasting was invaluable but two years notice for some orchestras is not enough time. Time and dates were issues that were frequently raised.

Musicians On Call went very well and around 84 visits took place. If there was to be a Listen Up! 3 then it would have to be relevant to orchestras. Although there were only two live concerts over the five week period, this seemed to work well with other recordings being played two/three days later. The ABO's aim was to get orchestras beyond the Radio 3 listeners, hence the point of National Orchestra Week in bringing classical music to a wider audience. A steering group would be meeting soon to discuss all these issues.

### Orchestras Live update

David Richardson, *Director, Eastern Orchestral Board (EOB)* explained that the current season included 52 concerts, from which new promoters and orchestras had been brought in. A merger had been piloted with organisations outside and inside the Eastern regions, with work being done in Lincolnshire (Midlands) and Humberside (Yorkshire).

There had been closer monitoring of promoters' performances with help from the box office and a look at pricing to help the Arts Council's money go further. Money was also being received from Hamlyns and other organisations. David highlighted that the balance had to shift to orchestras making money not the promoters

and that the more effort management put in the better. Some orchestras had found that promoters were disconnected from their local authorities. It was possible to have a direct agreement with EOB, which some orchestras were looking in to.

Plans for the 07/08 season had not yet surfaced but the expansion of concerts next year was expected to coincide with the expansion of the EOB. Funding was also being reviewed as it would be difficult to spread across all chamber ensembles. EOB had commissioned a consultant to convert EOB in to a limited company, which would allow the EOB to make different partnerships and not be solely reliable on local authorities. It would be important to take a strategic view and an active role, which was emphasised by the appointment of Stuart Bruce and Jan Ford as Partnership Managers. There would also be an increase in staff with a communications manager and administrative assistant joining the team. These changes would come into full effect in April 2007, when the EOB will be renamed Orchestras Live!

## Relationships with Management Artists

Mark Ashley Newbanks, *Senior Artist Manager, Askonas Holt Limited* introduced himself to attendees and gave a brief background. He then went on to explained that Askonas Holt have one office in London. Orchestras should use Askonas Holt to :

- ❖ Talk about orchestras' needs, expectations etc and use the management company/manager as a resource.
- ❖ Build partnerships with artists
- ❖ Provide feedback. It was important to sell the orchestra, keep up-to-date via bulletins etc.

Mark continued by explaining that working with a chamber orchestra is more flexible than symphonic orchestras as they do not have residencies. Establishing a relationship with young conductors/artists early on can have a positive effect on an ensemble. Many older conductors still go back to their first orchestras.

Mark pointed out two crucial things:

- ❖ When it comes to publicity, let them know as soon as possible about any marketing material needed as it takes time to collate up-to-date information on the artists.
- ❖ Point out any changes clearly

## Chamber orchestras' lobbying for Comprehensive Spending Review

DCMS review would be published in late summer 2007. Arts Council England would decide what their priorities would be. This would be based on information from the orchestras, including what increases in funding had achieved. Russell was intending to produce a document for the Treasury Minister to be handed out at the conference. A draft copy would be circulated before Christmas.

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra VAT case had split the ABO, with Michael Henson being the Chairman. Orchestra of St Johns and City of London Sinfonia (CLS) were still awaiting their cases' results.

Christopher Lawrence, *General Manager, Academy of Ancient Music* noted that promoters who are exempt had been driving down fees because they cannot claim VAT. They would not expect it on prices from orchestras.

## Acoustic Shells

Russell went to China with the CLS and found that the use of an acoustic shell enhanced the event. There was a suggestion that they could be used in chamber orchestra venues to enhance performances.

## Noise update

Owen Mortimer informed the meeting that the new regulations would be enforced from April 2008 (see handout). A second edition of *A Sound Ear* would be produced, with a set of guidelines for all music counterparts.

Antony Lewis–Crosby, London Mozart Players, asked who would be responsible for carrying the musicians hearing passport. Owen Mortimer responded that there would be regulations on employers but freelance musicians would have to take control, updating their passports as and when. Opting out would not be an option.

There was a recommendation that orchestras record the level of sound at concerts with a dosimeter. This level should be kept for the orchestras' records, together with how and when it was recorded. The exposure level would be set at a limit of 85, meaning that employers would have to provide hearing protection for higher levels of exposure. Hearing tests would have to be undertaken on an annual basis and recorded. Without these annual tests musicians would find it hard to obtain work.

The Musicians Benevolent Fund would be providing funding for Alison to provide training for symphonic players. This would also be required for chamber orchestras as well.

The Birmingham Royal Ballet had bought an acoustic pit that cut noise levels for musicians by 10/15%. The sound remained unchanged to the audience.

## Publishers' hire charges

Stephen Navin, *Chief Executive, Music Publishers Association (MPA)* introduced himself to the meeting and gave a brief background into the MPA, which was now in its 125<sup>th</sup> year.

Attendees then proceeded to list issues that they were facing:

- ❖ Costs of hiring music – small ensembles playing in small venues have to pay the same costs as symphonic/larger orchestras. The cost is decided by the duration of the piece not the scale of the performance.
- ❖ Several problems were highlighted with Boosey & Hawkes, included their hire costs, resulting in many orchestras choosing not to use works produced by them.
- ❖ If the prices decreased, more music would be used but there are issues largely with copyright music.
- ❖ When you commission a work, there should be room for negotiation as some pieces cannot be commissioned because the publisher's charges are too high.
- ❖ Quality of hire material was said to be not in good condition, especially from Concorde. Several orchestras noted that parts were not readable.

Stephen noted that hire libraries play an important part in the publishers' role so if works were going out on a regular basis, this would make it quite difficult to maintain in good condition. Stephen added that the condition of parts is an important issue and the hire charges for smaller orchestras would have to be looked at further.

Several members informed Stephen that they were self-funded orchestras with no Arts Council funding so hire charges would make a huge difference to their budgets. They insisted that it was important to work closely with the MPA to create a better relationship.

**Action :** *Organise a meeting between the ABO and MPA to discuss these issues.*

## AOB

Christopher Lawrence noted that the ABO needed to keep informed on the views of Chambers Orchestras. He was not sure if Orchestras Live was the way forward and suggested that Hilary Boulding should talk to Chamber Orchestras in regard to the Arts Council England's strategy.

*Action : Invite Hilary Boulding to next meeting.*