

CHAMBER ORCHESTRAS MEETING

WEDNESDAY 11 APRIL 2007, 10.30 – 3.30pm
BECHSTEIN ROOM, WIGMORE HALL, LONDON



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

R E P O R T

Anthony Lewis – Crosby introduced the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves and put forward the main issues at the top of their agenda.

ABO Conference 2008 – Brighton

Thorben Dittes *Projects Manager, ABO* confirmed the ABO Conference dates as Thursday 17th to Saturday 19th January 2008 in Brighton. The feedback from the online survey of Manchester's conference was extremely positive. One of the issues raised was how to make the Conference more relevant to Chamber Orchestras. Russell Jones *Director, ABO* commented that the idea of a committee/advisory panel (borrowed from the IAMA conference) was currently being discussed.

Anthony Lewis-Crosby *Managing Director, London Mozart Players* pointed out that fundraising was a major issue for the Chamber Orchestras at present. Elaine Baines Robins *General Manager, City of London Sinfonia* thought it would be useful to have a Charity comparison on fundraising as the USA model was not relevant in the UK. Russell highlighted that the culture of individual giving could be changed here if we asked and thanked in a more positive way.

General thoughts were that someone from outside the Arts sector could speak at the conference, especially with regards to individual giving. Anthony Lewis-Crosby suggested that it would be a positive step if Arts and Business were to become more actively involved in encouraging people with gift aid.

Thorben then enquired about management training for smaller orchestras. Simon Funnell *Chief Executive, Orchestra of St. John's* spoke of the management reshaping that their Chairman (Peter Cousin) had done, based on his business experience.

David Butcher *Britten Sinfonia* asked if the conference could have a session devoted to successful models for writing a good website as a marketing tool for the orchestra, with advice on updating specific content to keep people re-visiting and interested (such as downloads and podcasts). Simon Funnell was concerned about the legal issues concerning performing rights online and agreed that a conference session highlighting the successful working practices would be of great benefit.

Russell Jones thought that John Smith from the MU and the Performing Rights Society would be useful to approach for advice here.

Peter Helps then asked if the Chairmen of orchestras could have their own separate meeting at the conference.

Action: *Thorben to investigate the possibility of having a Trustees/Boards day at the Conference and a possible discussion session on website management, including downloads*

Noise

As of the 6th April 2008 the new Health and Safety Noise Regulations would be enforced in the UK. The public consultation for the Health & Safety guidelines would be open between July and September 2007 when feedback should be given on the proposed changes.

Thorben announced that a second edition of *A Sound Ear*, containing a review of what had been done with individual case studies, would be published in early 2008 and launched at the Brighton conference in January.

The Musicians Union would be launching a Musicians Hearing Passport for freelance musicians to keep a record of their noise exposure. One of the biggest concerns regarding the monitoring of individual passports was where responsibility lies for freelance musicians.

With regards to the European perspective, with the exception of Holland, the rest of Europe had yet to even begin to consider the issue of noise levels on their agenda. In Australia they had resolved the problem by having certain sections on a rota, i.e. different musicians perform in the run of an opera/ballet.

Thorben explained that in the light of the chamber orchestras' financial situation and the freelance status of their musicians, the Musicians Benevolent Fund had agreed to fund a series of training workshops for groups of musicians from various chamber orchestras, rather than whole individual orchestras, as had taken place with the symphony orchestras. These musicians would then disseminate the information to the rest of their colleagues. To ensure the success of these workshops a fixed fee would need to be decided upon between the various orchestras then backed by the MU so all players would receive the same remuneration.

Action : Russell would agree a rate with the MU (in the region of £50 for a 3 hour training session) at the ABO/MU meeting on the 3rd May.

Action: Thorben to co-ordinate some suitable dates in three regional locations to hold the training workshops.

Orchestras Live!

David Richardson, *Director, Orchestras Live*, introduced the new organisation that was an independent charitable company rather than the membership organisation that the Eastern Orchestral Board had been. He explained that the 2007/08 planning was underway and they were currently working with promoters. There was no intention to alter the overall relationship with orchestras going forward. When asked if further expansion was planned, David responded that they would still operate in the East and East Midlands.

With the 34% cut in Arts Council funding several orchestras were finding touring funding extremely difficult, if not impossible to come by. An example was given whereby the Arts Council had suggested that applications be made to Orchestras Live for this funding. David was clear that the two schemes were entirely different and it was also noted that the ACE national touring scheme did enable orchestras to tour in different regions of the country that Orchestras Live did not operate in .

MU/ABO Agreement

Russell updated the group from recent meetings with the MU. A touring best code of practice document was wanted by the MU, to give both musicians and orchestras clear guidelines for touring both in the UK and abroad.

Together with Timothy Walker, *London Philharmonic Orchestra* and Elaine Baines Robins, *City of London Sinfonia*, Russell had met with the MU to discuss the inflationary figure to be applied to the 2007/08 agreement. The MU had requested a 4.6% increase, based on the Retail Price Index from February. Further discussions would now take place to get an agreement around the 3% figure.

Other items discussed with the MU included changes to the portage rate, the congestion charge and the possibility of a three year deal being reached after the Comprehensive Spending Review outcome.

Chamber Orchestras Lobbying for Comprehensive Spending Review

Russell informed the group that after the success with the National Insurance campaign, Richard Jukes, the political lobbyist, had been engaged by the ABO board to continue his work, this time to influence the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Feedback from the Chancellor and The Treasury suggested that the politicians only hear from the sector in times of need. Russell encouraged all orchestras to write letters to The Chancellor to highlight how beneficial the funding from government was. The ABO would also be writing to the DCMS and The Treasury on behalf of all orchestras.

Action: ALL chamber orchestras to write letters with their individual success stories of grants or other types of Arts funding to local MPs (and copy letter to Russell).

AOB

Roy McEwan, *Managing Director, Scottish Chamber Orchestra*, raised the issue of Health and Safety when orchestra's family members are brought in to rehearsals (i.e. children during school holidays or new babies). Dawn Day, *Academy of St Martin's in the Fields*, had experienced a similar problem and always asked the musicians to have a supervisor with the child.

A discussion then took place about Cadogan Hall and people's experiences. All felt that the terms had become very commercial and too expensive. The Orchestra of St John's no longer had their concert series there.

Action : Antony Lewis-Crosby to set up a meeting with Cadogan Hall to discuss the orchestras' concerns and to broker a more successful partnership going forward.. Elaine, Dawn and Simon were also interested in attending this meeting.

Next meeting : To be confirmed