

# CHAMBER ORCHESTRAS MEETING

WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2008, 10.30 – 3.30pm  
ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE, LONDON



Chaired by **Antony Lewis-Crosby** *Managing Director, London Mozart Players* and  
**Bob Riley** *ABO Board Member and General Manager, Manchester Camerata*

## R E P O R T

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Antony Lewis-Crosby introduced the meeting (the best attended Chamber Orchestra SMM so far) and invited attendees to introduce themselves and say what their priorities at their organisation are at present.

Mark Pemberton introduced the new members of staff at the ABO and asked Keith to talk about his background at the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and then explain Noise Regulations in relation to Chamber Orchestras.

### Noise:

Freelancers are jointly responsible for the level of noise exposure they are exposed to. They should tell the employer about their exposure before taking up an engagement as you can only look after the designated time they are under your employment. However, you need to be able to provide them, if asked, with their noise level exposure.

If exposed to over 80 Db you are required to put in hearing surveillance, do a risk assessment and make ear plugs available if asked for. These measurements should be averaged out first over an eight hour period and then over a week, put into a noise calculator on the HSE website and then the averages taken from the five day week. 85 Db is the upper action level – you need to take measurements and must do what is reasonably practical e.g. experiment with spacing, seating configurations, screens, risers. Hearing Passports are the freelancer's responsibility.

Peter Helps (*Sinfonia Viva*) explained that all their contracts offer basic earplugs free of charge and discounted rates on better models are also available to musicians. Information re hearing measurements can be available through general rehearsals and website.

Bob Riley (*Manchester Camerata*) is piloting a chamber orchestra programme for Healthy Orchestra Charter.

Sharing measurement equipment through the ABO is not an option as it is very sensitive and has to be calibrated every 2-3 years. However, it was agreed that a database of measurements could be shared but it should be remembered this is relevant to the particular venues they were measured in. £6000 would purchase a Badge Kit (containing chargers, software etc) and 10 badges, £4000 will buy a Badge Kit and 4 badges, while a basic data-logging meter can be bought for £250. For more information contact Keith Motson (ABO).

### Suggestions:

- 1) Peter Helps will give a reading template to Mark Pemberton.
- 2) Orchestras to look at clubbing together to buy equipment at reduced rates, as in Scotland.

### ABO Conference

Following 2008 Conference feedback it was suggested that there should, if possible, be a chamber orchestras representative in all the sessions at the conference. Attendees were also told that planning has begun for the 2009 Conference (25<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> February in Cardiff) so members need to tell the ABO of topics /speakers they would like to hear about / from.

### Suggestions:

- 1) Strategic planning
- 2) Guests from outside the industry as long as it is not used as a marketing opportunity for them.
- 3) Touring – invite groups such as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra / The Australian Chamber Orchestra / The French Chamber Orchestra to the conference as they would give an international perspective and share some similar problems.
- 4) Carbon Footprint - How do we tour responsibly?
- 5) Conductors e.g. Thierry Fischer? ... educating conductors in their scheduling

### Future Strategies for Chamber Orchestras

Chamber orchestras need to get their message across to the public in a much better way – should this be at an extra cost through having a productive communications campaign to benefit everyone? We should learn from the successes of the '8' Symphony Orchestras for the next funding opportunity.

If we begin creating a strategic plan now we have probably about 18 months preparation before beginning a communications campaign. This could be used as a marketing tool – presenting a unified group of excellence.

**Suggestion: Set up a working party - Bob Riley, Barry Kempton, Simon Funnell and Felix Warnock**  
**Stage 2: invite an OL representative to the working party**

### Suggestions for discussion included:

- Are we competing or doing different work than the symphony orchestras? ... differentiate eg. smaller / unusual venues
- Adaptable programmes / rural programmes
- Collaboration with each other and other art forms e.g. English Heritage / artists – Partnerships e.g. The Sixteen & the Academy.
- Internationalism - including the impact of foreign chamber orchestras coming to the UK
- Touring
- Innovation, taking risks, collaboration
- Education and community work
- A strategy for London
- Direct communication with the audience
- Retrospective or visionary?
- What are the barriers to implementing this Strategy Document?
- Include background as to where this sector has been and where we stand now
- Use simple terminology and be short in length with punchy facts and pledges / clear directions for the future
- Document should be profile raising and aimed at a wide audience e.g. public & private funders, press, politicians
- It should be visionary, ambitious and innovative
- It should contain artist endorsement and endorsement from those we deliver to as well as short case studies giving evidence of the impact of chamber orchestras

### Issues to be brought to the afternoon session:

- Is the McMaster report going to lead to significant changes?
- Is a 3 year spending review long enough?
- Is the ACE going to re-instate its Touring Department?
- ACE: A national or regional organisation ?
- ACE: make no distinction between inner & outer London- even though outer London not served well in orchestras due to a reluctance of people to come into the centre for chamber concerts
- ACE: Should Chamber Orchestras be funded in the same way as Symphony Orchestras?
- OL: Clarity on how they work
- OL: Is the list of UK promoters / venues generally available? And do OL suggest groups to Venues?
- OL: How has their brief changed?
- Why do OL do education work?

The Afternoon session contained a question and answers session with Susanna Eastburn *Director, Music Strategy at Arts Council England*, Henry Little *currently Senior Officer, Music Strategy at Arts Council England and Chief Executive (designate), Orchestras Live*, David Richardson, *Chief Executive, Orchestras Live* and Jan Ford, *Partnership Manager, Orchestras Live*.

- 1) The ACE has the following priorities for making decisions:
  - a) how to engage with RFOs
  - b) touring
  - c) internationalism

Key area for development: peer review. An ambition for excellence – this is work in progress.

2) It is early days yet but ACE has a new Director of Music Strategy and the thinking is how can it support organisations in thinking of the quality of the work they are doing.

3) Re. the contradiction in how touring fits into an environment of devolved regions, it was recognized that chamber orchestras are more flexible and suitable for touring. There is a high awareness in ACE of touring as a result of the McMaster Report.

David Richardson then explained that Orchestras Live is critical in inspiring people to have an orchestral experience. They stand between the promoters and producers and are independent of both. Orchestral work should be appropriate to the area's needs.

It was agreed that a collaboration between Chamber Orchestras Live and the ABO would be important.

Jan Ford spoke about how Orchestras Live delivers education work as one way of creating a relevant product for their partners.

David Richardson clarified how Orchestras Live divides up the list of promoters and venues. He has a conversation with promoters where ideas are exchanged and preferences arise. If there are no preferences David looks at the programme of the orchestras and makes suggestions to the promoter. It occasionally happens that after a while a strong relationship is established and orchestras start a residency in particular venues. In general, Orchestras Live stay clear of where symphony orchestras work.

As a principle it shouldn't happen that orchestras being funded by Orchestras Live will be excluded from funding from elsewhere.

Internationalism is of benefit to artistic exchange and in building the quality of work done so the role of ACE and the British Council will be very important. The Carbon Footprint issue is a personal interest of Susanna.

Jan contributed that when developing a strategic plan we should observe how we develop relations with audience (cf. Doug Kinzey). Evidence of our impact ... What is so special about using an orchestra ... how to influence your partners.

In summary it was clear that both organisations are in a transitional period but we can take comfort in that they are positive about chamber orchestras developing a strategy.

After a very brief discussion of the recording industry it was suggested that this could be a topic at the next Chamber Orchestras SMM and perhaps Bill Kerr (Orchestral Organiser, MU) could speak on this topic.

Finally Simon Funnell (OS) told all present about the Cadogan Hall Series of Chamber Orchestra concerts, which will happen next season.