



maidenhead music

Chairman's Report October 2024

It is with regret that I give this Chairman's Report, as I must stand down from the office this year, for family reasons. However, I will remain a staunch member of Maidenhead Music and hope to continue to play an active part in the Committee.

As Chairman, I've followed a list of people with considerable musical accomplishments, so I have always seen myself as a stop-gap. I fall back on the fact that I might reflect those of our members whose love of music far outweighs their knowledge or competence.

My husband and I moved to Maidenhead in 2016 and my neighbour, Mavis, immediately brought me to concerts – and almost immediately after that persuaded me to join the committee. I have always enjoyed the concerts and consider it a perk, not a labour, to be part of the group that organises them. Compared to the early days of the Society, when committee members hired different venues, sold tickets, moved furniture etc – we have it easy with Norden Farm's facilities. Being Chairman is the easiest office – as Deborah and Peter and Bill and Melanie, Robert and Alex do all the work!

When I started my caretaking role, live classical music was still attracting audiences, albeit silver haired. However, there has been a decline. I'd love to have been able to say that it has turned round, but it hasn't, yet. Membership numbers declined by one third after Covid, and, although they have recovered, they are still in the 60s as opposed to the late 70s. Covid interrupted people's habits of coming out. Now we get fewer Season tickets, but more tickets are sold at the box office.

Social media has changed publicity from paper to online. Sadly, we no longer have Adi Sheldon delivering hundreds of leaflets. There are also broader trends: the consumption of music has changed, as people choose what to listen to, rather than being open to a greater variety to try and I think the discipline of quiet listening as opposed to enthusiastic participation has declined.

The financial result for the Society is that we don't break even. So, each year, we use up some of the funds left to us by Win Law and those careful custodians of her legacy. Happily, we have that backstop and can continue nevertheless.

I'd like to pay tribute to Bill Fone, our retiring Treasurer, one of those custodians. Bill has provided thoughtful, quiet and reflective advice for over 8 years. He has produced clear information for the committee and paid our bills with efficient competence. We have been very lucky to have him. However, we are very happy that Alex has joined our team and will be undertaking his responsibilities in the future.

There are many very talented musicians out there, wanting to perform for us and we are still able to offer them a platform to perform. But also to offer the local audience the chance to have top quality professional classical music on their doorstep. Many of those musicians are young. We need some of that youthfulness on the organising side of things too. We don't need muscle, not do we need a great deal of anyone's time, but we do require some energy and interest, preferably under the age of 70 – or dare we even say 60!?

This year we started with a whimper but ended with a bang – much the better way around. It is sad that Walton's Façade was so poorly attended, but Lawrence Power and Red Priest certainly pulled in good numbers. I hope you appreciated the quality and variety of the concerts, for which I must congratulate our Concert Secretary Deborah – who has pulled off the same calibre, depth and width of offerings this season. You will hear all about it in her Concert report.

This is Maidenhead Music Society's 78th season and we are about to plan the 79th – no mean achievement!