



Annual report 2015

Chair's report

This is my second report as chair of DSO and, as I am standing down at this year's AGM, my last. The experience of being chair of the orchestra has been on the whole a pleasurable one. I have felt proud to be associated with the progress of the orchestra, its excellent performances and its continuing success in promoting music making in our part of London. My role has depended on the enthusiastic support of our conductor, our leader, the organisations we deal with, especially the Elmgreen School and All Saints Church and above all our members. To all of them, many grateful thanks for their contribution over the last two years.

During the year, we were very fortunate to receive a donation of £2,000 from the Golden Bottle Fund, which is the charitable arm of Hoare's Bank. The donation has helped us to sustain our excellent programmes, especially those requiring large numbers of extra players. During the year we also received a grant from the Vaughan Williams Trust to meet the costs of music hire for our performance of music by Vaughan Williams, and support from Making Music towards the fee of one of our soloists, Mario Mora.

The 2014-15 season was the first full year of working with Leigh O'Hara, who was formally appointed as conductor in autumn 2014. Leigh's energy and commitment to the orchestra has been inspiring during the year, and DSO can look forward to continued musical development with him at the helm. Once again, I would like to extend the orchestra's thanks to Paula Tysall, our leader, whose contribution has played a big part in establishing a strong string section in DSO.

A major concern during the past two years has been to maintain the financial stability of the orchestra and build up some reserves. Orchestras are not cheap to run, and, apart from the special donations which I have mentioned, DSO receives no regular subsidy but depends for its income almost entirely on the fees paid by members and ticket sales at concerts. We do try to look for additional sources of income – for several years we have been Amazon Associates, receiving a percentage on goods ordered through our site, and this year the costs of producing one of our programmes was partly met by an advertisement (from Kinleigh Folkard, estate agents in Dulwich Village). But these contributions inevitably cover only a small proportion of our costs. I suggest that the new committee should continue to have as a priority publicising the orchestra to increase our audiences, and building its size by recruiting more members (especially string players), as well as continuing to look for sponsorship. This is not just a matter for the committee. All members have a part to play.

Repertoire and performances

Our Autumn concert in 2014 featured a performance by Emma Halnan of the Nielsen Flute Concerto. We had met Emma as winner of the Croydon Festival soloists' prize in 2013. To judge from her work with us, she has an excellent career ahead of her. I am very pleased that Leigh O'Hara has agreed to continue the orchestra's engagement with the festival by sitting on the judges panel, and we are happy that the opportunity to perform with DSO is part of the prize.

This spring we put on a concert of English music, in which Philippa Barton played *The Lark Ascending*. In the same concert, we gave a rare performance of Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* for which Ruth Holton, assembled an excellent choir, whose members gave their services free of charge. I am very grateful to Ruth and her colleagues for their work.

Our final concert provided the first opportunity for us to benefit from the excellent new piano which All Saints Church has bought – again with Ruth Holton playing a major role as musical advisor to the church. The concert attracted a gratifyingly large audience and as well as an overwhelming performance of Rachmaninov's second concerto by Mario Mora, we had great fun playing Shostakovich's 9th Symphony.

Outreach

This year's Young Composer Award was won by a Dulwich College student, Zacchary Fox. His piece was enthusiastically received at our summer concert, and it was good to see a number of new members of the audience who came to hear the piece. It remains our aim that a wider range of local schools should encourage their students to take part in the competition.

We did not run any formal sessions with students at the Elmgreen School this year, but we remain in touch with the music department and were very pleased to host students from the school at an open rehearsal. I hope that we will develop new and exciting ways of using the Philip McKenna bequest to support music in the school in the next year.

Membership

Numbers remained steady again this year. We had 44, 45, and 43 members in the three terms respectively against 46, 53 and 47 in 2013-14. Although we are fortunate in having strong membership in most sections, we must continue to attract new members and retain those who have already joined.

Members were involved in a consultation during the year using the online platform SurveyMonkey. 28 members took part in the vote on repertoire (against 38 in the previous year) and 20 voted on the proposal (which we have adopted) to bring forward the starting time of concerts to 7pm.

Venues

We continue to be grateful for successful collaboration with our rehearsal venue, the Elmgreen School and with All Saints Church. Particular thanks go to Mike Kirby and Milko Georgiev at

Elmgreen and to Wendy Stephens, Parish Secretary at All Saints.

Summary of financial position

I am very grateful once more to Liz Cleary for her excellent work as Treasurer.

Financially 2014-15 was less good than the previous two years, when we managed to build up a small surplus. This year, due to the fall in membership, lower concert takings and an increase in costs, we spent about £1,600 more than our income from normal sources. Our reserves now stand at just under £4,000, and it is clear that we must act so as not to incur similar losses in future. The committee is therefore proposing that membership subscriptions should be increased from £60 to £70 a term, with a concessionary fee of £35.

Running the orchestra

As chair, it is my pleasant duty to thank all those members of the orchestra who have contributed to our continuing viability and success as an organisation during the year. The committee (who are also our trustees) have again supported the orchestra in concert management, engaging extras, publicity, website management, outreach and finance. Non-committee members have also done essential work - not least in making the tea at rehearsals. Special thanks go to Jo Duggan, Ariela Cravitz and Helen Bartholomew for excellent work on producing our programmes and flyers and to Nicky Jackson and Tessa Crilly for organising the hire and management of the orchestral parts for all rehearsals and concerts. Lastly I should like to thank Jeremy Crump, valiant secretary, for his continuous and patient guidance to me personally over procedural matters and everything else during the past two years.

Caroline Annesley
Chair