

Blog 4 MUSIC SELECTION

The programme of music that we play is of key importance to all members, and so I thought it timely to write to remind members (and notify new members) to outline our process for selecting music. On the table by the door at rehearsals, we usually place a book in which members are invited to suggest pieces they would like us to play. This book is brought out at our music selection committee meetings (chaired by Sian), and we try to pick out the programme for 1-2 years ahead. Planning ahead is vital to check we have the music, the players and the rehearsal time, and to fit in a given piece with the character of the concert in question. That choice of character tries to ensure there is something for everyone in a given year, so that one concert stretches us with a symphony or similar piece, one is lighter so that not everyone spends the year feeling stretched, and then we mix in concert somewhat between these two if appropriate.

Every piece suggested in the book is considered. We listen to it, look through the music where we can access scores (or at least see what instruments are required), and consider how of a challenge the piece represents. We also consider whether a given item will fit into the intended concert, in terms of its character, duration, and sometimes even key signature (it can sound off to have a piece in certain key signatures follow a piece in certain other key signatures). We write up in the book, and in the minutes of the music selection committee (which are available in the members section of this website), any reasons why we cannot do a suggested piece. Sometimes those reasons do not mean rejection forever: pieces that have in the past been rejected because we lack certain instruments, or because they are too difficult, we can fit in a concert a few years later as our playing and the membership of key sections improves.

We also have considered pieces, if they are of sufficient quality, written by members of the orchestra, to keep with our mission of helping members, though the standard is pretty high.

I hope that clarifies how you can suggest pieces, and how you can get feedback on why we sometimes do not choose them: it is never because we do not consider your suggestion, and feedback on the reason is logged in the minutes and in the book.

Tim Leighton

15 October 2018