

Concert Manager's Newsletter

Dear SCO Members,

21st January 2021

Well, what a year 2020 was! We did at least manage to put on one very successful and highly enjoyable concert at the beginning of March before we were all hit with the horrors of a new virus arriving on our shores and the consequent lockdown restrictions which effectively made it impossible for us to get together as an orchestra to practice, meaning that any thoughts of concerts were simply out of the question. Through various changes in government policy and changing patterns of the spread of the disease, faint glimmers of hope were occasionally raised only to be dashed by the intransigent nature of the virus and further restrictions. Sadly, we only managed another three rehearsals after the Freemantle concert before the first lockdown started.

Then we all learned about a thing called Zoom. A virtual rehearsal opportunity too good to miss, and many of us have taken up Kaylee's weekly invitations to get together and keep in touch, and practice the pieces which were planned for what would have been our next concert in Lymington URC Church on 17th May. Simon has adapted to the new medium with great skill and alacrity, and although we haven't been able to have the experience of hearing each other play, due to internet time delays, Simon's enthusiastic and informative introductions have given us invaluable insights into the pieces. The zoom sessions have also provided a great incentive to keep on practicing and to explore the repertoire.

The summer holidays came and went, but nobody really went anywhere. Then, after careful study of the government rules and consultation with Making Music, we were able to arrange some limited strings rehearsals in Colbury Church Hall. Sadly, it was deemed too dangerous to include wind instruments due to the perceived greater risks attached to blowing virus laden air through tubes. Now, with the advent of new and more contagious strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, continued lockdowns and restrictions look inevitable for the foreseeable future, although there is currently some doubt as to whether these are proving effective against the new strains.

Luckily for us, we have amazing scientists in this country and around the world who have been working day and night to develop vaccines to protect us against the virus. These are now being put into people's arms across the country but although the vaccination program has got off to a good start, it remains to be seen if the supply is sufficient to allow the relaxing of the regulations enough to re-start any meaningful rehearsals in in the first half of the year. However, we remain hopeful that by the autumn, we may be able to start full rehearsals again, with the possibility of holding strings rehearsals before then. If this does become possible, then we could hopefully schedule a concert in one of the venues previously booked before the lockdowns (Lymington URC Church or All Saints, Milford on Sea), or maybe even in both venues, playing the programme we started rehearsing in March, and have continued with in the Zoom sessions. Once the situation starts to improve sufficiently, I will make contact with the 2 venues to provisionally book concerts towards the end of the autumn term. Whenever, and wherever it happens, our next concert will be dedicated to the memory of David Parsons, who sadly passed away last year, and we will be raising funds for a charity which was a great help to David during his illness- the HASAG Asbestos Disease Support charity.

Another problem we may have to resolve is where to rehearse if Bramshaw Village Hall haven't completed their repairs following last summer's flood. If it turns out not to be possible to rehearse there, we would need to find another venue temporarily. Colbury might be possible, but only if the rules around minimum distances between players are relaxed, as it really isn't big enough to fit us all in as things stand.

For the time being, the situation remains rather bleak, but as soon as things start to look more promising we will hopefully all be able to get back to doing what we love most, making and performing beautiful music.

Good health and happy playing to you all,

Andrew Row,

Concert Manager