

## Chair's report

I would like to thank all the orchestra members, and our non-playing supporters, for continuing to ensure we have an orchestra during this last year. The numbers rehearsing on zoom prior to the relaxation of lockdown restrictions did not represent the whole orchestra who were playing with us before lockdown, but because of the zoom rehearsals, and the generosity of extra donations by some members, we managed meet our fixed costs during lockdown, and at the end of it to give a concert that raised more money for charity than we do in a normal year. We supported Bramshaw Village Hall, and in our second concert (in Hythe) we supported the HASAG Asbestos Disease Support charity, in memory of our dear friend David Parsons.

We plan to return to Bramshaw Village Hall in January 2022, and I would like to say a big thankyou to all those who have helped shift the library and instruments from there to the containers in the car park, and store large items in their homes for over a year.

Recruitment must now be at the heart of what we do. The two concerts we preformed were only possible because Elspeth put in the hours to find the Guest players, and we need an additional volunteer to take on the role of coordinating our recruitment activities (it is not a committee role), leaving Elspeth free to focus on finding Guest players. However whilst we need a Recruitment Coordinator, it is also up to every one of us to recruit new players. Asking Elspeth to find Guest players is not a fix: every time the Music Selection Committee meets, it must guess what instruments we will have on the day at least 18 months in advance, and lack of key instruments always limits the options of what pieces we can play, and rules out many of the pieces suggested by members for future concerts. Our numbers dwindled during the pandemic, and we have to remedy that by starting up conversations with people outside of the orchestra, to recruit new players. Passive measures (such as publicizing our vacancies on Facebook, posters and the webpage) have proven not been enough. All of us have to act by talking to people about the orchestra and finding connections.

After the March 2022 concert, Andrew Row will step down as Concert Manager after serving wonderfully for many years in the role. Unless someone volunteers to replace him as Concert Manager at this coming AGM, we will not be able to do any more concerts, nor benefit from the associated ticket sales. Please note that Andrew will be available to help and support whoever takes over, and will also attend committee meetings to support the new Concert Manager. However the transition does need to begin at this coming AGM, so a volunteer is needed.

Orchestras need a committee of about 6 people, with a dozen more in supporting roles. For big orchestras of 50+ people, that means most people do not have to serve. However, in an orchestra of about 20 people, like ours, everyone needs to undertake a supporting role most of the time. And unless we have most of the orchestra serving a committee role at some time or another, the current committee will burn out.

As I said, most people have a role, and many have two or more, in keeping the orchestra running (for example, Howard has the roles of Treasurer, plus stand-in Chair, plus author of our concert write-ups in local newspapers and other radio adverts). If you don't have a role, please volunteer for one of the roles I outlined, or to replace someone who leaves one role to take up another. To the proportion who have a role, I would like to close with a big thankyou, and I would like to close with a big thank you to Andrew as this will be his last AGM as Concert Manager for several years.

Thank you all. The orchestra could easily have shut down in 2020, and opened in 2021 in a way that kept to Government guidelines but, in hindsight, contributed to the burden on the NHS. The dedication of you all turned those risks into successes.