



PETERSFIELD MUSICAL FESTIVAL

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NEWSLETTER 33 AUTUMN 2020

Where do you start, after the toughest and most extraordinary nine months of national life that most of us can remember? When the 2020 Petersfield Musical Festival opened on 13 March, the shadow of COVID-19 already hung heavily over performers and audiences. Three days later it wiped out what was left of the Festival, together with the rest of the country's professional and amateur performing arts.

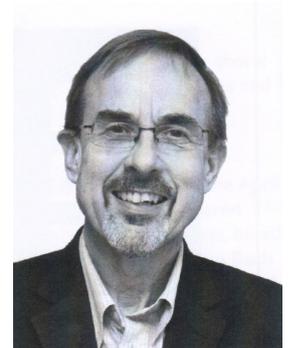
The effect on individuals and organisations has been little short of disastrous. But a huge amount of energy and determination has gone into maintaining professional careers and amateur groups, and keeping performance venues in some kind of operation.

Sadly, we lost the Choral Workshop with Paul Spicer, planned for September. But now March 2021 is approaching, and plans are taking shape – circumspectly, like so much else at the moment – for what we hope will be a Covid-proof Festival. This means we can't offer the usual large scale concerts with combined choirs and schools, and celebrity

guests. Instead, the focus will be on showcasing some of the brilliant individual musicians and smaller ensembles based in our local area. Given the uncertain times, detailed plans and booking arrangements will be announced nearer the time.

Meanwhile, this Newsletter brings news from musicians connected with the Festival, about their lockdown experiences and, in particular, the joy of being able to make music again, albeit in constrained circumstances.

In addition, we can report on the Festival's first ever remotely conducted Annual General Meeting, thank three trustees who have retired, and introduce three new trustees whom we are delighted to welcome onto the team.



Philip Young – Chairman

The Festival's Annual General Meeting

Twenty-eight committee members, Friends, singers and members of the public tuned in for the Festival's online AGM on Thursday 24 September.

Introducing the accounts for the year, the treasurer, Rob Walker, explained the effect of the cancellation of the Festival after only three concerts. Over £2,000 worth of tickets and choir subscriptions were refunded, and ex gratia payments of over £6,000 – or about 50% of the agreed fees – were made to performers whose appearances had been cancelled. Some audience members and many singers generously refused a refund, or donated their refund back to the Charity. Overall, the Festival made a loss of over £10,000 on the year, but fortunately that still left a reserve to ensure the future of the Festival.

The chairman, Philip Young, opened his report by paying tribute to David Francombe, a long-standing and tireless supporter of the Festival and many other groups in Petersfield, who had sadly died on the second day of the Festival. Philip thanked the treasurer

for his meticulous presentation of the accounts, and the whole Festival committee for their work both in completing all the preparations for the Festival and in dealing with its demise efficiently and sympathetically. The three concerts that took place had been successful, very varied and greatly appreciated, although audience numbers had been affected by the developing national situation.

Wendy Wilshin reported a frustrating year for the Michael Hurd Memorial Fund, since of seven grants agreed for young musicians to develop their skills and experience, all but one had fallen through as a result of the cancellation of courses and summer schools. The Festival of Young Composers had attracted a small entry, but the adjudication day – in which Jonathan Willcocks and Philip Young were joined on the panel by Dr Jill Jarman of Chichester University – had provided a fascinating morning for the audience and great encouragement to the young composers. The chairman introduced Sue Bint, who is taking over →

from Wendy as administrator of the Fund.

The committee elected for 2020–2021 comprises:

Chairman: Philip Young

Secretary: Marcia Fielden

Treasurer: Rob Walker

Committee members: Nancy Buck, Pam Buckley, Geoff Culbertson, Elizabeth Gotto, Sarah Hard, Simon Mason, Sally Maybury, Tony Newberry and Sheila Rowe.

Since the meeting, Elizabeth Gotto has retired from the committee and Sue Bint has been co-opted as a committee member and trustee.

A huge thank-you to our retiring trustees!

The three committee members who have retired this autumn have notched up an amazing total of over 70 years' involvement on the committee!

Ruth Firth is still remembered for her role as Mrs Beeton in the 1984 premiere of Michael Hurd's *Mrs Beeton's Book*; she joined the committee the following year. Since that time she has served for long periods as joint Secretary, and as Front of House Manager – a position for which her common sense and calm exterior, and her firm direction of the choir's behaviour (in what Ruth liked to call her 'Head Prefect' mode) made her the ideal candidate. The

Festival has benefited hugely from Ruth's positive and supportive interest in every aspect of the Festival, from the choice of guest musicians and ensembles to the creation of a welcoming and attractive ambiance for the audiences.

Wendy Wilshin joined the committee in 2001, and became inaugural administrator of the Michael Hurd Memorial Fund when it was founded in 2007. In that role, she has promoted and administered the Fund's grants scheme, and organised the biennial Festival of Young Composers and other events. She has sung with the altos in the Festival Chorus, helped with the décor of the hall and provided hospitality for visiting musicians. Her husband, Richard has also given invaluable assistance and support, preparing leaflets and programmes, including the Festival programme itself in its entirety for several years.

Elizabeth Gotto was already contributing to meetings as conductor of Froxfield Choir before she joined the committee as a trustee and soloists' coordinator in 2003. As a conductor, singer and music administrator, Elizabeth has brought a huge range of experience and a concern for high standards both to the Festival in general and to its music sub-committee, as well as singing with the Festival Chorus. She is responsible for bringing us a marvellous array of vocal soloists over the years, in particular introducing rising stars from the London conservatoires.

Welcome to our new trustees!



Sue Bint grew up in Montgomeryshire where she led the Powys Youth Orchestra and was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales for several years. She was awarded the Paul Mailles Memorial Prize and the Montgomeryshire Society's

Music Prize, and after four years studying violin (with Yossi Zivoni and Malcolm Layfield) and piano, at the Royal Northern College of Music, she graduated GMusRNCM (Hons). Sue moved to Hampshire after gaining her Postgraduate Certificate in Education and was awarded MA in Applied Music Education with Distinction in 2010.

Working in a range of educational settings has enabled Sue to fulfil her keen commitment to music education for all. She held various positions within Hampshire Music Service, including directing the Petersfield Area Schools' String Orchestra, and was head of junior school music at Churcher's College for several years. In her role as leader of Basingstoke

Symphony Orchestra Sue performs solos with the orchestra in Basingstoke's Anvil, and organises and leads string workshops. As well as other freelance playing commitments, Sue performs with SouthDowns Camerata and Speranza String Quartet, with whom she gives recitals across the south of England as well as a regular tour in North Wales. She runs a busy and successful private teaching practice and is an examiner for ABRSM throughout the UK and worldwide. When not pursuing musical activities, Sue enjoys walking (particularly with her retired greyhound), gardening, travel in the UK and abroad, and exploring church architecture.

Pam Buckley is passionate about Classical Music and in particular choral singing. She sang for twenty-five years in the London Symphony Chorus and served on its Council, including as Chairman for six years. While living in Singapore for twelve years, she sang with the Singapore Symphony Chorus and the Singapore Lyric Opera. Since returning to the UK and moving to Petersfield three years ago she has joined The Petersfield Choir, the Chichester Singers and has



sung as an Independent in the Petersfield Festival choral concerts.

Pam had a successful career in business magazine publishing both in the UK and in Singapore. She was Publishing Director of both long-established titles and new launches as well as events such as exhibitions, conferences, awards and competitions.

“In choosing to come and live in Petersfield”, says Pam, “the Musical Festival with its long heritage and choral workshops led by Paul Spicer was one of the attractions. I’m delighted to have joined the Committee and look forward to helping in any way I can, particularly on the publicity and print side.”

Simon Mason writes:

“I have been a member of Petersfield Choral Society since 2008, and I sing bass, which I enjoy tremendously. I believe strongly in the Petersfield Musical Festival, for the experience and opportunities that it provides for performers and audiences alike,

and the impact that it has on the town.

The range and standard of the concerts are high, and over the years I have been delighted to have regularly attended orchestral, chamber, schools' and children's concerts, as well as singing in both choral concerts under Paul Spicer every March. Performing Verdi's *Requiem*, Brahms' *German Requiem* and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* have been the highlights for me over the years.

I sang prolifically at school in the 1980s, where I also played clarinet in the orchestra. I have an eclectic taste in music, from pop and folk through to a range of classical composers, including Monteverdi, Beethoven and Mahler. I am very happy to serve on the committee and to support the Festival closely in the years ahead.”



Music-making since March

Marcia Fielden, Piers Burton-Page, Michael Burnham, Sue Bint, Michael Buckley and Pam Buckley describe how people have found enterprising ways of keeping up or resuming their music-making during the pandemic, and we offer a few extra online entertainments.

The joy of the dots

Marcia Fielden, Festival Secretary and a member of St Peter's Church choir, was delighted when the first stirrings of choral music returned to St Peter's.

At the beginning of September, I received an email entitled 'Good news!!' And that, it certainly was. It was from Mark Dancer, organist and choirmaster at St Peter's Parish Church in Petersfield. He was writing to tell us, the church choir, that singing had been sanctioned at last by the church authorities and that Friday night practice could begin again.

How wonderful it was to be back together. There had been no singing in St Peter's since before lockdown in March, and we hadn't seen each other for as long. It was a joyful meeting on 4th September. We stood, properly distanced from each other, in a large horseshoe on the chancel steps instead of in our usual choir stalls. There are very few of us – two sopranos, four young trebles, four altos, one tenor and three basses. One bass was a treble last time we saw him – what a difference six months make!

We sing only for Evensong, twice a month at 6 pm. No hymns (not allowed), but Byrd, Gibbons, Stanford, Walmisley, canticle settings, responses, and anthems are ringing out again. Our joy at turning those black dots on the stave into music once more was palpable. It's been a miserable deprivation, but how happy we are to be back. The Evensong congregation has doubled too – Petersfield is glad for the return of singing!



You can watch Mark Dancer's YouTube channel of organ solos here https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD6mjVGtjtj6rjB_VUhnLfg

Petersfield Orchestra meets again

Piers Burton-Page reports from the cello section



'Lockdown' has just been awarded the accolade of Word of the Year by Collins Dictionaries – an honour it could perhaps well do without. We have probably all had enough of its impact, as well as of the word itself. Over the course of 2020, Petersfield Orchestra has lost not one but three concerts: depriving us of welcome exposure, and most especially, of the joy of communal music-making. Concerts are after all why we exist! So the news that Petersfield Musical Festival, of which Petersfield Orchestra is such an integral part, is determined to go ahead in 2021 is very welcome.

Not that our musicians have been totally silent: from September onwards we began to rehearse in the Assembly Hall at The Petersfield School – socially distanced, one player per desk, strings only, all doors wide open (brrrrr!), with a view to a possible COVID compliant-concert before Christmas. Alas, the second lockdown – that word again – has put paid to that project, for this year anyway. It's been back to practising on our own – with a slight feeling of resentment that the rules seem to be so different for the likes of professional footballers or people who race Formula One cars . . . while professional musicians now find their livelihoods threatened, to the point of possible extinction.

But Government restrictions permitting, Petersfield Orchestra will be there, playing – a rather different programme to the one we originally planned. Certainly the chosen repertoire will be subject to many constraints. I think I'd put my money on Haydn and Mozart, maybe with some Baroque gems, and perhaps with a concerto of some kind just to leaven the texture. Small is beautiful: we need to leave room for an audience! If the event can be streamed online for a while, so that all our friends – and Festival Friends and Orchestra Friends – can hear us in action, then so much the better for everyone concerned. Goodbye 'Lockdown' – we hope!



The strings of Petersfield Orchestra rehearse in the hall at The Petersfield School

Fernhurst Choral Society's Zoom rehearsals

Michael Burnham, has been practising remotely with Fernhurst Choral Society

Fernhurst Choral Society, like so many others, had to shut up shop in late March when the first lockdown was imposed, and all rehearsals were cancelled for the rest of the season. We had been rehearsing Vivaldi's *Dixit Dominus* and Haydn's *Mariazell Mass* for the 2020 Petersfield Musical Festival of course, and Handel's *Samson* for our summer concert in Petworth.

The vast majority of the membership re-joined for the new season in September, which was very heartening as the committee had decided to commence weekly rehearsals on Zoom. These have been very well attended and are enthusiastically and engagingly led

by our Musical Director, Tim Ravalde. We have been singing selected works from John Rutter's *European Sacred Music* collection and recently movements from Handel's *Messiah*. As an experiment, we have been recording the rehearsals so that members can review and practise the videos from our website Members' Area.

In the summer, the committee had provisionally scheduled a Come and Sing event of Handel's *Messiah* for late November this year. However, for some time it has been obvious that with prevailing pandemic conditions hosting this was not going to be possible.

Our next provisionally scheduled events would be the PMF in March next year and a concert of Mozart's *Requiem* at Chichester Cathedral in late May. But who knows what will be possible in four to six months' time?

The SOS Choir

The choir missed the Festival's Youth Concerts but made it to Britain's Got Talent!

The Festival's environmentally-themed 2020 Youth Concerts were due to include the locally-based SOS Choir and the schools' chorus singing Simeon and Dorry Macaulay's song 'SOS from the Kids'. Sadly, the song never made it to the Festival Hall, but it got the SOS Choir through to the semi-finals of Britain's Got Talent!

You can watch their performance and see the reactions of the judges here. <https://youtu.be/L-IFA-uB90Q>

Music-making during the pandemic

Sue Bint is a new Festival trustee and committee member, and has taken over the administration of the Michael Hurd Memorial Fund from Wendy Wilshin.

Since lockdown restrictions eased I have been fortunate to continue making music with Speranza String Quartet <https://speranzastringquartet.com/> initially rehearsing alfresco in a garden and latterly, as temperatures have dipped, in a village hall and a garage (complete with infra-red heaters!) We were able to give two garden performances during the summer with invited, socially distanced audiences.

Meanwhile, SouthDowns Camerata began rehearsing at the end of September for concerts on 17th October. The newly configured interior of St Mary's, Liss, with its versatile space, excellent acoustic, lighting and flooring, perfectly lends itself to socially distanced performances. It was wonderful to be making music with a dozen musician friends once again. Our 4 pm concert was fully booked online within a couple of hours and the decision was made to repeat the programme at 6 pm, when the church was also filled to the permitted capacity. An emotional experience for performers and audience alike since the dearth of live performances over these last months.

The 4 pm performance was live streamed, reaching many more people than would normally have been able to attend and the video has been viewed over one thousand times!



SouthDowns Camerata, socially distanced, performing at St Mary's Church, Liss on 17 October.

We've received so many appreciative messages, many mentioning their delight at receiving much missed 'food for the soul'. Here's the video link: <https://www.facebook.com/spiritofmusicfestival>

A JustGiving page was launched with donations in aid of Help Musicians <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/spiritofmusic>

A one-man baroque ensemble!

Watch Andrew Leslie Cooper sing and play all the parts in Purcell's *Sound the Trumpet!*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8FUzIXJzqY>

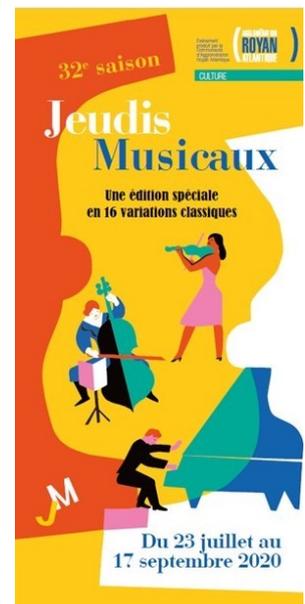
Music in France – 2020

Not many of us managed any time overseas this summer, but **Michael and Pam Buckley** have been watching developments on both sides of the Channel.

Michael Buckley describes the concerts they enjoyed in western France.

After two earlier sailings cancelled by Brittany Ferries, Pam and I finally arrived at our house in western France at the end of June, having been warned that even the beaches had previously been out of bounds and patrolled by police. But in July things became more relaxed. We watched a magnificent Bastille Day concert from Paris on TV with the full Orchestre National de France under the direction of Ms Eun Sun Kim together with Choeur de Radio France and soloists, including the sensational Egyptian soprano Fatma Said. The chorus acted as audience and the event gave us hope that music would re-emerge from the nightmare of Covid.

In past years we had attended the local music festival of Saintes with performances conducted by artistic director Philippe Herreweghe, which sadly this year was cancelled. So we were delighted to find that from 23rd July to 17th September a 'special edition' of 16 various classical concerts had been arranged and funded by the regional Communauté d'Agglomération of Royan, our local town, known as Jeudis Musicaux – normally every Thursday in summer. We bought advance tickets for five of them (no tickets available at the doors of the different venues.) These were in selected churches throughout the region of the Charente Maritime which had all been risk assessed, cleaned and supervised by a team of Jeudis Musicaux staff.



We were escorted to socially distanced spaces to hear top musicians from all over France (including Michel Dalberto, Marina Chiche and Eric Le Sage) perform a wide variety of music ranging from solo classical piano to a marimba (Vassilena Serasimova) and piano (Thomas Enhco) duo, the like and brilliance of which I have never heard before. Many of the performers were almost in tears as they announced their joy to perform live to an audience after so many months of cancelled events.

We felt that where there is a will to continue live musical performance, the French in our region had certainly found a way.

Socially distanced singing with Chichester Singers

Pam Buckley, a member of the Festival chorus, The Petersfield Choir and Chichester Singers, has taken part in Chichester's 'virtual choir' under PMF President Jonathan Willcocks

Back in March, rumours quickly circulated about the risk of singing spreading coronavirus. It was such a huge blow, after rehearsing for several concerts that had to be cancelled. How fortunate we were in Petersfield to be able to perform the music by Blackford and Carter after so many weeks of preparation of those challenging yet rewarding pieces.

Jonathan Willcocks., the indefatigable director of Chichester Singers, has done a sterling job at keeping us singing throughout the pandemic. Firstly, by organising a singing together-but-remotely video of Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*. This required a private YouTube recording of our accompanist, Sue Graham Smith, which we had to listen to on earphones while recording our solo parts on a selfie-video. Jonathan soon realised that most of us were quite horrified when we listened to our videos featuring nothing but our solo voices, so he sent a helpful nudge of encouragement:

“ I am NOT listening to any of the videos – just forwarding them on to my son who will merge them all together. You are not being asked to produce something that anyone would want to listen to by itself – any more than most of you would crave the chance to sing solo in one of our Cathedral concerts. All I am after is your vocal participation in a group effort – the miracle of singing in a large choir is that the whole is so much more than the sum of individual parts!!”

The final result can be found here: https://youtu.be/IQ5WC_zR6_4

We were all delighted and sent the link to friends and family far and wide. So far it has had over 4,600 views.

The follow-up to this was *We'll meet again*, arranged by Jonathan. On our guide track we could only hear Sue playing the accompaniment but the final version had two pianos, trumpet, clarinet and the mezzo-soprano, Susan Legg.

Again, there was lots of encouragement: “Just think of yourself as being one voice within a large choir – not an individual solo. Unless something has gone seriously wrong when you selfie-record (in which case try again!), just play back enough to know that you have recorded successfully and then send it off to me.”

The final video was also featured as the closing message in the “Virtual Festival of Chichester 2020”:

<https://chichestersingers.co.uk/watch-us-sing/>

The committee worked hard over the summer to organise copies – to be collected from the Librarian's patio! At the first rehearsal on Zoom, we could hear JW and our accompanist but not each other due to different bandwidths. I found that first Zoom rehearsal in early September (from our house in France) very emotional and was in tears at the end as I wondered how long it would be before we could sing together physically and hear each other.

In fact, that moment came very soon, as the Committee followed the government regulations that as long as the venue was Covid secure, singers kept two metres apart and a full risk assessment was carried out, we really could meet again. So, each Wednesday, half the choir e.g. surnames A-L meet at St Paul's church in Chichester, arriving at intervals to avoid mingling, wearing masks which are only removed on reaching their assigned seat, while the other half follow the rehearsal on Zoom. The rehearsal lasts one hour and we keep our volume to mezzo forte.



Half of Chichester Singers keep their social distance in St Paul's Church. The other half can follow Jonathan Willcocks' direction at home on Zoom.

It is such a joy to make music together again and to be put through our paces learning a new Mass (Bruckner in E minor) and revisiting many of the beautiful works in *European Sacred Music*. Who knows when we shall perform them? Hopefully on a future, re-scheduled tour to Lisbon or maybe in smaller groups spaced around Chichester Cathedral but the important thing is to keep on singing as, for me, it is food for the soul and quite frankly an essential part of my life.

Pandemic animation!

To see the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as you've never seen it before, click here, or paste this line into your browser

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/yli3ehjb8lmkcnp/VID-20200405-WA0000.mp4?dl=0>