

The Amersham Festival Society

Chairman's report AGM 2022

In my report last year I ended with the hope that the time would come when we could once again offer concerts when the pandemic subsided. I am therefore delighted that we are able to offer a complete series of concerts throughout the Autumn and Winter 2022-23. You may remember that last year we adapted our programme to suit the Covid situation at that time. As an experiment we offered some concerts in the afternoon. This was popular with audiences, so this season the New Year's concert will be performed twice – once at 4pm and again at 8pm. This is always a popular concert, so we hope that this will allow more of you to attend. Other concerts will have one performance at 8pm.

It was wonderful to be able to present a full programme for our April festival. Audiences were treated to a variety of musical styles and events. We welcomed back Nazrin Rashidova, who gave an exquisite performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto with our own festival Orchestra directed by Iain Ledingham. Iain also directed South Bucks Choral Society in a memorable performance of Mendelssohn's popular oratorio 'Elijah'. After a 2 year delay it was great to have Jazz vocalist Clare Teal to perform with her stunning trio. For our dinner and concert evening we returned to the beautiful Chenies Manor with the music provided by the exciting Echea Quartet. On other evening audiences enjoyed sampling Italian wine whilst listening to Italian songs. The youth music concert this year was given by Chiltern Music Academy. Their skilful performance was enriched by their musicianship and energy. We are always keen to provide a platform for local musicians and this year, for the first time in the Festival's history we welcomed a brass band. Amersham Concert Brass performed brilliantly with a delightfully varied programme.

We are always trying to spread the word about Amersham Festival of Music and to attract new audience members. We do have some concerns about the number of seats sold during the April festival. It was only about 2/3 of what we would normally expect and sales for the Winter Series have begun slowly. However post pandemic this seems to be the case with many local music societies.

The Friends of Amersham Festival Society have always been at the heart of everything we do and we would like to encourage more people to become Friends. The committee will be addressing this and also reviewing our publicity. In my role as chairman I have really enjoyed getting to know the Friends and thank you all for your friendship and support.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome some new people who have joined us to help with the organisation of the festival. Claire Jenkin and Nick Kirkbride have become trustees and Ian Barrett is our new website manager.

As I step down as Chairman I want to record my sincere thanks to all the members of the committee. Their many and varied skills ensure that events are planned, publicised and managed. They are an efficient, talented and friendly group of people who make a great team. I have really enjoyed working with them all and have greatly appreciated the personal support they have given me.

It has been a privilege and an honour to be Chairman. It is a role I have thoroughly enjoyed. Over the last 10 years I have attended so many wonderful events and heard the most fantastic music. A significant feature of the Festival is the fact that we have our own Festival Orchestra. These talented musicians love to play for us and it is the chance to work with Iain that draws these professional musicians back time after time. The festival is fortunate to have a Musical Director with such exceptional musicality. Iain is a gifted conductor, soloist and accompanist and it has been an enormous pleasure to work alongside him.

With a new team in place I know that the future is secure and I look forward to continuing to enjoy the wonderful music.

Jane Partridge