

The Amersham Festival Society

Chairman's report AGM 2021

Looking back to my Chairman's report last year there was a great sense of loss as the 2020 festival had to be cancelled, but also the hope that some sort of concerts might be possible. In the event we also lost the Winter Series concerts. The loss of live music was keenly felt by concert goers across the nation, but the impact was by far the greatest for those earning their living through performing. Many of you sent donations and we were able to give support to some of our musicians and also give them the reassurance that as soon as possible we would offer them performances. We are particularly indebted to our sponsors Nigel & Kate Piercey and Clinimed for their generosity at this difficult time

The committee decided to try and record 2 concerts to offer for online viewing. These were made free to the Friends of the Festival to thank them for their continuing support and put on sale to others. We are indebted to John Carr, who not only recorded the concerts, but also gave us so much help in the technical side of creating the necessary private YouTube channel. It has been a huge learning curve!

I am delighted to say that 4 Winter Series concerts are planned for the 2021-22 season and tickets are on sale. As Covid is still presenting some challenges we decided to use this as a positive opportunity to try a new format with our first 2 concerts. The concerts will last approximately one hour and will be performed twice; once at 4pm and again at 8pm. Both times are proving popular. Hopefully we can return to normal for January and February.

Planning for next April's festival is well underway. Many of the artists booked for 2020 will be able to perform for us at last and there is an interesting and varied programme, including orchestral, choral, jazz, brass and young artists' concerts.

I would like to thank members of the committee who work so hard and who also offer me personal support. They perform many and varied roles including Events management, Financial management, Programme planning, Box office, Publicity, Catering, Bursary awards and organising the Friends. The festival couldn't happen without them!

This year I would like to say a particular thank you to Steve, Tony and Heather as they step down from the committee.

Steve has been on the committee for many years and has worked tirelessly to promote the festival and to run the bursary scheme. Both these aspects of the festival have required lots of leg work - putting leaflets in shops, encouraging businesses to advertise and spreading the word about the Bursary scheme. Steve has done all this with dedication and determination.

Tony was the Festival treasurer for a number of years and now works with Iain on planning events. He liaises with agents and artists and has kindly agreed to continue to do some of this 'behind the scenes'. We are so grateful for his enthusiasm and dedication.

Heather will be stepping down as our Event Manager after the November concert. This is a complex role involving everything to do with staging our concerts – Health and Safety, knowledge of venues, organising ushers to name just a few jobs. Somehow Heather has remained calm, collected and cheerful!

We are so grateful for all that Steve, Tony and Heather have done. Their contributions have been significant and I have been particularly grateful for their constant support and for the way they have just "got on with it"! Thank you!

I would also like to say particular thanks to Jon Wallis who has steadfastly and efficiently worked behind the scenes for many years. Although Jon is not a member of the committee he is essential to our marketing and communication. You all see the work Jon does as he is responsible for the wonderful emails you receive. Maintaining our mailing lists, utilising the Mailchimp system and reminding me of what needs to be done are some of his essential tasks. Having been unable to find a volunteer we have sought professional help and Jon will be liaising with the new person over the next couple of months.

I would also like to thank Patrick Hudgell for the work he does in updating and maintaining the website and also for his photography at festival events. Do take a look at the gallery of photographs on the website. Many of his photographs feature in Jon's emails.

We are always trying to spread the word about Amersham Festival of Music and to attract new audience members. As a new advertising venture we are currently running a social media campaign, so look out for us on Facebook and Instagram!

Finally, I know you would like me to thank Iain for planning, performing and directing all the wonderful music. Once again we look forward to hearing his exceptional musicality in live performance. We are very lucky to have a Musical Director of his calibre.

Jane Partridge