

The Newsletter  
for the Maidstone Orchestral Society

# crescendo!

December 2010

## Chairman's Notes

Welcome to the second concert of our Centenary Season. I want to use my column inches in this edition of Crescendo to reveal to you the immense amount of work which Barry Reynolds, Events Manager for Maidstone Leisure Centre, and his crew do to make our concerts possible. Last season was particularly difficult for us because of the refurbishment works, but every concert represents a major operation for Barry and his team.

We shall gloss over all of the administration involved in booking the Hall, confirming dates, programming the box office system, and establishing a green room for the orchestra, and give an overview of some of the work involved for just one event. Starting in the week before the concert, the activity required for the MSO concert on 16 October 2010 was as follows.

On 12 October MSO's Orchestral Manager, Alex Fender, emailed Barry with the stage plan, lighting requirements and schedule for delivery of the concert grand piano. On 13 October John Lewis, Chairman of Friends of MSO, liaised with Barry to arrange the private Friends' Bar.

A day before the concert, on Friday 15 October at 9.30pm, 6 crew went to work to drop curtains, build the stage, erect acoustic screens, attach stage safety barriers, and drop in the cyclorama. Approximately 40 staging units are used, each being clamped to the other, using about 60 clamps. There are 80 chairs for the orchestra, and 300 floor chairs to be linked and spaced. The tiered seating safety rails were attached, 4 bleacher seating units were moved from stores on wheeled pump trucks by 4 crew and erected, gallery seating was erected, safety rails attached, and the rails on the gallery removed. The store was cleared, carpet laid, curtains dropped, and chairs set out for the orchestra's green room. After a safety check, at 1.00 am on Saturday 16 October, the crew went home.

Concert day started at 8.30am for Barry, who checked that the staging and seating complied with MSO's plan, working with Alex Fender. At 9.00am the technicians focused lights, set microphones for the Conductor and Steve Migden's pre-concert talk, and at 10.00am the piano arrived. The dressing rooms were checked for cleanliness, and Barry positioned the acoustic screens. From 11.00am tables were set in the foyer for MSO

ticket sales, the interval drinks orders and ice cream sales, and the bar was stocked and checked by Barry. In the Club Room, tables and chairs and glasses were set for the Friends Bar.

At 1.15pm the conductor and orchestra started arriving. Technicians liaised with Brian Wright for final approval of lighting, and Reception was reminded to avoid PA announcements in the Hall. During the afternoon rehearsal seating letters were attached to stalls. At 6.00pm five front of house stewards and five bar staff arrived, the technicians returned, all fire exits were checked and all fire escape routes cleared, and all seating, gangways and aisles were checked for cleanliness. Front of house and bar staff were briefed on the evening's schedule and emergency procedures at 6.30pm, and at 6.45pm the Bar opened.

The concert ended at just before 10.00pm and by 10.30pm the stewards had picked up litter in the Hall, the technician had cleared cables and microphones and the crew arrived to repeat Friday night's operation in reverse. Finally, at 2.15am on Sunday 17 October, the crew finally went home, and another concert date had been completed.

The effort that Barry Reynolds and his team put in to all of our concerts is phenomenal, and I am delighted to be able to thank them on behalf of MOS for this unsung and largely unrecognised work. Because Mote Hall is not a purpose built concert hall their task is made all the more difficult, but there is no comparable facility in Maidstone, and we are grateful to them for creating, out of a sports hall, a concert hall which accommodates the orchestra and audience as well as it does, and allows us all to enjoy MSO's fabulous music. I hope you enjoy this evening's programme, and we look forward to seeing you at our next concert on 5 February 2011. Chris Gibbs

## *Membership Secretary(s) of the Maidstone Orchestral Society*

*With Anna and Malcolm stepping down after 12 years as Membership Secretaries, we invite Members to speak to them and discuss the 'Job Description' and 'modus operandi' as the job exists today. For the future new methods and practices can be devised. Essentially it is receiving Season and Individual Concert Ticket requests and maintaining the seating plan throughout the year to maximise seat sales. Please speak to A&M on 01622 736392*

**Music Around and About** compiled by Ron Hegarty  
You might just be in time to book a seat for the RTWSO concert at 3pm at The Assembly Hall on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December**. The programme will include Saint-Saëns 'Carnival of the Animals'. Roderick Dunk, conductor, and Richard Simpson, oboe, will perform Mozart: Overture, 'Don Giovanni'; R. Strauss: Oboe Concerto and Mahler: Symphony No. 1 'Titan' on **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2011**. Tickets from the Assembly Hall Theatre Box Office (tel. 01892 530613/ 532072) or online at: [www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk](http://www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk)

*Bearsted Choral Society* are to present a Christmas concert with a variety of carols, some well known favourites with audience participation, on **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December at Holy Cross Church, Church Lane, Bearsted, at 7.30pm**. The concert will include excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*. Tickets are £7 each, £4 for students, from 01634 666730 or at the door. Sutton Valence Choral Society has two Christmas concerts in the coming fortnight. The first is on **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December at Holy Trinity Church, Sissinghurst, at 6.30pm**; free admission with a collection in aid of The Friends of Sissinghurst Church. Miss that one then go to *St John the Baptist Church, Harrietsham, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December*. Free entry, with a collection in aid of The Friends of St John the Baptist and Kent Air Ambulance Trust.

'Music for Christmas' by Maidstone Choral Union on **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December at Mote Hall at 7.30pm**. Their annual concert is closer to Christmas than before and will send you home full of festive cheer after a feast of carols, brass band music, children singing and a highly praised dance group. See their programme advertisement for ticket details. MCU will be celebrating Twelfth Night on **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January at the United Reformed Church, Week Street, at 7.30pm**; followed by a buffet reception. Entrance free, with a retiring collection. Excerpts from Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio' will feature at the East Malling Singers concert on Saturday 18 December at 7.30pm in St. James the Great church. Seasonal readings and carols from the choir, organ and piano music will be provided for your pleasure. Tickets at £8, concessions at £6 and children free, available from Sue Greenham(01622 750943) or at the door.

See the New Year in with the talented young musicians of Kent County Youth Orchestra on **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2011 at 7.30pm in Mote Hall**. Their concert will include music of Tchaikovsky, Walton and Brahms. Tickets from 01622 358402 or: [tickets@kent.music.com](mailto:tickets@kent.music.com)

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MSO CALENDARS ARE ON SALE  
IN THE FOYER Price £8.00  
featuring pictures by Emma Abnett

**Made to Measure** Some concerts revisit familiar territory - as memorable as a trip to the shops. Not so October. I'd like to say that MSO flourishes not despite but *because of* its policy of exploration, but let's ask some straight questions. Were we born knowing Beethoven? Of course not, though some seem to think so. There was a time when every musical experience was new. MSO's printed programmes are a good read, and have long been so. They read as well after the event as before. Every page tells us something. Asked why he chose Beethoven Four, piano soloist Tom Poster reveals that it wasn't his choice but 'the orchestra's'. Not asking him what *his* choice would have been, the interviewer leaves us in the air. It says something for Poster's professionalism that he turned in so vivid a performance of this popular work. Whoever had the final choice, it was a wise choice. It is one of the less orchestrally demanding works of this (until his later years) eminently practical composer, written in the amenable key of G major - albeit for a somewhat smaller orchestra than today's MSO. Because of this choice, more time could be spent rehearsing for the première of Malcolm Riley's commission, his concert-overture *Fairmeadow*, and for that challenging masterpiece Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*. Even a pre-cursive scan of the programme notes left me not knowing what to expect of Riley. In the event reality outshone expectation. Those who turned up to hear Steve Migden's prefatory introduction to the woodwind section (on stage to demonstrate) would have noted how well the composer casts these key orchestral personalities. Indeed, Riley's new piece had the prime ingredients of a concert-opener. Also (which some composers overlook) it was good to play. It was, one might say, 'made to measure'. One can almost forgive Riley for attributing Faversham's Shepherd Neame to Maidstone! There are times in music when the first bars grip you and don't let go - as with Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*. They hold me to the very end, not with the romance of the *Second Piano Concerto* but with something more compelling. That MSO should programme this terminal work *and* give so emotionally gripping a performance more than justifies the existence of this fine orchestra. Maidstone Symphony Orchestra, through generations of conductors, still flourishes after one hundred years of playing the sort of music that attracts a dedicated and (to use today's in-word 'sustainable') minority following. What matters is that the people of Kent support what MSO is trying to do, which is not simply to tickle their fancy with what they already know. Nor should we forget that without our cars and our network of motorways and trunk roads today's MSO and much of our audience would not be there at all.

**Don Goodsell**