



Chair's Report 2010-11

Our primary purpose is to rehearse and perform orchestral music. I can therefore report, with pleasure, that this has been another excellent year in the life of the Dulwich Symphony Orchestra.

We enjoyed tackling the new rhythms and compositional styles in the Latin American works in each of our three concerts. Our soloists served us well: Boyan Ivanov (clarinet), Matthew Jones (viola) and Elizabeth McNulty (harp). And the orchestra rose to the challenges of the major symphonic works. Audience numbers were not always as high as we would have liked – all members are asked to make a greater effort to encourage friends to support us in this way.

It was good to welcome a number of new players during the year but also we sadly said farewell to others. We already miss the quiet joviality of Mike Lasserson (bass) who died in August. Let's all make known as widely as we can our need of more string players (except cellos!) and some brass. The website gives details.

Leigh O'Hara and Lindsay Ryan rehearsed us during the autumn and conducted the concert in November, while we went through the process of appointing a new permanent conductor. We were grateful to them for undertaking this during the uncertainties at that time. Despite the heavy snow in early December we carried on with auditions for the new conductor and we were delighted when Tom Hammond accepted the position. Tom has already endeared himself to us and we thank him for the care with which he has got to know us as an orchestra and the highly competent way in which he has taken our rehearsals and conducted the spring and summer concerts this year. The orchestra also gains confidence from the excellent leadership of Paula Tysall.

Lindsay Ryan left us at the turn of the year. We record our deep-felt thanks for all the work she put in especially as our community outreach organiser. But this is not to belittle our enjoyment rehearsing and performing under her baton, in her role as assistant conductor. And she also left a gap in the horn section.

A highlight of the year was our performing 'Toys Alive' in July, Peter Lam's winning composition in the Philip McKenna Young Composer competition. This event is gathering popularity and this year we had five entrants, all excellent, who together attended a workshop led by Tom Hammond and John Holland.

Another new venture this year has been a small involvement in the Croydon Music Festival. In response to an approach from the festival organisers, we agreed to offer an

opportunity to perform with us during the following season, to one of the prize winners of the advanced concerto class, which Tom assisted in adjudicating. Last year's winner was a soprano – we are currently discussing details with her.

The committee regrets that it hasn't been possible to arrange any musical activities in the community this year despite some efforts to do so. The British Home and St Christopher's Hospice now make other arrangements for fund-raising events, and Elmgreen School hasn't been able to respond to our approaches in this regard.

We are grateful to Elmgreen School for hiring us this hall and other rehearsal rooms, and to JAGS whose hall we use at half term. It is good to be able to present our concerts in All Saints' Church. At all three venues the staff give us every co-operation and help (despite occasional hiccoughs here at Elmgreen!).

At the beginning of the season some members expressed dissatisfaction at certain aspects of the running of the orchestra. I do not propose to go into any more detail. Suffice to say that in the wake of this, there were changes to officers – I was asked to become chair, and Frances Barrett, previously chair, became secretary. A constitutional working party was also set up under the able leadership of Jeremy Crump, and the majority of this group's recommendations were adopted by the orchestra at the EGM a few weeks ago.

The orchestra owes a very great debt to Frances, until last year chair of the orchestra and for the past year secretary, and also to Ian Finn, treasurer. Neither is standing for re-election at this AGM. Only during the past year have I gained any understanding of the extent of the work that they have put in over many years – all the small but vital things they remember, and the many tasks beyond their official roles. I'm sorry they have both felt it right to resign from office but it's good that they intend to continue to play with us and I'm personally grateful to them for their assurances of ongoing help as new officers take over. We will have an opportunity to show our appreciation to them later this term.

I must thank the members of the committee for their help and support, and indeed all orchestral members who have willingly undertaken various tasks during the year. The orchestra belongs to the members – everyone has a part to play – musically and also keeping the show on the road!

Russell Ashley-Smith
October 2011