

## AGM 2021

### Chair's Report



#### Lockdown

Due to the global pandemic, 2020 was the first year in which DSO did not perform publicly since (as far as we know) the orchestra's foundation in 1951. It is with both relief and joy, therefore, to be able to report, as we return to rehearsals in the Holst Hall at JAGS, that the orchestra is thriving, with established members returning and a good number of new joiners. This is a sure sign of how important it is to play together and of our shared enthusiasm for orchestral music.

The health of the orchestra was sustained over the last eighteen months by the hard work and commitment of a number of members together with our conductor Leigh O'Hara and our leader Paula Tysall who enabled us to put on online events and socially distanced rehearsals during different phases of public health restrictions.

On 16 March 2021 DSO members met online for a virtual concert consisting of videos of solo and duet performances they had recorded at home. This was on similar lines to an event the previous year. A discussion forum was held online on 12 January 2021 with a quiz devised by Ruth Holton and Paula Tysall. On 9 February 2021 Leigh O'Hara gave a presentation online entitled 'Music' and the AGM was held online on 27 October 2020. We are particularly grateful to Leigh O'Hara who hosted these meetings and who produced the virtual concert on the basis of members' contributions.

As lockdown restrictions eased, and informed by advice from Making Music and Leigh's experience of managing social distancing in an educational environment, we were able to put on a series of weekly play-throughs of classical repertoire for a chamber-sized orchestra. These were held in St Paul's Church Hall, Herne Hill from 29 September until 3 November and again on 8 and 15 December. The orchestra is particularly grateful to Liz Cleary and Tessa Crilly who developed a set of social-distancing guidelines for our sessions at St Paul's and made the necessary arrangements for social distancing and hygiene in the rehearsals. We rehearsed there five times between 29 September and 3 November, and twice in December.

#### Concert

The same guidelines were invaluable once we were again able to meet at St Paul's Church Hall in May 2021, with a view this time to giving a concert with a reduced audience at All Saints Church, West Dulwich. On 26 June, we performed Mozart's 17<sup>th</sup> Piano Concerto and Beethoven's Eroica Symphony, with Leigh O'Hara as soloist, conducting the concerto from the piano. It was a great pleasure for us to be able to perform again, and our thanks go to St Paul's for facilitating rehearsals and to All Saints for liaison over social distancing arrangements at the concert.

During the summer, we had very good liaison with JAGS about access to the Holst Hall for rehearsals, and we returned there on 16 September.

### [Leigh O'Hara](#)

Over the summer, we were saddened to learn that Leigh had decided to resign as conductor with effect from the end of the autumn term 2021. Leigh first worked with DSO in 2010 and became our musical director in 2014. It was with Leigh's encouragement that we moved to the Holst Hall as our rehearsal venue, and it was fitting that he should have led us there as he has been a successor of Gustav Holst as music director at both JAGS and St Paul's Girls' School.

Leigh's invaluable contribution to the development of our orchestra has been remarkable. It has been a time during which we have strengthened our membership, sustained good audiences for our concerts and explored new and varied repertoire. Leigh's ambition has extended from big orchestral and choral works – Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony, Holst's Planets, Brahms' German Requiem and the Tchaikovsky Symphonies – to less familiar works such as Florence Price's 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony, and to the smaller scale of classical repertoire. He also played with us as soloist in Beethoven's 3<sup>rd</sup> and Mozart's 17<sup>th</sup> Piano Concertos.

We wish Leigh all the best for the future.

The process to appoint a new conductor began in September 2021.

### [DSO web site](#)

The new DSO web site, which is on the Making Music platform, went live in the summer of 2021. It was available for ticket sales (via Eventbrite) for our June concert, which was a ticket-only event. Members are now able to log in to a members area with password access. The bulk of the DSO archive was transferred to the new site over the summer. Work remains to be done on creating a new photo gallery for the orchestra.

We have continued to build our presence on social media. In addition to existing Twitter and Facebook channels, we set up an Instagram account, which has about 300 followers.

### [Finance](#)

In spite of having no activity during the spring term 2020, a shortened summer term, and only one concert during the year, the orchestra's finances held up well. 28 members played in the autumn term and 36 in the summer term. Thanks to receipt of the Orchestra Tax Relief payment of £1,729 due from 2019-20 the orchestra ended the year with a surplus of some £860, offsetting some of the previous year's loss. The reserves now stand at £7,400, slightly lower than in August 2019.

We thank Leigh Whittingham who once again was the independent examiner for the accounts, and Liz Cleary for her work as Treasurer.

### [Education and outreach](#)

There were no outreach activities in 2020-1, although we remain committed to using the funds (amounting to just over £6,000) from the Philip McKenna bequest to encourage performance and composition of orchestral music in local state schools. We are keen that the new conductor will be able to contribute to outreach work.

## Thanks

On behalf of the orchestra, I would like to thank our secretary, Tessa Crilly, and the members of the committee for all the work of sustaining DSO during difficult times. Thanks go as well to those members who have helped with the running of the orchestra, in particular Nicky Jackson (librarian) and Helen Bartholomew (graphic design).

Jeremy Crump  
Chair, DSO  
27 October 2021