

AGM 2025

Chair's Report



Concerts and repertoire

2024-25 was a particularly successful season for DSO. We had three very well attended concerts, one of which realized our ambition of a joint performance with the Dulwich Choral Society (DCS), our membership numbers were good and, once outstanding Gift Aid claims are settled with HMRC, an increase in our reserves.

DSO musicians, including our conductor Chris Stark and leader Paula Tysall, also performed a version of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* at the 2024 Herne Hill Festival. John Flinders again joined us as narrator. The piece was adapted for the participation of pupils from the Judith Kerr Primary School by DSO's Alan Taylor under the title *Peter and the Wolves*. The event in St Faith's Church Hall sold out and the young students, the audience and the musicians had a lively time of it. This event was our contribution to educational outreach for the year and suggests a possible format for future engagement with local schools using the Philip McKenna memorial fund, although on this occasion we were generously supported by the Herne Hill Festival.

Our December concert was a joint performance with DCS including Fauré's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Schicksalslied* and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, in which the soloist was again Adam Heron. Conducting duties were shared between Chris Stark and the musical director of DCS, William Vann. All Saints West Dulwich (ASWD) was full, the audience numbering some 300, the biggest we have ever had. Organising an event on this scale is no straightforward matter and my thanks go to DCS, especially their concert manager, Barney Rayfield, and to all those in DSO who were involved in putting on the concert. Ruth Holton and Liz Cleary played a big part in ensuring all went well on the day and before. A further special mention should go to DCS for their management of ticketing and of running a cash bar during the interval.

Following the concert, we sought feedback from members about their experience. We learned a good deal about what we might have done better, but the great majority of members were very positive about the collaboration. Audience reactions were uniformly enthusiastic. On the basis of this feedback, audience response and the strong financial viability of the event, discussion is underway with DCS for another joint concert in 2026-27.

Our March concert was for orchestra only and comprised Sibelius's rarely played overture *Pan and Echo*, Holst's seldom heard Symphony Opus 8 and Brahms' Second Symphony. Paula Tysall was indisposed for this concert but we were very pleased to welcome Rachel Allen as leader. At this point I would also like to acknowledge the work of Thomas Paine who stood in for Chris Stark in several rehearsals over the course of the year and did a lot to help us master the repertoire for the second and third concerts.

In June, we welcomed Sophie Kauer as soloist in Dvořák's Cello Concerto. This was a rare encounter for DSO with Hollywood since Sophie had previously appeared in the film *Tár* alongside Kate Blanchett, playing the cello on screen. Another first in this concert was a performance of the *Concert Overture* by Elfrida Andrée. We were very grateful to Dr. Susan Pickett, Catharine Chism Professor of Music emerita at Whitman College, Walla Walla,

Washington state, USA who made available to us at no charge the performing edition which she had prepared of this piece from the manuscript in Sweden. Thanks also go to Nicky Jackson who made the connection with Dr Pickett and managed the business of getting orchestral parts and the score printed and distributed. The final item in the programme was Schumann's Second Symphony. Once again, there was a large and enthusiastic audience, who were particularly appreciative of our excellent soloist.

Our success in growing the audience is also attributable to the work done by all those members who recruit audience members and publicise the concerts, using the excellent flyers and posters which were once again designed by Helen Bartholemew.

The committee

I am grateful to all members of the committee for the work they have done on behalf of the orchestra over the year. The members of the committee in 2023-24 were Liz Cleary (Secretary), Sam Wise (Treasurer) and Chris Burns, Mary Cowlett, Ruth Holton, Ishani O'Connor, Claire Richards and John Paul de Soissons. Mary Cowlett has taken the lead on publicising DSO on social media. Special thanks are also due to Claire Richards who, assisted by Nicky Jackson, acted as Librarian during the year and also edited our concert programmes.

Membership, subscriptions and finances

During the three terms, we had 57, 56 and 58 subscribing members respectively. The corresponding figures for 2023-24 were 51, 47 and 48. It is particularly good for the orchestra that we now have a complete heavy brass (trombone and tuba) section.

Full accounts for 2024-25 will be circulated separately, but in summary, our income for the year was £19,000 against £17,930 in 2023-24. This is due to the additional income from *Peter and the Wolves*, increased ticket sales and a growth in membership fees. Income is understated since the payment of £2,948 for Gift Aid from HMRC arrived after the end of our accounting year (31 August) and will be accounted for next year. Our expenditure was also significantly increased at £21,016 against £18,259 in 2023-24. The net result is that our bank account stood at the end of the year at £5,178 (down from £7,194 at the end of 2023-24) but, as mentioned above, including the delayed HMRC payment of Gift Aid would take our reserves to £8,116.

We do not recommend an increase in subscriptions or ticket prices for 2025-26. Next year, we will need to review our reserves policy to ensure that DSO continues to have sufficient to be secure against contingencies.

The fees for our conductor and leader in 2025-26 have been increased in line with inflation (4%).

Thanks

On behalf of the orchestra, I would again like to thank all those members who have helped in the running of the orchestra, organising refreshments at rehearsals and the preparation and presentation of our concerts. We are again grateful to James Allen's Girls' School and All Saints West Dulwich for continuing to make available facilities for our rehearsals and performances.

Jeremy Crump
Chair, DSO
16 October 2025