

CORK ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1938 by Aloys Fleischmann (1910-1992)

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Prepared for the 2018 Annual General Meeting of Cork Orchestral Society

Sunday 14 October 2018

The 2017 – 18 season began on a high note with a well-attended and very well received Irish Chamber Orchestra concert, followed soon after by the 2017 AGM which saw the Board's membership increased significantly.

Having piloted online bookings towards the end of the previous season, 2017 – 18 saw an enthusiastic uptake of online booking by our audience, and by the end of the season we were seeing some 50% of ticket sales being booked in advance online. This helps to cut down on queues before concerts, and audience figures would suggest an increase in attendance due to pre-booking availability also.

A relatively late addition to the first half of the season was the Cassandra Wilson concert as part of the Jazz Festival which attracted an almost entirely new audience for us. It was a shame that the performance was something of a disappointment however, running to little over forty minutes and not what we feel the society represents. We did contact ticket holders after the concert with a special offer on future concerts but there was minimal take up.

A concert the following month, however, by John O'Connor and Veronica McSwiney was an outstanding success despite being postponed and then re-announced in the week previous, due to Veronica McSwiney's sad bereavement. The power of our society's communications to be able to manage these difficult circumstances and still result in a higher-than-usual concert turnout was encouraging.

In the second half of the year our communication resources were dealt something of a blow however, in the form of the EU's Global Data Protection Regulations which came into effect in May of this year. The regulations essentially require us to restrict direct communications, whether by email, SMS or mail, to recipients who have expressly requested them, and require us to delete personal data of anyone who has not expressly requested communication. Since 2017 our membership forms have included an opt-in box for communications for this reason, and numerous email newsletters prior to GDPR coming to effect requested recipients to update their preferences online. The recent 2018 – 19 season brochure mail out however was much reduced to stay in line with these regulations and it remains to be seen if this will have a significant impact on audience figures. Our online newsletter is less affected since the system we use allows us to demonstrate the regular engagement of our subscribers with our mailings, and we can therefore justify carrying on that line of communication with a minimally reduced mailing list.

Concert attendance in the second half of the season was strong for the most part, with particular successes being the Vanbrugh's concert with Michael McHale and indeed the Vanbrugh One by One series which was an inspired idea of our artistic director Tom Crowley who has been ensuring quality and variety in our offer. It was particularly encouraging to welcome the Cork Philharmonic

President: Dr Máirín Quill

Directors (Sep 2019): Tom Crowley (chair), Nicola ffrench Davis, Tom Doyle, Ciara Glasheen-Artem, Maria Judge, Pax Ó Faoláin, Joan Scannell

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Winds to our season, a relatively new ensemble who I'm sure our founder Aloys Fleischmann would have been thrilled to see appear on the Cork scene.

On behalf of the society's membership my deepest thanks to all the hardworking volunteer team that makes these concerts happen with extraordinary dedication and capability. I'd like to mention in particular our board secretary and concert manager Hugh McCarthy who has put a robust system in place for all events, and our treasurer Tom Doyle who secured significantly increased Arts Council funding for the third time in four years and our first increase in Cork City Council funding in a decade.

Nicki ffrench Davis
Chairperson
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