

Orchestra Managers Report – November 2024

This is my fourth AGM report to members as your Orchestra Manager.

OM Role:

As a brief reminder, the main aspects of my role are to co-ordinate the arrangements for our weekly rehearsals and to book venues, soloists, guest conductors, narrators, dancers etc. for our concerts. I also work with the section leaders to ensure that extra players are engaged as and when needed. Trevor and I work closely together to ensure that orchestra payments are made promptly.

The main challenges this year have been around:

- Ensuring that we have enough players across all sections to be able to perform the planned musical programme e.g. July 2024 in Romsey Abbey.
- Getting enough concert day help – front of house; percussion moving; venue setting up.

We do need to ensure we have sufficient players (especially strings), so I would ask everyone to ensure they are able to commit to play at the start of a whole season, and to stick with that, (unavoidable illness or other personal circumstances allowing).

More Help:

It would be great to have a couple more helpers with some aspects of the orchestra co-ordination, so please give some thought as to whether you could take on either of these deputy roles:

Front of House Co-Ordinator:

To ensure that we have people to:

- Act as stewards for the venue requirements
- Sell programmes
- Take ticket monies (only needed for family concert)
- Greet any VIP's

I'm very grateful to the players who have regularly volunteered members of their family or friends to assist with the "Front of House" arrangements for our concerts. Each venue has slightly different requirements and it is VITAL that we continue to have non-players performing these roles.

Extras Co-Ordinator:

Most of the extra players needed for some of our concerts are sorted by the section leaders, but it would be helpful to have someone to work with them ahead of time to confirm names and availability so that this can be incorporated into the rehearsal schedule. This will help me enormously, given the challenges at some of our recent concerts.

This Season – Ideas Under Consideration:

Sectionals:

With the improvement in the orchestra finances we were able to incorporate a “sectionals” evening as part of the preparation for the November concert. Feedback on the sessions is welcome and we will continue to try to incorporate these as and when the music deems it necessary.

It was a significant challenge to find enough rooms at Taunton’s to accommodate 4 -way split that was requested (upper strings; lower strings; woodwind and brass).

Conductor Workshop:

We have 4 rather than our usual 5 concerts in the season so we are hoping to work with John to arrange another workshop for aspiring conductors. This is likely to be in the summer term.

A Southampton Overture – artistic collaboration:

Many of you will recall the creation with John of this overture with input from members of the orchestra, in memory of Zena Howell (our past leader). It was first performed in November 2021.

We are hoping to perform this again in a forthcoming season, and we have started working with a local video artist to create some imagery that can be used to accompany the next musical performance. This is in the early stages of development, and I am in the process of applying to the Southampton City Council for a film permit.

Communication:

I hope that the ongoing communications about dates; rehearsal schedules etc. are clear and working ok. If you are not getting the information that you need then please let me know. I am reliant on the distribution lists within the Membermojo system that we use for membership administration, so please check that your email address is up to date.

I will continue to send summary emails to everyone, and the information is also posted on the CSO member pages of the website. If you think you are missing something or want some clarification, then do please check there first.

Thank you for your continued support.

Judith Houghton
CSO – Orchestra Manager