

A Strategy for the Future

John Rivers, Chairman of sinfonia ViVA, and Peter Helps, Chief Executive, look at developments at Board level designed to protect and strengthen the Orchestra in the face of new funding stringencies

The end of March marked a major milestone in a long journey for the Orchestra which started back in November 2009. The significant marker was the news that sinfonia ViVA had been included in Arts Council England's new National Portfolio of Arts Organisations which will receive three years of funding.

However, the journey is not complete, but where did it start?

It was becoming obvious in the second half of 2009 that things were going to change in the economic world and more than likely in the political one as well. Money was going to be tighter and public spending was going to be squeezed. We had enjoyed ten years of growth in the money allocated to the Arts, but we would need to be thinking of how we might work if things turned out less well in the coming years.

So the management got together and were joined by some people who had also started to explore new funding and operating environments and what the future may look like. Over the following months the management team worked on developing new thinking within the organisation, looking at different models of working and alternative funding streams to support our key work of delivering concerts and associated education activity at a really high quality level. It was very clear that any strategic decisions we made should not jeopardise the work for which we had a growing reputation. All of this led to a presentation of a strategic options paper linked to a new business plan to the Board at the end of 2010.

In parallel, we undertook a review of the Board and the skills its members contained identifying shortfalls in need against the emerging picture from the strategic work and the direction this was giving to the future of the Orchestra. Strengthening the Board membership helps in all sorts of ways - questions we asked ourselves included: Do we have representatives in areas where the Orchestra has key partnerships? Having identified new directions and angles for our work, does the Board contain the right people to support and advise the management team to achieve the new goals?

All of these things matter in supporting the core mission of the Orchestra to deliver quality and engaging musical experiences whether on the concert platform or in communities across the East Midlands and beyond. If we are to thrive and grow, particularly in the current climate, we must ensure that activities of the Orchestra are supported by strong direction from the Board within a clear strategy and framework.

Our journey is a challenge, but also hugely exciting for all of us involved.

At the beginning of *Winnie the Pooh*, A.A.Milne said:
'Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.'

What we have been doing over the last year or so has been looking at new ways of not banging our heads!



Photo credit: Top - Alan Fletcher



INSIDE ~ ~ ~ Adam Hillary of Reaction Fireworks explains the art of coordinating a display with music... Peter Helps on the debate around themed programming... PLUS forthcoming concert details ~



Supported by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Saturday 11th Jun

Royal Concert Hall Foyer, Nottingham 11.00-12.00, 1.15-2.15pm and 3.00-4.00pm
 Tickets: Adults and Children £6.50 Box Office: 0115 989 5555

www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2011-06-11-nottingham.shtml

▶▶ The Beanbag Proms - Quack! Growl! Moo!



A musical menagerie of wildlife descends on the Royal Concert Hall Foyer as The Beanbag Proms returns with more fun listening and joining-in activities for youngsters and their carers to share. Musical maestro **Alasdair Malloy** leads this enchanting and entertaining session which will excite and enthrall your child in a relaxed and comfortable setting.

Beanie Bear's Gang will be assembling again too with **Julia Damassa** as Beanie Bear presenting an animal assortment of tunes, including The Bare Necessities and Teddybear's Picnic in the company of sinfonia ViVA musicians.

Each concert includes:

- Participation elements - including actions and playing instruments
- Dancing
- Singalong
- Stories
- Performances

At the end of the performance there will also be an opportunity for children to have a close look and touch (gently!) the instruments used during the performance. Join Beanie Bear's Gang and enjoy a magical musical adventure that your children will be talking about for a long time to come.

Please note: Parents must remain in the foyer area with their children throughout this performance. Video or audio recording of this performance is strictly forbidden. Photographs may be taken at the end of the performance. Please also note that the programme of music is subject to change and alteration. Places are limited for each performance and will be sold on a first come first served basis.

Supported by Royal Centre Nottingham, sinfonia ViVA and Arts Council England.


⇒

If you still receive your newsletter in printed format through the mail, please consider changing to getting it by email instead if you can

You will receive it days earlier... and we will save postage costs!

Contact us with your email address and we will make the swap for you!

⇒


JOIN OUR NETWORK!

>>> Watch the latest videos... Hear Orchestral news as it breaks...

>>> Discuss sinfonia ViVA concerts... Be part of what's happening...



To watch our videos visit
<http://youtube.com/>

Find us as
sinfoniaViVAUK



To join in, sign up at
<http://twitter.com>

Find us as
sinfoniavivauk



To join in, sign up at
<http://www.facebook.com/>

Find us as
sinfonia ViVA

Tuesday 21st Jun

Assembly Rooms, Derby

1.00pm Schools' Performance - tickets £1.50 per child for school groups with accompanying adults free - contact 01332 207602

7.00pm Public Concert - tickets £3.00 from the Derby LIVE Box Office 01332 255800

www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2011-06-21-derby.shtml

▶▶ 'Tis Death to Break a Frame: The Story of a Stockinger

sinfonia ViVA: Residency

Conductor: David Lawrence
Composer: James Redwood
Writer: Hazel Gould

Billy is the grandson of a Nottinghamshire Stockinger. Billy's Grandfather is getting old and ready to pass the stocking frame to Billy, but there is not much need for stockings anymore, rent on the frame has been raised and they don't have much money to run their frame and even less for their home. Billy's Grandfather has learned that a factory is to open on the hill and encourages Billy to go to work there, but Billy doesn't want to work in a crowded, cramped and noisy room, with unskilled women and children for less money than his Grandfather makes.

Our story charts Billy's quest to protect their way of life and his struggle to accept the new.

sinfonia ViVA returns with a brand new oratorio written by James Redwood and Hazel Gould in partnership with the Ruddington Framework Knitters' Museum to mark the 200th anniversary of the Luddite uprising. 180 young people from across Derby and Bolsover will join sinfonia ViVA to perform this new work themed around the Luddites.

The interactive afternoon performance is specifically designed for primary school groups, with supporting materials linked to the national curriculum provided in advance to help prepare you for the concert.

For more information on the afternoon performance please contact sinfonia ViVA on 01332 207602

This project has been supported by: Rolls-Royce plc, Derby City Council, Derby LIVE, Derbyshire County Council, Bolsover District Council, Orchestras Live and Arts Council England



July 2011

Monday 18th Jul

iCon Environmental Innovation Centre, Daventry at 7.30pm

Tickets:£12 (£10 concessions) Box Office:01327 828 391 info@daventrybp.co.uk

www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2011-07-18-daventry.shtml

▶▶ sinfonia ViVA in Daventry

The programme includes:

Mozart: Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (string quintet)
Mozart: Clarinet Quintet in A 'Stadler'
Rossini: Duo for Cello and Double Bass
Telemann: Concerto in D
Corelli: Concerto in D

An ensemble drawn from sinfonia ViVA, the region's only professional orchestra, is delighted to make a first appearance at the iCon in Daventry bringing a selection of superb pieces for lovers of classical music played to the highest standard to enjoy.

The programme includes such gems as Mozart's instantly-recognisable Eine Kleine Nachtmusik with its wit, elegance and humour... Mozart's sparkling Clarinet Quintet in A 'Stadler' composed with the clarinettist Anton Stadler in mind, its lush texture calling for no less virtuosity today than it did then... Rossini's dynamic Duo for Cello and Double Bass with its intriguing 'conversation' between the two instruments... plus gorgeous concertos by two Baroque masters, Telemann and Corelli.

With each piece introduced by the players, this is sure to be a great evening of music performed in a cordial atmosphere set within the exciting surroundings of Daventry's new Environmental Innovation Centre.

Supported by Arts Council England, sinfonia ViVA, Orchestras Live, Daventry Business Partnership, Northamptonshire County Council and Legacy Trust UK.

Daventry Arts Festival is part of Igniting Ambition, a Cultural Olympiad programme in the East Midlands which invests in projects and people that take the London 2012 Games as their inspiration to create once-in-a-lifetime cultural opportunities for audiences and communities. Igniting Ambition is funded by Legacy Trust UK, an independent charity set up to create a cultural and sporting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the European Regional Development Fund and the East Midlands Development Agency, with the support of Arts Council England and many others.



Photo: Marco Borggreve

the backstage page

Fireworks dancing in the sky, perfectly choreographed to the music of the orchestra are a spectacular finale to an outdoor concert such as Darley Park. But how does the firework company ensure a loud burst of shells during the crescendo and a silent scattering of stars in the soft sections?

Adam Hillary from Reaction Fireworks has been choreographing fireworks to live music for over 20 years and explains exactly how it's done...



A choreographed firework display can take several months' of planning and sourcing followed by weeks of preparation of the materials.

After listening to the music 'dozens of times' to familiarise myself with the music, I source specific fireworks and effects to fit the varying parts of the piece. In some sections individually fireworks might be selected to pick out single notes.

It is not always possible to have a recording of the music as performed by a particular conductor or orchestra and in most cases the tempo of the music is significantly different on the day. This means that the timings of hundreds of cues that are programmed into the digital firing system will need to change during the live performance in order to synchronise the fireworks with the music.

A comprehensive understanding of all the materials being used is needed as a cue might ignite a firework but the actual burst effect can be some seconds later. The duration and number of effects vary greatly between different types of fireworks although there are 'tricks of the trade' employed such as lighting a barrage of fireworks from both ends to shorten its time.

The fireworks are prepared in advance of the show at the company's base which is hidden away in a rural part of County Durham. Each of the fireworks is numbered to correspond with the firing order and many of the fireworks are chained together using timed fuse or 'matched' in such a way that they can

produce a fanned effect. When the show is finally ready to leave the warehouse a detailed packing sheet is used to ensure that the correct equipment is loaded with the corresponding fireworks.

On the day of the show the display team 'set up' the fireworks at the firing site, usually located 100m or more behind the stage. The fireworks are arranged to a site plan that ensures that the fireworks will be seen in perfect symmetry by the audience.

There are three key elements when firing the show; the cues are called out by the display director, alerting the 'firer' to send an electronic signal which ignites a detonator within the fireworks.

As display director, it is my role to scrutinize the timings of both the firer and the orchestra, and to make immediate adjustments to ensure the fireworks burst in time to the music. Since the firing site can be some distance away from the orchestra the display director will use a two way radio to signal the cues to the firer who must remain at the firing site.

It is a real challenge firing to live music, each cue needs to be called fractionally early to allow for the time it takes for my call to register with the firer and for them to push the button, I also have to keep in mind the rising time and burst delay of every firework.

The audience of course are completely unaware of the technicalities of producing such a show and instead enjoy the assault on both senses.



Adam Hillary



**The Chief Points
from
Peter Helps**

What should be the 'glue' that binds a programme together and how tight should that binding be? It's a subject of quite intense debate at times with often polar opinions being expressed and one that we've touched on but have never fully explored before here in the newsletter.

No-one would disagree (I hope) that there has to be *some* common basis when selecting the items for a classical music programme. Whilst an element of variation is refreshing - essential even - and juxtaposing seemingly unrelated pieces can create interesting contrasts, there has to be limits; it can be a very confusing and actually quite uncomfortable experience to have to sit through a concert where nothing on the programme list seems to bear any relation to

anything else. A classical concert programme that resembles the running order for *Britain's Got Talent* or even the *Royal Variety Performance* might help the sale of headache remedies but it will not build audiences or win glowing reviews. Neither is the answer to 'play it safe' by programming items which are so homogenous that audiences are presented with a 6-course meal in which everything is smothered in the same musical gravy.

Long-time readers of this column will know that we quite often make reference to the subject of thematic planning of programmes - the idea that a common subject links the pieces in some way. It's one of the best tools in the programmer's kit because it is so flexible. Thematic programming gives a framework on which to hang each piece. A theme can be based on the music of a geographical region, the output of a single composer over time, the commemoration of an anniversary or contemporary event, the encapsulation of society in a particular time period, the influence of composers on each other... There are many possibilities. To some people, themes are what help make sense of the music - they are an intellectual element to the programme which builds understanding from piece to piece, adding context and enjoyment to the concert.

Not everyone is a fan of themes though. Opinions vary on whether thematic programming is a 'good thing' and if it is, how far it should be pursued. The questions are many and far reaching. When does a theme become so tenuous as to lose credibility - or even distract from the music? Why this theme and not that one? What makes a particular link valid? Why was this piece included when that one seems equally or better qualified to be on the programme? Themes can be something of a programming minefield. As a result, some people question whether there should be any 'glue' at all.

More than once, audience feedback has shown that while some concert-goers enjoy a degree of novel programming others prefer not to be 'challenged'. It is one thing to experience from the settled comfort of a pre-booked seat the different scenery on a train journey as it takes the passenger from the seaside through rural settings and urban bustle. It's quite another thing to make the same journey whilst being asked to change to riding a unicycle for one leg of the journey, take a bus for another and paddle a canoe upstream against a strong current for the third.

There is a thin line between adventurous programming and scary programming. Getting the right mix between comfort and challenge, between familiarity and freshness is a delicate thing. We are fortunate to work with conductors, programmers and venues who understand the complexities of balancing the need to nourish the established appetite of audiences for traditional favourite compositions whilst at the same time encouraging them to enjoy new experiences, less-familiar composers and fresh approaches to established works from the repertoire. Building the relationship with an audience is the key to interesting programming. Unlike Marmite, it's not a straightforward love-hate relationship; a theme doesn't have to be 'safe' to be accepted, does not have to stop short of providing novel listening experiences and the opportunity to make new favourites. If the audience gets to know you, they start to trust you. If they trust you, they will be ready and willing to invest in programming that has that vibrant dash of innovation which is where classical music really breathes and grows.

Peter Helps

VIVA receives funding from Derby City Council and Arts Council England

Viva Chamber Orchestra Ltd is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.1879552
Registered address 22-26 Nottingham Road, Stapleford, Nottingham.
Registered Charity No.291046 VAT No.385367024

sinfonia VIVA: Suite 17, Beaufort Business Centre, Beaufort Street, Derby DE21 6AX
Phone: 01332 207570 Fax: 01332 207560 email: info@vivaorch.co.uk www.vivaorch.co.uk

sinfonia



Principal Conductor
André de Ridder