



## **British Viola Society Annual Report 2015-2016**

### **Introduction**

The British Viola Society (BVS) was established in October 2012 and replaced the English Viola Society, founded by John White and Dr Louise Lansdown in 2007. John White, who sadly died in December 2013, at the age of 75, enthusiastically supported the Society in its transition to the British Viola Society in 2012 and remained our Honorary President up to his death. The Society is affiliated with the International Viola Society but operates as an independent Society with its own constitution and regulations. As a nonprofit organisation, the primary aim of the BVS is to promote viola performance, teaching, research and all other viola-related activities.

### **Review of Activities during 2015-2016**

Since 2012, the Society has slowly been gathering momentum and this report focuses on recent activities since 1 April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

### **Viola Excellence**

The Society remains proactive in highlighting international viola competitions that give great career and developmental opportunities to some of the best young viola talent across the world. The first Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition, held at the Birmingham Conservatoire from Friday 24th to Sunday 26th October 2014, a really wonderful opportunity for the Society to collaborate on such a prestigious event. In 2016 the Society was honoured to be represented at the 12th Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, held from 12-19 March 2016 on the Isle of Man by the very first British winner in the competition's history, 20 year old RAM students and BVS member, Timothy Ridout. The BVS President is also represented on the Committee of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition and was directing the viola ensemble during the week with several of her students from Birmingham Conservatoire, also all BVS members!

### **Viola Repertoire**

The Society recognises the importance of continuing the great legacy left by celebrated British violists such as Lionel Tertis, William Primrose and Cecil Aronowitz both in terms of promoting and cherishing the current viola repertoire, as well as ensuring its continuing growth. During the year, we were delighted to be able to post on the BVS website the work of BVS member, Valerie Dart who has compiled a long list of British viola works from about 1865 to about 1965, with dates and publishing details. The aim of this list is to revive some forgotten repertoire and to share it with fellow violists.

The Society actively promotes new viola compositions and it was most exciting to receive a new work for viola ensemble/ quartet dedicated to the Society. Called 'Leading Lines' by Sheffield-based composer Jenny Jackson, it is a set of

four short, contrasting pieces. The work was premiered in Huddersfield at the spring 2016 Viola day and is now being promoted through the BVS website.

### **Raising the profile of the Viola**

The Society promotes master classes, recitals and open days, accessible to players at all levels. During the year we have been delighted to share news about courses and events for all ages, such as the Arpeggione courses for Junior through to Senior players; Sunday morning events at the RNCM and summer schools for school age players and more advanced students.

BVS professionals provide development days, and courses for keen amateurs and conservatoire level students throughout the year. For example Martin Outram (BVS Vice-President) directs an annual Viola Summer School at Benslow Music for Diploma level students; the International Music Academy based in Suffolk at Leiston Abbey 'Pro Corda' hosts an annual Viola week for Conservatoire level students; Robin Ireland and Martin Outram both direct regular Viola Workshop Days to develop the skills of amateur players.

The annual 'Violarama' in Cardiff, offered opportunities for violists of all abilities to come together and play in ensembles and the BVS organised a successful day in Huddersfield. For these days it is a privilege to have the support of the Absolute Zero Quartet, which offers a vast range of repertoire arranged for viola ensembles and provides a wealth of resources for these events.

Throughout the year the BVS has been proud to promote the ARCO Project, a new musical collaboration between Birmingham Conservatoire and Cape Gate MIAGI Centre for Music, Soweto Johannesburg. The project was launched in January 2016 delivering music education, including viola lessons, to young people in South Africa.

### **Communications**

In June 2015 the BVS invited its BVS members and other viola players and interested individuals to share their views on the priorities for the Society. The survey was open to a wide range of people interested in the viola, such as professional players, teachers, luthiers, conservatoire and other advanced level students, and keen amateurs including adult 'late starters'.

The information received revealed that, although people's priorities differed, there was overall support for the activities that the BVS was endeavoring to promote. The need to retain a balance of activities, useful to both professional and amateur players was highlighted in individual comments.

Suggestions were made for supporting amateurs playing at a lower grade standard (both adults and children), e.g. through highlighting the amateur repertoire, suitable viola 'play' days and relevant tutor books.

Awareness of the Society could be improved and promotional initiatives to encourage membership of the Society were suggested, e.g. through conservatoires and Social media, such as Facebook.

In taking forward these suggestions, the BVS has engaged successfully with students at most of the British Conservatoires. Each Conservatoire has nominated a viola student to regularly share information with the BVS about local viola events and activities. Elsabe Raath (a Post Graduate student at Birmingham Conservatoire) is the coordinator of this information.

The main communication channels continue to be through the BVS website, Facebook and Twitter we engage with a wide audience. Our BVS Facebook group currently has over 900 members and 487 Twitter followers follow us. It is a pleasure to find so many interested violists from across the country keen to get involved and help us with our viola mission.

As a benefit of BVS membership our members receive a monthly e-newsletter, in which we promote and advertise violistic events and news of interest to our members. Our newsletter was launched in October 2013 and has reached its 30th issue (March 2016). We are delighted to feature articles from students, professional players and luthiers as well as reviews of viola events, concert news and member adverts. Due to the success of this regular newsletter the annual BVS Journal was not published in 2015 and its future is under review.

### **Membership at 31st March 2016**

All Members: **181**  
(includes 10 Honorary Members)

We regret to report the death on 13th October 2015 of Honorary BVS Member, Duncan Druce. As a composer and Lecturer at the University of Huddersfield, Duncan found time to support the BVS Viola Days and his viola ensemble piece in four parts, 'Violas!' was specially composed for the Viola Day in Huddersfield on 16th November 2014.

### **Our Committee 2015-2016**

Louise Lansdown – President  
Martin Outram – Vice-President  
Sue Douglas – Secretary  
Michael Freyhan – acting Treasurer  
Janet Pazio (Executive Secretary – Membership)  
Ben Lawrence (Executive Secretary – Facebook)  
Laura Sinnerton (Executive Secretary )

***Dr Louise Lansdown***  
***BVS President***  
***June 2016***

<http://www.britishviolasociety.co.uk/>

