



British Viola Society Annual Report 2016-2017

Introduction

The British Viola Society (BVS) was established in October 2012, replacing the English Viola Society founded by John White and Dr Louise Lansdown in 2007. As Honorary President John White, supported the Society in its transition to the British Viola Society. John sadly died in December 2013 and the Society did not appoint another Honorary President until July 2016, when the composer and violist Sally Beamish accepted the position. At the same time the Society was further strengthened by the recruitment of additional Committee members to help it grow and function efficiently.

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 many other viola-related activities.

Review of Activities 2016-2017

Over the five years since 2012, the Society has been gathering momentum and this report focuses on activities between 1st April 2016 and 31st July 2017.

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. Timothy Ridout, winner of both the 2014 Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and the 12th Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition in March 2016, is an inspirational young British viola player and the Society is delighted to follow his career development and share news of his performances with the membership.

The second Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition will take place from 18th to 24th November 2017, and the BVS is looking forward to collaborating in this major viola event. Alongside the Competition is a Viola Festival and BVS funding is supporting a full day of viola ensembles and workshops with the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet, suitable for viola players of all ages and abilities. The BVS is also supporting master classes with eminent viola players throughout the week, for students from across the UK.

The British Viola Society was well represented at the 43rd International Viola Congress in Cremona, Italy, in October 2016. The BVS delegation, which included the BVS President, and staff and students from Birmingham Conservatoire, presented a one-hour performance including Campagnoli Caprices 1-17, as well as performing three different recital programmes in concerts in the streets of Cremona.

A new BVS bursary scheme was launched in 2016 to support viola excellence, particularly amongst young people. One bursary has been awarded enabling a young person to attend viola masterclasses at a 2017 summer school.

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. 2016 was Cecil Aronowitz's Centenary Year and several special events were arranged to reflect his legacy. This included a new composition: 'Birthday Meditation' by former Aronowitz pupil Simon Rowland-Jones, premiered at a special concert on 1st March 2016.

The Lionel Tertis - John White Collection was made accessible to the public and researchers during 2016. This unique and comprehensive archive of material relates to Lionel Tertis and the viola and was collected by the late John White, former President of the BVS. It is now in the Jerwood Library at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London.

The Society is happy to have the support of the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet, which offers a vast range of repertoire arranged for viola ensembles, providing a wealth of resources for viola events and group playing.

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: the Arpeggione courses for Junior through to Senior players, Sunday morning events at the RNCM, summer schools for school age players and more advanced students, and many more.

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.

An increase in the BVS annual subscription for 2016/17 enabled the Society to launch a new grant scheme to increase opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in these types of viola activities. This scheme enabled several young viola players to attend a Viola Day in Oxfordshire on 9th October 2016.

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. Launched in January 2016, the project delivers music education including viola lessons, primarily via Skype, to young people in South Africa. The annual ARCO Festival in Soweto enables the young people to meet their UK teachers for a week of tuition and intensive music

making. One of the ARCO violists has been funded by the Gwyn Williams Memorial Trust for Young Violists to visit the UK and participate in workshops and classes and watch the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and Festival.

In fund raising for ARCO, the viola has been given extra publicity, notably by BVS member Alistair Rutherford, who ran the 2017 Liverpool Half Marathon dressed as a viola and broke the Guinness World Record for running this event dressed as a musical instrument.

Communications

The Society aims to be relevant to and communicate with a wide range of people interested in the viola, from professional players, teachers, luthiers, conservatoire and other advanced level students, to keen amateurs including adult 'late starters'.

During the year new people have joined the BVS Committee and this has helped improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our administration and ensure we deliver a high quality service to our members. We are particularly grateful to our new Membership Secretary who has worked very hard to streamline the membership lists and make it easier for people to pay their subscriptions.

We have continued to maintain engagement with students at most of the British Conservatoires. Each Conservatoire has nominated a viola student to share information regularly with the BVS about local viola events and activities. Elsabe Raath (a Post Graduate student at Birmingham Conservatoire) has been the coordinator of this information for the last two years. Elsabe is moving on to progress her career and we thank her for dedicated BVS work.

The main communication channels continue to be through the BVS website, Facebook, and Twitter and we engage with a wide audience. Membership of our BVS Facebook group has increased to 1098 members (31 July 2017) and our number of Twitter followers has slightly increased to 569 (August 2017). Laura Sinnerton and Ben Lawrence have worked tirelessly to keep the BVS alive through Social Media and 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. Ben is standing down from the Committee in September and we are actively trying to recruit someone else to continue his vital work.

As a benefit of BVS membership our members receive a monthly e-newsletter, in which we promote and advertise viola events and news of interest to our members. Our newsletter was launched in October 2013 and has reached its 43rd issue (July 2017). We are delighted to feature articles from students, professional players and luthiers as well as reviews of viola events, concert news and members' adverts. Due to the success of this regular newsletter the annual BVS Journal is no longer published.

Membership at 31st July 2017

General members: **145**

Members who joined to enter the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola competition : **69**

Honorary Members: **9**

TOTAL: 223

Our Committee 2016-2017

Sally Beamish - Honorary President

Louise Lansdown – President

Martin Outram – Vice-President

Sue Douglas – Secretary

Richard Muncey - Treasurer

Tim Walton - Executive Secretary, Membership

Janet Pazio - Executive Secretary, Groups and Orchestras

Ben Lawrence - Executive Secretary, Facebook

Laura Sinnerton - Executive Secretary, Twitter

Maria Parfitt - Membership Coordinator

Elsabe Raath -Conservatoire Coordinator

Natalie Wing - Assistant Editor

Merrick Pascal - Legal and Accounts Consultant

Michael Freyhan – Treasurer Emeritus

Dr Louise Lansdown

BVS President

August 2017

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