



British Viola Society Annual Report 2017-2018

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. He sadly died in December 2013 and the Society did not appoint another Honorary President until July 2016, when the composer and violist Sally Beamish kindly agreed to accept the position. At the same time the Society was further strengthened by the recruitment of additional Committee members to help it grow and function more 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 2017-2018

Over the six years since 2012, the Society has been gathering momentum and this report focuses on activities between 1st August 2017 and 31st July 2018.

Viola Excellence

The Society has continued to have a prominent role in supporting international viola competitions that give great career and developmental opportunities to some of the best young viola talent across the world. The second Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition took place in Birmingham between 18th and 24th November 2017, and the BVS significantly collaborated in this major viola event. 26 young viola players from around the world came to Birmingham to take part in the Competition. A Viola Festival was held alongside the Competition, which benefitted from the support of BVS funding for specific events, including a full day of viola ensembles and workshops with the Absolute Zero Viola Quartet which was suitable for viola players of all ages and abilities. The BVS also supported master classes with eminent viola players throughout the week for students from across the UK. The BVS contributed £3,000 to this worthy British event that brought attention to the viola both in the UK and across the globe. The social media coverage was enormous thanks to a wonderful live streaming and photographic team. The next competition will be held in 2020 at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

It was not possible to represent the BVS at the 44th International Viola Congress (IVC) in New Zealand in September 2017. However, the Society will be well represented at the 45th IVC in Rotterdam in November 2018 with three different productions:

1. Violists and actors from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire will perform Hindemith's Dramatic Master work "Der Bratschenfimmel" (Viola Mania)
2. Violists from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, actors and pianist Anthony Hewitt will perform Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' with movements from Borisovsky's arrangement of Prokofiev's music for viola and piano.
3. Yue Yu (viola) and Anthony Hewitt (piano) will perform lesser known and unpublished music by York Bowen.

Alistair Rutherford and Anthony Hewitt intend to cycle from Birmingham to Rotterdam to raise money for ARCO dressed as the Cycling Viola and the Cycling Toilet (for the meaning see the Hindemith play).

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.

The Society has been delighted to be able to promote the performance of new viola compositions in 2018 with BVS members as soloists. Vice President, Martin Outram, gave the world premiere of a Viola Concerto written for him by Peter Aviss. Matthew Jones gave the UK premiere of a new Viola Concerto by Tolibkhon Shakhisi and Katherine Clarke has premiered five new viola pieces, composed with support from the Arts Council England.

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

We are delighted to see the enthusiasm of our amateur adult members. A new Viola Ensemble group has been established in Sheffield. This group meets once a month, and gave a short informal public performance as part of the spring Classical Sheffield weekend.

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.

Throughout the year the BVS has been proud to promote the ARCO Project, a relatively new musical collaboration between the Royal 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 was funded by the Gwyn Williams Memorial Trust for Young Violists. This was to enable Kwanda Buthelezi to visit the UK, participate in workshops and classes, and watch the Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition and Festival. Whilst here, Kwanda was given a new viola from Cardiff Violins. She is still on the ARCO Project and is making excellent progress.

In fund raising for ARCO, the viola has been given extra publicity, notably by BVS member Alistair Rutherford. Alistair has broken two Guinness Book of Records for the fastest half and full marathons dressed as a musical instrument. In this instance – a viola of course!

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'.

The main communication channels continue to be through the BVS website, Facebook, and Twitter in our endeavour to engage with a wide audience. Earlier this year we welcomed Peter Whitehead as the new Facebook Coordinator and he has worked tirelessly to update the BVS Facebook presence. The initial Facebook group was closed down and followers asked to join a new group. This transition process caused a temporary drop in membership, which has been slowly rebuilding.

The aim of this change was to ensure that the Facebook group was more closely aligned with the work of the BVS and also to establish synergy with the Twitter feeds which Laura Sinnerton posts. We are very grateful to Peter and Laura for keeping 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.

During the year, we have been delighted to welcome Vanessa Gaidoni to the BVS Committee. She is taking forward a new role to support young viola players aged 18 years and under. A BVS Young Violists group has been formed and 37 young people have taken advantage of this scheme, which gives them one year's free membership plus access to an Instagram group and a web-based blog where news and information relevant to young players is posted.

We maintain our commitment to engage with students at most of the British Conservatoires. Toby Holden took over as the new BVS coordinator late last year and it is building up relationships with the nominated student representatives and sharing news of student viola events and activities.

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 e-newsletter was launched in October 2013 and has reached its 43rd issue (July 2018). 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 and coverage of this regular newsletter, the annual BVS Journal has been discontinued.

The BVS Committee sought advice on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and published a revised Privacy Policy before the legislation came into force on 25 May 2018. The Society is satisfied that it complies with the GDPR requirements and provides a secure, efficient and effective administration and a high-quality service to our members. We are particularly grateful to our Membership Secretary who continues to work very hard to maintain the membership lists and advise on payment of subscriptions.

Membership at 31st July 2018

General members paying full subscription: **100**

Concessions and student discount: **96**

Honorary Members: **12**

TOTAL: 208

Our Committee 2017-2018

Sally Beamish - Honorary President

Louise Lansdown – President

Martin Outram – Vice-President

Sue Douglas – Secretary and Newsletter Editor

Richard Muncey - Treasurer

Tim Walton - Executive Secretary, Membership

Janet Pazio - Executive Secretary, Groups and Orchestras

Peter Whitehead- Executive Secretary, Facebook

Laura Sinnerton - Executive Secretary, Twitter

Maria Parfitt - Membership Coordinator

Toby Holden - Conservatoire Coordinator

Vanessa Gaidoni - BVS Coordinator

Natalie Wing - Assistant Editor

Michael Freyhan – Treasurer Emeritus

Dr Louise Lansdown

BVS President

August 2018

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