

Report of the committee for 2023

This annual report summarises the activity of Strings Attached during 2023 and includes the Coffee Concert series 2022/23

In October 2022 we returned to the Attenborough Centre for the new season of Coffee Concerts. There was indecision about when the Corn Exchange would be up and running after the major refurbishment programme, and we rather expected to leave ACCA at the end of December 2022. However, this was not to be and the whole season continued there. The change of venue has long been a source of discussion among the audience and this year, any worry about it was postponed until well after the 2022/23 season had ended. The staff, led by Andrew Comben and Amanda Northcote-Green were there to manage the concerts and their work is appreciated by us all.

There were six concerts including a recital given by Philip Higham which demonstrated the emergence of the cello as a solo instrument through pieces from the 17th up to the 21st century. This concert was in memory of Andrew Polmear, himself an amateur cellist and a founder member of Strings Attached, who died in September 2022. Throughout the season Joanna MacGregor and the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra Chamber Ensemble, the Paddington Trio, Heath Quartet, Quator Agate and Quator Arod delighted us with interesting and varied programmes, and we were introduced to some rarely played pieces. In December there was cause to move again; this time to the Meeting House on the University of Sussex campus. The temperature was very low indeed and the poor Quator Arod performed wearing jumpers and with an electric heater at their feet in an attempt to help. This was a testing concert for the audience too, for the acoustics are notoriously bad in the Meeting House. We were very grateful to the players and also our loyal audience who, with no prior warning, settled down in their coats, hats and gloves. to listen to the music.

The freesheets with programme notes and details of the performers and also future concerts continued. The programme notes were written by Chris Darwin, Andrew Polmear, Guy Richardson and Helen Simpson.

The concerts were reviewed by Michael Wilkinson, a long standing member of Strings Attached, until he became unwell. He passed away

on 21st April 2023 and his presence and work for these concerts is sadly missed.

The Newsletter was taken on by Betty Skolnick after Andrew Polmear's death and the committee is very grateful to her for managing the complexities of Mailchimp. During the course of the 2022/3 season seven newsletters were sent out to members. Betty led the committee's discussions about the dissemination of news and possible alterations and clarifications that could strengthen Strings Attached's presence in the Chamber Music culture across Sussex.

The Strings Attached website continues to be managed and maintained by David Botibol. During the summer of 2023 the committee discussed updating the functioning of the site and moving sections around in order to help navigation. We are most grateful for the huge amount of work and the many hours David spent in discussion with Christine Moon who filtered our ideas and, with David, moulded them into concrete technical tasks. The committee are very grateful to both Christine and David for having achieved a more streamlined website, complete with its new photo of the Corn Exchange, our venue from November 2023 onwards.

The Cavatina scheme which offers free tickets to audience members aged 8-25yrs was accessed by only a small number of young people in the 2022/23 season despite our canvassing schools and colleges. This is a common problem faced by similar organisations across the U.K. We are developing links with Create Music, which covers Brighton, Hove and East Sussex. More recently, we have made connections with Springboard, the performing arts festival. The audiences of the future are in part those people who are currently learning instruments and singing.

In the early Autumn of 2023 it was announced that our first concert of the new season would be held in mid November at the Corn Exchange, Brighton. This was an exciting moment and one that was testing for all the staff at the new venue. There was speculation about the audience's acceptance of returning to Brighton, but also anticipation that there might be a number of people who, for one reason or another, were happier to come to the Corn Exchange for their Sunday morning Coffee Concert.

The first concerts in the Corn Exchange brought large audiences and in November there was a group of students from a college in Brighton using the Cavatina scheme. The numbers of ticket sales has continued at this level which is most encouraging.

Heath Quartet	414 including 39 Cavatinas
Adelphi Quartet	319 including 8 Cavatinas
Castalian String Quartet	307 including 24 Cavatinas
Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective	336 including 26 Cavatinas

The members of Strings Attached were invited to two receptions immediately following concerts. This gave an opportunity for members to talk with each other and to meet the musicians. Performing chamber music in such a large space as the Corn Exchange poses acoustical problems, both for players and audience. Andrew Comben the Chief Executive at Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival continues to work on all aspects on behalf of the audience and players. There will be progress as the season continues.

If you would like to find out more about Strings Attached or make a donation towards our work, please contact us at info@stringsattachedmusic.org.uk

The committee met four times in 2023. In between meetings, work continued by email.

We had sixty six members as of 31st December 2023.

Current Committee: Helen Simpson (Chair), Christine Moon (Treasurer), Margaret Polmear (Secretary), Guy Richardson, Betty Skolnick (Editor Newsletter).

Helen Simpson

April 2024