

Report of the committee for 2024

This is the fourteenth annual report of Strings Attached. It summarises the activity of the membership group during 2024 and includes the Coffee Concert series 2023/24

In the autumn of 2023 it was clear that the Coffee Concert series was to be delayed because there were outstanding final checks to be made in the Corn Exchange. The work was finally completed and the doors were opened to the delight of all who came to hear chamber music in this stunning new space. The room had been transformed with raked seating and a spacious performance area which seemed vast. Performances took place at the front of this platform with four chairs and stands. The size of the stage and the distance from the players for the audience drew various comments and views. These were considered and consultants called in to advise. The first of seven concerts took place in November when the Heath Quartet opened the season. This was followed by the Adelphi Quartet, the Castalian Quartet and the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, Lumas Winds, Northern Chords Ensemble and the Kleio Quartet. Strings Attached sponsored this final concert in April thus extending the season.

At each concert there was a free sheet for audience members. The programme notes for these were written by Chris Darwin, Guy Richardson and Helen Simpson. In addition there were short biogs. of the players and information about the next concert in the series.

The Newsletter continued to be managed and despatched to members by Betty Skolnick. In 2024 eleven newsletters were sent out to members. Chris Darwin provided and maintained the calendar of local concerts and the directory of local players. These demonstrated the sense of a community supporting Chamber Music across Sussex. We are most grateful to Chris Darwin for his work in these areas.

The Strings Attached website managed by David Botibol was maintained through the year and streamlined, complete with a new photo of the Corn Exchange in readiness for the return to this venue in Brighton, after some years at ACCA. The website holds details of the concerts, programme notes and sound clips for members to enjoy as they prepare to hear the Coffee Concerts. David supports the committee throughout the year with his knowledge of IT especially for the delivery of the Newsletters and our online membership application/renewal. We are most grateful to David for continuing to run our website.

The Cavatina scheme which offers free tickets to audience members aged 8-25yrs was enjoyed by increased numbers of students during this season. This might have been due to the return to Brighton and the Corn Exchange after years at the University of Sussex. The numbers of ticket sales held up and the series finished in April, just a month before the Festival began, which offered lunchtime chamber music concerts as in previous years.

Ticket sales, discounting “Walk-ups” bought on the door.

Heath Quartet	414 including 39 Cavatinas
Adelphi Quartet	319 including 8 Cavatinas
Castalian Quartet	307 including 24 Cavatinas
Kaleidoscopic Chamber Collective	336 including 26 Cavatinas
Lumas Winds	217 including 15 Cavatinas
Northern Chords Ensemble	236 including 7 Cavatinas
Kleio Quartet	290 including 11 Cavatinas.

Strings Attached developed links with Create Music and it is to be hoped that in time students will take up these free tickets more regularly and grow accustomed to chamber music performances. In December’s newsletter we included information for Create Music’s Big Give Christmas Challenge. Strings Attached contributed £100 to this cause. In the following newsletter we were able to report that the campaign was a huge success and in just seven days had

exceeded its target and raised £11,148 plus gift aid for Create Music's Bursary Scheme !

An approach was made to Springboard, the Brighton and Hove Performing Arts Festival, with a view to perhaps sponsoring an event, but after discussions it was agreed that because of the categories that are used it was not possible to support chamber music. Springboard agreed, however, to promote the Coffee Concerts and Cavatina scheme to encourage young players.

Members of Strings Attached were invited to three receptions immediately following concerts. These gave an opportunity for the audience to meet the players, talk with each other and exchange opinions on the concert itself, the newly refurbished Corn Exchange and enjoy a glass and a light snack.

The current season that began in September 2024 opened with a concert sponsored by Strings Attached. This whole season was supported by a group of Patrons of Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival in recognition of Andrew Comben's tenure as Chief Executive and his love of chamber music. Andrew Comben left Brighton after 17 years to take up the position of CEO of Britten Pears Arts. A full appreciation of his work in Brighton may be found on the Strings Attached website. We welcome Lucy Davies who has replaced Andrew Comben as Chief Executive of Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival. She has attended coffee concerts since taking up her appointment in January 2025 and we look forward to meeting her and discussing our role in the support of chamber music in the city and across Sussex.

Audience numbers are fairly stable as are Cavatina sales.

Fibonacci Quartet	250 including 13 Cavatinas
Olivier Stankiewicz	209 including 8 Cavatinas
Charlotte Spruit	227 including 25 Cavatinas
Elmore Quartet	279 including 29 Cavatinas

The next season of coffee concerts will begin on October 25th, followed by November 16th, December 14th, January 25th, February 15th, March 15th. It is proposed that Strings Attached will sponsor a seventh in April. Performers have not yet been agreed.

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 2024. Work continued between meetings via email. Jill Bourne was co-opted to the committee at the meeting 11th December 2024.

There were 83 members in December 2024.

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

Helen Simpson

March 2025