

Ely Sinfonia: **AGM 11 October 2020**

Annual Report for Friends of Ely Sinfonia

Little could we imagine at our last AGM just how different this year's would be.

We began our orchestral year with a magnificent 20th Anniversary Concert on 21 September 2019 with Martin Roscoe the soloist in Shostakovich's Piano Concerto no 2, followed on 20 October by a woodwind workshop day (led by Margaret Archibald) which ended with a recital play-through for Friends. Then on Sunday 10 November came Faure's *Requiem Mass* in Ely cathedral, where a small orchestra of our players accompanied the three cathedral choirs as part of the Remembrance services. Finally - as it turned out - Steve held together the orchestra of 90 players in the January 2020 Open Workshop which tackled Rachmaninov's Symphony no 2, again with a play-through for Friends and families.

So far, so very good. However, by Easter 2020 the UK was in Co-vid 19 lockdown and desperate Arts performers and players were learning enterprising new skills with the internet and You Tube. Steve Bingham and Jeremy Harmer produced an online performance of *Song of Peace* from the *Island Oratorio* by Jeremy Harmer and Phil Toms. Players from Ely Sinfonia and the Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra recorded their parts from home and Steve mixed and edited it all, adding scenes of sunny Norfolk and video clips of the performers and soloists themselves. Many FES expressed how uplifting and inspiring they found it. Our July newsletter was filled with activities which the Friends had undertaken during lockdown. It also celebrated the 100th birthday of our oldest member, Phyllis Warth, aged 100 in April, in a fascinating biographical account provided by her daughter - definitely worth a read on our website. The Clow family quartet came up trumps with a splendid arrangement of 'Happy Birthday' which was sent to Phyllis on What's App.

Despite the easing of many restrictions over the summer, it has not been possible for the orchestra to come together in 'real life'. This has been a year of cancellations: the May concert was cancelled, the September concert was cancelled, all Christmas concerts have been cancelled, the January workshop is cancelled. Unsurprisingly, it was agreed that Friends' subscriptions for the orchestral year 2020-21 were likewise cancelled.

Aside from this year, one FES couple regularly cope with the hectic refreshment break at the afternoon rehearsals on concert days, which is always hugely appreciated by our players. However, I would be really glad of a few more helpers for the stall, which has a very strategic position from which to welcome to the audience as they enter the cathedral. Also, it is a recruitment opportunity for the Friends: we are always looking for new members.

Friends are always among the first to buy priority tickets and they have always provided a wonderful contribution to the orchestra with their interest and financial support and, in normal times, their loyal attendance at concerts, for all of which we are most grateful.

Charlotte Dean, Friends Secretary.

26 Sept 2020