

Grayshott Concerts AGM on Wednesday 27 January 2010 at the Fox & Pelican, Grayshott
Review of Activities for Year August 2008 – July 2009
Presented by Peter Harrison – Director of Marketing

Last year, at our first AGM, I reviewed all our activities since October 2004. This year, I shall be reviewing only the period from August 2008 to July 2009.

You might recall that last year, I identified FIVE key parameters which help to guide our activities:

First, Grayshott is a very supportive community – but we mustn't (and don't) take it for granted! Second, we put on the events which people want – rather than ones our performers would like to perform.

Third, we know that 'Top Quality' sells! We always aim for the highest quality that our finances can support.

Fourth, we market our activities as professionally as we possibly can – we don't assume that our audiences will just turn up!

Fifth, our focus is always on Grayshott! We want to give good things back to our community.

These are the principles that lie behind our proud strap-line ***“World-class performances – on your doorstep”***.

I'm glad to say that, since I spoke last year, none of these principles have diminished in any way. In fact, they have only enhanced as time progresses.

August 2008 to July 2009 seems a long way back – but that's the reporting period. So here goes.

In August, we'd just finished our second open-air opera, enjoyed by an audience of nearly 500, so we were looking for a bit of a rest.

No chance.

We had to get ready for our first world-class instrumentalist, violin virtuoso, Chloe Hanslip.

There is no doubt in my mind that this event was a pivotal point in the development of Grayshott Concerts.

The performance was a delight from start to finish.

This tiny person was a human dynamo, a power house and for many people, Vivaldi's Four Seasons will never be the same again. And how Chloe loved the Grayshott audience.

But this event was, for us, much more than just entrancing to eyes and ears.

It suddenly made EVERY world-class artist – a potential performer in Grayshott. Suddenly, no holds were barred. No door ununlockable. For us, that was a huge revelation.

It's given us the courage and confidence to approach whoever we would like to come. All we have to do is to find the right date – and the right money!

And actually, this is a good moment to talk about funding.

As you will see from the accounts, ticket income covers only about two-thirds of the cost of putting on an event – and, as we increase the quality, in future our budgets show that it will reduce to covering only about half!

So where does the rest come from? Well, we can't reasonably charge any more for tickets. We already charge way above 'village' prices in order to get the top quality performers our audiences expect. But we still sell out on every event!

There are three principal sources.

- Business Sponsorship last year contributed £3750 (30%)
- Local Authorities contributed £6270 (51%) and
- Friends contributed £2355 (19%)

And let's be clear. Without this financial support, we would either have to dramatically reduce quality or abandon concerts altogether!

We spend a significant amount of time seeking sources of funding. And we have to plan months and months in advance. It can take up to 6 months to source, apply for and secure a grant – and another year or more to book an artist.

So a few months back, we secured the funding for our big event in March 2011 with Tasmin Little and the London Mozart Players.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what you are helping us to achieve in Grayshott is, for a village, truly exceptional and possibly unique, our funders tell us.

In any case you will perhaps appreciate how vital your membership donations are to creating brilliant world-class music – on your doorstep!

Chloe's performance took us to a new level of quality – unheard of in many towns and villages – and usually found only in London and the big cities. But that's the level of quality we want to maintain in Grayshott. And, we hope you'll agree, are currently well on the way to achieving.

Our first ever event in 2004 was staged to raise funds for our lovely church, St Luke's. So when the St Luke's church organ needed extensive repairs in 2008, it seemed only natural for Grayshott Concerts to step forward again and put on another event.

The resulting "It's Christmas!" concert in December was a triumph for Excelsis and the Choristers of St Edmund's – and much enjoyed by our local audience who contributed over £2,700 to the organ fund. Another example of our activities giving something back to the community.

Every year, Grayshott's traditional Christmas Carol sing-along in the Square on Christmas Eve, organised by BIG in association with Grayshott Concerts, has grown a little bit more.

2008 was no exception.

There were almost a thousand people there enjoying singing on an especially mild evening. BIG kindly donated the £800 collection to the organ fund – thereby fulfilling the chorus of 'The Holly and the Ivy', How does it go? "The playing of the merry organ – from singing in the square!"

By February 2009, another Grayshott Concerts ambition was finally coming true. The arrival of almost £18,000 worth of professional dismantlable staging. Another milestone in our development.

And all funded by those who fully support the use of this facility in the village including: National Lottery, East Hampshire District Council, SITA Trust and Co-operative Community Fund. Now we can proudly accommodate almost any world-class choir or orchestra.

And all this, just in time to stage the emotive “Stabat Mater” in March, with Excelsis and the new Grayshott Festival Orchestra – in the presence of the great composer himself, Dr Karl Jenkins together with his wife Carol Barratt Jenkins, whose words were set to such great effect.

Karl wrote to us afterwards and said: *“Let me single out, for special praise, the excellent Excelsis Choir and Grayshott Festival Orchestra.”*

He told us how delighted he was to experience such quality and high musical standards in such a small village and continued: “Grayshott is very lucky to have Grayshott Concerts.”

Buoyed up by such an accolade we plucked up courage to invite him to become our Patron. “Delighted” was his reply.

The Chloe concert back in November was the result of intensive discussions with the London Mozart Players who showed us how we could attract the best musicians in the world to perform in Grayshott.

And Chloe was just the first.

In May we could hardly believe our good fortune. The great Howard Shelley, who has getting on for 150 CDs to his name, agreed to perform ‘Mozart on the Ivories’ in Grayshott with two early Mozart Piano Concertos and a little Rossini.

We’d never had a pianist (or a grand piano) before – and he was a sensation. Apparently surprised by the chorus of ‘Encores’ from the audience, he gave a breathtaking rendition of a Clementi sonata which most of us had never heard before.

Absolute heaven.

He was so delighted with the reception he received, that we took the opportunity of inviting him to return to play ‘something more substantial’.

He was visibly taken aback when we suggested he performed Beethoven’s ‘Emperor’ Piano Concerto No.5, the big one, but sizing up the stage and knowing it would go down well, he’s coming back in September to play it and to conduct not just one but two symphonies. Another real coup for Grayshott.

And just in case anyone here is thinking that I or the committee are blatantly ‘blowing our own trumpet’ (heaven forbid!) then think again.

This report, ladies and gentlemen, is a huge accolade not to us – but to you.

Because without you, as our audience, supporters and paymasters we have nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

If you don’t come along, don’t bring your friends, don’t tell them about us, don’t help us to run events, we are powerless.

And we try never to forget that.

So a huge thank you:

to all our **'Friends of Grayshott Concerts'**;

to our generous Sponsors, **Applegarth Farm** and **Huntington House**;

to our local authority funders **East Hants District Council** and **Hampshire County Council**;

to our other funders, **National Lottery**, **SITA Trust** and **Co-operative Community Fund**;

to **Buy In Grayshott members** for their constant support;

to **St Luke's Church and members** who allow us to use their acoustic masterpiece as a venue, and their 'bicycle shed' as a staging storeroom;

to **Grayshott Parish Council** for allowing us to put posters on their notice boards;

to **Grayshott.Com** and **Peter Hatch** for endless publicity on the Grayshott website;

and to all those hardworking and generous individuals who erect and dismantle staging, run bars, meet & greet, clean tidy and organise the church, distribute tickets; and the countless contributions of help and kindness which make our activities worthwhile.

We thank you all.

Your support is bringing to life the wonders of music in Grayshott and ensuring **"World-class performances – on your doorstep"**.

So now I'll end by reminding you that this year's programme, our most ambitious yet, is all in our latest Newsletter.

I hope you'll agree – it's stupendous!

So back to you, Mr Chairman.