

Dorset Chamber Orchestra (DChO) Handbook

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Constitution establishes a legal framework for the governance of DChO.
- 1.2 Clause 12 of the Constitution allows the Committee to make further rules for the running of the DChO. This DChO Handbook, prepared under Clause 12, gives greater focus to our objectives and provides guidance for the operation of DChO.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 We provide an opportunity for the public to listen to live, high quality performances of a wide range of classical music at affordable cost.
- 2.2 We support the careers of young professional soloists.
- 2.3 We offer opportunities for talented young players to join the orchestra to gain valuable performance experience.
- 2.4 We make classical music accessible to a younger audience.
- 2.5 We will promote Dorchester as a centre of musical excellence.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The standard for new membership is such that a player could consider a career in music as a professional player or instrument teacher. A player must provide such evidence of musical ability as the Committee may reasonably require.
- 3.2 Although based in Dorchester, we encourage membership from all parts of the County, and beyond.
- 3.3 We maintain a bank of player-members whom we aim to engage throughout a season wherever possible.
- 3.4 Depending on the orchestral forces required, we may need to engage extra players of equivalent standard for a specific concert. If a regular player retires, an “extra” player may be invited to join our regular bank.
- 3.5 Membership does not carry an entitlement to play at every concert, because the forces required will be dictated by the programme and the technical demands for individual instruments.
- 3.6 The Committee delegates to our orchestra fixers decisions as to the booking of individual players for each concert.
- 3.7 If a player is unable to play for two consecutive concerts, he/she continues to be a member but may risk his/her previous “regular” place.
- 3.8 A player will cease to be a member if he/she has not been available or has declined an invitation to play in a concert on four consecutive occasions.

4. Rehearsals and Performances

- 4.1 We will perform four concerts per season. Two will focus on smaller scale chamber works. We may call on full symphony forces for one concert. One concert will be targeted at young people, and the forces for that concert will vary according to the programme.
- 4.2 The Music Director will programme music which seeks to engage with a wide (including younger) audience and will include challenging and exciting works that members are keen to play.
- 4.3 We operate a compressed rehearsal pattern, (currently 3-preceding and “on the day”).
- 4.4 Before the final concert of a season the Committee will publish the concert and rehearsal dates for the following season and invite player-members to indicate their availability. Players are encouraged to be available for all concerts, so that by regularly working together we may improve the quality of our performance through shared experience and learning.
- 4.5 The vast majority of DChO comprises regular unpaid members. If a place cannot be filled, an extra player will be engaged. Subject to the technical requirements of the programme and the need to maintain the standard of performance, priority will generally be given to extra players who do not seek a fee.
- 4.6 The Music Director will identify which sections of the orchestra are required for each rehearsal. If a player commits to play in a concert, it is expected that – to avoid wasted rehearsal time - the player will attend the requested rehearsals, unless there are exceptional circumstances. (For example it is recognised that there some players may have family, work or community commitments).
- 4.7 The Committee will make sheet music available for private practice before rehearsal. Bowings will be distributed electronically, and it is the responsibility of each player to mark their parts.

5. Financial

- 5.1 The Committee will operate a sustainable financial model, meaning that we will always budget to generate a modest surplus over the season (recognising that individual concerts may make a loss).
- 5.2 The Committee will maintain our financial reserves at a level that enables us to make financial commitments at least two seasons ahead, plus contingencies. Subject to maintaining that reserve, the Committee may fund special performances or exceptional items from retained surpluses.
- 5.3 Currently our income is almost exclusively generated by ticket sales. We recognise that the demographic of our regular audience means that fewer are able to attend each year. It is incumbent on all members to help to extend our audience, particularly the next generation.
- 5.4 The key challenge is to improve the quality of our performances but being realistic about what we can afford. Our current financial model does not include a subscription. However, if our ticket revenues become insufficient to achieve the quality of performance to which we all aspire, the question of membership subscriptions may need to be considered. (We recognise that this creates further challenges, where subscriptions are used to subsidise paid players, and a need for greater clarity over members rights and responsibilities. Such a step would only be taken after consultation with members).

6. DChO and young musicians

- 6.1 The Committee will work with schools, teachers and DASP to identify suitably talented young players to perform within the orchestra, and to give solo performances, particularly at the Music for Youth concert.
- 6.2 The Committee will offer opportunities for talented young players to join the orchestra to gain valuable performance experience.
- 6.3 The Committee will offer concerto performance opportunities to college students and young professional soloists.
- 6.4 The Committee will engage high calibre soloists (within our budget constraints) who will provide inspiring performances, and who are willing to spend time with a local school during their visit.

7. Appointment of Chairman and Committee

This paragraph is to be read alongside clause 7 of the Constitution. At each annual general meeting all committee members shall retire and be eligible for re-election for a period of one year. The members will elect the Chair and other committee members. It will then be for the committee to decide individual officer roles.

8. How we all can help....

The Committee are a dedicated bunch, but we really do appreciate your support too. Here are a few things you can do to help the success of our concerts:

- Save the concert and rehearsal dates in your diary
- Arrive 15 minutes early to a rehearsal to help set out chairs, allow your instrument to warm up and to tune so the rehearsal starts on time.
- Bring a pencil, stand and stand light.
- Private practice before the rehearsal schedule, to make the most of that first rehearsal.
- Adopt a street or village, school, pub or garden centre to distribute flyers, posters and season brochures.
- Re-tweet and 'like' social media messages to broaden our coverage.
- Give out flyers at other concerts whether you are attending or performing.
- Help pack away at the end of rehearsals and concerts.

9. Concert dress

Our evening concert dress is smart, elegant, long black for ladies and black tie for gentlemen. The Music for Youth concert is less formal but all black. Jackets optional.

10. Communications with members

- Communication with members is generally by email.
- Documents and member information are on the players' page of the website. For the password please email the chairman.
- Contact details you may need for committee members are:
 - Chairman, Tim Smithers: timsalix@btinternet.com
 - Music Director, Walter Brewster: walter@clarinet.org.uk
 - Librarian, Jackie Birdseye: j.birdseye@btinternet.com
 - Social media, Gillian Wallace: gillwallace7@btinternet.com
 - Treasurer, Chris Watts: c.watts187@ntlworld.com
 - String fixer, Deborah Johns: deborahjohns566@gmail.com
 - Wind and Brass fixer, Clare Whitehead: [oboecclare@gmail.com](mailto:oboeclare@gmail.com)

8. Policies

This document is to be read in conjunction with the policies which are available on the Members area of the DChO website.

9. Publication and review

This document is available on the Members area of the DChO website. It will be reviewed by the committee at least once every two years.

Adopted at AGM 22 November 2019

Last Reviewed 22 November 2019