Dorset Chamber Orchestra (DChO) Handbook (2024 revision)

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. Members are defined as regular players who do not receive any payment.

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. 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 propose a programme of music for each season which seeks to engage with a wide (including younger) audience and will include challenging and exciting works that members are keen to play. This programme will be considered and agreed by the Committee, prior to publishing of details in the season's brochure. As a chamber orchestra, DChO's concert programmes will focus on smaller scale chamber works, but will, from time to time, call on full symphonic forces, as agreed between the MD and the Committee along with the season's programme of music.

4.3 We operate a compressed rehearsal pattern, (currently 3-preceding and "on the day").

4.4 Ideally, before the final concert of a season (or if not, as soon as possible thereafter) 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. The principles which apply to the engaging of, and payments to, extra players are set out in Appendix 1.

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.

4.8 It is a condition of taking part in DChO concerts, for members and 'extra' players, that they agree to video and sound recordings being made of the concert, and also a sound recording of the final rehearsal, for the use of the orchestra. This use involves the following:

- Broadcast of the sound recording on local radio station Keep106
- Viewing of full video recordings by orchestra members via the 'Members page' of the orchestra's website
- Use of video clips for publicity purposes, on the internet, by the orchestra and the video/sound engineer.

4.9 DChO operates a clear policy on the use of mobile phones at orchestra rehearsals to avoid distractions and show due consideration and respect for other musicians. The key points of this policy are:

- Apart from during breaks, we should have our phones either turned off or, as a minimum, on silent and avoid phone use when in our playing positions during rehearsals.
- If there is a piece we are not involved in, and we wish to use our phone, we should position ourselves away from the playing area so that we do not cause a distraction to others.
- Clearly sometimes things can happen that require our urgent attention. In this case, we should also move away from our normal playing position, to attend to the matter.

5. Financial

5.1 The Committee will operate a sustainable financial model, meaning that we will always budget to either break even or 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 approximately equivalent to the costs incurred for a full season (set at £9000 in 2023). 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, young musicians and safeguarding of young people

6.1 The Committee will work with schools, teachers and Wessex MAT 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 engage high calibre soloists (within our budget constraints) and aim to prioritise the offering of concerto performance opportunities to college students and young professional soloists. However, DChO will also engage more established soloists, from time to time, as agreed between the MD and Committee.

6.4 In relation to individual young people (Under 18s) performing as soloists with the orchestra, or playing as part of the orchestra, it is a requirement that they shall be accompanied to all rehearsals and concerts by a parent /guardian or other adult authorised by the parent/guardian to supervise the young person. Written confirmation shall be provided of any such authorisation.

6.5 In relation to groups of young people who join the orchestra temporarily for rehearsals and concerts, it is normally expected that this would be done through a school or youth organisation. This shall be controlled by the school or youth organisation who shall be responsible for safeguarding, including supervision and obtaining parental consent to the activity.

6.6 In the event of any different scenarios of Under 18s' involvement, other than those described above, the Committee shall ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.

6.7 The orchestra has a trained Safeguarding Officer who acts as a focal point for any concerns regarding safeguarding.

6.8 The orchestra very much welcomes young people attending its concerts. Providing young people with opportunities to engage with a range of music is central to our purpose as a charity and this is reflected in the low price of the U18 tickets. The orchestra is happy for

U18s to attend concerts unaccompanied as long as they feel comfortable doing so and their parent / guardian is satisfied that they will not need support or supervision in the concert environment. The orchestra however cannot accept any responsibility for supervision. On this basis it would normally be expected that children under 12 would be accompanied, but this is ultimately a matter for parental judgement.

6.9 This safeguarding policy shall be published for general access on the orchestra's website along with contact details for the Safeguarding Officer.

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. Ex-officio roles

The Music Director and Leader receive payment for their services and these are ex-officio roles, such that they attend Committee meetings by virtue of the positions that they hold, but they do not have any voting rights.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 (including ex-officio) members are:

  Chairman and Orchestral Manager, Jerry Ryall: jerry.ryall@gmail.com
  Music Director, Walter Brewster: walter@clarinet.org.uk
  Secretary, Vacant
  Leader, Jane Bultz: jane@bultz.myzen.co.uk
  Librarian, Jacquie Shaw: cellojab@outlook.com
  Publicity, Vacant
  Treasurer, Ros Ashcroft: ros30@btinternet.com

String fixer, Jane Bultz: jane@bultz.myzen.co.uk
Wind and Brass fixer and Safeguarding Officer, Clare Whitehead: oboeclare@gmail.com
Additional member with non-specified duties, Sian Williams: sianiflute@gmail.com

12. Policies

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

13. 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 October 2024

Appendix 1

Policy on the engaging of, and payments to, extra players

Explanation for players (to be provided where a player requests/enquires about payment)

DChO is a charity, and the great majority of its regular players are not paid at all. Over a season we aim to at least cover our costs and to retain a level of financial reserve appropriate to a charity of this size which has limited methods/means for securing income. While we charge for entrance to our concerts, our costs can be substantial and our constitution requires to try to ensure that our tickets are affordable. This means that regrettably that where we need extra players to join the orchestra we are not able to pay a commercial playing rate. Where a player requests a fee, we can offer a payment which we would describe as “generous expenses” or “expenses plus”. It is intended to cover reasonable average expenses of attending the Friday and Saturday rehearsals and the concert and give a modest return for players’ time.

More detailed statement (for Committee reference)

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We acknowledge that actual expenses incurred by individual players will vary, and that the extent to which our payment will cover expenses and give a return on time will depend on the player’s circumstances (in particular how close their base is to the Dorchester area). However we feel it is appropriate to pay a standard rate to most players reflecting our position as a charity and our focus on the Dorchester area. Exceptionally a higher payment may be agreed to ensure we can secure players of the required standard, and in some cases to also recognise particularly high costs for a player, but the maximum paid will unfortunately still be substantially below commercial player rates recommended by the Musicians’ Union.

Notes for fixers

In general, player requirements for wind, brass and percussion are clearly determined by the repertoire. However, generally for strings only, a bit more judgement may be needed. This is normally agreed between the Music Director, section leaders and fixers. If agreement cannot be reached, then the Committee (generally the Chairman) will be consulted.

In accordance with the Handbook, assuming everyone concerned is of an appropriate standard), the order of consideration" for filling places should be:

1. Regular unpaid player
2. Extra player not requiring a payment (and within them, probably priority for anyone we think might be interested in playing regularly/whenever there is a space)
3. Extra players requiring a payment.

When an 'extra' player is required, the general advice to fixers (as of 2023) is as follows:

- On the basis that DChO is a charity, the vast majority of players are not paid and does not have a large budget to pay players, ask the player if they are willing to play for either no payment or only modest expenses. If so, then point out that this generosity is much appreciated by the orchestra.
- If agreement cannot be reached on the above basis, then the standard maximum payment to be offered for extra players is £60 - on the basis that this would constitute generous expenses/expenses plus some extra allowance for time.
- Up to an additional £20 (i.e. maximum of £80) can be offered by the fixer if it is judged necessary to secure a player of the required standard within a reasonable time before the concert and/or to recognise particularly high expenses for the player.
- If it still proves impossible to secure an appropriate player with the maximum payment outlined above, then any higher payments need to be agreed on an exceptional basis with the Chairman and Treasurer.
- It needs to be made clear to 'extra' players that, by accepting the engagement, they are agreeing to video and sound recordings being made of the concert, and also a sound recording of the final rehearsal, for the use of the orchestra. This use involves the following:
    - Broadcast of the sound recording on local radio station Keep106
    - Viewing of full video recordings by orchestra members via the 'Members page' of the orchestra's website
    - Use of video clips for publicity purposes, on the internet, by the orchestra and the video/sound engineer.