

Artistic Director's report on the 2014 Roman River Festival

Overview

The 15th Festival was the highest-quality, most wide-ranging and biggest festival we have produced, with 27 concerts over 17 days in 19 varied venues, given by a total of over 200 musicians and almost 4,000 tickets sold. Over 1,000 young people from 25 local schools participated in 8 education projects.

Audiences, participants, sponsors and supporters all increased substantially from the previous festival.

The festival garnered widespread and excellent feedback from audiences and participants (a selection of which is given on p15), and strengthened the USP image of international quality music in interesting venues.

The charity is left financially stable, with good resilience and ability to plan ahead with confidence.

The organisation is in the process of a complete rethink of the management, as the increased popularity and size of the festival put considerable strain on all key personnel.

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Artistic Outcome

Achievements

The highest quality festival we have yet produced, strengthening our reputation for across-the-board international quality of performances. The broadest range of musical genres and ensembles heard at the festival, and the broadest range of audience members and interests.

Among events new to the festival were the 'Colchester Weekend', a young talent platform initiative, our first ever full orchestral concert, a Lieder recital, an electronic & sampled music concert, a festival walk, and a special exhibition of work by the 2014 Festival Artist Luke Elwes, in partnership with a local art gallery.

A substantially increased educational programme, the biggest we have yet produced, actively involving over 1,500 young people from a large age-range in a variety of projects.

The following soloists and ensembles performed at the festival. In total 145 professional musicians (plus the amateur festival choir of 58) appeared. The Roman River Festival Orchestra comprised 35 musicians (see appendix 3), the Festival Ensemble in its various configurations 17, and the side-by-side ensemble 27 musicians and 24 young players.

Catherine Backhouse <i>mezzo</i>	Peter Gregson <i>cello</i>	Benjamin Nabarro <i>violin</i>
Fiona Bevan & band	Savitri Grier <i>violin</i>	Thomas Norris <i>violin</i>
Tom Blach <i>piano</i>	Benjamin Griffiths <i>double bass</i>	Onyx Brass
Simon Blendis <i>violin</i>	Thomas Guthrie <i>tenor</i>	Raphaella Papadakis <i>soprano</i>
Samuel Burstin <i>conductor</i>	Lucy Hall <i>soprano</i>	Emma Parker <i>violin</i>
The Celan String Quartet	Peter Hanson <i>violin</i>	Ruth Paton <i>storyteller</i>
Bojan Cicic <i>violin</i>	Gillianne Haddow <i>viola</i>	Julian Perkins <i>clavichord & harpsichord</i>
Natalie Clein <i>cello</i>	Dominic Harlan <i>presenter, piano</i>	Jennifer Pike <i>violin</i>
The Armonico Consort	Ruby Hughes <i>soprano</i>	Tom Poster <i>piano</i>
Simon Crawford-Phillips <i>piano</i>	Malcolm Johnston <i>viola</i>	Gabriel Prokofiev <i>electronic</i>
Emily Dankworth <i>voice</i>	Guy Johnston <i>cello</i>	James Redwood <i>composer, presenter</i>
Anna Dennis <i>soprano</i>	Orlando Jopling <i>cello, conductor</i>	The Roman River Festival Ensemble, Choir and Orchestra
Steven Devine <i>organ</i>	The Lawson Trio (Annabel Lawson, Clara Biss & Rebecca Knight)	Gemma Rosefield <i>cello</i>
Nwando Ebezie <i>DJ</i>	Richard Lester <i>cello</i>	Mark Simpson <i>clarinet</i>
The Escher String Quartet	Jonathan Manson <i>cello & gamba</i>	Sergio Tiempo <i>piano</i>
Luke Elwes <i>talk</i>	The Marian Consort	Rebecca Truscott <i>cello & storytelling</i>
Firefly Burning (Bea Hankey, John Barber, Jack Ross, Sam Glazer & James Redwood)	Ben McAteer <i>baritone</i>	Zsolt-Tihamer Visontay <i>violin</i>
Yuri Ghislin <i>viola</i>	Joseph Middleton <i>piano</i>	Vive vocals
Rebecca Gilliver <i>cello</i>	Philip Moore <i>piano</i>	
Christopher Glynn <i>piano</i>	Charles Mutter <i>violin</i>	

Things to get better

This was the third year of the Festival Choir. Although there was no negative feedback about the concert, and it was an improvement on the last two years, I still felt that the choir did not come up to the high standard of the rest of the festival concerts, nor of the orchestra which accompanied them. For 2015 we will hold auditions and introduce a 'side-by-side' element to the choir, so that it is 70% top-quality amateur and 30% professional. The size of the venue and our financial situation does not yet allow us to pay for a fully professional choir, and in any case the choir has brought the festival to the attention of a new group of people, and can also be considered part of our outreach work.

Audience, profile and marketing

Overview A substantial increase in audience numbers, profile and support from all sectors.

Achievements

- A. A continuation of the festival's 14-year trajectory of significant year-on-year increase in popularity. This year ticket sales increased by 37% or almost 1,000 compared to last year, to 3,768 tickets, and box office income rose to £44,000 (circa 45% of income). A loyal and crucially, trusting audience base is forming around the festival, as many of our core audience are trusting the programming to venture out and attend concerts they would not necessarily have tried without the Roman River endorsement. If one takes into account the 700 primary school pupils who heard the Soldier's Tale at the Mercury, plus the secondary school pupils who heard the 8 in-school recitals, over 4,500 people listened to international quality performances during the festival (up from 3,075 in 2013)
- B. The festival made many new friends and supporters. Half of the new ticket sales were people new to the festival. Over 400 people wanted to be added to the mailing list, increasing its size by almost 25%. 12 people joined the volunteer team, and we accepted our first ever work-experience placement.
- C. New reciprocal marketing with Saffron Hall and also our partner art gallery Cobbold & Judd
- D. A significant step up in local / regional profile, with extensive local press and radio previews.
- E. The festival reinforced the valuable perception is that we produce high quality performances in interesting venues. An online survey is being undertaken to find out more about our audience.
- F. A successful brochure launch party attended by 150 people (up from 13 last year)

Things to get better

- A. Considering the quality of the concerts and although some events (Vive and the festival walk) sold out, the audience for the 'Colchester weekend' was mixed, with 561 tickets sold (52% capacity). Our evaluation is that this is because it was a new concept, and new ideas always take time to build a following. Next year we will try fewer events during that weekend to focus marketing efforts, aim to create a different production team to avoid exhausting our core team, and change the marketing strategy for this part of the festival, aiming to increase to 70-80% capacity.
- B. We still have no national media coverage either before or after the festival. Although national media might not gain us many extra ticket sales, it would be an affirmation of our supporters' view that the festival is of regional significance. We will step up efforts to gain this recognition.
- C. We estimate that there are still several thousand music-lovers within reach of the festival who have not yet been tempted to dip their toes in and try a concert. We need to continue innovating with our marketing to reach these people.
- D. It is essential to farm out the programme book as a self-contained project for a team of volunteers to create from May onwards, to avoid strain on the core team. Song texts are better as separate sheets handed out at relevant concerts (this is in process of being sorted out)
- E. We were promised a town centre 'hub' by one of our sponsors but this did not transpire. However, we did succeed in persuading some people to help us achieve a visual presence: flags hung from the town hall, posters in shopping precincts, and self-standing banners.
- F. The extra time needed to design these meant that there was pressure on design time this year, so we need to budget extra hours next year (actioned).
- G. We need to nominate one person to run the twitter account, and tell the story of the festival as it happens - pictures of well-known performers arriving at the station, rehearsing etc.
- H. Persuade more local and regional media outlets to do *interviews* with the performers.
- I. Discontinue most of the special offers - we did not get enough benefit from them to warrant the complexity they created for box office staff (also see finances)
- J. Strengthen our online presence with blogs and social media in general. Perhaps free tickets to those who agree to write their impressions of the festival in a blog.
- K. We were forced to postpone to 2015 the pilot project of recording and filming concerts for streaming. However we did instead succeed in commissioning a 2-minute film introducing the festival.

Finances

Overview We are in a strong, sustainable and resilient position with reserves in line with our stated policy.

Achievements

A Income increased - all income streams (sponsorship 66%, grant funding 70%, funding specifically for the education programme 68%, box office 8%, and income from our Friends organisation 9%) show increases on last year. The final accounts are being prepared but we should end up with approximately 30% of annual turnover in reserve, in line with our reserves policy. We have already had offers of financial support for the 2015 festival.

B Value for money - although our venues are intimate, the number of concerts in the festival is now in the same ball park as many nationally-known festivals, like Cheltenham and Aldeburgh. We deliver the festival with a tiny fraction of their resources, making the festival extremely good value for money for our funders, sponsors and supporters.

Things to get better

- A. Box office income. This increased again this year by 8% and remains exceptionally high in our sector as a proportion of festival income (over 40%) and is almost exactly the amount we budgeted. However it did not increase by nearly as much as the number of tickets sold, for three reasons. Firstly, the ACE grant enabled (and required) us to take risks with artistically experimental events, which attracted a smaller audience than the concerts of well-known music. Secondly, we were delighted that the take-up of our very low ticket prices for the under-26s was much higher this year than previous years. Thirdly, the special offers reduced the box office income without having enough tangible beneficial effect, and will mostly not be repeated.
- B. Personnel. We have been relying on one volunteer to be in charge of both box office and finances. This made sense when the festival was smaller, but is no longer viable due to the large increase in numbers of tickets being processed. **Solution:** Lindsay Wilson will next year be in charge of the box office only, plus we are recruiting two box office assistants to share her workload. The floats, cash receipts for tickets on the door, donations towards refreshments, and programme sales will be dealt with by Ruth Job. Bills and payments to musicians will be the responsibility of a person yet to be appointed - there are several people who have expressed an interest in this honorary post.
- C. Box office system. We have evaluated the pros and cons of our box office system against outsourcing to an online system like eventbrite or using the box office of another organisation like the Mercury. At the moment our system has more benefits than drawbacks, but every year the balance swings more towards online systems and we need to be ready to take advantage of the efficiencies that can be obtained. Next year we will align ourselves more with most ticket providers by charging P&P, but we will give people the option to avoid the charge by printing out and bringing their paypal receipt.
- D. Our accounting processes and systems will soon be no longer fit for purpose for the larger festival. We are taking independent advice and will improve these in order to avoid future problems. As a first step, we have had advice from a new honorary independent advisor Robert Clubb, and new volunteer accountant Ruth Job is preparing systems for 2015 in line with his advice. We are separately in the process of appointing an accountant to the board of trustees to oversee this increasingly complex part of the organisation. (Richard Harvey has been invited to the next Trustees' meeting in November).
- E. Paying bills - Although performers will all be paid within a month of the end of the festival, we would like to improve this so that everyone is paid within two weeks of their particular performance. We will appoint a separate person to deal with invoices and payments.
- F. Although income from our Friends increased from the previous year, the increase was not as much as we had hoped, mostly because the core team were too stretched to organise the Friends enough. We are in the process of putting together a team of people who will take advantage of the offers of social events throughout the year, to encourage people to join and also to encourage them to give more. We have also raised the levels of support from £25 / £75 / £150 to £35 / £100 / £250.

Education

Overview

A substantially increased programme, involving 19 primary schools (up from 15 in 2013), 10 secondary schools (up from 4 in 2013) and actively involving over 1,500 young people in total (up from 900 in 2013), with several new and successful initiatives.

We are now seen as a force in extra-curricular learning and have been invited to participate in the Colchester Learning Network alongside, among others, firstsite and Colchester Castle.

Aims

Overall aim To make a long-term difference to young people's approach to and knowledge of classical, world, folk and jazz music; to educate young people in music so that they can reap the rewards for the rest of their lives either by participating, performing, composing or listening.

In order to achieve this, we aim to make best use of the over 100 world class musicians who are in the Colchester area during the festival, creating opportunities for young people to meet and interact with them, hear live music, be inspired to listen or try an instrument or singing for themselves, or improve their skill if they have already started.

Specific aims for 2014 were to continue to expand the programme and develop the various projects to reach more young people who would otherwise not have access, either because of their social background or due to lack of funding in schools. It was particularly noteworthy that the initial take-up of the young musicians projects the previous year was by schools where classical music is already an important part of the music curriculum and most of the students play an instrument.

Summary of the 8 projects in the education programme.

Julie Cuthbert *Youth programme and secondary education projects co-ordinator*
Kate Williams *primary schools projects co-ordinator*

The first four projects were offered to primary schools.

i. The Soldier's Tale.

James Redwood (composer / animateur), Anthony Bailey (clarinet & animateur), Andrew Connington (trombone) and Martin Rockall (trumpet) introduced the music, instruments, animals and themes of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* to classes from 17 primary schools. All participants were then invited to a free full-scale live performance at the Mercury Theatre during school hours on Friday 26th September, given by Andrew and others of the top musicians appearing at the festival, and introduced and animated by James. Roman River Music organised and paid for coaches for all 17 schools to bring the pupils to the Theatre.

Soldier's Tale ensemble

Charles Mutter *violin / director*
Anthony Bailey *clarinet*
Martin Rockall *trumpet*

Scott Lumsdaine *percussion*
Paul Boyes *bassoon*
Andrew Connington *trombone* Ben Griffiths *double bass*

ii. Music Hall Songs.

Pianist, presenter and composer Dominic Harlan and top singer Rob Gildon led a singing, composing and performance project in 4 primary schools. The all-day workshops echoed one of the strands of the festival programming; Music Hall songs from 1890 - 1914, including *Lambeth Walk*; *She Died, She Did*; *Knees Up Mother Brown* and *After You've Gone*. Groups performed their songs to an audience of 230 at Stoke by Nayland Church on Sunday 28th September, and listened to a full orchestra perform Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Elgar's *Cello Concerto* at the same concert.

iii. Winterreise

Opera and installation designer Ruth Paton worked with two primary schools to create 3D sculptures inspired by Schubert's *Winterreise*, which was performed at 4pm on Saturday 20th September in liquid nightclub on

Colchester High Street. The pupils' classroom was turned into a gallery for an afternoon and the work was shared with the school community.

iv. CPD session for primary school teachers.

This was a session dedicated to the teachers involved in the primary schools workshops, designed for them to get the most from the workshops and add value by teaching related subjects and following up subjects covered in the workshops. This was attended by 18 teachers; a good result considering the wide geographical spread of the schools, and was very well received.

The other four projects were offered to young people and secondary schools.

v. In-school recitals

Almost 30 top-class musicians gave interactive recitals in 9 schools to over 500 pupils in total, featuring a range of musical styles and genres. All schools have said they would like to participate again next year.

Once teachers understood the quality of what we were offering and that we wanted to help support them in delivering music to their students rather than give them extra work, we more than doubled the participation of secondary schools this year. Julie Cuthbert worked with the teachers to ensure that the timings of recitals suited them, and they were also given more information about the performers and the music and a choice about who could play at their school. As a result Roman River was able to arrange recitals in six schools and colleges that had refused us last year.

Performer	School
Vive	Colchester Academy (new) The Gilberd School (new) Colchester County High School for Girls Thomas Lord Audley School (new)
The Celan Quartet	Philip Morant Academy
Tom Poster and Tom Blach	Colchester 6th form College (new)
Guy Johnston, Tom Poster and Mark Simpson	Colchester Royal Grammar School
The Escher Quartet	Colchester Institute (new)
The Marian Consort	Manningtree School (new)

vi. Performance opportunities for young musicians

15-year-old Jessica Villiers sang to 100 people at the beginning of Ruby Hughes and Joseph Middleton's recital at Layer Marney Tower, and 16-year-old George Pertwee performed to 130 people at Simon Crawford-Philips and Philip Moore's recital in Liquid Nightclub.

Jessica Villier's head of music wrote *Just to say many thanks for giving Jess the opportunity to perform at the Layer Marney Tower Concert last night and for organising it. It was a fabulous experience for her and both the school and her parents were thrilled. And what a terrific venue! She received many compliments from members of the audience at both the interval and at the end which I am sure will have found inspiring.*

vii. Side-by-side Ensemble

A unique opportunity for young musicians to rehearse and perform alongside some of the top musicians appearing at the festival. 24 local young players were coached in individual sections and in an orchestral context during weekends throughout September by top quality professionals, working towards a performance where they were joined by 30 top professionals to perform two major works of the orchestral repertoire - Elgar Cello Concerto and Stravinsky 1919 Firebird Suite, with a top-class soloist (LSO principal cello Rebecca Gilliver) and conductor (Samuel Burstin). The performance was of an extremely high standard, to an audience of 230 on Sunday 28th September in Stoke by Nayland Church. The coaches were:

Lois Au & Jonathan Davies <i>bassoon</i>	Samuel Burstin <i>viola & conductor</i>
Alison Hayhurst <i>flute</i>	Rebecca Scott & John Smart <i>violin</i>
Orlando Jopling <i>cello & conductor</i>	Virginia Slater <i>viola</i>

viii. Set works concert.

Over 100 pupils studying GCSE and A Level music from 4 schools listened to a live performance-lecture, on Friday 3rd October, of works from their syllabus, introduced and analysed by Orlando Jopling. The performers were:

Oliver Pashley <i>clarinet</i>	Connie Tanner <i>bassoon</i>
Philippa Mo <i>violin</i>	Martin Rockall <i>trumpet</i>

Eleanor Stanford *violin*
Martin Wray *viola*
Thomas Maternik *cello*

Martin Lawrence *horn & natural horn*
Andrew Connington *trombone*
Ben Griffiths *double bass* Fiona Dalzell *piano*

The repertoire was

Corelli Trio Sonata in D, Op. 3 No. 2: 4th mvt

Haydn Trumpet Concerto in Eb and the 'Joke' String Quartet 4th mvt

Mozart Piano sonata K 333 mvt 1

Beethoven Horn Sonata (1st mvt) and Septet in E flat, Op. 20 mvt 1

Schumann Kinderscenen nos 1, 3 & 11

Poulenc Sonata for Horn, Trumpet & Trombone mvt 1

Luciano Berio PSY

Piazzola *Libertango*

List of participating schools

Primary schools

Baynards
Bishop William Ward CofE
Brinkley Grove
Dedham
Fordham
All Saints CofE
Home Farm
Langenhoe Community
Mayflower
Mersea Island
Myland
Old Heath Community
Rowhedge
St John's CofE
St Lawrence
St Luke's Church
St Peter's CofE
Willow Brook Primary Schools
Prettygate Junior School

Secondary schools

Colchester Academy (new for 2014)
Colchester Sixth Form College (new for 2014)
Colchester County High School for Girls
The Colchester Institute (new for 2014)
Colchester Royal Grammar School
The Gilbert School (new for 2014)
Manningtree High School (new for 2014)
Philip Morant School & College
St Mary's School
Thomas Lord Audley (new for 2014)

Achievements

- A. A huge increase in the number of secondary-age school pupils benefiting from the festival. It is apparent from the enthusiastic response of teachers, students and sponsors that Roman River Music substantially achieved its youth programme aims for 2014 and after only two years is already beginning to achieve its long-term aim. Our only difficulty has been gaining the trust and confidence of schools that we are not some inferior regional outfit trying to tick boxes. Every single school that we have played in wants us to come back next year. Students who have moved on to university are coming back to see us due to the quality of our performances. Teachers and parents who came to concerts in a private capacity want to know why we are not in their schools.
- B. We more than doubled the number of secondary schools signing up for our interactive in-school recitals, organised and produced by our young player co-ordinator Julie Cuthbert.
- C. Much-improved standard of the side-by-side performance, with coaching from 7 top professionals (up from zero in 2013), enabling the young players to tackle two major works of the orchestral repertoire - Elgar Cello Concerto and Stravinsky 1919 Firebird Suite, with a top-class soloist (LSO principal cello Rebecca Gilliver) and conductor (Samuel Burstin)
- D. Successful launch of our young talent platform initiative, giving young musicians not only a performance platform but also an opportunity to meet and quiz professional performers about their career.
- E. New this year for the expanded primary schools project was a CPD session dedicated to the teachers involved in the primary schools workshops, designed for them to get the most from the workshops and add value by teaching related subjects and following up subjects covered in the workshops.
- F. The successful appointment of Kate Williams, primary schools co-ordinator, who carried out the role with commitment and care, successfully mediating between different stakeholders and solving problems.
- G. Improved evaluation procedures will enable us to improve the longer-term strategic plan.

Things to get better

- A. More support needed for Julie Cuthbert, honorary co-ordinator of the now-substantial secondary school and young musician projects. A volunteer education team is in the process of being assembled, with two new people already on board.
- B. We need to find better ways of getting though to, and bringing on board, local instrumental teachers for the side-by-side project. This seems to be an even tougher challenge than secondary schools, who have now all come on board following Julie's patient and committed efforts. The instrumental teachers remain anonymous and difficult to get hold of. We are for the first time interacting with the local learning network and other cultural learning institutions, which may help.
- C. We also need to rethink the schedule and scope of the side-by-side project, fitting in better with the busy lives of young people and also developing ways of dealing with unreliability and people dropping out, and cutting our cloth to fit i.e. choosing repertoire to fit those who sign up. The gradual increase in our profile will help. It is only the second year of the project, and will take time to build up.
- D. Only 120 pupils came to hear the 'insight' (set works) concerts. This needs to be organised much more in advance to allow schools to forward plan. A result of the management issues discussed below.
- E. We need to articulate better the benefits of cross-border collaboration (Essex / Suffolk) to funders.
- F. We need to take advantage of school networks (often there are a cluster of primary schools connected to a secondary). Primary school groups could go into secondary schools to perform the songs they have learnt as part of our projects.
- G. We need to expand the education programme through the year, as September is a busy time for schools.
- H. We were disappointed that one school new to Roman River Music withdrew from the Music Hall project because they had received a complaint from a parent about having to pay to hear their child perform at the concert. The parent in question was quite happy to pay £10 for a coach to get them to the concert, but not to pay £5 to for the concert itself, despite the associated workshop being completely free to participants. This is symptomatic of a general lack of appreciation of culture in the area in which we operate. The school was also participating in the Soldier's Tale projects, and once the workshop had taken place, they realised what an amazing opportunity they were depriving their pupils of, and tried at the last minute to re-sign up for the Music Hall project, but it was then too late to include them.>

Management

Overview

A challenging year, with the core team under pressure from the increased popularity and size of the festival. Despite this, the stress was not apparent to the audience or participants, and there were some positive outcomes during the festival itself, mostly relating to the increased size and fulfilment of the volunteer team.

The organisation has the particular challenge of combining the logistics involved in converting and running almost 20 venues, with the kind of consistent quality of performer of the Aldeburgh festival or the Wigmore Hall, whose funding is in a totally different league from ours.

Core team

		Project fee for 2014
Producer	Joanna Seifert	£12,000
Artistic Director	Orlando Jopling	£5,000
Volunteers & schools	Kate Williams	£4,500
Design	Alexandra Davis	£1,850
Box office manager	Lindsay Wilson	Honorary
Young players co-ordinator	Julie Cuthbert	Honorary
Friends	Zélie Jopling	Honorary
Librarian	Judith Hutchings	Honorary
Accounts	Ruth Job	Honorary

Trustees

Harry Anderson
Kevin Bentley (resigned Oct 2014)
Adrian Biggs
Julie Cuthbert
Richard Harvey (appointed November 2014)
Zélie Jopling
Hana Loftus

Venue managers

Harry Anderson	Fordham
Adrian Biggs	Packing Shed & Layer Marney Tower
Sara Colquhoun	St Martin's Church and Liquid Nightclub
Julie Cuthbert	Colchester Castle and Wivenhoe Church
Pepeta Dutton	Abberton Church
Marcus Edwards	Copford Church
Malcolm Hawskby	Fingringhoe Church
Plep Johnston	St Peter's Church
Kathryn Knight	East Mersea Church
Andrew Norman-Butler	Stoke by Nayland Church
Jonathan Pearsall	Bandstand in Castle Park
Lee Pugh	The Minories
Kate Williams	Peake's House

Achievements

The FOH and management of the familiar venues was significantly better and smoother than previous years, partly because of the experience of the various venue managers, and partly because paid staff Kate Williams and Jo Seifert were good at this part of the operation and the immediate challenges of picking up musicians from the station, starting the concerts, and being a positive presence at the festival.

(management cont.)

It was the most successful year for volunteers, both in numbers and that they enjoyed the experience. It is a great way to get the community involved and make people feel part of something exciting, challenging and worthwhile.

Things to get better

The organisation is undertaking a bottom-up reorganisation of the management, in order to

- a) create a structure which can cope with the increased size of the festival
- b) improve the recruitment and management of key roles, giving more support and being more realistic about what we can expect from someone doing the role for the first time
- c) make best use of the several offers of help we have had during the festival, and
- d) ensure consistent and timely delivery of the administration and execution of events.

Hana Loftus (Trustee) has prepared a briefing document which outlines the context of the present situation and also the three most common forms of management structure for organisations of our size. An interim diagram of the particular structure for this festival as far as we have got has been prepared. It shows several gaps, the most critical of which are a general manager and board lead for marketing. A particular feature of it is that when getting volunteers on board, we have decided to gather teams of people with board leads for a particular area of responsibility, as we have found that the areas which have teams of volunteers have been much more successful at getting the job done.

2015 will again partly be a 'learning the ropes' year for the new general manager, and we will have to put aside realistic time for this. It was a mistake to call the main job 'Producer' as that hinted at a bigger role than we in fact needed.

Finding an office is becoming increasingly vital. We need a space where the various team members both voluntary and paid can exchange information, support each other, and nip potential problems in the bud.

Legal change

At the same time, the organisation is undergoing a legal change, unconnected with the strains that the management team have been experiencing, but connected to the growth of the festival to its present size.

The constitution is no longer fit for purpose, being designed for a membership organisation putting on 3 small-scale concerts per year largely funded by members' subscription. A new charity in the new CIO format with a constitution suitable for a regionally significant event that the festival has become, has been formed. The Trustees plan to transfer the assets of the present charity to this new charity after approval by members at the AGM on 11th November 2014.

Venues

The 2014 festival put on concerts in 19 venues.

Six of these were new to the festival: The Packing Shed (Shell Island, West Mersea), Colchester Castle, Peake's House (6 events), Little Bentley Church, St Peter's Church on North Hill, and the bandstand in Castle Park.

The remaining thirteen had already hosted concerts in previous years: Layer Marney Tower, Liquid nightclub (2 events), The Minories (3 events) & The Mercury Theatre (2 events); Abberton, Colchester Baptist, Copford, East Mersea, Fingringhoe, Fordham (2 events), Stoke by Nayland (3 concerts) & St Martins (four events) Churches, and finally Colchester Rail Station ticket hall (2 popup concerts).

Overview

An essential part of our USP is the variety of interesting venues, but it presents a huge logistical challenge which we have to manage.

Achievements

- A. 19 venues were converted, set up and cleared away within 2 1/2 weeks - a remarkable achievement for the volunteer team.
- B. New venues Little Bentley Church, Peake's House and the Chapel of Colchester Castle were a success although we will reconsider the capacity for the castle - see below.
- C. The audience risers for the rear 5 rows of audience at Stoke by Nayland Church (our largest venue) were popular and provided 56 additional full-price seats. Despite the increased capacity, full-price seats were again the first to sell out, so ideally we would build a further 5 rows of risers over the front. However at the present moment Andrew Norman-Butler (our Stoke contact) has said no to this.
- D. The bar at St Martin's, manned by Paul Smith and friends, was a great success, providing a relaxed and social atmosphere to the more informal concerts held there.

Things to improve

- A. Two incidents reminded us of how fragile our relationship is with the local churches we use for venues. The first was where the church did not alert a family intending to hold a baptism during the festival to the fact that there would be staging, which came as an unwelcome surprise to them, and caused disappointment and ill-feeling. The second was where a service overran and was interrupted by our musicians entering the church for their rehearsal. We are aware that the churches we are so lucky to use are primarily for church services, and will continue to make a big effort to work with the churches' priorities. We have changed the planned times and dates of the relevant concerts next year to try to ensure this does not happen again.
- B. The choir staging was not large enough - needs one more row of risers at the back
- C. We set the capacity for the Chapel of Colchester Castle (a new venue for us) too high. Although we did not get negative feedback from members of the audience, we felt it was too hot and crowded, and because we cannot put a stage up for fear of damaging the floor, the sightlines were not good enough. Our assessment is that for safe evacuation in case of emergency, and for best sightlines, the capacity should be 100. We will have to set the ticket price at £35.
- D. The proposed conversion of a riverside warehouse was stymied when the borough council informed us late in the day that there was asbestos. However, we will investigate a derelict 1851 public meeting hall in Colchester which could hold an audience of 300-350, in the hope that it might solve the problem of a lack of concert hall in the region. Orlando Jopling has written a separate briefing document on this.
- E. St Peter's Church in the centre of town was too gloomy to be a really good concert venue
- F. The chairs we hired were uncomfortable. We need to increase the budget for this.
- G. The orchestra stage at Stoke should be lower (60-80cm) to avoid looking up at a sea of music stands.
- H. There needs to be an extra choir riser at the back, as the choir members were too cramped.
- I. The large number of venues put a strain. We should consolidate into circa 15 instead of 19.
- J. We need a separate drinks manager to organise the offering of wine and refreshments, or outsource to a dedicated bar. Julie Cuthbert is organising this.

Looking ahead

Overview

Once we have sorted out the management issues, we are generally in a strong position to continue growing the festival into a resilient and vibrant regional cultural force, We should aim to increase box office by 25% next year and put on between 15 & 25 main concerts, plus a fringe / Colchester Weekend / 'late nights at St Martins' possibly under separate branding & production team.

We have already secured funding to commission a new work from Gwilym Simcock to be premiered at the 2015 festival, and we have also agreed the first co-production with the new management team at the Mercury Theatre - our first ever evening concert in the venue.

Education

We should aim to again substantially increase our education programme to make up for the erosion of music teaching in schools and the lack of opportunity offered to young people in the area. The scarcity of young players wanting to sign up for the Side-by-Side project (an opportunity of being coached and playing next to top professionals), has underlined the urgent need for our primary school programme to extend its reach and open doors to younger children, so that many more young people take up instruments and develop their musical talent.

The festival operates in an extremely challenging environment where the general level of awareness of music and culture is very low, and there is a pressing need for the kind of work that we undertake.

Management

The Trustees have asked Orlando Jopling to continue as Artistic Director and have given him the responsibility of finding a suitable person with the organisational and communication skills to complement and partner him to take the festival forward.

Orlando Jopling has agreed to devote 35% of his time to the artistic direction of the 2015 festival and activities (including all additional duties as required to make the festival a success). The trustees will aim to remunerate him for this commitment at a minimum rate of £7,500 and maximum of £15,000.

If he finds the right person to be General Manager, and depending on the timescale of the appointment, skill set, experience and availability of the appointee, the trustees will offer up to £19,000 for project work over 9 months.

The organisation will in addition fund up to four further project-based positions:

Designer for print

Marketing

Primary schools projects co-ordinator

Friends co-ordinator / Development

A breakdown of time and remuneration for these smaller roles can be given on request. The rest of the management roles will continue to be on a volunteer basis.

Orlando Jopling 12th December 2014

List of concerts in the 2014 festival

September

Thursday 18	8pm Colchester Baptist Church	Pergolesi <i>Stabat Mater</i> , Vivaldi & Bach
Friday 19	7pm St Martin's Ch, Colchester 9.30pm St Martin's Church	Jazz acappella with Vive & Emily Dankworth NonClassical Clubnight with Gabriel Prokofiev
Saturday 20	2, 3.30 & 7.30pm Peake's House 4pm liquid nightclub 7pm St Martin's Church 9.30pm St Martin's Church	The Weaver's Tale (a new story with music, for families) Schubert <i>Winterreise</i> staged with puppet Fiona Bevan and her band (pop/folk) Firefly Burning (minimalist soundscapes) featuring Bea Hankey's vocals
Sunday 21	11am The Minories 1pm 4pm St Martin's Church 6pm St Peter's Church North Hill	Knotts, Boulanger, Ireland and Ravel & other piano trios The Lawson Trio Festival Walk with music by Onyx Brass The Battle of Lilac Lawns (for families) Onyx Brass - from Bach to Kenny Wheeler
Tuesday 23	8pm Fingringhoe Church	The Celan Quartet play Mozart, Brahms & Gubaidulina
Wed 24 7pm	Liquid Nightclub	The Rite of Spring plus Rachmaninov & Debussy Philip Moore and Simon Crawford-Phillips
Thursday 25	8pm Layer Marney Tower	Ruby Hughes and Joseph Middleton Songs by Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, Debussy, Ravel
Friday 26	7pm Fordham Church	Jennifer Pike violin, Tom Poster piano Rosza, Beethoven, Dvorak, & Vaughan Williams
Saturday 27	11am Abberton Church 6.30pm Stoke by Nayland	Bononcini, Vitali, Gabrieli & the Bolognese cello school Jonathan Manson Shostakovich 8th Quartet & Rachmaninov Vespers
Sunday 28	11am, 1pm & 3pm Mersea 4pm Stoke by Nayland	The Oyster Boy (a new story with music, for families) Elgar Cello Concerto and Stravinsky Firebird Rebecca Gilliver & the side-by-side orchestra
Tuesday 30	8pm Wivenhoe	Turnage, Messiaen & Mendelssohn Quartet for the end of Time with Mark Simpson, Guy Johnston, Tom Poster & Zsolt-Tihamer Visontay

October

Wednesday 1	Colchester Castle	The Escher Quartet, Colchester Castle
Thursday 2	8pm Copford	The golden age of English choral polyphony with the Marian Consort
Friday 3 7pm	Fordham 10.30pm St Martin's Church	Natalie Clein <i>cello</i> Sergio Tiempo <i>piano</i> Bach, Mendelssohn, Chopin & Shostakovich Strauss <i>Metamorphosen</i> with Schnapps
Saturday 4	11am Little Bentley Church 6pm Stoke By Nayland	Bach & Ysaye played by Savitri Grier <i>violin</i> Schumann Cello Concerto & Brahms German Requiem
Sunday 5 friends	11.30am East Mersea	Arias and sonatas with Anna Dennis, Julian Perkins & Dodgson, Rameau, Scarlatti, Handel & Purcell

The 2014 Roman River Festival Orchestra

Flute Alex Jakeman
Nicola Somerscales
Claire Beard

Oboe Daniel Bates
Katie Bennington

Cl Joy Farrall
Oliver Pashley

Bsn Connie Tanner
Ruth Rosales

Horn Gavin Edwards
Nick Benz
Martin Lawrence
Anthony Halstead

Tpt David Blackadder
Phil Bainbridge

Tromb Sue Adddison
Abigail Newman
Adrian France

Tuba James Anderson

Harp Lucy Haslar

Timps Adrian Bending

Vln I Peter Hanson
Tom Norris
Liz Pigram
Ellie Norris
Helena Ruinard

Vln II Kathy Shave
Rebecca Scott
Jo Green
John Smart

Vla Gwendolyn Fisher
Matthew Quenby
Sarah Chapman
Chloe Vansoeterstede

Vc Juliet Welchman
James Barralett
Rowena Calvert

Db Ben Griffiths
Elena Hull

Feedback by email

This year has been the most magnificent achievement for Roman River Music. The eclectic mix of music on offer this year was amazing and gave much pleasure to so many people. I only wished that I could have attended every concert. But I look forward with eager anticipation to next year. (Judy Kimmance)

We wished to congratulate you on a wonderful Festival. We consider ourselves most fortunate indeed to have been able to hear such music in such venues. Really quite inspiring and raising emotions which will endure. Thank you. (John Longdon)

What an incredible two weeks it was again. We are all incredibly fortunate to have such a range of amazing performances - and wonderful music which I'd never heard before - the Messaien and the Rachmaninov Vespers both particular highlights but in such a special atmosphere. I had ecstatic accounts of Tom Poster and Jennifer Pike's concert, and also of the Marian consort in Copford. I would like to say how brilliant the staging at the back of Stoke church was. It gave a wonderful view and great sound. (Gay Edwards)

A huge thank you for the festival. Wonderful variety, quality and quirkiness that has made many of our friends envious of our move to deepest Essex. (Giles Job)

It was the hugest pleasure to be involved with the festival, as ever. At a time when so many events seem to be struggling for audiences, it's absolutely brilliant to be part of such a positive, thriving festival - bravo for making it all happen. (Tom Poster - performer)

I only moved to Essex 2 years ago, and have sometimes lamented the lack of concerts in the area. The Roman River festival was amazing, with such a range of performers and venues, and amazing quality. Including my school trips, I ended up making it to 7 concerts, and had a fantastic time! My personal highlights were Vive, the Old time music hall children, and Brahms' Requiem, but it was all great, and I'm so glad to have discovered it this year. (Martha Taylor)

I just wanted to thank you for a wonderful week in Essex. We only caught the second half of the Festival but loved every minute of it. The whole experience was, for us, just brilliant. I particularly liked the programming - if purchase of CDs is anything to go by - last year it was 1, this year 6! The highlight for me was Wivenhoe Church and it sort of epitomised what the festival does so well. Stunning, world class artists who gave their all, a wonderful church in a magical location, the romantic D minor trio followed by an absolute amazing Messiaen. What is more the audience loved it, I mean really loved it. (John Paton)

What a feast of wonderful music you have treated us to. Best wishes and congratulations on another marvellous Roman River experience. (Michael Menzies)

I can truly say they were some of the most enjoyable and engaging experiences of my year, so thank you for providing them! (Rebecca Truscott - performer)

Congratulations on an outstanding festival this year. I enjoyed every concert I went to and was sorry to have missed any, as I usually heard the next night how good they had been. (Richard Spooner)

There have been so many highlights this week I cannot think where to praise highest. Last year was incredible and I hoped for similar but already it has exceeded all expectations. The children mixing with the professionals, magic and their sheer delight, what a treat for them [and us] but more so as the experience must be overwhelming and such an influence for their futures. The school children too, especially when they were all jolted upright in the Firebird and clung to every note! (Plep Johnston)

What a wonderful series of concerts. All five that I attended were marvellous, but the Messiaen/Mendelssohn/Turnage one was out of this world. (Tim Torry)

Thank you for organising such a marvellous Roman River Festival. For me, someone who is still exploring the huge range of serious, quality music available, what you provided was an opportunity to hear music, performed by world class musicians, that I would never have known about. In the usual run of things I would have had to have travelled to London for such performances, so to have them on by doorstep was, well, quite marvellous. I am not sure what I enjoyed the most, but perhaps the the Marian Consort's An Emerald in a Field of Gold, performed in Copford Church would count as my favourite. The term 'divine' to describe the singing is probably overused but that is the best I think that I can use. Beautiful. I would like to take the opportunity to

(email feedback cont.)

thank your producer, who must have had an enormous task on her hands managing the logistics of the Festival. She helped ensure that the Festival banners were miraculously in place at every venue. Just little things can count to ensure perfection. (Jonathan Pearsall)

A testament to programming: an undisputed success, in spite of being much bigger. More and more people are realising what an amazing thing is happening in our midst. Schools projects - A combination of content and hard work: a great success. Venues - a marvellous disparity of place, each one creating its own context and character. (Hana Loftus)

I'd like to thank you for the pleasure of singing in the choir, and for all the wonderful concerts you put on. You make a real difference to music in North Essex/Suffolk. It is a pity it is only for 2 and a half weeks! We look forward to next year, and I am happy to help in any way I can. (Sarah Greatorex)

Just a quick note to congratulate you all on a wonderful concert last night – enthralling music and beautifully staged. (Emma Judd)

The festival has achieved a superb amount in a short time (Leslie Olive)

I was delighted to perform for the festival, and I know that we all felt very privileged to give this year's final festival concert on Sunday. What a beautiful church - a veritable oasis. (Julian Perkins)

It was a lovely opportunity to play a concerto. Glad your festival has been such a success- your hard work and vision is just amazing. (Rebecca Gilliver)

The whole festival was a triumph with concerts galore that knocked the socks off. The Church looked great with Brian's lighting and the Marian Consort were wonderful. The evening was magic. Under the direction of Brian and Wendy Bolton the lighting, although simple, was enormously effective and during the concert the timbre of the wall paintings glowed and charmed. The music was stunning consisting mostly of Pre-Reformation compositions (Byrd, Tallis, Mundy, Strogers) some sourced from library treasures at Christchurch College, Oxford. The Marian Consort is a 7-voice ensemble and the audience reaction was one of rapture. I had wondered if the fare wouldn't be too academic; I was wrong. The music was beautiful.

I heard numerous people comment that they had no idea that our Church existed nor that it was quite so beautiful inside. My two over-riding impressions are that this was a truly beautiful event, and that the warmth with which the "Church People" embraced the challenge was welcome and fortifying. (Marcus Gregson)

The Festival was a TRIUMPH. The quality of the music was the best ever, and my many guests were blown away. Jennifer Pike's recital was the best recital I've ever been to. (Harry Anderson)

I went to the Oyster Boy performance with my family at the West Mersea Packing Shed last Sunday. We had a lovely experience - the little ferry ride and the music and stories were very enjoyable. Thank you for organising a lovely day. (Ellen Peterson)

Many thanks to everyone concerned with this year's festival of music, I'd like to say what a treat it has been. The Emerald in a Work of Gold, Winterreise and the Vespers were particular highlights. (Dominic Joame)

I just wanted to say how much I appreciated the opportunity to sing with the Roman River choir for the Brahms's Requiem. It was a wonderful and special experience to be taught and guided by different brilliant musicians, Paul Brough as well last Monday was inspirational. I was impressed how much care and effort everyone put in with the German language, and it was so particularly moving for me to be part of a group of mostly non-native speakers singing such a deeply meaningful composition so expertly in my mother tongue, especially when it all came together on the evening of the concert with the absolutely stunning orchestra, just intensely focussed on the music-making with the rest of the church in total darkness, quite a humbling experience and I nearly felt I shouldn't really be there, so beautiful. A very big thank you, what a privilege! (Claudia Nehmzow)

I would like to thank and congratulate you and all the team involved for the most wonderful Festival. It has been great to discover new favourites like the Cello Counterpoint on the Nonclassical Clubnight and the Shostakovich Quartet which was so full of despair and anger. It has also been lovely to rediscover old favourites like the Lark Ascending which was so sublime in its execution that the tears streamed down my cheeks. I thought that James Redwood did an amazing job with the schools and I am so proud to have been involved,

(email feedback cont.)

albeit in a small way, and want to confirm that I will help sponsor the education programme again next year. (Julia Havis)

My son is not a natural performer and was a little nervous but he did enjoy it and realises it was a brilliant opportunity. Dominic was obviously very good at inspiring the children. Also, my eldest son was privileged to see Vive vocals perform at his school (The Gilberd), as he is taking GCSE music. He said they were cool – a massive compliment from a teenage boy! So “thank you” again, especially for all the work you are doing with the youngsters. (Jo Banks)

What a lovely event at Layer Marney Tower - the songs were beautiful, the singer exquisite, and it was a great great setting for a concert. (Thomas Lennon)

Another wonderful and exciting evening! Thank you to you and all your volunteers for creating this extraordinary and exciting series of events. (Rosalind Mays)

‘The Oyster Boy’ at the Packing Shed was a huge success. Everyone, young and old, was absolutely entranced by captivating and charming storytelling by two charismatic performers - accompanied by the ferry trip to the island, sun shimmering silver off a thousand wavelets, a wild shell island to explore and the evocative old fisherman’s shed in which the performance took place, against a backdrop of gnarly old nautical artefacts. And to cap it all, we were so lucky with a perfect early autumn day - magical. (Adrian Biggs)

Yesterday’s concert was fantastic, I’m so pleased we came! It really was inspiring to see Dominic Harlan working with the school kids so enthused and both the singers and instrumentalists enjoying themselves so much. (Tessa Bartlett)

Thank you for transforming those couple of hours with the most sublime music-making. (Mary Durlacher)

We and many others have attended some outstanding events in truly unique locations; Orlando Jopling's solo cello concert in Peake's House on Wednesday evening being the stand-out among several really remarkable events. Having been aware of the Festival for some years, we have attended much more of it this year in its town centre venues. The quality of the music is tremendously high and the whole Festival has a feel of "taking off". (Sara Humphreys)

Congratulations on the fantastic programme this year. I've already been to two events, both of which were exceptional. (Bojana Petric)

Joe Middleton hugely enjoyed the recital with Ruby Hughes last month with you at Roman River and he would absolutely love the opportunity to return to your Festival. Indeed I believe he used the word "stunning"! (Sophie Dand, Askonas Holt)

Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed helping out on Tuesday night and to meet one of the 'creative forces' behind this splendid festival. (George Mckissock)

I should have written at once to say how much we enjoyed RR concerts this year. We booked a weekend package - what a good idea and the concerts were all excellent. (Margaret Seebohm)

I had a wonderful time and hope very much to join everyone again next year. (Jenny Campbell)

Congratulations on Festival 2014. Sincere thanks to all involved. A fantastic achievement. Eagerly await programme for 2015. (Graham Houghton)

A memorable experience with a very special orchestra and soloist - a humbling experience when the church was darkened and we were given the privilege to sing that glorious music to such a large audience. Our rehearsal with Paul was truly inspirational. It was an amazing Festival yet again with so much to look back on, a veritable feast of wonderful memories. (Jillian Hill)

Thank you for the wonderful experience of singing the Brahms Requiem this year, amazing! I hope many, many people express their appreciation of all the work that went into making the festival such a success, giving us the chance to hear such fantastic music so close to home. (Charlotte Scott-Barratt)

Feedback from audience survey undertaken in November 2014

99.6% of respondents would recommend the festival to their friends

95% thought the ticket pricing was good value or excellent value for money

70% are hoping to come to more concerts next year

'What is your general impression of the festival?' [all of the unedited anonymous answers are below].

A wonderful surprise. I loved the fact that international musicians were playing in unusual locations like village churches

Well organised, good quality of performance, interesting music

Increasingly professional

I very much enjoyed the programming - including hearing works like the Messiaen which is not often on concert programmes.

Truly professional

Really varied programme of events. Enthusiastic and friendly. Different and special in terms of venues and celebrating a sense of place. Putting this special corner of the world on the map. Bringing new cultural opportunities to the people of NE Essex. Supporting music education for children and young people. I think it's brilliant that we now have a music festival in the area - and one that seems to be thriving. Thank you!!!

Some outstanding music-making

Wonderful

Excellent in every respect

We only attended the 2 concerts so I would find it hard say how they could be improved. Both were run to perfection.

Very professionally run.

very exciting, brilliant choices of music and venues

Quality music making in delightful, sometimes unusual venues in a friendly environment

Excellent, wonderful, brilliant!! Thank you very much for all your hard work!

something we are very lucky to have and should be very very proud of

I think it is fantastic to have such an event in this area. Well done.

Excellent. Opportunities to hear top class performances without travelling far.

well organised and growing in stature

being so close to the performers is the best thing about Roman Rivers - brilliant

Professional, classy, exciting. Lucky to have it on our doorstep.

Good, but if you want to attract the "undecided" have some shorter programmes.

Excellent value and great music.

Amazing, inspired programming. Beautiful venues. World class music.

Great, with a variety of music for everyone and particularly good to include young local musicians

Well organised, top-quality musicianship across a range of venues with good acoustic qualities. Especially encouraging to see your inclusion of 'Fiona Bevan' & 'Firefly Burning' at St Martin's on the opening w/e: really added to the eclectic mix of Roman River...

Very good performances in more unusual venues at a reasonable price - and with very reasonably priced wines/beers!

Friendly approach with a real team of professional dedicated people behind it....wonderfully accessible to primary school children.

Enthusiastic excellence

Liked it last year when I attended a variety of events especially Gwyneth Herbert. Only attended one this year so difficult to comment. Need to see more than one event to make the most of it.

Wonderful variety of quality events in great settings. I was VERY impressed.

Excellent

quite enjoyed it

Wonderful

Friendly atmosphere, great value, just the sort of music I love - and of a very high quality.

Very well organised - something for everyone ! The Rachmaninov Vespers was magical and definitely one of the high points of 2014 for me. Thanks very much!

Wanted to attend more events but was away on holiday.

Very welcoming and perfect organization of venues and concerts

Friendly, varied, really good standard

A good varied mix of quality music and venues. Thanks to those involved for making this happen.

excellent, but resist getting too big. Keep it small & good quality

Well organised;superb potential to embrace alternative ground-breaking music & challenging performers.....

Excellent. Helpers and organisers are friendly and efficient. Music superb! Love it. Think we are very lucky to have an event of such quality available locally.

Very Mixed. Quite haphazard with organisation. Lack of thought on facilities for older and infirm people

Great music, interesting venues, friendly organisers

Very good

very good

Having moved from London, probably the musical centre of the universe, it was a joy to stumble upon this enterprising festival.

High quality music, very eclectic. A real asset to the local arts scene.

Varied so something good to taste for everyone.

Great to get to hear good quality music outside of a big city. Good to encourage young talent.

I was very impressed. The concert was well organised and I was particularly impressed by the level of enthusiastic support you have within the community. You are an inspiration

Excellent

Excellent and varied

Excellent - really great range of events, and well organised.

Concerts easy to access and catering for a wide range of musical tastes.

Lovely performances with some impressive headline artists, music sometimes esoteric and for a slightly 'exclusive'/older audience which will put off younger audiences

Very well organised but cosy and friendly too...

Good varied programme, accessible to large numbers of people.

Well organised and professional. Great thought put into the variety of performance and appropriate venues. Excellent website with tickets easy to pay for. Efficient and polite service.

Fun, different, loved the venues However audience does seem to be of a certain age - mostly retired

Excellent

It was brilliant. I live in Colchester and to be able to walk into town and listen to such wonderful music in unusual venues was amazing. I especially enjoyed the concerts in the Dutch Quarter such as St Martins and Peakes House as well as Liquid Night Club and the Castle Chapel.

Really interesting and high quality performances in beautiful venues.

Excellent, wish we'd been available to attend more concerts. Think the festival is a wonderful concept.

Excellent. Something a little different to the norm.

Live music is always good to hear

Well organised, friendly people behind the scenes, excellent performers

Very well organised. Friendly and very professional

Remarkable programme quality and so accessible.

great

Very impressed with quality of performers

Very well organised

A blazing light for culture and excellence.

Good idea hope it continues

I tend to like more main-stream classical works

Interesting programme, varied without lacking focus

We are incredibly lucky to have professional performers of such high calibre and diversity. I was only sorry that some audiences were so small in number.

Great

Very professional

Enjoyable evening but would have liked to have a better view.

Great value for money. Saw artists that we would not normally have through of seeing.

Eclectic and relaxed. Perfect. You can even drink your drink in the pew!

excellent organisation. I really like the way you are engaging with all age groups and tastes. I did not enjoy one event, a little too radical and not really pleasant to listen too, even if he was related to a famous composer.

Thank you! The festival was magnificent: this was the first time I have been and I was delighted by the events I attended.

high quality music in lovely venues. Access to music and artists not often heard

Very well organized.

General impression good

A great range of concerts that should suit everyone.

Lovely to have such good music on home soil. I have not much experience, but seems a reliably good standard

I have already encouraged friends to attend what I regard as an excellent festival with first class performers.

Some good stuff, somewhat expensively priced.

Fantastic!

Extraordinarily high quality

excellent

fantastic experiences with perfect blend of local atmosphere and professional performances

great

Distinctive, varied, attractive, nicely balanced, personal in the sense of reflecting a crusading zeal and the taste(s) of the organisers. So many festivals today are anodyne, one could say anonymous, interchangeable, the events parachuted in

The Wivenhoe concert was superb - also pleasing that there was such a large audience for a "modern" and quite "difficult" work.

It is so varied, there is something for everyone. the concert at stoke by nayland was excellent

Excellent, wonderful music in unusual venues!

Its special and always highly enjoyable and the time of year is perfect!

Wonderfully imaginative.

Brilliant. I've recently moved from London, and if this festival was there, I wouldn't have a hope in hell of getting tickets, let alone be able to afford them. I think people I have spoken to have an impression the tickets are expensive, but I don't think they've actually looked.

A thoroughly professionally run festival providing a wonderful facility for Colchester

Superb - improving year on year

Amazing, wonderful, sublime at times

very well thought through.

Wonderful! What a great chance for us to enjoy fantastic music on our doorstep. All the volunteers were so helpful and efficient too. Thank you all very much.

Well run. Thoughtful. Impressive

A warm and friendly festival

Excellent organisation and music.

Well organised, very efficient on ticket sales. Liked the idea of one programme for all events: encouraged you to look out for other things next time.

It goes from strength to strength. It included some of the most enjoyable music listening this year. Live music is always more exciting but the superb standard of musicianship resulted in some extremely enjoyable and memorable concerts. The Peake House environment was magical.

Fantastic performers, many of them very young.

I was impressed with the very high standard of the performers, the well chosen music, the variety of styles of music, the detailed programmes and friendliness of the volunteers. I loved it all!

Quality and variety - difficult to beat!

Has immense potential so long as the right young artists can be produced.

Extremely high quality and unusually non commercial festival with a great deal of thought put into venues and instrumentalists and singers. High quality music for music-lovers in north Essex and beyond - a real treat to be savoured at the end of summer.

High standard of performances

wonderful music and musicians.

great i look forward to it

Very good

Increasingly ambitious and broad based. Well organised. Good publicity.

A glorious celebration of chamber/solo music in unusual venues

Terrific. Marvellous range of music and venues and such top quality. Very welcoming and efficiently run

Fantastic choice of music - we love it!
Most enjoyable

Splendid

Good and improving

Very high standard of performances.

Good music and friendly people. I really like the way the musicians talk to us in the audience about their instruments and the music they play. It's interesting the way the use of smaller venues maintains the intimacy of the concerts and the Festival as a whole. It would be a shame to lose that.

High quality performers, let down by amateurish organisation front-of-house

Very well organised. Extremely high standard of performers. Interesting venues. Varied programmes.

An excellent and enterprising festival

Brilliant

rich, entertaining, 'gritty'

Brilliant, varied, high quality.

fantastic music, fabulous performers, a range of styles, wonderful friendly atmosphere, excellent education programme

It is getting better year on year and I have been coming since the days of the Whalebone Barn.

Excellent for this area. Would come to more events but not the time or other engagements. Love the way you go into schools - our sons have benefitted from this part of the programme over the years.

Brilliant. Bringing music in easy reach

a good alternative to Snape which concentrates too much on contemporary/modern music

Excellent music in beautiful venues

Great value, interesting and 'different' programme and venues. fun to go to...relaxed!

World class performers who relate well to their audience. Well organised

Its brilliant and seems to have improved from previous years. The quality of the performances I have attended is very very high. Additionally, now there are more concerts, this year a good amount were reachable on public transport.

Well organised,

Quality

An amazing number of quality concerts. Well advertised and planned.

Twitter

sherri singleton @mistleykitchen Oct 5 @RomanRiverMusic Manningtree High scored big time when the @marianconsort came for a most amazing singalong! #talent

Julia Abel Smith @juliaabelsmith Oct 2 Magical evening @romanrivermusic concert in sitting room @ #PeakesHouse #Colchester, Julian Perkins played clavichord

The Marian Consort @marianconsort Oct 2 @RomanRiverMusic Felt very welcomed by all. Here's the amazing venue

Hana Loftus @hanaloftus Sep 30 Utterly fantastic Quartet for the End of Time tonight @RomanRiverMusic @PosterTom.

Alan Critchley @AlanJCritchley Sep 28 Wonderful concert @RomanRiverMusic tonight. Elgar, Stravinsky and primary school children doing music hall songs. Fantastic mix!

Colchester Classics @ClassicalCDs Sep 29 @RomanRiverMusic Utterly awe inspiring brilliant choir rehearsal last night.

Kate Charlton-Jones @KatesThinking Oct 2 @RomanRiverMusic wonderful concert in unique venue #CopfordChurch tonight. A huge treat.

Wendy Bryant @DrWMB Oct 3 @RomanRiverMusic what a wonderful evening last night with Natalie Clein and Sergio Tiempo, thank you.

Nigel Dyson @nigelgardenshow Oct 4 @RomanRiverMusic Savitri Grier was a wonderful violinist at the concert today at Little bentley

Anne Jenkin @Baronessjenkin Oct 4 @bernardjenkin singing his heart out in the grand finale Brahms Requiem @romanrivermusic in Stoke by Nayland Church. Amazingly successful.

Geoff Whittaker @WhittakerGeoff Oct 4 Well that was good! Schumann Cello & Brahms German Requiem with @RomanRiverMusic. Great bunch of people and great music!

Claire Driver @CDriver4 Sep 28 @RomanRiverMusic Thank you! Feel lucky to have joined you for Oyster Boy today in such an exciting place for magical music and stories

David Jack @DJack_Journo Sep 28 Stunning venue for today's @RomanRiverMusic concert - The Oyster Boy in The Packing Shed, Mersea

The Landmark Trust @LandmarkTrust Sep 28 Explore the #history of #PeakesHouse, currently home to @RomanRiverMusic, in the historic market town of #Colchester <http://ow.ly/BRjmh>

Tom Poster @PosterTom Sep 27 So happy to be back at the brilliant @RomanRiverMusic last night with @ViolinJenny and look forward to Mendelssohn/Messiaen on Tues!

Orlando Jopling @OrlandoJopling Sep 24 Playing Bach in a C15 half-timbered townhouse in Colchester as part of @RomanRiverMusic - doesn't get much better than this.

VisitColchester @VisitColchester Sep 23 Cast your eyes over the astonishing performances still to come @RomanRiverMusic Festival - wow! <http://romanrivermusic.org.uk/events/event>

lawsontrio @lawsontrio Sep 21 We all loved trip to @RomanRiverMusic! Thanks to all who are making it happen-good luck this week! Delectable curating from @OrlandoJopling

Wendy Bryant @DrWMB Sep 21 @OnyxBrass @RomanRiverMusic thanks for great music tonight, all very absorbing. Really loved the Couperin.

Tymperleys @Tymperleys Sep 21 Colchester, East Wonderful concert from @OnyxBrass for @RomanRiverMusic

The Minories @CI_Minories Sep 21 Truly excellent concert today as part of @RomanRiverMusic Festival. Thank you to all the performers. #RavelPianoTrio #Colchester

Stephen Wiles @musictheoryguy Sep 21 I'm in Colchester looking forward to hearing @lawsontrio at @RomanRiverMusic An early start but worth it to hear Ravel, Knotts & Ireland.

Chris Glynn @chrisglynn00 Sep 20 @RomanRiverMusic Loved playing for @bastianboytg and his puppet in this unique & inventive #Winterreise. Brilliant festival too.

Wendy Bryant @DrWMB Sep 20 What amazing music. I didn't want the evening to end. Stunning. @Wearefirefly @RomanRiverMusic

Hana Loftus @hanaloftus Sep 20 the most fantastic new sounds I've heard for ages from Firefly Burning in a disused church this evening. @RomanRiverMusic is the best!

Thomas Guthrie @bastianboytg Sep 20 So enjoyed singing #winterreise with @chrisglynn00 for @RomanRiverMusic - fab audience, brilliant venue @LiquidColchest, and great support..

FlatfordNT @FlatfordNT Sep 20 Strongly recommend Luke Elwes exhibition <http://ow.ly/3rA4f5> @CI_Minories @RomanRiverMusic Great talk this morning about his work.

Geoff Whittaker @WhittakerGeoff Sep 20 Brilliant evening @RomanRiverMusic yesterday. Many thanks to @vivevocals - stunning a capella. See what else is on at <http://romanrivermusic.org.uk/>

David Jack @DJack_Journo Sep 19 Beautiful vibe, beautiful sound, beautiful people @vivevocals @RomanRiverMusic

Gabriel Prokofiev @gprokofiev Sep 19 Colchester, East Our green room for tonight's gig is a 16th century @LandmarkTrust town house -only at @RomanRiverMusic festival

Nathan @Eg_Nathan Sep 19 @RomanRiverMusic @vivevocals I was there, second row, behind beatbox kids at Thomas Lord Audley :) it was amazing guys!!! :D

Peter Gregson @petergregson Sep 19 Just arrived in Colchester w @gprokofiev - tonight we make our Essex debut at the @RomanRiverMusic

Percius @Perciusonline Sep 19 3) Sparkling Schubert Die Winterreise, complete w puppet: @bastianboytg @chrisglynn00 for @RomanRiverMusic tmrw <http://romanrivermusic.org.uk/events/event/schuberts-winterreise/> ...

St Mary's Colchester @stmaryscolch Sep 19 20 St Mary's musicians are looking forward to a concert today by @vivevocals at #Colchester County High School, part of @RomanRiverMusic

Hana Loftus @hanaloftus Sep 18 @romanrivermusic launch this evening - such an exciting buzz for this year's fest!