
ROMAN RIVER MUSIC

2016 Annual Report



Fabulous having such quality of performance in local venues.

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The festival was innovative, exciting, inclusive, artistically of very high standard, fun, creative, modern. The Sacconi in the Waiting Room had a wonderful atmosphere and it was great seeing children reading there. I loved the explanation intros. Breaking the Rules was superb and broke down classical music barriers.

A GREAT Occasion in the life of North Essex.

Overview

This has been the first time we have come to the Festival and we were enthralled; it has been superb Audience member

2016 was artistically the most adventurous in our 16 year history, combining an ambitious programme of challenging music with our most varied offering of artforms yet, attracting our largest and most diverse audience. Key steps in the transition to a more professional core team were achieved, and the year saw the start of several new partnerships.

The variety of events attracted an audience with a huge range of interests and backgrounds. Among sold-out events were our first theatre piece, the premiere of a new dance work, cross-genre collaborations and a site-specific immersive sound and light experience in a disused bus depot.

Our festival artist Anne-Marie Jacobs produced a new body of work inspired by the festival. We featured her stunning aerial photos of Essex marshes on all our publicity material. A special exhibition of her work mounted by the Minorities Gallery in Colchester complemented displays of her ceramics at the 16 festival venues.

Our core offering of compelling, challenging music brought to life by international performers in converted, informal and unexpected spaces, strengthened our reputation as a festival to be surprised and inspired by. The artistic quality of the festival has resulted in Radio 3 planning to broadcast 4 concerts from the summer festival in 2017.

The concerts we attended were all absolutely fantastic.

Our learning and participation programme continued to evolve. Our work in schools actively involved over 1,500 children and was spread across several months rather than the intense period around the Festival which had previously presented challenges to schools. The projects increased Roman River's profile in schools and their communities, and forged new collaborations with local organisations. The overall programme is also developing to involve excluded groups and those with challenges of various kinds, as well as young people.

For the third year in a row it was the highlight of my entire year, and it has made a significant difference to my mental health. Volunteer.
Ticket sales increased from the previous year, and the diversity of our offering meant that substantial new audiences were won.

It is a joy to have a high standard of concerts locally. I wish I could have attended more.

The charity continued to strengthen its management, building a fully professional core team complementing our volunteers whose roles are now better defined. It was an ambitious but rewarding year for the team. Our General Manager Victoria Steinitz successfully produced her second festival and also acted as interim head of education until the recent appointment of our new learning and participation leader Laura Davison.

I love the mix of approachable and innovative programme, involving young musicians and the settings in unusual venues.

The Board of Trustees continued to develop, with three new appointments with key skill sets - Sara Naylor (lead for marketing), Celia Crossley (lead for NPO application) and Wendy Bolton (lead for volunteers).

Finances remain stable, with reserves in line with our policy. Key funders continued to support us, and for the first time the Arts Council awarded us a two-year grant for the period September 2016 - March 2018.



Audience development, profile and marketing

This was the first time I've attended the festival. I thoroughly enjoyed all 4 performances I attended. There was X factor spine tingles, chemistry between the performers, and joie de vivre.

Audience development

- 4,678 tickets were sold; an increase of 23% on the 2015 figure of 3,790
- 46% of advance ticket sales were to those who were new to the festival - i.e. new people who asked for their names to be added to the mailing list since January 2016
- Average occupancy was 83%, similar to 2015's 84%. This year we performed in several new large venues, allowing room for expansion in the future
- Including the secondary school pupils who listened to the 7 in-school recitals, and the primary school pupils who listened to the festival finale on 2 October, over 5,500 people listened to top quality music during the festival (4,500 in 2015)
- The events at the old Bus Depot, Colchester Arts Centre, on board a vintage thames barge and those which featured new genres of performances (dance, theatre) brought new audiences to the festival.

This was my first time of coming to The Roman River Festival - it was fantastic and such a very high standard of performances. The highlight was Bach with contemporary dance - simply stunning and perfect setting visually and acoustically in the church - stunning.

Profile / press

Local and regional press and radio continued to promote the festival. There remains strong potential to increase the festival's profile regionally and nationally, especially taking advantage of the Radio 3 broadcasts in 2017.

I loved all I went to - managed 7 concerts this year. Thank you for the concert at Firstsite and the Mahler Symphony at Stoke by Nayland with just 15 players which was completely amazing and which I felt privileged to have heard.

Marketing

Our new designer Julie Green improved the look of our printed material, and we began to tackle the challenge of communicating with those who think that the festival is just classical music and that it is therefore not for them (see image below). Having appointed Sara Naylor as board lead for marketing, we are now looking for an experienced all-round arts marketer with a passion for a variety of music.

We repeated our pop-up concert to commuters at Colchester station. Financial constraints meant we did not have the resources to implement much of our marketing strategy this year, but despite this ticket sales increased, our Facebook page increased from 600 to 830 likes and our twitter account gained 400 followers to a total of 1,400.

2016 supporters and partners

Major Funders

Arts Council England
The Essex Community Foundation
The Band Trust
The Jerwood Charitable Foundation
Colchester Borough Council

Funders

The Fowler, Smith and Jones Charitable Trust
The Hervey Benham Charitable Trust
The Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust
The Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust
The Fenton Arts Trust

Corporate Sponsors

Anglian Water
Birkett Long
Chewton Rose
Fisher Jones Greenwood
Primeware
Hopkins Homes
The Wine Company
Thompson Smith and Puxon
Platinum Crown
Printwize

Individual Sponsors

Jonny and Miff Minter | Jennie Mace | Mary Durlacher | Helen and Michael Wigan
Patrick and Louise Grattan | Plep Johnston

I did so enjoy the concerts - the orchestras were wonderful, particularly Friday - spectacular. I look forward very much to the next series, and I fully intend to go on sponsoring. Jennie Mace, sponsor

The Friends of Roman River Music

Our Supporters, Associates and Benefactors

Just to say that I have immensely enjoyed this year's festival, and have therefore decided to increase my annual contribution. Incidentally, we would also be happy to accommodate musicians, if that helps - Benefactor

Partners

Colchester Arts Centre | The Waiting Room @st botolphs | The Mercury Theatre | Firstsite
The Minorities | The Pimlott Foundation

It is an outstanding festival and we are thrilled to be part of it Anthony Roberts, Director, Colchester Arts Centre

Our heartfelt thanks go to these organisations and individuals who supported our 2016 programme.

We are looking for trustees to lead on business sponsorship and individual giving. Meanwhile the trustees, volunteers and management jointly brought some new sponsors on board. Most existing supporters continued, except for Fenwicks (W&G) who were focussed on opening a new store in Colchester. We started to reach out to a wider network of business and individual sponsors, having some success in the regional context of a comparatively small group of people and businesses able and willing to support culture. We also had some success with funding and we are looking for a funding assistant to help with this essential area of our operation.

Individual giving increased in 2016 and we will continue to work hard to increase this. Our Friends organisation grew to 162 (154 in 2015) and their support grew by £2,000 from £9,750 to £11,750.

Artistic Outcome

I wanted to say once again how thrilled we were to be a part of this year's festival. We really enjoyed our stay and events, made so much more pleasurable by outstandingly generous hosts, the highest quality of music making in the orchestras, and welcoming, kind and encouraging support by your entire team. Kensington Brass

Roman River @ the Mercury | March and May

Building on our first co-promotion with the Mercury Theatre last year, two excellent concerts: Tasmin Little and Piers Lane in March, and Argentinian pianist Sergio Tiempo in May. Average occupancy 97%.

What a great standard of music. I would like to see more in Colchester.

Summer festival | July 4-6

Five informal concerts programmed over a summer weekend to make the most of light evenings, idyllic countryside and warm churches. The festival included

- Piano Quartets by Fauré and Schumann with sensational American violinist Elena Urioste, rising star violist Tim Ridout, Artistic Director Orlando Jopling and long-time festival favourite Tom Poster.

Last night was utter magic. The Quartet were so good together that it is hard to appreciate that they don't play together every day. Wonderful programme, too.

- A virtuosic solo viola recital by Tim Ridout including music by Patterson, Vieuxtemps, Telemann, Hefti and Bach.
- Juliette Bausor *flute*, Daniel Bates *oboe*, Katherine Spencer *clarinet*, Stuart King *bass clarinet*, Peter Whelan *bassoon* and Pip Eastop *horn* played Ibert *Trois Pièces Brèves*, Veress *Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon*, Damase *Dix-Sept Variations*, Poulenc *Novelette* and Janacek *Mladi*
- A family concert with specialists Billy's Band led by Dan Newell, LSO trumpet
- Winners of the Oxford Lieder Young Artists competition Nick Mogg (baritone) and Jâms Coleman (piano) performed a range of repertoire and musical styles for their Roman River début, including songs by Schubert, Loewe, Britten and Quilter



Just to say thank you for the delightful concert we enjoyed this afternoon. The setting was beautiful and the 2 performers gave us such a superb performance and they were great communicators too. The music was a joy to listen to.

Main Festival | 15 September - 2 October

What an extraordinary standard of musicians brought to our local communities by an extremely hard-working team. Long may it last. A real privilege to enjoy this annual classical music festival which also introduces children in local schools to life-enhancing music.

The opening festival weekend brought some of the world's leading classical musicians to play chamber music in churches in the area's idyllic countryside. The second weekend celebrated Colchester's unusual and charismatic venues with theatre, dance, installations, immersive experiences, concerts and exhibitions. The third offered rare orchestral masterpieces with a stunning orchestra hand-picked from London's international orchestras, in the dramatic setting and wonderful acoustic of Stoke-by-Nayland Church.

Thank you for a truly magnificent concert. The choir were exemplary in all departments; it will stay in my mind for a long time.

Among festival highlights were a theatrical dramatisation of the life of 16th-century composer Carlo Gesualdo, brand new choreography to the music of JS Bach, a string quartet performed from memory in darkness, guided walks, family concerts, a day out singing sea shanties on a Maldon barge, new collaborations between folk and classical musicians, a beer festival, talks and exhibitions, a hair-raising Bartók ballet set in a brothel and an epic Mahler symphony.

The quality of the performances I attended was outstanding, and the variety you offer is excellent. Interesting venues and varied genres.

We heard new music by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Steve Reich, Tom Adès, Gwilym Simcock, Jonathan Dove, Elvis Costello, Chris Woods, David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon and seven local composers, and forgotten 400-year-old choral gems by Praetorius, Gesualdo and Schein.

Yet another wonderful season of music.

International stars Tim Hugh, Nicola Benedetti, James Gilchrist and Bellowhead's Jon Boden appeared alongside rising stars Kensington Brass and the Marian Consort, dancer Laura Caldwell, guitarist Chris Woods (photo), rock art collective the Neutrinos and international chamber music performers including Tom Poster, Savitri Grier, Katie Stillman and Nathaniel Boyd.



I love the varied program pulling in people who would not normally attend classical concerts.

The festival continued its friendly, informal concert style, with the music introduced by the performers. A 'pay what you can' concert produced an average ticket price of over £11, and a 'read the paper' concert introduced a totally relaxed, informal style. Both concerts were packed.

Thank you. The passion and dedication of the musicians made it truly outstanding, even by international standards.

Outreach and opportunities for young people

During the summer term, top amateur Anthony Bailey and Roman River musicians gave workshops in 8 primary schools, introducing the music and themes of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, ahead of a performance to 750 pupils at the Mercury Theatre.

The main festival included early years concerts for children of 6 months upwards, a community brass project that included players well into their 70s, a primary singing and composition project in partnership with the Essex Music Education Hub, coaching for secondary school age musicians, and free interactive recitals and workshops in seven secondary schools by festival musicians. The Festival Finale included over 100 performers ranging from local primary school children to members of the London Symphony Orchestra, the festival choir, the local youth orchestra and the inspirational singer/songwriter Gwyneth Herbert.

Although I am in my 60s it is the first time I have ever sung in a Classical Music concert, as I don't read music. Being able to be involved in the Festival was an absolute highlight.

We continued our very successful young musician programme, selecting six exceptionally talented musicians at the start of their careers and giving them mentoring and development opportunities within the festival. Our context out of London and our support network of partners and Friends gives us the unique opportunity to be able to offer life-changing opportunities to talented young musicians, and we are thrilled to have the support of the Jerwood Foundation and Fenton Arts Trust to enable us to continue this effective work.

Venues

Roman River Music performed in 20 venues in 2016, including the Mercury Theatre and the following venues:

Summer Festival

East Mersea, Wivenhoe, *West Bergholt and Mistley Church

Main Festival

Fordham, Fingringhoe, *Coggeshall, Dedham, *Brightlingsea, and Stoke by Nayland Churches | St Martin's Church in Colchester | The Mosaic Space, Firstsite | *Colchester Arts Centre | *Thistle (a 1904 sailing barge) | *The old bus depot, Colchester | *Theatrical | *The studio theatre at the Mercury | Tymperleys (a half-timbered 15th century merchants house in central Colchester) | The Moot Hall at Colchester Town Hall * new venue (8 in total)

Roman River Team

All the concerts I attended were superb - well organised, lovely venues and musicians of the highest calibre.

Paid roles

Artistic Director	Orlando Jopling	Appointed 2007
General Manager	Victoria Steinitz	Appointed 2015
Education manager	Laura Davison	Appointed November 2016
Designer	Julie Green	Appointed early 2016
Primary Schools co-ordinator	Kate Green	Appointed 2015
Administrative support	Lizzie Cheeld	Appointed 2015

Traci Norrie Shipp also provided administrative support to the General Manager.

The festival is a collaborative effort involving dozens of volunteers, each of whom contributes a vital element in making the festival and education projects a success. We owe a huge debt of thanks to everyone who volunteers.

The festival was even more varied than usual, with some truly inspirational settings. Exceptional performances and just the friendliest group of volunteers you can imagine.

Key volunteer roles

Box office Manager	Lindsay Wilson
Box office Assistant / Intern	Joe Cowie
Accountancy	Ruth Job
Young musicians	Julie Cuthbert
Admin Assistant	Bettina Bullimore
Charity Secretary	Giles Job
Lighting	Brian and Wendy Bolton
Librarian	Judy Hutchings

Trustees

Harry Anderson
Wendy Bolton (appt 2016)
Celia Crossley (appt 2016)
Julie Cuthbert
Julia Havis
Zélie Jopling (Founder)
Hana Loftus
Sara Naylor (appt 2016)

Lead area

Chair
Volunteers
Finance
Learning and Participation and Visual Art
Local Connections
Friends organisation
Funding
Marketing

Patrons

The Hon Bernard Jenkin MP
Anthony Marwood
The Mayor of Colchester
Sir Andrew Motion
Mark Padmore
The Hon Will Quince MP
The Vice-Chancellor University of Essex

Summary / looking ahead

During 2016 Roman River Music continued to evolve at a fast rate, both artistically and organisationally. The process is exciting and we are tackling the financial and managerial challenges that come with change.

This year was best yet, with a wonderful variety of performances in a great selection of venues. Growing up can be tricky, but you have managed to maintain the intimacy of the early days with the maturity today in the selection of music and quality of performers. A highlight is the performers being so willing to engage with the young.

This year's audience figures show support for our key aims over the next few years. While keeping our core offering of compelling musical performances, these aims include increasing the diversity of what we offer and of our audience, connecting more with the different communities in our area, and developing our commissioning and producing work. We also aim to widen our outreach programme to include not only young people but excluded communities.

The ongoing organisational change is creating, pretty well from scratch, a professional core team led by Victoria Steinitz to work with our uniquely strong volunteer resource which has been built up over 16 years. The relationship between the two elements is being supported by a new Trustee appointment who is herself a long-standing volunteer and will take on responsibility for volunteers at board level.

The financial challenge is to fund the organisation through this transformation. We are in conversation with our major funders and will be continuing to apply to them for the core support that we need to enable the organisation to continue to flourish. We are continuing to work hard to keep our existing and win new corporate and individual sponsors, and to look after our Friends whose support underpins everything we do.

Orlando Jopling
Artistic Director
November 2016

The festival was absolutely fantastic. I enjoyed everything I attended, for different reasons. Beethoven in the Dark was beautiful to watch. KlangHaus was mesmerisingly immersive. Watching Laura Caldwell dance to Bach and interacting with the cellist had me totally drawn in, feeling emotions I may not have otherwise experienced. I was particularly impressed with the performance of the Mahler Symphony with only 15 musicians. The sound that came from the stage was astounding. Words can't do the performance the justice it deserves.