

Friends of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra
Chairman's Report
AGM 10th July 2020

Dear Friends,

I do hope that you have navigated this difficult period in good health, although I fear that cannot be the case for all. We all hope for happier days ahead, with the dearth of cultural activity across the nation being felt by so many.

As you will no doubt know, the Orchestra's season was truncated, with the final two concerts being cancelled due to the Government's Covid-19 restrictions on movement and public gatherings.

As ever, we are blessed with the high musical standards being achieved by the Orchestra, which under the guidance of its musical director Rod Dunk, seems to just get better and better. We now have the added excitement of the Orchestra's centenary year of 2022 coming into view.

In the shorter term, the plans for the 2020/21 season are in full swing and you will be hearing more about that direct from the Orchestra, as well as from the Assembly Hall Theatre. The hope is that we can all be in our seats for the 'opener' in October, but I think we all realise that there is much still to be navigated before that happens.

One consequence of a shorter season though is that the Orchestra's finances have been under less strain and the Friends have not felt the need to make a donation in the year to 30th April 2020, helping us to husband our resources for future years.

However, as you will hear in our Treasurer's report, the current stock market upheavals have had a, hopefully short-term, impact on our investments. Meanwhile, we have taken the opportunity to add to the holding in M&G's Charifund, whilst also retaining substantial cash balances.

When the RTSWO is once more able to perform, it cannot be known how its finances will fare in what could well be changed conditions. So we at the Friends are standing ready to do what we can, to help the Orchestra re-scale the musical peaks.

A final note is that it is a year now since John Isaac stepped down as Chairman and I would again like to thank him for all that he did for the Friends over many years.

best wishes

Neil Cumming
Chairman