

MULAG NEWSLETTER no. 2 - MAY 2003

In Sonata Form: A. exposition; B. development; C. recapitulation; D. coda

A. It is now a year since MULAG was set up in response to the closure of the three dedicated music libraries in East Sussex, at Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes. Although these closures led to a huge reduction of the music library provision before April 1st 2002, and most regrettably the loss of three knowledgeable and enthusiastic music librarians, we are now working towards the gradual restoration of music, especially scores and sheet music, in all three libraries, ultimately to the previous level. **So what has MULAG achieved so far?**

1. The restoration of scores and sheet music to a specially refurbished area in Eastbourne Central Library. We have stressed the need for musicians to browse and see the music in order to decide what to borrow.
2. Provision of single copies *for reference only* at Eastbourne and Lewes, from the sets of scores that can be borrowed from the county store in Lewes. This is not yet possible at Hastings.
3. Suitable space for music is included in the revised Architect's brief for the New Lewes Library.
4. A channel of communication has been established through a series of meetings with East Sussex County Councillors and Library Officers.

What are MULAG'S future aims?

1. To restore music to Hastings Library
2. To reduce the cost of borrowing. (It already costs less to order materials on line – see enclosed leaflet)
3. To safeguard stock from inappropriate weeding criteria.
4. Ultimately – to restore Music Library provision to its previous level in all three libraries.

B.1 We now have a positive dialogue with ESCC, both with the Lead member for Library Services, Cllr. Meg Stroude, and with the officers responsible for delivering Library Services. We are especially grateful to Paul Leivers, who recently left to take up a new appointment in Dorset, for his very positive interest both in Mulag and in the New Lewes Library.

B.2 An important development for the Library Service follows from restructuring at County Hall; in August Libraries will come under Education instead of Community Services. Although wary of further changes we believe that this will be a beneficial move; the County Education Officer, Denise Stokoe clearly values the Library Service, and it will continue to have its own budget, separate from Education. She is now seeking to appoint a new Head of Library Services and an Assistant Director of Libraries and Community Learning.

B.3 Our dialogue with ESCC chiefly consists of meetings between the Mulag Committee and Cllr. Meg Stroude and the County Officers. The first, in June 2002 was held at County Hall, the second last September at Eastbourne Central Library, and the third meeting was on May 13th at the County Music Store, Brooks Rd. in Lewes. The next meeting is planned for 25th November at Eastbourne Central Library. This has enabled us to persuade ESCC to restore a good number of scores to Eastbourne Library, where they have been housed since January in the specially refurbished mezzanine gallery at the back of the ground floor, in direct response to our plea that music and scores should be accessible for browsing and research. We also requested that single copies from the sets of scores held in the county store (and still available by order as before) should be on view for reference in Eastbourne and Lewes, and ultimately we hope in Hastings too. We are grateful to the Library Officers for hearing and meeting these requests for improved access to music.

We continue to press for the restoration of music and scores to Hastings, but the situation there is more complicated. ESCC recognises the need for a new library building, but this may well be linked to future plans to build a new University Campus. Meanwhile music materials can be ordered (on-line costs less) from any library in the county – see the enclosed leaflet.

Our Mulag committee member in Hastings, Louise Denny, writes: “ The nearest borrowing from open shelves is the mezzanine floor within Eastbourne Central Library. Should you know exactly *what* you wish to borrow you can order it from Hastings Library. An embryo music library is starting at Café Caricature in the Bourne Hall, The Bourne, Hastings Old Town, opening hours 11.0 – 3.0 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.” For more information call Louise on 01424 714222.

B.4 In this last year the whole county music collection has been catalogued and copies are available in libraries or on-line. A standardised loan system has been introduced, so it is now possible to monitor borrowing patterns.

B.5 This new channel of communication has also enabled us to explain the needs of musicians and music lovers to those whose brief is to provide for these needs. We have expressed our concern over the drastic reduction in music materials last year and challenged the current criteria for weeding materials, i.e. if an item is not borrowed for two years it may go into store, and if not requested for a further year it may be disposed of, so please keep on borrowing music as much as possible! We have also offered our combined and varied expertise to monitor future weeding processes, and would welcome any advice from our members; your committee does not aspire to omniscience!

C. RECAP: We would welcome volunteers to join our committee, and any advice, requests or suggestions.

D. CODA:

1. Are you aware that West Sussex has lost all its music libraries, and that Kent is now reduced to one music library in Maidstone?
2. Please support our campaign and recruit more members to ensure that music provision is maintained in East Sussex libraries.
3. Use the Music Library Service whenever possible – **USE IT OR LOSE IT!!!!**