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MULAG NEWSLETTER No 3. October 2004

First of all – thank you to all those who have joined Mulag, renewed your subscriptions and/or completed our questionnaire in this last year. Your contributions are much appreciated, and we are grateful for your various offers of help. Secondly – we apologise for the delay in sending out this third newsletter. It has been a hardworking year for all of us, and of course we all have many other commitments beside Mulag!

It is now two years since Mulag was set up, so it seems a good time to review developments past and present, and to consider future plans and objectives.

A. Past developments

1. We now have a website www.mulag.org.uk, most generously set up for us and managed by Robin Houghton. Please have a look and give us your comments and suggestions, which can be emailed to cynthia@mulag.org.uk.

We are also grateful to Roy and Angela Goodall for the regular reports on Mulag in their excellent bi-monthly publication "Words and Music", a valuable survey of the Performing Arts in Surrey, Sussex and Kent. (Available free of charge in libraries or by post for £6 a year – from the Goodalls, 28 Northcote Lane, Telscombe Cliffs, BN10 7ED, tel/fax 01273 589752).

2. As mentioned in our previous newsletters, we have now established a pattern of half-yearly meetings in May and November with the County Councillor and officers responsible for East Sussex Libraries and Information (ESLI). These meetings with ESLI have enabled us (a) to explain why musicians need to research, study and browse through music in order to decide what to borrow, and (b) to achieve the restoration of scores and sheet music to a specially refurbished area in Eastbourne Central Library, and (c) to request that single copies should be available *for reference only* from each of the sets of scores which can be borrowed from the county store in Lewes. These are now available in Eastbourne and Lewes, but unfortunately not as yet in Hastings.

3. We now have 92 members, and some of these have joined in answer to our questionnaire sent out nearly a year ago. Naturally it took some time for all the responses to come back to us, (we did not set a deadline), but these responses gave us valuable feedback to guide our activities in this last year. By 2.2.04 we had a 75% response. Our analysis of these responses showed a majority in favour of holding an AGM with Lewes as the preferred venue. We therefore arranged the AGM for the evening of May 16th at the Royal Oak in Lewes. Twenty Mulag members attended,

and it proved to be a lively forum for debate. The evening was stylishly concluded with an equally lively programme of “Western Swing”, performed by Roy Martin’s group, “Martin’s Marauders”.

B. Ongoing efforts

1. Our six-monthly meetings with ESLI continue, giving us opportunities to put forward and discuss comments, views and requests from our members. Libraries now come under the ESCC Education Department: the Chief Education Officer (CEO) is Denise Stokoe, and Irene Campbell has been appointed as “Assistant Director for Libraries and Community Learning”. We look forward to meeting her.

2. We continue to press for improved stock and access to music, (e.g. more miniature scores on the shelves) in all three Libraries, Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes, and for musically literate Library Assistants.

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis writes from Eastbourne:

“While the music library has improved we do still need

- Staff trained in music librarianship
- Better guiding/labelling to help find music
- Better organisation of vocal scores: soprano/alto/tenor/bass
- To fill the gaps in vocal scores e.g. six Schubert scores all for soprano, none for lower voices, and no Brahms/Schumann.
- A noticeboard on the music mezzanine level for concert posters etc.”

From Hastings Louise Denny writes:

“With the grandiose plans for the new Hastings Library, which we gather will include a section for sheet music, orchestral and choral scores, it is extremely important to keep potential music browsers and borrowers on board or the new library will take a long time to get up and running. At present the top floor of the Brassey Institute is still vacant, and the main Library at Hastings still has on its staff the dedicated music assistant who was formerly in charge of the music library there.”

In Lewes we eagerly await the completion of the New Library, due to open in July 2005. Cynthia Eraut writes:

“Building work is now in progress! It is widely recognised that many musicians have made valuable and generous contributions to the great fundraising effort for the new Lewes Library. The Appeal has now raised a grand total of nearly £70,000. ESCC is funding the building and basic equipment of the new library, but the money raised by the appeal will be used to provide various “enhancements” which could not otherwise have been funded. As a member of the Appeal Committee I have kept a close eye on the proposed provision for the music library section. About £8,000-£9,000 is now set aside for the purchase of 4 listening posts (for recordings), a computer with music software (probably Sibelius), a keyboard with headphones, and a noticeboard for musical events – posters, leaflets and brochures. There is still time to consider further suggestions or requests.”

C. Future plans

1. We hope soon to design new Posters and Information Leaflets to continue to make people aware that we *do* still have music provision in East Sussex libraries, and we need to encourage maximum use in order to safeguard our music collections for the future. We must resist “the gradual erosion of music borrowing facilities in this country” (quote from a letter from a Mulag member in Crowborough.).

2. We hope to compile a list of music/scores held by Mulag members (and others too perhaps?) who would be willing to lend them out on request, by private arrangement. Many music items were purchased by Mulag members and friends when they were sold off from the various music libraries in 2002 – or before. Would you be willing to lend any such music or scores you possess which are no longer available through East Sussex libraries? The list could be kept on our website, and on hard copy, to enable potential borrowers to contact potential lenders. This project would take some work to set up and administer. Would it be a useful operation?

In conclusion – we shall continue in our endeavours to keep ESCC Councillors and Officers informed about the needs of musicians and music lovers throughout the county, thereby safeguarding the future of our Music Libraries. We welcome your comments/suggestion/requests, which can be discussed at our meetings with ESLI. I attach a list of MULAG Committee members in case you wish to get in touch.

With best wishes for your continuing enjoyment of music!

Cynthia Eraut
Hon. Secretary

If you are in or near Lewes – please support a **concert** by **THE LEWES SINGERS: 7.30 pm on Sat.4th December at St. John Sub Castro, Lewes.** (In aid of CLIC and the restoration of the organ at St. John’s, where Susan Bain is the organist. Concert arranged by Robin Houghton. Call 01273 470010 or visit www.lewessingers.org.uk)

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