



January 2021 Chair's Update

Happy New Year 2021 to everyone. Well here we are in another time of Covid-restrictions labelled "Lockdown 3.0". Once again this means we are not able to meet (legally and morally) until the infection rates are sufficiently under control again, and restrictions are lifted. Meanwhile, some of you are ahead of others in the queues for vaccinations and we are all doing our bit to "stay at home". Our health, both physical and mental, remains a priority as the Committee seek to find ways of engaging you, our members, in the mission and purpose of Nonesuch Orchestra. To that end we have some exciting projects which we are now launching:

Virtual Recording (starting 28th January onwards)

We have an ambition to create a virtual recording of a simple piece composed by Robin Wedderburn, called "On the Move". This would be the very first 'virtual' arrangement that Nonesuch Orchestra has tried, although many of our members have joined in other projects during 2020 with other orchestras. The aim of this project is to have fun and play through something simple enabling us to achieve a reasonable quality of sound and ensemble playing remotely. The real 'fun' comes when you see how your contribution fits into the final performance (and maybe even share it with others).

Full instructions will be sent out and we also have the music (via pdf files) available to get this started soon. Watch out for an email inviting you to sign up to participate so that we have an indication of what contributions we can expect from you (thanks).

Should we exceed our expectations and find that our 'virtual performance' is of high enough quality, we could build upon it and create an on-line learning resource for schools. This would be a bonus, as the agreed aim is to have fun and just see what we might be able to produce 'virtually'.

Joe Keenan has kindly agreed to run a technical session on how to set up and get ready to record your contribution, as well as join all our recordings into one performance (thanks Joe). Dial into the Virtual Tea Break on Thursday 28th January at 10:30am to learn from Joe and others and get your technical questions answered.

Bartok Workshops (starting around mid-February)

This Spring Term we will start to run some remote workshops, on Zoom, concentrating on the Bartok Divertimento for Strings (BB113). Similar to the Dvorak labs that we enjoyed in the first lockdown, these workshops will take us through the Bartok Divertimento in a detail that we could never achieve under 'normal rehearsal' conditions. Using Zoom, and the 'break-out' room facility, we will run 'virtual sectionals' again to get into the detail of each part. There is a possibility that once lockdown restrictions are lifted, we could hold another 'Play Day' so that we have the opportunity to play through it all together (most likely in Covid-secure conditions).

The music has now arrived and we have enough parts for everyone. Again, check your email over the coming days to sign up and we will find the best way to get the music to you quickly (they are brand new parts).

You are all encouraged to participate and learn this fantastic piece as it is highly likely to feature in a future 'live' concert as part of the orchestra's 60th anniversary celebrations in the future. Of course, we will understand if you are unable to participate this term and hope you can join us when you can.

Supporting Young Composers (approx. second half of the term: Mid Feb to end of March)

A very special part of the outreach work that Nonesuch Orchestra supports with schools is the Spring Term Compositions Workshop for young composers. Lockdown 3.0 has created many barriers for us and for the students/schools and we can't expect to run live workshops as we have done for the last 2 years. However, given the importance of this outreach, and recognising that 'composition' is such a neglected part of music education, the Committee (and particularly Catherine) has been working to find creative ways to continue the involvement of Nonesuch Orchestra in this field.

So we are pushing ahead with supporting Young Composers during Spring 2021. We have 10 interested composers who have already submitted first drafts. As term progresses and the above 2 projects make some progress, the Committee will determine how best the Nonesuch Orchestra and its members can get involved. Watch this space for further developments.

So those are the plans and I hope you will all find some time to participate in some, if not all of them this term. I'd like to thank the Committee for their contributions and support in getting these projects formulated and of course to Dan, Steph and Joe for their continued support and leadership.

We are determined to bring Nonesuch Orchestra through this pandemic with purposeful and meaningful activities, that keep us all learning and playing together. I trust this meets with your support and participation and we are always open to listening to your suggestions too.

Yours,

James

Chair