



NEWENT ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

May 2022

PREFACE

This handbook has been produced to provide you with a description of how the Newent Orchestral Society is run and a guide to the guidelines and rules that we have developed to ensure that, by following them, everyone has an opportunity for an equally enjoyable experience within the group. You are urged to read the whole document to familiarise yourself with its contents.

If you are a new member of the Society, welcome! You are part of an enthusiastic and friendly group of musicians who are continuing a tradition of music making in this town for well over 70 years. We hope you enjoy your time with us, and that it will be a rewarding and fruitful experience. Whilst we are fortunate to have a number of accomplished players, we do not set a minimum playing standard to join the orchestra, as we wish to encourage as many potential new members to join us as possible. All we ask is that everyone contributes their best and aims to achieve a growing capability. This will enable our group, of what is now around 40 people, to make music together as an effective ensemble. Our concerts have an enthusiastic following, which is a testament to our guidance under our recently retired Music Director and conductor, George Taylor. Bill Anderton has now taken over the role of Music Director and conductor.

The Society is affiliated to Making Music, the National Federation of Music Groups. Making Music provides a convenient vehicle for certain administrative tasks, such as obtaining insurance for the Society and payment of Performing Rights Society fees, as well as providing advice and guidance on various issues including, recently, operating during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Comments and suggestions for improving this handbook are welcome. Just let me know.

Colin Henderson
Treasurer, Newent Orchestral Society
May 2022

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NEWENT ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY - MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

1. Introduction

This handbook has been produced to inform members of the way in which the Newent Orchestral Society operates and to inform them of their rights and obligations as members, for the benefit and protection of everyone. The Society operates under a constitution that defines the legal basis for its existence, while this document gives some additional and more informal information. The constitution is updated at intervals to keep it in line with modern guidance and members have to approve changes at a general meeting. The constitution is currently being updated and will be issued before the next AGM in 2022 when members will be asked to approve it.

Although we are not registered with the Charity Commission as our income is below the threshold value requiring registration, we are recognised in law as a charity by HMRC, who have determined that our constitution is as required for this purpose. We are therefore able to take part in the Gift Aid scheme, which provides valuable additional income for the Society. The operation of the Gift Aid scheme is described in Section 3, and any members who wish to, and who are UK tax payers, can increase the value of their membership subscriptions to the Society by signing up to the scheme. Ask the treasurer for details. Note that, in return for the tax concessions arising from being recognised as a charity, we have certain obligations in the way we operate and in promoting music making and music appreciation within the wider community.

2. The Committee (the Society's governing body) and how it operates

Like other similar bodies, the Newent Orchestral Society is administered by a committee consisting of three officers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer), plus additional committee members who assist with the running of our group. All these people are elected by the membership, and, as they are the Trustees of the Society, have a duty to follow the constitution and uphold Society rules and ethical practice. They perform the administrative

tasks needed to make the Society function (such as arrangements for rehearsals, concerts and finances) and they meet about four times a year. If necessary, meetings may be conducted online via Zoom. The minutes of the most recent committee meeting are circulated by email for members to read. Remember that these people are elected by you and are accountable to you at annual general meetings (AGMs). You are encouraged to stand for election yourself to any of these positions. At the AGM each year, the committee for the next 12 months is elected, and the constitution requires that any committee member who has held a position for three years must stand down, although they are allowed to offer themselves for re-election.

The committee members are the charity trustees in law, and have important obligations to exhibit complete integrity in executing tasks on behalf of the Society. For this, they must be fit and proper persons, honest in character and free of unspent convictions of certain offences, such as deception or money laundering, and not have committed certain other barring misdemeanours. Regulations that came into force in August 2018 actually require each Trustee to sign a declaration stating that they are not disqualified from acting as a Trustee and that they will inform the Trustees promptly if, after the date of the declaration, any defined disqualification reasons arise. These declarations are retained by an officer of the Society (currently the treasurer).

Assisting the trustees are people who, by virtue of their experience or other duties, are appointed to attend the committee meetings to provide additional essential input to decision making, but, unlike the trustees, have no vote. These individuals need not be members of the Society. The orchestra's Music Director and President are examples of these people.

The committee communicates with the members through email and announcements by the secretary or treasurer during rehearsal intervals and by exhibiting the latest committee meeting minutes online or on the noticeboard. Other communications shall be made as appropriate by representatives of the committee or the Music Director. As email is the principal means used to convey information to the membership, make sure we have your up-to-date details.

If you have any issue you think needs to be resolved, feel free to bring it to the attention of a committee member so that it can be discussed at the next committee meeting.

3. Finances

The Society treasurer operates the finances of the Society in collecting membership subscriptions, moneys from events, from refreshments and so on. Money can be collected as cash, by cheque or by internet banking direct to the Society's bank account. The treasurer makes outgoing payments either by cash, online banking or cheque. Cheques and payments by online banking involve double authorisation by two approved officials of the Society. Membership fees account for about 35% of income. The balance comes from events such as workshops and concerts. The treasurer aims to keep the incoming revenue and outgoing expenditure close to balance over the medium term and maintains a healthy reserve to cover contingencies. This was shown to be invaluable during the 18 months when we could obtain no income during the Covid-19 pandemic but still had significant outgoings.

For the last few years, a bursary fund has been established, aimed at supporting local musicians to encourage their development, for example via instrument purchase support or support for the cost of lessons. Incoming donations are currently normally earmarked for the bursary fund, which currently has a balance over £700. The role of the bursary was later extended to cover support for certain educational events. Moneys in the bursary fund cannot be used for other purposes unless changed by a decision of the committee.

The Society uses HMRC's Gift Aid scheme to augment income from subscriptions. By signing up to it just once, if you are UK taxpayer, the treasurer reclaims from HMRC an amount equivalent to an additional 25% of your membership payment or any donations you make to the Society, at no extra cost to you.

Our financial year runs from 1 August to 31 July.

4. Membership

Membership of the Society is open to anyone, regardless of playing ability. Prospective new members are welcome to attend three to four rehearsals to see whether the orchestra suits their needs before the treasurer will invite them to pay a membership fee. At that point, we will ask for their contact details, including an email address that will be used for communications about rehearsal schedules. The secretary will then send an email, to which the new member should reply, confirming that he/she is happy for us to hold personal data of name, address, telephone contact and email contact, which we will hold confidentially and use purely to inform on Society activities. Emails will be sent using bcc (blind carbon copy) means to maintain confidentiality.

Continuing members will be expected to pay membership subscriptions to the treasurer as soon as possible after the annual general meeting (AGM) each year. The fee is reviewed annually and the recommended level for the following year will be presented by the treasurer to the committee in advance of the AGM, at which the membership will be asked to agree it. For late joining new members, the membership fee may be reduced to take account of the proportion of the membership year remaining. People under 18 years of age do not have to pay any membership fee. Payment can be made in cash, by cheque (payable to Newent Orchestral Society) or online using internet banking. The treasurer will supply bank details on request.

Please note that the committee has the power to terminate the membership of any individual if certain rules are broken. However, this will only be applied as a last resort, and after proper procedures have been followed. More information on this is given in Section 5.

5. Membership rights and obligations

Rehearsals are busy affairs, and all members need to be able to hear the conductor and to concentrate on what they are doing, in order to enjoy participating in making music. This puts a responsibility on everyone to be respectful to the other members, to be courteous and not to cause disruption by, for example, being excessively noisy, or arriving late, causing settled

members to have to move. This applies after the break also. The following guidelines and rules have been drawn up for everyone's benefit.

Rules and guidelines:

- 1. All members 18 years of age and over shall pay the membership fee unless granted exemption by the treasurer.*
- 2. All members have a right to enjoy rehearsals in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.*
- 3. Members are asked to arrive, as far as possible, in good time for rehearsals and concerts, so as to cause no annoyance or disturbance to other members.*
- 4. Members are requested to refrain as far as possible from talking when the Music Director is speaking to the orchestra.*
- 5. Members should give respect to the Music Director and pay heed to the advice and instruction given by the Music Director.*
- 6. The above will be interpreted sensibly, for example, banter will not be suppressed.*
- 7. No member shall cause distress to other members through any means.*
- 8. No member shall use foul language or otherwise abuse another member.*
- 9. Members are asked to assist with tidying rehearsal and concert room spaces after activities, but this is subject to any special instructions during the Covid pandemic.*
- 10. Members must act in a safe and responsible way at all times.*
- 11. Any additional safety rules introduced by the Society as necessary, for example to control risks from Covid-19, must be followed.*

The Society holds third party liability insurance and employer's liability insurance. Copies of the relevant certificates can be made available to members.

All members will appreciate that serious breaches of the rules on decent, respectful behaviour could necessitate the committee issuing warnings that could, if unheeded, theoretically lead to expulsion. However, note that such situations are considered very unlikely to arise. An annex to this booklet describes the Society's guidelines for issue of warnings and reproduces the relevant section of the constitution.

6. Policies for safeguarding and data protection

The Newent Orchestral Society recognises that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all such individuals with whom we come into contact and to protecting them from harm. While, currently we have no members in these categories, we could still encounter vulnerable people at any time (an example is at school events), so the Society has a safeguarding policy document held by the treasurer which names the member responsible for safeguarding.

The Society will follow the data protection rules in not abusing members’ personal contact details. These will be kept purely for Society communications with members to enable the smooth running of activities. Email communications to all will be sent via the bcc (blind carbon copy) option to prevent recipients reading other recipients’ contact email details.

7. Safety policies and guidelines

The trustees (committee members), as representatives of the Society, have an obligation to ensure that rehearsals and concerts are operated in a safe manner. The school site team are available to us via mobile phone for issues regarding the facilities that arise during rehearsals. You are obliged to follow safety instructions issued by the Society and to behave in a manner that is conducive to the safety of everyone present. A general safety risk assessment and separate risk assessment specifically for Covid-19 have been carried out by the treasurer and these are set out in brief form below.

HAZARD AND ASSESSED LEVEL	PERSONS AT RISK
Trips and falls injuries - low	Any attendee
Failure to follow fire evacuation procedures - low	All attendees
Covid-19 infection - low-medium	All attendees

CONTROL MEASURES

We ensure adequate spacing of players to minimise trip and fall hazard, facilitate emergency escape routes and minimise Covid-19 infection risk. All members are asked to take care at all times for the safety of other people in the room.

Mobile telephones are available for emergency contacts and the school site team is available by mobile phone.

Fire emergency procedures and emergency exit routes will periodically be pointed out to attendees.

For Covid-19: The orchestra publishes and applies detailed risk assessment and preventative measures as condition of attendance. Risk is currently assessed as sufficiently low to mean that we now simply ask participants to if possible take a lateral flow test before attending and to stay away if positive or symptomatic. Members are told to respect the space of others. Chairs are set out well apart.

For accidents or medical issues, orchestra members will be asked at intervals if anyone would be willing to be named to be available for advice in case of any potential medical issues during rehearsals. Mobile telephones are always available for emergencies.

These measures are considered by the assessor (Colin Henderson) as suitable for reducing risks to acceptable levels.

8. Rehearsals

The Society meets for rehearsals every Saturday during period September to May or June. We have a break during the summer, generally starting again on the first Saturday in September. The venue for rehearsals is currently the main hall at Newent Community School, Watery Lane, Newent. However, we plan to return to the Newent Community Centre, Ross Road, Newent when modernisation works are completed, early 2023. We rehearse from 10:00 am until 12:00 noon, with a 10-15 minute break. When we return to the Community Centre, we hope to restart providing refreshments at a small charge.

All members are asked to attend as many rehearsals as possible, and to arrive in good time to avoid disruption. This helps ensure that we can prepare properly for the next concert. You are reminded about the obligations set out in Section 5.

9. Concerts

The Society generally puts on two, but sometimes three, concerts per year. Currently, most of these are held in St Mary's Church, Newent. Dress for the concerts was comparatively formal until recently, but the policy on this has recently been changed to informal with guidelines announced in advance of each concert by the secretary or conductor. It is important that everyone follows the guidance, to allow consistency, to give a good impression.

There is always a short pre-concert rehearsal starting about two hours before the concert, and it is important that players arrive in good time for this so we can go through all the more awkward parts of the music to ensure a polished performance. After concerts, members are asked to assist in putting away the chairs tables and ensuring that all is restored to neatness. Instructions on when to return music will be given by the conductor.

Discipline during the concert is important. Thus, every player must be waiting, ready to enter the seating area in a suitable sequence when signalled to do so, no later than five minutes before the concert is scheduled to start. Upon a signal by the first violinist, the orchestra then tunes, woodwind and brass first, followed by strings. Instruments are not raised for playing until prompted by the conductor. A similar process is applied at the start of the second part of the concert after the interval. During the concert, please avoid placing music on the floor.

In addition to our own concerts, the orchestra is occasionally invited to contribute to other local functions. Examples of this are the local branch of the Royal British Legion's events associated with wartime anniversaries, which are held at the school. Through this sort of contribution to the life of the local community, we are gaining a growing profile locally.

10. Workshops

The orchestra also holds workshops open to people who are not members, attracting players from all over Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, and much of the guidance given with respect to rehearsals applies to these where appropriate. A fee is charged for playing at workshops. Members pay a lower fee than the visitors.

11. President and Vice Presidents

The Society has a President, who attends committee meetings, and several vice presidents. The President acts as a valuable advisor about local issues and is invited by the committee to chair annual general meetings. The current President is Cllr Roger Beard, who has always been a strong supporter of the orchestra.

12. Equal opportunities

The Society has an equal opportunities policy. In accordance with the law, no individual shall be excluded from membership of the Society or de-barred from any official capacity on the committee on the grounds of sex, race, colour, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability or political affiliation.

13. Orchestral property

The orchestra possesses a library of music, as well as a limited number of musical instruments and some miscellaneous items. The instruments can be borrowed by members, if requested for the purpose mainly of playing in the orchestra. If the instrument requires servicing or repair before being borrowed by a member, the Society will pay for that initial service or repair. However, the cost of any future maintenance will be expected to be borne by the borrower. While the Society covers insurance of these items, great care should be taken with such instruments.

Music used at concerts must be kept in good condition and returned as soon as possible after the end of the relevant concert. Some music that we use is borrowed from libraries and it is particularly important that this is returned to avoid heavy financial penalties being levied on the Society. Your copy should be marked in pencil with your identifying number that has been supplied to you.

14. Annual general meeting

All members are eligible to attend the annual general meeting (AGM), which is announced by email about three weeks in advance. The AGM is held in place of the second half of a normal rehearsal session within three months of the end of the financial year (which ends on 31 July).

The main business of the AGM is to enable the Society's officers to present reports on the previous twelve months' activities, including a statement by the treasurer of the financial position of the Society. The latter will include a recommendation regarding the membership fee for the following year, which the membership are asked to consider for approval.

The officers for the following year (chairperson, secretary and treasurer) and general committee members are also elected at this meeting. Any member can stand for any of the positions, and nominations should reach the secretary in advance of the meeting. All elected members will need to ensure, and later confirm, that they are not disqualified from being members of the committee, as described in section 2.

Any member can also propose items for discussion at the AGM. If possible, please submit details of these in advance to the secretary.

Special (extraordinary) general meetings may be called from time-to-time through the procedures described in the Society constitution.

The quorum (minimum number of attendees) for these meetings is described in the current constitution. The AGM can, if necessary, be held online, via Zoom.

15. Handbook revisions

The handbook will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis and revised as necessary.

This edition is dated 8 May 2022.

Annex to section 5

Guidelines for issue of warnings for unacceptable behaviour and copy of relevant section of constitution

Guidelines for verbal warnings:

- 1 Warning interviews will be given on behalf of the committee in a quiet, undisturbed location by a representative of the Society in the presence of an observer.
- 2 Warnings will be firm but fair and will clearly describe the areas of concern.
- 3 The person being interviewed will be asked if they understand and agree with the issues described and with the need for improvement in their behaviour. The person's response will be noted and placed on file with the secretary. A copy can also be given to the individual at their request.
- 4 A record of the proceedings will be produced, to include the location, date, time and persons present.

Guidelines for written warnings issued by an official of the Society:

- 1 This will remind the recipient that two verbal warnings have been given but that these have been unheeded.
- 2 The issues outstanding will be expressed in writing.
- 3 The recipient will be informed that subsequent lack of compliance with Society rules will result in the procedure for removal from membership described in the constitution (reproduced below) being actioned.

Extract from constitution:

- 4 the member is removed from membership by a resolution of the Trustees that it is in the best interests of the Society that his or her membership is terminated. A resolution to remove a member from membership may only be passed if:
 - (a) the member has been given at least twenty-one days' notice in writing of the meeting of the Trustees at which the resolution will be proposed and the reasons why it is to be proposed;
 - (b) the member or, at the option of the member, the member's representative (who need not be a member of the Society) has been allowed to make representations to the meeting;
 - (c) the decision to terminate the membership is communicated to the member in question in writing within 7 days of the meeting taking place;
- 5 any decision made by the committee to terminate a membership is final.