

## The Friends of the Moot Hall Organ

### Chairman's Annual Report 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

I am delighted to say that we were able to hold all nine recitals as planned this year. The early ones were under stringent covid restrictions, which we coped with, gradually we returned to normality, although we have still retained wider spacing between chairs, which seems to be appreciated. Our recitalists were Stephen King, Gillian Ward-Russell, Drew Cantrill-Fenwick, Ashley Grote, Anthony Gritten, Hilary Punnett, and, of course, three from our own Ian Ray, plus vocal support from local ensemble the Morenzio Singers at Christmas.

We were also delighted to welcome to the Moot Hall Maria Kustas to provide two wonderful piano recitals raising funds for The Friends and for the Mayor of Colchester's Charities. The cost of these was generously funded by our Committee member, Derek Lorkin.

Your Committee held one meeting this year in January when we discussed and agreed, to recommend to the Annual Meeting the adoption of a new Constitution, which will enable us to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the Charity Commission. This was a requirement of our prospective new banker, the change of which is also being recommended by the committee to this Annual Meeting. Charitable status is a prudent way of going forward and is really a requirement of organisations such as The Friends operating in the 21st century.

The organ appears to have behaved itself by and large and we were delighted to hear that our Recitals could now take place each and every month, so we hastily planned accordingly. The committee had considered the remuneration offered to recitalists and agreed a new structure. From the start of this financial year, we shall offer £200 per recital plus travelling expenses of up to £50. We continue to attract leading national and international organists and the Committee felt that we needed to be able to continue to attract those of the highest calibre to Colchester.

This increase in expenditure led me to circulate to our audience in March a letter setting out the finances of the Recitals. A copy is attached to this Report. This has resulted in generous sponsorship from 'Friends' and other members of the audience, which validates our actions. I would remind Members that Recitals are free of charge resulting from a commitment made to the HLF when the grant was received for the organ's restoration. Free Recitals had been offered since the Town Hall opened in 1902 and these were to continue.

Finally, I must offer my grateful thanks to Ian Ray, who books all the organists and plays for four of the recitals each year as part of his commitment as Honorary Borough Organist. I am equally indebted to Alison Smith, our Treasurer, who has done sterling work on our Charitable status application, in researching a new banker and in generally offering me sound advice! Thanks too, of course, to the Committee and to

Alex Blustin, our webmaster, for their fulsome support in all we do. Thanks to Cong Gu of Colchester Borough Homes for verifying our Annual Accounts. I must also thank the Town Hall staff for all their support and help.

I look forward to our twelve recitals this year, our usual 'Meet & Greet' event for Heritage Day and all the other challenges the future holds!

Nigel Chapman

Chair