



Report of Chief Officer Libraries, Arts and Heritage

Scrutiny Board (Culture and Leisure)

Date: 22nd JUNE 2007

Subject: LEEDS INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SEASON

Electoral wards affected:

City-wide

Specific implications for:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the gap

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Leeds International Concert Season (LICS) has been in existence for 27 years. The philosophy of the LICS is based upon the belief that experiences of, and participation in, the arts enriches the quality of life for Leeds residents and visitors alike. As such, there is a clear commitment to bring the highest quality music of all types to the City and to make it accessible to the widest possible audiences. The Concert Season aims to provide as comprehensive a musical experience as can be achieved by complementing the commercial and voluntary sector. Classical, Jazz, Brass Bands, Children's concerts, education and outreach, light music, world, popular and contemporary music are all embraced under the banner of the Leeds International Concert Season.
- 1.2 Along with the world-famous Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, Leeds International Concert Season is proud to have Leeds Town Hall as its home. A venue at once iconic, yet immensely well-suited for the presentation of music in all its rich diversity. The proposed further refurbishment/development of the Hall and infrastructure will enable the Concert Season to expand and improve its offer. Sustainability of the Concert Season will be a fundamental element of business planning for this development.

2.0 Purpose of this report

- 2.1 The Report provides an overview of, and historical background to, the work and function of Leeds International Concert Season, its future opportunities and challenges.

3.0 Background information

3.1 Leeds International Concert Season (LICS) comprises a specialist staff team promoting around 200 concerts annually. It is by far the largest such programme by any local authority in the UK. Although Leeds has a rich musical heritage and orchestral concerts have taken place in the Town Hall since its opening in 1858, the Concert Season as it exists today came into being in 1980 under the auspices of the City's Leisure Services Department. It is the successor to the presentation of musical events in Leeds Town Hall and elsewhere.

3.2 The Leeds International Concert Season is vital not only because it is well used, maximises income and has tremendous attendance and loyalty (06/07 orchestral season averaged nearly 80%) but allows the City to 'punch above its weight' musically in terms of cultural provision. Leeds has neither a purpose built concert hall nor a full time resident symphony orchestra, that each of its major core city competitors possesses. Despite this it is highly respected in the music business because of the universally acknowledged excellence of Leeds International Concert Season as the following comments demonstrate:

"I have attended a number of concerts at Leeds Town Hall in recent years in my capacity as Chief Executive of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. The Town Hall is one of our favourite UK venues outside Birmingham, partly on account of its great tradition but more crucially nowadays for the excellent atmosphere, attentive and (always sold-out) audiences, and the excellent acoustics".

Stephen Maddock, Chief Executive, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

"In the UK we are now equipped with many first rate late-20th and 21st century halls. Leeds Town Hall is unique in that it offers a historic cultural environment similar to those that exist only now in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Musikverein and the St. Petersburg Philharmonie. Great 19th century halls are a rarity throughout the world and my own view is that Leeds should continue to provide this world class resource"

Andrew Jamieson, Head of UK Touring, IMG Artists

"I think the Town Hall is one of the civic architectural treasures of not only Leeds but the whole of England. It only stays that way if it is utilised, and loved for the experiences people have had in it. Many buildings in the same tradition have been used as concert venues, with varying degrees of success, but whatever changes have taken place have generally been to the venue's detriment as a concert venue. In the case of Leeds Town Hall, the building becomes much more welcoming with every phase of re-development. It really is a heritage site and as long as audiences are willing and able to get to it, it represents something very special which is not easy to create with a new hall".

Geoffrey Owen, Head of Artistic Planning, Hallé Orchestra

3.3 The constituent parts of the Leeds International Concert Season are:

- I) Orchestral and Choral Concerts on Saturday evenings at Leeds Town Hall. This consists of highly prestigious orchestras and performers from all over the globe, including London Orchestras, touring orchestras from Overseas and including significant annual input from the City's two premier adult choirs, Leeds Festival Chorus and Leeds Philharmonic Society. The Orchestra of Opera North makes a special commitment to the series each season and is

closely involved, by means of co-promotion as well as performance, in respect of the Gala Concerts and Leeds Conductors' Competition [see II) and IX) below.

- II) An innovatory series of Sunday Gala Concerts, including a number of Jazz presentations each season, the annual Viennese Concert at the year end, a Gala Film Night and regular lighter repertoire. These events aim at increasing the access base for music within the Hall.
- III) Leeds International Concert Season was the instigator and facilitator of the internationally acclaimed *Fuse Leeds* festival (one of a number of festivals with which the Season has been actively involved over many years). *Fuse Leeds* is a productive partnership between the City Council, the Arts Council of Great Britain, Leeds College of Music and Leeds Jazz. The *Daily Telegraph* asserts that "this Festival gives new music a wider definition than just about any other new music festival...", while *The Guardian* reports that it is an event "where the classical avant-garde cheerfully rubs shoulders with jazz, rock and electronica". *Fuse Leeds* was in, Spring of 2007, nominated for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award within the "Festivals and Concert Season" category – one of only three so short-listed out of hundreds of contenders nation-wide.
- IV) **Free** Monday Lunchtime Concerts weekly – mostly organ recitals with a wide-ranging repertoire and occasional choral and band programmes. Average attendance has been around 800 per event with highlight concerts attracting 1200.
- V) **Free** Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts weekly – at *The Venue*, Leeds College of Music, presented as a result of the negotiated "free day" usage agreement drawn up between the College of Music and the City Council on the opening of *The Venue*, Leeds's newest recital hall/concert room. These concerts very often play to capacity audiences of over 300.
- VI) An enviable provision of children's concerts, education projects and similar outreach events for young people, including events for those with special educational needs arranged in conjunction with the Yorkshire Association for Music and Special Educational Needs.
- VII) The most comprehensive series of Brass Band Concerts in the world – events based mostly at Morley and Yeadon Town Halls, but also forming part of the Monday series at Leeds Town Hall.
- VIII) **Free** Sunday afternoon concerts in Leeds's Parks – this year, the series numbers over 70 concerts and is thus by far the largest such season in the country.
- IX) Leeds Conductors' Competition – nationally recognized as the only competitive arena of its kind for British-born conductors. Presented in association with the Orchestra of Opera North, the Competition was begun in 1984 and has, since then, launched the careers of a number of hugely significant figures in British and international music – including that of the first woman staff conductor at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

4 Main issues

- 4.1 Attendance figures and income: As the table below shows, attendance figures for orchestral concerts in Leeds are healthy. This is in contrast to the national trend of declining audiences and is achieved through innovative marketing and careful market research. Additionally, the City benefits from a secondary spend in hotels and restaurants.

		1998/1999	1999/2000	2000-2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007
Orchestras	Total Attendance	25540	26267	24258	25544	23864	23995	17192	23152	23373
	Seats Available	30520	30029	29663	29525	29155	29856	19297	29860	29580
	% Attendance	83%	87%	82%	87%	82%	80%	90%	78%	79%
	Average / concert	1277	1313	1213	1277	1193	1200	1433	1158	1169
	No of events	20	20	20	20	20	20	12	20	20

This table demonstrates that, despite the national trends, the Leeds International Concert Season during the past year has achieved an average attendance of 79% capacity at Saturday Symphony and Choral Concerts, as opposed to 51% at Birmingham's Symphony Hall and 55% for the Hallé at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall.

The subsidy for the Concert Season's orchestral programme in 2006/07 was £173,864 or 39% of the total spend. This compares favorably with Birmingham's Symphony Hall for example. The Birmingham subsidy is £600,000 on a spend of £1.2 million despite the larger hall capacity of 2,200.

	Artist Fees	Ticket income (net)
Galas	£ 25,750.00	£ 34,979.14
Jazz	£ 17,200.00	£ 25,894.19
Chamber	£ 20,000.00	£ 14,923.05
Endellion Series	£ 9,000.00	£ 9,846.97
Brass	£ 24,807.00	£ 28,871.00
Musical Carousel	£ 3,730.00	£ 5,425.36
Lunchtime Organ	£ 6,225.00	£ 8,060.49
Lunchtime Chamber	£ 9,112.50	£ 3,240.33
	£115,824.50	£ 131,240.53

- 4.2 The relationship of Artists' Fees to Ticket Income in respect of the remaining parts of Leeds International Concert Season is an encouragement, as the above table demonstrates, and shows a surplus of approximately £15,000 on the last season against ticket income and this is achieved within the context of at least some programming and price-levels designed deliberately to provide access for those of the community who might otherwise be unable to afford to attend concerts.
- 4.3 LICS faces ongoing challenges in its desire to provide a first class concert season due to the physical constraints of the Town Hall. Stage size and changing facilities are problematic for artists and circulation, bars and cloakrooms compromise the concert experience for the public attending events. These issues are due to be addressed in the proposed further refurbishment of the Town Hall.
- 4.4 Although acoustic issues pertaining to non amplified music have been to a large extent addressed by recent improvements to the hall, the Victoria Hall is extremely problematic for amplified concerts given its 2 second reverberation time empty. This issue is also due to be addressed during the next phase of the halls refurbishment.

5 Implications for council policy and governance

- 5.1 The driving force behind the International Concert Season is closely connected with the City's clearly expressed desire and intent to be "moving up a league" and "narrowing the gap". Other Concert Halls and promoters – civic, commercial and combinations of the two categories – see the Leeds International Concert Season brand as a major international player in the music field, not only in its Orchestral provision, but also – following the introduction of the *Fuse Festival* – in so many other musical *genres* in addition such as world music, jazz and popular music.

The Concert Season has long been committed to many different aspects of the City's "narrowing the gap" aspiration by means of:

- I) the provision of free lunchtime concerts twice a week during the season
- II) Outdoor Concerts in Parks throughout the Summer
- III) Taking music into the community by means of award-winning Heritage Festivals and other enterprises
- IV) Audience development by means of various aspects of the season – the Sunday afternoon *Musical Carousel* events at *The Venue*, orchestral concerts for Schools during the school day at Leeds Town Hall and concerts and workshops in association with the innovatory Yorkshire Association for Music for people with Special Educational Needs.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Report aims to demonstrate the ongoing well-being and operational viability of the Leeds International Concert Season and the importance of the role it plays in terms of the overall cultural provision sustained by the City of Leeds for its residents and visitors. When bench-marked against its colleagues and competitors from other core cities throughout the United Kingdom, the Leeds Concert Season is frequently quoted in terms of being a beacon of good practice and ongoing success in the national arena.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are invited to note the report.