

You and your audience: are you nurturing or neglecting?

Mick Dowrick

Our current motto is 'Wind Music in all its Diversity'. Recent articles and letters have shown that the range of interests of the membership of BASBWE is extremely wide and varied; they have also shown how out of touch many of these individual members are with one another. BASBWE by its very nature brings about many problems, as any umbrella type movement will. We should all perhaps be a little more tolerant of each other's likes and dislikes, and we should also try to learn from one another and broaden our own, our band's and audience's horizons.

Indeed it is not the bands, conductors, musicians or even the music that provide all of the answers to the woes of the movement. I think it is the audience that holds the master key and the individual relationships that bands, conductors, musicians and the music that they provide, have with their audiences that cause and answer the many faults that we all share.

We need to develop and cultivate an audience for the music that we want to play. 'We do that already,' I hear you say. Well, perhaps you do, but do you attempt to include an original wind composition in each part of your concert programme? Could you provide a complete programme of original wind music? If you don't it's probably because you are stuck in the cycle of excuses.

There is I believe a 'Cycle' of excuses as to why 'we don't do that'. If your argument is 'the audience don't like it', have you played it to them? Is your audience aware of the wonderful wind music of Stravinsky, Copland, Strauss, Mendelssohn, Saint Saens, (are you?) These, along with many others, are composers that your audience has probably heard of, but perhaps do not yet realise that there are many wind pieces written by them not just transcribed from the 'Classics'. As well as these there are now, mainly due to the commissioning work of BASBWE, many great works for a diverse range of tastes that have been composed in the last twenty years. If you do introduce something different to your regular

audience, try not to talk the piece down before you play it almost apologising for daring to change your routine. Many works now have a programme note inside. Read this to them (indeed to the band) before the performance. (This was done several times at the last conference by soloists, composers and conductors.)

Audiences provide us with one excuse; rehearsal time is the other great dictum of wind bands.

Have you written to Classic FM and requested your favourite wind piece?

Is Warren Barker's *Gershwin* or *Sousa!* any easier at first look than many of the new original pieces that are equally entertaining and programmable? Is it perhaps 'wasted rehearsal time' that is the real answer, playing through familiar old works that the conductor and the band don't have to work too hard at? (Concert planning and programming is a separate subject that should be discussed further, perhaps at Conference or within *Winds!*)

Allowing the band to provide us with an excuse for not doing something new and perhaps different from the norm is probably insecurity on our own part, either as a conductor or as a motivator. Recently, I attended a string quartet rehearsal, where the young players were required to play some very different types of music. Extremes of aleatoricism, extended instrumental techniques and many others. They enjoyed each piece for the challenge that it brought to their technical and musical abilities. Think of your favourite meal, and then consider eating it at every mealtime, surely you would want something different after a while? I'm

convinced that all musicians enjoy a challenge now and again, this includes conductors.

The broadcasters must share some of the blame; but have you written to Classic FM and requested your favourite Wind Piece? Interestingly enough one of the most requested pieces on Classic FM is the *Ashokan Farewell* played by Major John Perkins, this is part of a compilation CD of Solo pieces, all accompanied by Royal Marines Band. Perhaps if every member requested their favourite Percy Grainger piece we could bring about a revolutionary change within the radio studios and the minds of the producers.

We have to accept as a movement that the assortment of groups within our umbrella are interested in different music.

As for the conference: we do need to have more forums and discussions on programming and the like: perhaps some breakfast sessions as per the Mid-West Clinic. Maybe there could be scope for a repertoire session that is promoted and sponsored by a company like Warner Brothers to highlight some of the 'pops' type of music that some of our members are interested in.

We must remember that we are an Association of diverse groups, who don't all have the same needs or desires. We do need to support new wind music and try to extend our own, our band's and our audience's knowledge of the brilliant new and old spectrum of wind music.

