

The Library's future at risk

Many of you will already have received from Surrey County Council (SCC) a questionnaire seeking your views on radical proposed changes to the Performing Arts Library service. If you have not, you can access the survey on-line at surreycc.gov.uk/shapingspal. The background is the large budget deficit faced by SCC as a result of which SCC has decided that the Performing Arts Library (SPAL) must become "cost neutral" by 1 April 2018 which means making a saving of at least £180,000. To put this in context, last year the cost of running SPAL at Denbies was approximately £290,000 and income (from all sources) attributable to SPAL was approximately £65,000.

FOSPAL was notified of this highly unwelcome development in August and we have had a number of meetings with SCC (and others) where we have been given more information. It is clear to us that SPAL is (again) facing an existential threat. If the £180,000+ savings cannot be made, or another organisation cannot be found to take over SPAL, then SCC say SPAL **will** close early next year. This would be a disaster for the many groups and individuals (including teachers, singers and other musicians) who rely on SPAL's extensive range of orchestra, choir and drama sets, scores, books, CDs and DVDs. The sudden uncertainty over SPAL's future has already led to a virtual halt to any new acquisitions and to the imminent departure of another of the experienced librarians (Ellie Miles - see more below).

FOSPAL has, reluctantly, come to the conclusion that the only long-term future for SPAL is, if possible, for it to be taken out of local authority control and taken over by another not-for-profit community organisation (Option 2 of SCC's three options). That would remove it from the financial constraints and bureaucracy of being part of a local authority and, if taken over by a suitable charity, would give it more flexibility in how it is managed and how it can raise funds. Whether that can be achieved at all, or within SCC's desired timescale, creates a huge challenge. FOSPAL cannot realistically take that on alone (we are far too small) but we believe that FOSPAL may have a critical role in bringing together user groups and interested parties to try to find a long-term sustainable solution for SPAL which can be presented to SCC.

So please help us by doing the following:

- (1) Respond to SCC's questionnaire by expressing as strongly as you can the importance of keeping SPAL's services and stock intact for as long as possible while a long-term solution can be found (you may have to use section 9 of the questionnaire (the comments box) to express this view most clearly).
- (2) When responding to the options, strongly support Option 2.
- (3) Ask as many other people you know who value the existence of a specialist Performing Arts Library in Surrey to go to the questionnaire and to respond in the same way. Ask them also to contact us so we can build a contact list of interested people. This should include members of choirs, orchestras and drama groups even if they only indirectly benefit from SPAL at the moment through their group membership.
- (4) Let FOSPAL know (by emailing Paul McKay (Hon Secretary) at info@fospal.org.uk) if you know of any groups (or individuals) who might be interested and able to help FOSPAL co-ordinate a long-term future for SPAL outside SCC control. There are a number of examples around the country where libraries have been taken over by community groups, independent charities or other

organisations (e.g. education institutions) which have gone on to thrive. We are examining those to see what lessons we can learn to provide a sustainable future for SPAL. We would be particularly keen to hear from anyone who has had any direct experience of such transfers.

The deadline for responding to SCC's questionnaire is **Sunday 17 September** so please do this immediately - don't leave it for later or rely on other's replying. Your actions now may be crucial in saving SPAL.

We will be posting bulletins on FOSPAL's website to keep members and others up-dated about developments.

Ellie Miles: It is with great regret that we report that, due to the uncertainty of the future of the Library, Ellie Miles has decided to leave the Library at the end of September. She will take up a new job with Mole Valley District Council. Like Peter Baxter, from whom she took over the senior librarian role earlier this year when Peter retired, Ellie has been a knowledgeable and unfailingly helpful friend to FOSPAL and an enormously valued member of staff at the Library. She will be greatly missed by both FOSPAL and by many users of the Library. If you have an opportunity to do so, do call by the Library before the end of the month to say farewell to Ellie and to wish her well.

Next FOSPAL event - Saturday 28 October
2.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. in the Library

Nicholas Owen -
Surviving more than half a century in the media

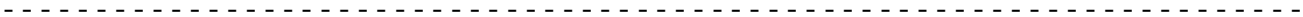
Nicholas Owen started his professional life as a print journalist, with spells on the Evening Standard, Daily Telegraph and Financial Times. He then moved on to television reporting and presenting, first with the BBC before moving to ITN and ITV. In 2007 he returned to the BBC news presenting as well as having a regular Saturday afternoon programme on Classic FM. Now 70 he can look back on more than half a century of involvement in print journalism and broadcasting. This event is part of the Mole Valley Arts Alive Festival.

Tickets are free and will be issued on the usual first come first served basis. Please use the order form attached and enclose a stamped addressed envelope. If you are unable to book early you can phone Jean Burger, ticket secretary, on 01372 453638, to check availability of seats nearer the time. Tickets are also available at the Library.

Also supported by FOSPAL: FOSPAL is also pleased to be sponsoring a talk organised by the Library on:

Saturday 14 October (2.00 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. in the Library)
Saving the score: Vaughan Williams' annotations restored

Conservator Victoria Stevens will talk about the process involved in stabilising Vaughan Williams' annotated score of Bach's St Matthew Passion. Victoria will also talk about conservation in general using the score as an exemplar. Tickets are FREE from the Library (or call 01306 887509).



For FOSPAL event tickets, please SEND THIS SLIP to:

The Ticket Secretary, FOSPAL, 13 Norwood Rd, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5NT (or tel: 01372 453638)

***Nicholas Owen - surviving more than half a century in the media* on Saturday 28 October, 2017 at 2.30 p.m.:**

Please send me ____ tickets; I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Name (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms)

Phone No

Address

.....

Post Code

Signature

Date

