

Welcome

It has been almost a year since our last newsletter and what a year 2020 was for us all! Who could have predicted Covid-19 and the way in which it has changed the world. The impact of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns on the Musical Museum has been substantial, with a loss of all events, group bookings, private hires and Museum visitors all at once. With virtually no income, the Museum faced a deeply uncertain future. However, as we have reached the end of the first quarter of 2021, the Museum is in a stable position thanks to a substantial fundraising drive and crucially the support of emergency fund grants.



In line with government guidelines, we are still closed to visitors and have not yet reintroduced a full volunteering programme. Despite this challenge, we have tried to use extended periods of closure to good effect, undertaking a major refurbishment of the building, and focussing on digital development, adapting to the ever-changing situation and positioning ourselves as positively as possible for when we re-open.

Chris Barber Steps Down

At the end of this month, Chris will step down from his positions as Chair, Musical Director, Resident Organist and from being a trustee of the Museum. At the end of April, he takes on a new role in his day job, which will be both very exciting but also very demanding and will involve a steep learning curve.

We thank Chris for his 11 years of association with the Museum and in the next newsletter will look at highlights from his many concerts and recordings at the Mighty Wurlitzer.



“Realistically, I cannot continue to do justice to both my operational role and my roles at the Museum and so with regret, the day job must take precedence.”

Future Organ Concerts

May 16	Kevin Grunill
May 29*	Richard Hills
May 30	Donald MacKenzie
June 13	Alec Walters
July 11	David Lobban
August 15	Joanne Powell
September 26	Carl Heslop
October 24	Donald MacKenzie
November 21	Simon Gledhill
December 12	Christmas Extravaganza

* Saturday at 6pm, all other concerts on Sundays at 3pm

musicalmuseum.co.uk



Contact Details:

For more information visit our website at www.musicalmuseum.co.uk or call:

020 8560 8108

Opening Details:

The Musical Museum is open Thursday through to Sunday each week and bank holidays from 10.30am to 5pm. (Last admission at 4pm)

Venue:

The Musical Museum
399 High Street,
Brentford,
TW8 0DU

New Chair



Steve Barrett-White (currently, Operations and Commercial Development Director) has been elected by the board to take over the role of Chair. Steve has been an extremely active trustee in lockdown, heading up major refurbishment projects and contributing to our digital development. Chris will be supporting Steve for a short handover period to ensure a smooth transition and to maintain the momentum of our recovery strategy.

Fundraising

You may remember that we secured a £35,000 grant in emergency funding from Arts Council England in spring 2020, this funding compensated us for the immediate loss of earnings we experienced during the first lockdown.

We were fortunate to have Ed Stannard join the team as our Fundraising Officer in May 2020. Ed has a strong background in fundraising in the third sector, and his experience has proved invaluable. Our General Manager, Ginette Kentish has been working with Ed on grant applications and grant reporting. Finance Director, Mark Blackwell has provided vital support (along with detailed spreadsheets!). Together, they have secured several major grants and have been successful in increasing the total income from fundraising to a level that has helped the Museum survive the current crisis and enables us to plan for re-opening in 2021 and beyond.

We thank the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England for major assistance through emergency funding and support from The London Borough of Hounslow. A big thank you, too, to volunteers, supporters and patrons for their engagement with digital broadcasts, subscriptions and donations to the Museum. All donations, whether big or small, really contribute to our survival.

Grant income for weathering the Covid-19 storm was the priority, but we are pleased to report that we have been successful in our application to the Association of Independent Museums / Pilgrim Trust Remedial Conservation Grant Scheme with an award of £6,000 for the restoration of the 'Beatrice' Steinway Duo-Art piano. The project is underway, and we will report on progress more fully in the summer.

New Resident Organist

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Richard Hills as Resident Organist at the Museum.



Richard's skills, international reputation and knowledge of the organ world will be a great addition to the team. In April, the Royal

College of Organists are producing a week-long celebration of organ music and concerts - Richard's first engagement with us will be hosting the second day of this prestigious event, broadcasting (and performing) live, from the Musical Museum as well as introducing theatre organ music from around the country.



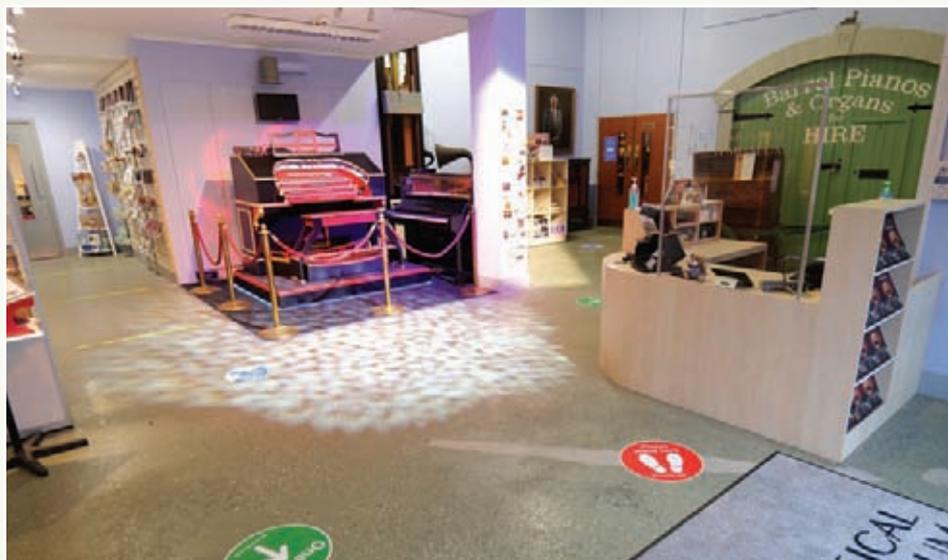
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'Beatrice' Steinway Duo-Art piano

Fresh Layout

Steve Barrett-White has been the driving force behind our refurbishment, huge thanks go to Steve and our team of trustees for their involvement in leading the significant and much-needed refresh to critical areas of the Museum.

In 2020, the reception area was completely redesigned to open up the space and enable social distancing. The project was a massive task as there was a considerable amount of re-wiring and re-routing of cables and power points, the relocation of the reception desk, and the creation of a small multi-purpose meeting/media room. Much of the work was done by specialist contractors, but a band of our 'Tuesday Crew' volunteers helped enormously with the rewiring and painting before greater levels of lockdown set in.

Thanks to our Vice-Chair, Simon Hill, the previous reception area now houses a newly acquired instrument, the Allen 4600 Digital Theatre Organ, and a small lighting rig to display it to great effect.



The Allen Theatre Organ provides an eye-catching focal point as visitors enter the building. The organ can play itself via its own replay unit, is reliable to operate and will be an added attraction for entertaining visitors. The instrument can demonstrate most of the main principles of a cinema organ, and as it is on a plinth on castors it can be moved to the concert hall to provide cover when extended maintenance of the Mighty Wurlitzer is required.

In Lambs Passage (a corridor space, previously lined with faux shopfronts) a wall and one of the old display windows were removed creating more floor space and opening the area to Gallery 2. The shop façades were removed, some of which have been kept and repurposed. The entire space was repainted in a pale sky blue to freshen it up.

As the months of closure rolled on, we took the opportunity to further refresh our offering for visitors, creating significantly more display and public space in our galleries. Special



thanks to Collections Director, Mike Wood and the volunteer team for their work on this aspect of the project.

The galleries have been given new names, with the new Connection Gallery (created from Lambs Passage) exhibiting rare gramophones and phonographs dating from 1880.

Some 22 instruments are on loan from The City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society (CLPGS - founded in 1919), and we are delighted to host this new display in addition to showcasing relevant items from our own collection, creating what is now the largest permanent gramophone and phonograph exhibition in the UK.

During our all-too-brief opening in late October, members of the CLPGS were on hand to demonstrate some of these fine instruments. We will be including them in our regular conducted tours and hope that they will be the focus of 'themed' events in the future.

Gallery 2 is now the Contemporary Gallery and houses later exhibits such as synthesisers and sound recording/replay devices which were originally in Gallery 3, as well as more traditional mechanical musical instruments. This helps us to tell a more complete story of music reproduction and connect the mechanisms and concepts of the core collection in Gallery 1 with items more familiar to a modern audience.

Gallery 3 will become The Workspace, a multi-functional area for exhibitions, as well as in-progress instrument restoration and hires. Gallery 1 becomes The Frank Holland Gallery and benefits from the re-siting of several instruments, together with the removal of many of the traditional rope barriers to create a welcoming and more spacious atmosphere.

Signage and Safety

To support the changes to the galleries Marcus Harborne (director responsible for Tours and Health & Safety) has developed new tours and undertaken thorough risk assessments to maximise the safety of our visitors and volunteers. Guided tours have been revised to suit the new gallery layouts, and with new instruments on display, we are well-placed to deliver a much enhanced, thoughtful presentation on the reproduction of music through the ages.

The new layout has enabled a one-way system to be put in place, illustrated by signage and floor stickers. Extra Covid-safety signage, together with a supply of masks, sanitising gels and wipes have been added in the entrance lobby and throughout the building.

Car Park

Last year we installed an automatic barrier to secure our car park and preserve valuable spaces for our volunteers and visitors. In recent years we had encountered increasingly challenging situations with non-visitors using the space, creating a very difficult environment for our staff and volunteers to manage. The barrier has been a huge success, allowing us to control use of the space and significantly enhance security. A bonus is the income we can generate by letting out parking spaces when we don't need them.

2021 Refurbishment

The most recent lockdown has seen the completion of several more refurbishment projects. Public lobby areas outside the concert hall and balcony area have been freshly painted and re-carpeted.



Two new dressing room areas have been created for artists and musicians. The Green Room behind the stage (which had been used as a store area) is now a much-needed, double dressing room. The space has been painted, carpeted and has comfortable seating, a dressing table and mirrors. This area will be greatly appreciated by the classical musicians from Maiastra that we host on a regular basis, as well as many of our other performers who became used to being crammed amongst stacks of chairs and tables while they waited to go on stage. A similar space has been created by clearing out a store area, adjacent to the Wurlitzer pit. The room has been decorated and furnished with armchairs, a bookcase and dressing table and now provides a welcoming space for organists to change and relax in private before performances.

The Digital Museum

Thanks to new funding, the Museum has been able to invest significantly in its technical infrastructure, and we have been able to purchase equipment that for many years has been on our wish list but beyond our reach. Items purchased include a vision mixer, cameras and other components which enable us to stream events live from our concert hall.

Not only does this provide us with the ability to share the Museum's story with a new UK and international audience, but it also provides a valuable new capability for our community, and we have already had enquiries from local groups who would like to use our facilities to record and stream their events.

YouTube and Patreon

The Museum started a YouTube channel in May 2020. We have recorded and live-streamed concerts along with detailed videos featuring iconic items in the collection.

This channel has grown from scratch to over 870 subscribers with 37,000 views and we have established a Patreon page to allow supporters to help us financially on an ongoing basis.

Simon Hill, as Technical Director, has led the digital drive and streaming has been an outstanding success complementing the work we are doing to develop our traditional audiences. By embracing this technology, we have been able to share our story across the world and ensure the Wurlitzer and our other exhibits continued to be heard, despite the need to close the Museum to physical visitors during lockdowns. Our digital journey is just beginning, and will remain a key part of our activities, both once we re-open and in the future.

You can enjoy concerts in the comfort of your own home and view digital recording of instruments in the collection by subscribing to the Museum's YouTube channel [YouTube.com/MusicalMuseumLive](https://www.youtube.com/MusicalMuseumLive). To help support the Museum's on-going digital broadcasts please consider signing up to Patreon. This is easy to do by clicking on the link on the Museum's website. www.musicalmuseum.co.uk

Concerts in 2021



On Sunday 31st January – An Audience with Len Rawle was our first live stream concert of the year. A slightly different format from the norm, Len's playing was interspersed with conversations between Chris Barber and Len. There was an obvious rapport between the two, who have known each other for many years. Len worked his usual magic on the Wurlitzer, and it sounded magnificent. Chris was able to respond to audience comments in real time, thanks to a newly purchased bit of kit, allowing the live comments to be shown on a feedback screen.



This screen was used again for our next concert with Cameron Lloyd on Sunday February 14th.

Cameron's debut performance at the Museum saw a performance of great energy and enthusiasm, which embodied the Blackpool style, those on the live chat even compared him to the great Reginal Dixon! It was a real Valentine's Day treat and has been viewed over 2,000 times on our YouTube channel.

On Sunday 14th March Chris and Joanne Powell made a welcome return to the Museum. They played their unique blend of organ and electronic music with an uplifting and upbeat performance. Chris and Joanne's chat with each other and the audience between playing created a welcoming, informal atmosphere.



They brought along their beautiful dog Jess, who came dressed for the occasion in a musical note scarf and has quite the following on social media.

The April Concert

At 6 pm on Saturday 10th April, Michael Carter gave a splendid debut concert. Using both the Mighty Wurlitzer and an electronic organ, he played a mix of modern and classic music in his unique programme. Chris Barber gave his last introduction as outgoing Chair and introduced new Chair, Steve Barrett-White to our digital audience, which initiated supportive comments on YouTube.

Michael's selection of music was quite different to the norm and his rendition of Pet Shop Boys 'It's a Sin' went down particularly well with the live audience. If you haven't seen it yet you can watch the recording on our YouTube channel.

Future Plans

Museum in a Box

We are excited to have started recording stories and audio content related to different items in our collection for our 'Museum in a Box' project. Much of this project has been done offsite so it has been a safe way to contribute to the work of the Museum during lockdown.

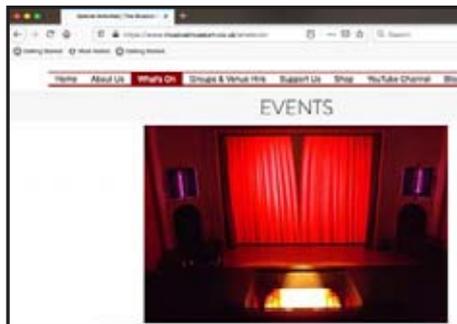


The project is all about small wooden boxes which are accompanied by a collection of objects – 3D prints, postcards, documents, maps; anything you can pick up and touch. You place the object on top of the Box, and it plays a pre-recorded audio track about that object. This audio could be the sound the object makes, the history or workings of the object, a story about the object or a combination of all these things.

It is portable, so can be taken out to educational or exhibition spaces to showcase items in the collection and we have the option to allow access to the audio files to anyone in the world who has the same technology. We have three boxes which will be used in the galleries and one that we will use as a mobile showcase.

Website redevelopment

We are looking to undertake a major redevelopment of our website in the next few months and would welcome input to shape the new site and make it accessible to all. Please send your comments and ideas to Noeleen: noeleen@musicalmuseum.co.uk



Volunteering

We have missed seeing our regular volunteers over the past year and look forward to welcoming them back soon. Re-opening of the Museum is planned for late May and we will contact all volunteers to invite them to a reorientation session prior to opening.

The Museum remains very short of resources, both financial and human. We need to recruit additional volunteers, with front of house vacancies including tour guides, visitor services assistants and stewards. Behind the scenes we have roles in audio/visual, conservation/restoration and administration. For more information and details of how to apply, visit the 'Support Us' section on the Museum's website. Please consider recommending us to a friend who may like to invest some spare time supporting a local charity.

We look forward to showing everyone the new look Museum and welcoming back visitors. Best wishes from all trustees and staff.

Content:

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Noeleen O'Gorman

Production:

Chimera Design Ltd

musicalmuseum.co.uk



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