



## **MUSIC ON THURSDAYS**

Bedford Music Club

### **SURVEY OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **Background to the survey**

In the current situation, putting on concerts in the short term is almost impossible, but it has given the Committee an opportunity to draw breath and reflect. Over the summer, we solicited the views of BMC current members and friends (former members or occasional visitors) on a range of matters via an online survey. The findings provide a basis for thinking about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

We received 27 completed responses: pretty high by online survey standards, and we thank all those that took time to share their thoughts. It goes without saying that we can only reflect the views of those who actually completed a questionnaire, so there are question marks over how truly representative any such exercise can be. Read the findings with that in mind.

##### **Classical music online**

Naturally, in the present uncertain climate, the Committee is interested in the potential for online experiences to enhance or even replace concert-going.

- Most (85%) of our respondents say they watch classical music events online, and for 44% this is a reasonably regular part of their lives: these do so at least once a month (Q3, p.2)
- Of those that consume classical music online, a substantial minority (41%) have paid money to do so (Q4, p.2, if we exclude those who have never watched classical music online)
- At this point in time, general willingness to pay for online classical music content is difficult to quantify. Most people haven't yet done so (Q4, p.2) and their propensity to do so in the future seems very divided. The answers to Q5, p.2 suggest two sub-populations (as indicated by overlapping bell-shaped curves) with roughly one-third clearly resistant, and the other two-thirds rather enthusiastic.
- The comments (Q6, pp3-4) suggest there is a strong mandate for looking more closely at online delivery: 16 of 23 comments positively support this idea. There are caveats, of course. Paraphrasing: it's better than nothing in the current situation, but do we have the technical capability to match professional offerings from, say, the Wigmore Hall?

## **Return to concert-going**

At some point, concert-going will resume. In this part of the survey, we assume in the short term that any return will be under the “new normal”: physically distanced, without intervals or refreshments, and with very limited social interaction.

- Confidence is fragile (Q7, p.5): two-thirds (67%) of respondents would be “very willing” or “willing” to return under these conditions: the remainder are either “undecided” (19%) or “unwilling” (15%) to do so. On the basis of these numbers, the Club would face considerable financial risk putting on concerts in the short term.
- The comments (Q8, p.6) suggest a general willingness to put up with a lot of restrictions (physical distancing, masks, hand sanitisers, temperature testing, etc.) so long as these were clearly communicated in advance and delivered in practice

## **Concert venues and timing**

- Overall satisfaction - as measured by “good” or “excellent” responses - with our current venues (Q9, p.7) is at a high level: Bedford Girls’ School (81%), Bedford School (88%) and Bunyan Meeting (100%).
- The comments show a nuanced understanding of the inevitable cons as well as pros of each venue, as well as offering some new suggestions: St Pauls’ Church, the Quarry Theatre, and the Panacea Society (Q10, p.8)
- The survey findings (Qs11-13, p.9) suggest that formats other than “Music on Thursdays at 7:45” might be worth exploring: with 68% of respondents either choosing Friday, Saturday or “don’t mind” with respect to the day of the week, and nearly a quarter (23%) opting for a matinee rather than an evening experience, or in many other cases (35%) being agnostic as regards the time of day.

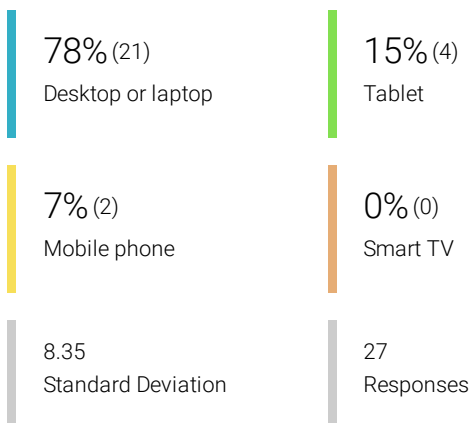
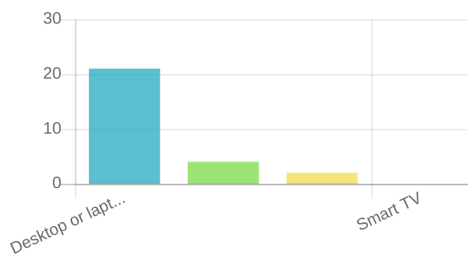
## **Repertoire**

- The free text comments (Qs16-17, pp12-14) are really very encouraging with regard to the balance of different periods and genres. The Club seems to be hitting exactly the right note, and the comments point to quality of experience as well as variety.
- For the reasons above, it seems pointless to dig too deeply into the answers to Qs14-15 (pp10-11) other than to say there may be a case for widening the offer further to include the occasional jazz concert as well as the inclusion of more twentieth century and contemporary repertoire.

# Part 1: Life under extreme uncertainty

Normal concert life is impossible right now and it is a worrying time for artists, venues and audiences alike. We hope to resume as soon as it is safe, but that may not be for a while. The Committee is keen to explore what we can do over the coming season to keep you engaged. We have no fixed ideas except that any services would need to be provided over the internet, given the situation.

## 1 What is your preferred device for accessing the internet?



## 2 What do you think we could do for members on the internet at no cost. Would these be of any interest?

A website of your Desert Island Discs, with links to YouTube clips



An online classical music quiz



A weekly email digest of online classical music events around the world

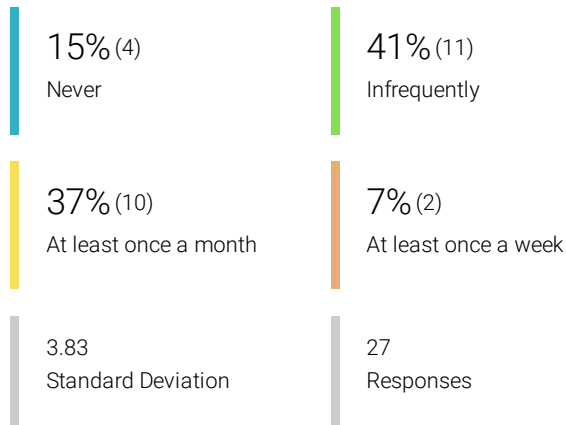
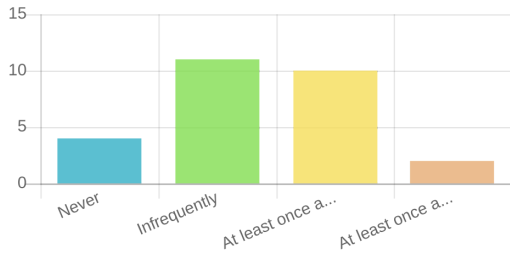


An indexed listing of all Bedford Music Club concerts to date

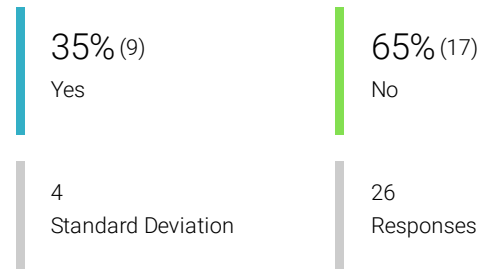
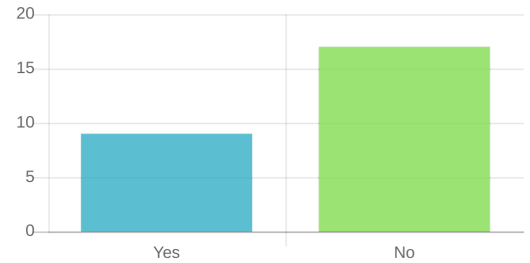


	A website of your Desert Island Discs, with links to YouTube clips	An online classical music quiz	A weekly email digest of online classical music events around the world	An indexed listing of all Bedford Music Club concerts to date	
<b>Not interested</b>	14 (58%)	7 (28%)	9 (38%)	7 (29%)	
<b>Maybe</b>	6 (25%)	13 (52%)	11 (46%)	9 (38%)	
<b>Very interested</b>	4 (17%)	5 (20%)	4 (17%)	8 (33%)	
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	4.32	3.4	2.94	0.82	
<b>Responses</b>	24	25	24	24	
<b>Weighted Average</b>	1.58 / 3	1.92 / 3	1.79 / 3	2.04 / 3	1.84 / 3

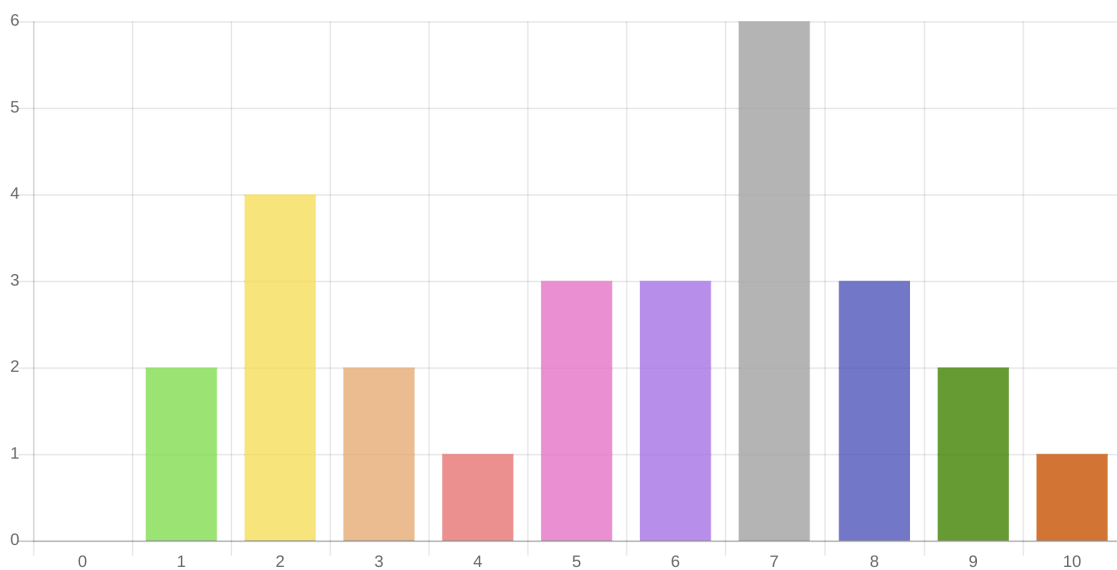
### 3 Do you watch classical music events online?



### 4 Have you ever paid to watch a classical music event online?



### 5 In principle, how prepared would you be to pay to watch classical music events online?



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Standard Deviation	Responses	Weighted Average
<b>Extremely unwilling - Extremely willing</b>	0	2	4	2	1	3	3	6	3	2	1	1.56	27	5.44 / 10
	(0%)	(7%)	(15%)	(7%)	(4%)	(11%)	(11%)	(22%)	(11%)	(7%)	(4%)			

5.44 / 10

**6** In the longer term, we are considering the possibility of live streaming Bedford Music Club concerts or offering you exclusive access (for a fee) to online concerts. There is a lot to think about and we make no promises. We are interested in any thoughts you might have about movement in this direction in the box below.

Good idea. It would perhaps enable more people to watch and at a time convenient for them.

This would be a positive step. As well as being in line with inevitable developments it would give members the option to appreciate a performance if they cannot attend in person and would enable those who do attend personally to revisit those events or parts of events they particularly enjoyed.

It would also help to promote the activities of the club generally.

I can wait until the concerts are back on again.

Definitely well worth considering until full capacity audiences are reinstated, but not as an alternative to a live concert once we are back to normal.

I should be interested in this idea.

The quality of the sound is so significant in whether it is worth watching online. It is also hard to achieve the intimacy that you get in a live concert. I wonder if extra attention should be put on introducing the pieces being played, with the context of the piece and for the performer.

Would support it for the Club, but can only watch on laptop

Seems like a good idea. I enjoy the live streams from the Royal Opera House - but will you have the same technical capability?

I prefer the live experience.

I would be very interested in this idea if it is the concerts you have run at Bunyan

We have to explore options, for our own enjoyment in listening to music as well as for supporting the livelihoods of musicians and other staff involved. Nothing beats the experience of a live concert, but streamed concerts/Zoom concerts are potentially the way forward in the short- to medium-term. I would be happy to support them and would appreciate the opportunity they can offer.

Yes I would definitely consider watching such a concert, with plenty of notice and information.

It might interest me but less for the events themselves than to support the series

I miss the Bedford Music Club concerts a lot and watching concerts online is a poor substitute. There is nothing like live concerts - live music must not be ended because of coronavirus! Outdoor concerts are being held in various places at present, although these are not suitable for the winter period. Indoor concerts are starting up again e.g. at the Stables from later next month. The Bedford Music Club concerts are not usually sold out in my experience - would it be financially on for the Club to hold them with a limited number of people using social distancing?

It would very much depend on the performer(s) and programme.

Would be interested.

I'm getting-on in years and I may be glad of using the radio/on-line rather more than at present. Your remarks about online concerts makes me wonder whether this would include local events like school recitals by pupils i.e. more of a community service perhaps so that the Club has a more continuing contact with Beds residents. It is important to consider the gradually smaller attendances to recitals up to last January, so there is an obvious need to adjust the style of concert, or just accept that the public's interest has moved away for classical. Would changes to smaller venue help the finance adequately?

In principle I would support this. I appreciate the service offered by U Tube

Not the same as live, but a Good Idea!

We would be happy to have a live streaming in lieu of a live event in these difficult times

I think the problem is that I can't think of anything that the BMC can do which isn't already available. If I want to watch a performance there are thousands already available, so I don't need a search mechanism or anything like that. I understand your problem, but if I want online performance why wouldn't just go to the Wigmore Hall site?

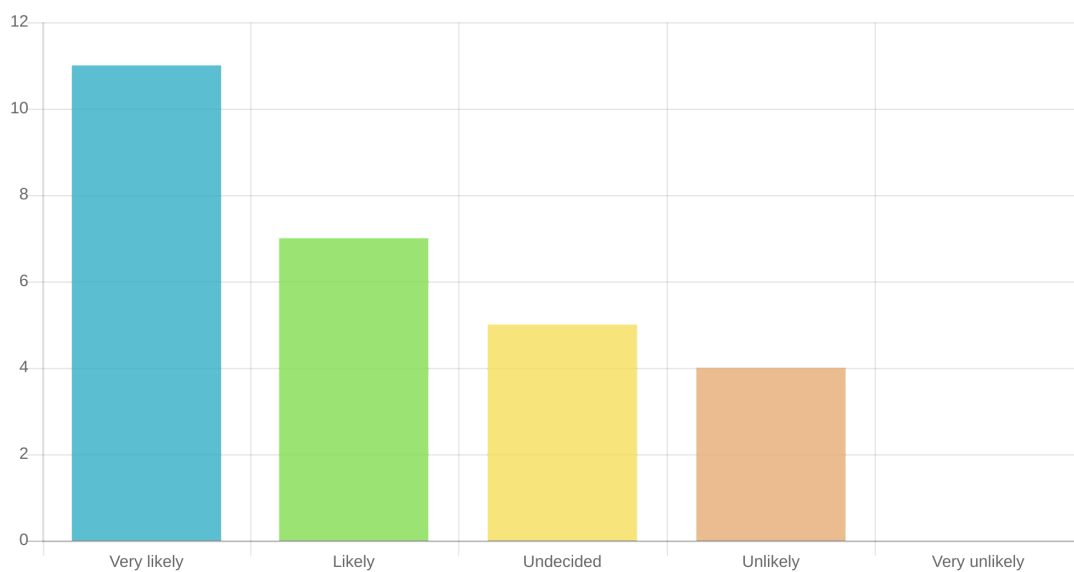
It is actually being physically present at a live performance that is the draw for me.

I think it would be worthwhile to look at the feasibility of live streaming future concerts as part of the subscription. This is sadly in anticipation of not being able to resume in the short term.

## Part 2: Getting back to normal

*At some point, concert life will begin to get back to normal - but things may be a little different in the short term. We may have to practise social distancing, go without intervals and refreshments, and have very limited opportunity for social interaction before or after concerts.*

**7** Under these conditions, how likely would you be to attend Bedford Music Club concerts in person?



41% (11)  
Very likely

26% (7)  
Likely

19% (5)  
Undecided

15% (4)  
Unlikely

0% (0)  
Very unlikely

3.61  
Standard Deviation

27  
Responses

**8** Please use the box below to tell us if there anything we could do to make you feel more confident about coming back to our concerts under these circumstances?

I am happy to attend a concert with one metre social distancing.

Nothing other than the usual sanitary precautions.

Nothing.

The social interaction is very important for a club, so I am afraid that I believe there is nothing you can do to help.

I'm waiting for a vaccine before going to concerts.

With the right controls in place, I would be happy to return to real concerts.

Not having to wear a mask. I hate wearing a mask and minimise the occasions when I have to do so. I would not go to a concert if I had to wear a mask.

Proper social distancing.

Just follow what we understand to be safe

it is clear that you are aware of the steps necessary to keep people safe - and their impact! That is most reassuring, even though none of us can see clearly into the future. I think safety is a responsibility shared by audience members as well as concert organisers. Please carry on with your current approach, which we can support and adapt as time goes on.

Plenty of pictures on your website of what you've done

Social distancing measures with seats more spread out and a limit to the numbers attending. Track and trace lists for each concert. Hand sanitisers at entry and exit points and in toilets.

I said Unlikely above because I live a fair distance away from Bedford, so it would not be worth travelling for a less than satisfactory experience. So it's not really a question of confidence – I'm sure you will comply with current Covid-19 regulations – but one of how enjoyable the experience might be.

Unfortunately, I have reached the state when eyesight and other factors will prevent regular attendance.

Insist that each member should wear a face mask throughout the evening

We miss the concerts a lot, and would put up with a lot of regulations just to get us in front of live classical music again.

Obtain contact details of attendees. Check attendees temperature on entry and ensure attendees wear masks and social distance

The age profile of your members is probably against you reopening early, and financially it is likely to be difficult. I might attend but it depends on the circumstances

A clear statement on the web site with a risk assessment (the latter could be adapted from those of the venues).



## Part 3: Back to normal

*Live concerts will survive the pandemic. We may not be able to offer you a programme this year, but at least we have a breathing space to think about the future and where, when and what you'd like to see.*

### 9 What is your general feeling about our existing venues?

Bedford Girls' School



Bedford School



Bunyan Meeting



↕	Bedford Girls' School	Bedford School	Bunyan Meeting	
<b>Poor</b>	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
<b>Adequate</b>	4 (15%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	
<b>Good</b>	15 (58%)	18 (72%)	14 (52%)	
<b>Excellent</b>	6 (23%)	4 (16%)	13 (48%)	
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	5.22	6.94	6.76	
<b>Responses</b>	26	25	27	
<b>Weighted Average</b>	3 / 4	3.04 / 4	3.48 / 4	3.18 / 4

**10** Please use the box below if you have anything more you'd like to say about these venues?  
Do you have any ideas for alternatives?

I think that they are all appropriate for the type of concert put on in them. Parking is an issue for some people at the Bunyan, but I do not find it a problem.

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It's a shame that the Harpur Trust sold off the High School rather than Dame Alice. Dame Alice is a drab location and it's only (but vital) attraction is that it's the home of what must be the best piano in the area. We need to keep it as a venue for that reason alone. Despite parking issues, the other two venues are excellent. The converted church in St Peter's Street might be worth looking at.

No.

Each of them has advantages and disadvantages. I quite like the mix of venues.

The Panacea Society usually organise a summer conference with a marquee in their grounds: that would be an interesting venue for a concert.

I have not been to the school

All seem feasible

St Paul's Church possibly.

I've only attended a concert at Bunyan Meeting, so can't comment on the others.

All have some drawbacks, Girls' school is rather big for present numbers and lacks any hint of coziness.

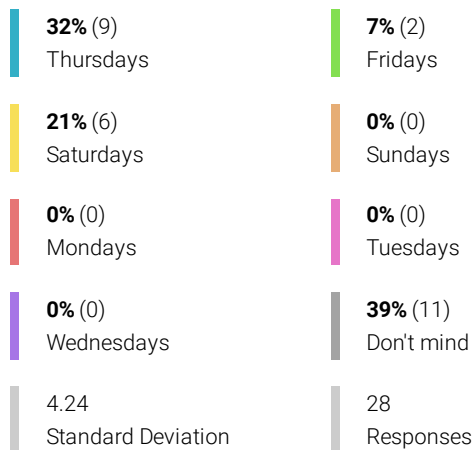
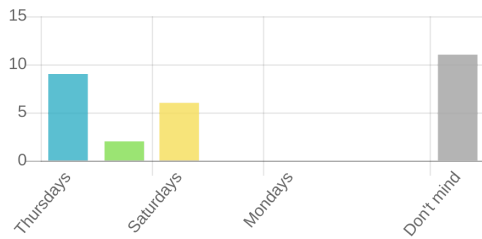
I wonder if the schools will still be willing to offer their facilities during the evenings or at half term

Parking at Bedford School and Bunyan is always an issue

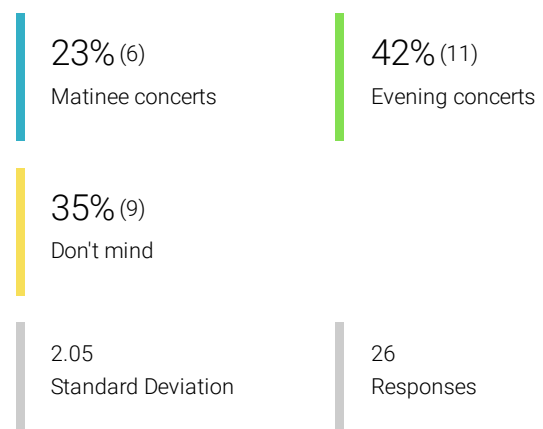
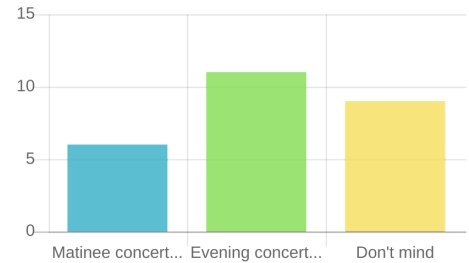
Parking is best at the Girls' School, and worst at Bunyan Meeting  
However, Bunyan is the best venue once you get there.

I have no concrete ideas because the limiting factor in all of this is the availability of a suitable piano. I would personally favour more concerts at Bunyan, even though this will limit repertoire choices. A longer term solution is needed because you can't do justice to the canon without a piano.

### 11 What would be your ideal day of the week for BMC concerts?



### 12 What would be your ideal time of day?



### 13 Please use the box below for anything more you'd like to say about the timing of Bedford Music Club concerts?

You would get a bigger audience on Friday or Saturday, but it might coincide with other concerts.

You would get a bigger audience on Friday or Saturday, but it might coincide with other concerts.

Afternoons are better than evenings especially in the winter.

I'm not thinking of attending concerts in person yet

It would be good to try some lunchtime concerts.

1930 start seems about right. It allows people who work in London to get home and eat.

7.30 ideal

The current timing is fine, but might be brought forward to 7.30 if there is no opportunity to mingle.

Thursday is not a great day for those in full-time employment, especially if they have a long commute. People are pretty tired by this



## 15 Thinking about forthcoming seasons, how keen are you on these chamber music genres?

Solo piano



Other solo instrumental (e.g. guitar, 'cello)



String quartets



Other small chamber groups



Vocal recitals



Choral music



Talks or lecture recitals



	Not at all keen	Not keen	Neutral	Keen	Very keen	Standard Deviation	Responses	Weighted Average
Solo piano	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (11%)	10 (36%)	<b>15</b> ( <b>54%</b> )	5.95	28	4.43 / 5
Other solo instrumental (e.g. guitar, 'cello)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	<b>14</b> ( <b>52%</b> )	9 (33%)	5.28	27	4.04 / 5
String quartets	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	6 (22%)	<b>18</b> ( <b>67%</b> )	6.62	27	4.52 / 5
Other small chamber groups	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (11%)	8 (30%)	<b>16</b> ( <b>59%</b> )	6.05	27	4.48 / 5
Vocal recitals	0 (0%)	6 (21%)	2 (7%)	<b>13</b> ( <b>46%</b> )	7 (25%)	4.5	28	3.75 / 5
Choral music	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	4 (14%)	9 (32%)	<b>12</b> ( <b>43%</b> )	4.22	28	4.04 / 5
Talks or lecture recitals	0 (0%)	5 (18%)	6 (21%)	<b>12</b> ( <b>43%</b> )	5 (18%)	3.83	28	3.61 / 5

4.12 / 5

**16** Bedford Music Club has always offered a broad mix of programming in order to appeal to the widest base of subscribers. In your opinion, is our offer too broad, or have we got it about right, or should we now consider a tighter focus, going narrower but deeper?

It is about right. Too tight a focus would be off-putting for many people.

It is about right. Too tight a focus would be off-putting for many people.

I think it's about right.

It is about right.

A tighter focus is likely to leave some members out. I think the present mix is good.

I should like a broader repertoire

I think it is hard with a small number of concerts to tick all the boxes all the time. Sometimes, it has been the players who have been the draw, sometimes the music itself. I think you should keep the selection as broad as possible.

Not too broad

I think it is about right. There are events to which I don't want to go but also ones which I do attend. The venue is as important to me as the programme: I don't like going to Bedford Girls' School.

Very happy with your programmes over the last 4 years

About right for me

I find your programmes intriguing, varied and stimulating. I have enjoyed the variety of styles and performers and the consistently high levels of performance.

No. It's just right.

Hard to say but it feels right to me.

About right - a wide variety of classical music is good, possibly with some world music and jazz included.

Got it about right.

To find this answer you need to present, initially, a broad mix to identify the attenders and their interests.

I think that you have got the balance right

Seems about right

I think you have it about right. I have problems with string quartets, but love it when there is a piano as well. I love the young people who play for us.

We have enjoyed the variety offered over the last 30+ years. It is good to go to something you don't know and extend your knowledge and enjoyment

Its OK

About right.

I would personally like to see more lecture recitals, talks or even films: in other words, to provide a better appreciation of the music and a deeper context. Links with the Retirement Education Centre perhaps?

**17** Please use the box below if you have anything more you'd like to say about the artists and repertoire that you'd like to see us programme in the future?

I like the present range, instrumental a vocal.

I like the present range, instrumental a vocal.

I think the quality has been very high. I would like to think that every season would include one solo piano recital and one string quartet. Works written for them are the bedrock of music created since the classical era outside of large scale works.

No.

20th century repertoire, eg Gerald Finzi, Benjamin Britton some Elgar, Howard Goodall

I like it when there are excellent quite local artists; Carolyn Sampson, Kitty Whately, Guy Johnson, William Vann. They were all stupendous.

I have been most pleased with the excellent quality of the players, and some new music to me is a great education.

More of the same, please.

The programme could also include some "young" (unknown?) artists

Hand in there!

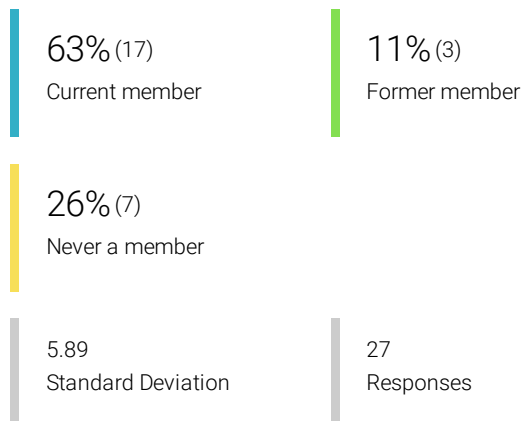
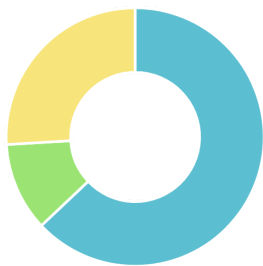
Planning might be a challenge, but I'd like to see a more thematic approach to the season (or at least a part thereof). One obvious example would be to feature more works by a single composer or genre, perhaps around an anniversary.



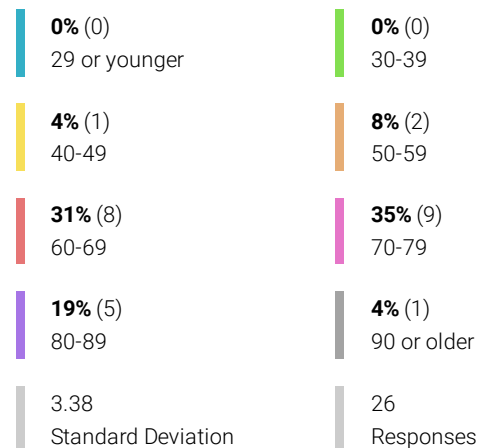
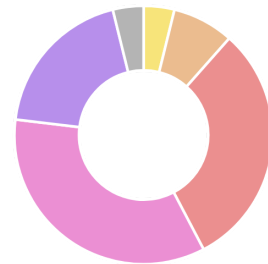
## Part 4: About you

*This survey is completely anonymous and confidential but we would like to be able to break down the findings to see any broad patterns. If you want to talk to a Committee member about any of the issues raised here, we do give you the opportunity to include your name and phone number or email so we can discuss at greater length.*

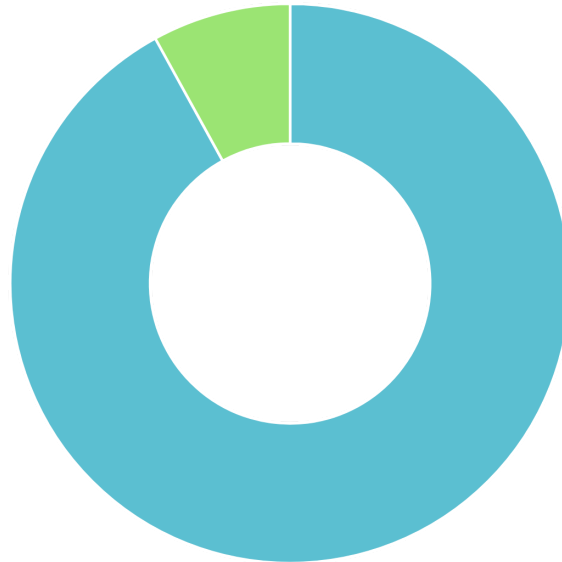
### 18 What is your relationship to Bedford Music Club?



### 19 How old are you?



**20** Are you completing this survey on your own account as an individual or jointly with another person?



92% (23)  
Individual

10.5  
Standard Deviation

8% (2)  
Joint

25  
Responses

**21** During the 2019/20 season, did you attend any of the these classical music events in Bedford?

Philharmonia Orchestra



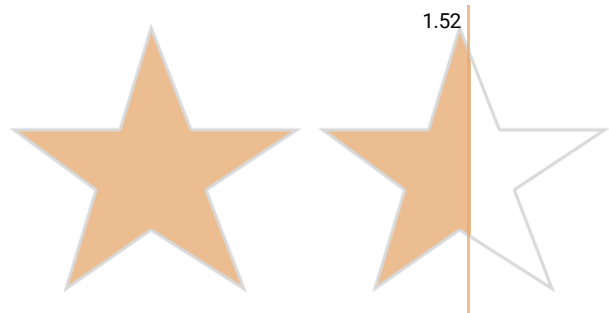
Bedford Choral Society



Music at St Andrew's



Bedford Sinfonia



Bedfordshire Symphony Orchestra



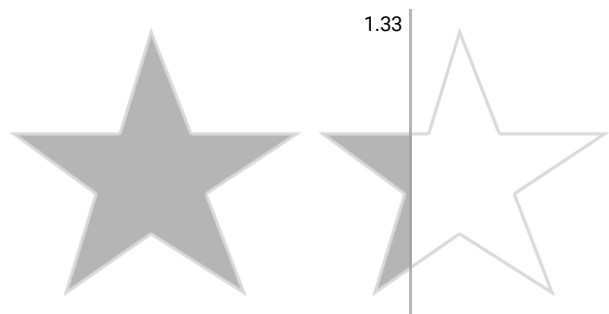
Bedfordshire Youth Opera



Tuesday Lunchtime Concert at St Paul's



Other classical music event in Bedford



↕	Yes	No	Standard Deviation	Responses	Weighted Average
Philharmonia Orchestra	12 (48%)	<b>13</b> <b>(52%)</b>	0.5	25	1.52 / 2
Bedford Choral Society	<b>12</b> <b>(55%)</b>	10 (45%)	1	22	1.45 / 2
Music at St Andrew's	10 (43%)	<b>13</b> <b>(57%)</b>	1.5	23	1.57 / 2
Bedford Sinfonia	11 (48%)	<b>12</b> <b>(52%)</b>	0.5	23	1.52 / 2
Bedfordshire Symphony Orchestra	8 (36%)	<b>14</b> <b>(64%)</b>	3	22	1.64 / 2
Bedfordshire Youth Opera	7 (33%)	<b>14</b> <b>(67%)</b>	3.5	21	1.67 / 2
Tuesday Lunchtime Concert at St Paul's	8 (36%)	<b>14</b> <b>(64%)</b>	3	22	1.64 / 2
Other classical music event in Bedford	<b>16</b> <b>(67%)</b>	8 (33%)	4	24	1.33 / 2
					1.54 / 2

**22** Would you like to talk to a Committee member at greater length about the issues raised here? If so, please leave your name and phone number or email in the box below and we will be in touch.

No.