



British Viola Society Annual Report January 2024 - 31 March 2025

Introduction

The British Viola Society (BVS) was established in October 2012, replacing the English Viola Society founded by John White and Dr Louise Lansdown in 2007. As Honorary President, John White supported the Society in its transition to the British Viola Society. He sadly died in December 2013 and the Society did not appoint another Honorary President until July 2016, when the composer and violist Sally Beamish kindly agreed to accept the position. At the same time the Society was further strengthened by the recruitment of additional Committee members to help it grow and function more efficiently.

The Society is affiliated with the International Viola Society, but operates as an independent Society with its own constitution and regulations. As a nonprofit organisation, the primary aim of the BVS is to promote viola performance, teaching, research and many other viola-related activities.

Review of Activities January 2024 - 31 March 2025

The Society continues to be supported by the hard working Committee which discovered the value and efficiency of communicating via Zoom during Covid. In 2024 we had to find a new Treasurer due to unfortunate circumstances and we were very grateful to Hywel Jones for standing in at short notice.

Viola Excellence

The Society has continued to take a prominent role in supporting international viola competitions that give invaluable career and developmental opportunities to some of the best young viola talent across the world. Since 2014 the Society has been actively involved and leading with both the Lionel Tertis and Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competitions. For 2025 the two competitions joined forces for one glorious week of viola excellence at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Gateshead, from 19-25 January 2025. The arrangements for this event were very time consuming and the Society's key officers were fully committed for many months leading up to the event. The highest calibre of violists and musicians from across the globe took part. Alongside the competitions an exciting 360° Festival was open to all violists, including those at school and amateur players. BVS officers represented the society in person during the week. In addition, the BVS had a table where leaflets and merchandise were available advertising the society.

The memory of Cecil Aronowitz and Lionel Tertis was honoured at the Gateshead Viola Competitions, with experts giving talks about their respective musical contributions alongside a special concert by Timothy Ridout, which took place in Tertis' hometown of Hartlepool. A complete picture of the event is available on the competition's website: <https://tertisaronowitzviolacompetitions.org.uk/>

The Society was unable to be represented at the 49th IVC, held in Brazil (7-21 July 2024). The 2025 Congress has been postponed but members of the society are sending in a proposal to represent the BVS at the 50th International Viola Congress in Paris in January 2026. This proposal will be considered during the committee meeting taking place after the AGM on 30th May 2025.

Viola Repertoire

The Society recognises the importance of continuing the great legacy left by celebrated British violists such as Lionel Tertis, William Primrose and Cecil Aronowitz, both in terms of promoting and cherishing the current viola repertoire as well as ensuring its continuing growth.

The Society continues to promote new viola compositions and we were delighted to have added to the repertoire with two commissions for the competitions: for the Aronowitz competitors 'Dual-ing' (Cecil in Africa) 2004 by Kathleen Tagg and for the Tertis competitors 'The Bridges of Newcastle (The Broon Toon Tune) by Garth Knox. Also commissioned by the Tertis and Aronowitz International viola competitions was a fabulous piece called "Mosaic," composed by Robin Ireland for 55 violists.

We are also pleased to learn of a viola and piano sonata by British composer, Francis Pott, inspired by the landscape around his home on the Isle of Man.

Raising the Profile of the Viola

The Society promotes master classes, recitals and open days, accessible to players at all levels.

We are delighted to see the enthusiasm of our amateur adult members. A Viola Ensemble group thrives in Sheffield and meets once a month, and gives regular short informal public performances as part of the Classical Sheffield weekends.

BVS professionals provide development days and courses for keen amateurs and conservatoire-level students throughout the year. For example, Martin Outram (BVS Vice-President) directs an annual Viola Summer School at Benslow Music for diploma-level students and professional violist and teacher, Jacky Woods continues to run 'Arpeggione' courses for young viola players and Louise Lansdown and Lucy Nolan have recently run their 4th Aronowitz Viola Course at "Lavethan", Blisland in Cornwall.

The Tertis and Aronowitz International Viola Competitions hopes to collaborate with and receive support from the BVS to begin a three-year series of Viola Days that will run from October 2025 until 2028 when the next iteration of the competitions is due to take place. This proposal will again be considered in the committee meeting on 30th May 2025.

Communications

The Society aims to be relevant to and communicate with a wide range of people interested in the viola, from professional players, teachers, luthiers,

conservatoire and other advanced level students, to keen amateurs including adult 'late starters'.

The main communication channels continue to be through the BVS website, and Facebook, and Twitter in our endeavor to engage with a wide audience. Earlier this year we started a major revamp of the website to give it a more modern appearance and attract new visitors.

We are very grateful to Peter Whitehead, our Facebook Coordinator who works tirelessly to update the BVS Facebook presence.

We are very grateful to Peter for keeping the BVS alive through Social Media and it is a pleasure to find so many interested violists from across the country keen to get involved and help us with our viola mission.

We are delighted to be supporting young viola players aged 18 years and under. Vanessa Gaidoni coordinates our BVS Young Violists group which has around 61 young people. Membership of the group gives one year's free BVS membership plus access to an Instagram group and a web-based blog where news and information relevant to young players is posted.

We maintain our commitment to engage with students at most of the British Conservatoires. We thank Thomas Cai, our new BVS coordinator in building up relationships with the nominated student representatives and sharing news of student viola events and activities.

As a benefit of BVS membership our members receive a regular e-newsletter. Distribution is now quarterly in order to focus on more in-depth articles, as well as promote and advertise viola events and other news of interest to our members. Our e-newsletter was launched in October 2013 and has just reached its 72nd issue (2025). We are delighted to feature articles from students, professional players and luthiers as well as reviews of viola events, concert news and members' adverts. Due to the success and coverage of this regular newsletter, the annual BVS Journal has been discontinued.

The Society is satisfied that it complies with the GDPR requirements and provides a secure, efficient and effective administration and a high-quality service to our members. We are particularly grateful to our Membership Secretary who continues to work very hard to maintain the membership lists and advise on payment of subscriptions.

Membership: 31 March 2025-

General members paying full subscription: **49**

Student members with discounted subscription: **2**

Tertis competition members with discounted subscription: **64**

Free subscriptions

Concessionary memberships: **73**

Honorary Members: **13**

BVS Young members (under 18 years) : **61**

TOTAL: 262

Our Committee as at March 2025

Sally Beamish - Honorary President

Louise Lansdown - President

Martin Outram - Vice-President

Sue Douglas - Secretary and Newsletter Editor

Hywel Jones- Treasurer

Tim Walton - Executive Secretary, Membership

Janet Pazio - Executive Secretary, Groups and Orchestras

Peter Whitehead - Executive Secretary, Facebook

Thomas Cai - Conservatoire Coordinator

Vanessa Gaidoni - BVSY Coordinator

Dr Louise Lansdown

BVS President

March 2025

<http://www.britishviolasociety.co.uk/>