

BANK NOTES

Whether crisp fifties or inky blots on a stove, art and sponsorship are intertwined, as Ian Ritchie, director of the City of London Festival, explains

The relationship between commerce and culture has existed for as long as people have traded, and the City of London has been an international trading centre throughout its history. While the trade guilds, forerunners of our Livery Companies, shaped working practices from the Middle Ages onwards, Sir Thomas Gresham helped to establish international markets alongside developments in culture and education in Elizabethan times. Great art was collected by traders, literature written by Shakespeare and Milton and music made throughout the Square Mile by Purcell, Handel, Chopin and many more. All this cultural activity, vital to the spiritual wellbeing of the City and the nation, has grown through patronage and investment of one kind or another.

The Festival was created in 1962 because the City needed it. Its first president was Sir Frederick Hoare, Lord Mayor and a prominent City banker, who wrote the following in his introduction to the first programme: 'Amid a period of the worship of Mammon, this Festival is trying to show many things that are beautiful and inspired in the arts — music by the masters, played by the masters, the song, the play, the opera, verse, tragedy and comedy — in the setting of this our most historic capital, and perhaps by so doing release man for a while and remind him that there are other things than those entirely material.' He went on to say that 'it has been my privilege, as Lord Mayor of London, to commission certain works of art, and I hope that I may set an example for others to follow.' These visionary words might just as well have been written yesterday.

The relationship between culture and commerce is ancient, but business sponsorship of the arts as we recognise it today is a relatively recent development that can be traced over the past 50 years or so, mirroring the progress of the City of London Festival itself. Its specific priorities and functions today are rather different from what they were 50, 25 or even five years ago.

Looking back 25 years, a company's decision to sponsor a festival event was often taken by the chairman (or perhaps his wife) for the perfectly good reason of loving the arts; it is also true that larger companies had by then appointed a small number of staff to work in this area and the relationship between business and the arts was becoming more strategic. The main focus nevertheless remained upon corporate entertaining and the opportunity for public recogni-

tion. Hospitality was more lavish than normally experienced today, with most Festival concerts occurring midweek, accompanied by drinks and followed by dinners.

Recent habits and restraints have changed all that but, more significantly, the nature of sponsorship itself has become more sophisticated and complex, mirroring the work of the companies themselves, and the vocabulary has changed to describe the arts as 'investments' and 'properties'. In today's difficult financial climate the faint-hearted, in both business and the arts, may be tempted to play safe and cut back on research and development. The festival, in its 50th anniversary year, shares with its business partners the need to avoid the pitfalls of short-term thinking and invest in creativity as the sure way forwards. Good sponsorship, its changing and varied nature notwithstanding, will always be born out of enlightened self-interest.

A theme of the City of London Festival over the past ten years has been 'Trading Places', forging cultural links internationally and naturally reflecting the City as a centre of world trade. The programme for its 50th anniversary has drawn the strands together, with the City and the rest of the world trading places, playing together and sharing their rich diversity of music and arts.

Anyone can have a go on one of our 50 golden street pianos, which will find themselves being played by workers, residents and visitors alike in the City's open spaces for three weeks this summer. The Festival's commercial partners have not confined themselves to sponsoring performances indoors but also are engaged in delivering free art and entertainment in the City's squares and gardens. There will be something for everyone.

A world-class city needs a world-class festival. This has been recognised in the past by emerging economies, for example in North America during the 19th century, Japan in the 20th century and most recently cities such as Shanghai, for which the vital importance of the relationship between commerce and culture is unquestioned.

The City of London Festival's first president in 1962 was absolutely correct in saying that 'despite the fact that the City of London is better known today mainly for its material efforts, in so many ways there is still a strong recognition of the things that have inspiration.' This remains completely true today. *J*



Above: The City of London Festival features events in such hallowed settings as Drapers' Hall (left) and St Paul's Cathedral



FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

‘This programme, remaining true to the vision of our founding fathers 50 years ago, is above all about the City itself — opening up and animating its buildings and outdoor spaces, revealing its past and nurturing its future, and reflecting the international diversity which defines this part of London’s unique local character.’

Book tickets at colf.org or call 0845 120 7502

MONDAY 25 JUNE, 8PM, TUESDAY 26 JUNE, 8PM

St Paul’s Cathedral, EC4

- › London Symphony Orchestra
 - › London Symphony Chorus
 - › Barry Banks (tenor)
 - › Sir Colin Davis (conductor)
- Berlioz: Requiem (*Grande Messe des Morts*)

THURSDAY 28 JUNE, 7.30PM

Mansion House, Walbrook, EC4

- › Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
 - › Alina Ibragimova (violin)
 - › Edward Gardner (conductor)
- Rossini: Overture — *The Italian Girl in Algiers*
Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto
Tansy Davies: New work (world première)
Mendelssohn: Symphony No 4 Op 90 Italian

MONDAY 2 JULY, 6PM

Deutsche Bank, Winchester House, Great Winchester St, EC2

Deutsche Bank Art Tour

One of the largest and most significant corporate art collections in the world, housed within the City offices of Deutsche Bank, the collection features works by Anish Kapoor, Francis Bacon and Damien Hirst

WEDNESDAY 4 JULY, 6PM

Guildhall Livery Hall, Gresham Street, EC2

- › Sir Andrew Motion (lecturer)
- Festival Lecture
Celebrating 50 years of arts in the City

MONDAY 9 JULY, 7.30PM

Merchant Taylors’ Hall, 30 Threadneedle Street, EC2

- › Narek Hakhnazaryan (cello)
 - › Denis Kozhukhin (piano)
- Gold medal winners of the Tchaikovsky and Belgian competitions
Ysaÿe: Sonata (for solo cello)
Franck: Sonata in A major
Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

SUNDAY 15 JULY, 7.30PM

Barbican Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, EC2

- › London Symphony Orchestra
 - › Renée Fleming (soprano)
 - › Valery Gergiev (conductor)
- City Livery Concert
Debussy: *La Mer*
Henri Dutilleux: *Le temps de l’horloge* (UK première)
Stravinsky: *Petrushka*
Returns only