

OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE



RENEWAL

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The Royal Over-Seas League is dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding through cultural and education activities around the Commonwealth and beyond. A not-for-profit private members' organisation, we've been bringing like-minded people together since 1910.

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WELCOME



“It is a real partnership
between staff and
members that keeps
ROSL thriving”

It is with mixed feelings that I write my final introduction to our journal, produced for the first time, as an online-only publication. Being involved in every aspect of ROSL's and the ROSL Trust's work since late 2017 has been an immense privilege; proving to be mostly inspiring, and at times challenging also. I have got to know so many members and enjoyed hearing about life experiences. Most of all, I have worked with a brilliant team who are immensely talented, dedicated and passionate about ROSL. Without their support and commitment, it would have been impossible to drive through the many changes that needed to be made to modernise ROSL and ensure its sustainability for years to come.

I would also like to thank the many members that give up their time to serve on our committees and on Central Council, and members who have stepped forward to help with special projects and use their expertise to benefit ROSL, such as the archives project and the planning of the Evelyn Wrench Lectures, and much more. It is a real partnership between staff and members that keeps ROSL thriving, and makes this such a special organisation.

And now, as I write this, we are living in strange and extraordinary times with London and the UK locked down, and most of the world affected in some way by COVID-19. My thoughts and sympathies go out to all those who are especially vulnerable and those whose lives and livelihoods have suffered. We have temporarily closed Over-Seas House and our teams have been extraordinary in stepping up to deal with this crisis. We are so grateful for all the messages of support and donations we have received during these unprecedented times.

There will be hard questions to answer, and for ROSL too in a post-COVID-19 world, particularly around our financial resilience and sustainability, what we stand for and offer our members. Our old business model will have to be reimagined under the leadership of our new Council and D-G. The virus has shown us starkly that we depend on each other and are inter-connected, and that we live in a global society. Perhaps it will be the many acts of human empathy, altruism and love that we are witnessing and hearing about that will shape our future world – not least by reaffirming our faith in community and our belief in a shared humanity that we have a duty to support.

I wish you all well.

Diana Owen OBE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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“For much of our waking hours,
we are not really present.
We are not experiencing life...
missing out through always
thinking about the next
thing we need to do”



WELCOME

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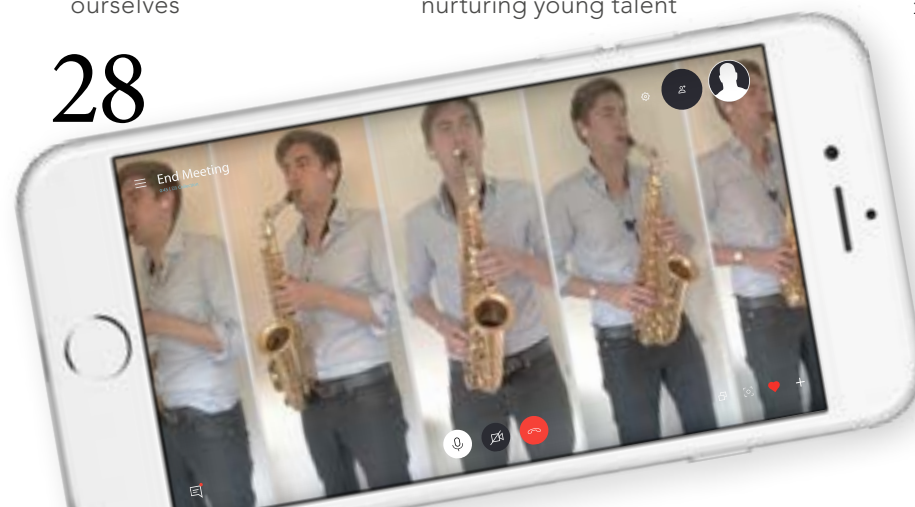
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From the EDITOR

With so much change across the world, as well as at ROSL, the post-pandemic 'new normal' may be quite different from the world we're used to. Despite the restrictions placed on all our lives, it can still be viewed as an opportunity, to look again at the way we care for ourselves, each other and the world at large. That's why, in this *Overseas*, we have chosen the theme of 'renewal' to reflect these changing times, both within ROSL and across society as a whole.

The coronavirus pandemic has been an anxious time for many of us, with many looking for ways to relieve stress from the uncertainty of it all.

Mindfulness had become one of the foremost techniques used to ease the demands of the attention economy, well before the current crisis. On page 18, Ross Davies looks at how this contemporary form of meditation might be applied to renew the mind and help us better reconnect with ourselves.

But does this taking an old idea and repackaging it for the modern day speak of a wider trend in society; has the world run out of original ideas? With Hollywood remaking old movies, tech giants lauding flip phones as the next big thing, and fashion influencers returning to looks of decades past, Abi Millar asks why the world is finding such comfort in the familiar on page 24.

When the clubhouse first closed in March, we all had to find new ways to stay connected and engaged with the outside world. For the young musicians, artists and writers we have the privilege of supporting, it has also been their aim to stay creative. That's why we launched the ROSL at Home project, which has given ROSL alumni the artistic outlet sorely missing now that live performances are currently not possible. On page 28, we present some of the highlights from the project.

A renewal of ROSL's leadership is also taking place in 2020, with recently arrived Chairman Alexander Downer AC being joined by new President Lord Geidt, and later this month, new Director-General Dr Annette Prandzioch. Welcome to them both. That means saying goodbye and a heartfelt thank you to Lord Luce and Dr Diana Owen, on page 10 and 6 respectively.

Mark Brierley
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Strong foundations

Since joining in December 2017, Diana has addressed many of the structural issues at ROSL, both physical and organisational, to put it on a solid footing for the future. She tells Mark Brierley what she has enjoyed most about her time as Director-General, her biggest challenges, and what her plans are post-ROSL

After a career spent in the not-for-profit sector at the National Trust, and latterly ten years as the CEO of the global charity, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-Upon-Avon, Diana came to ROSL with a wealth of experience and knowledge, but what was it that initially attracted her to ROSL?

“Ahead of my interview, I read through back issues of *Overseas* and that made me think this is a really interesting organisation; all the articles demonstrated that music and arts, and education projects are a way for people to come together, and that idea of international friendship and being a worldwide organisation” explains Diana.

“I could see that this is an organisation that has a lot going for it, in terms of what it stands for and what it is trying to achieve. The bit that I hadn’t really explored, or had much involvement with before, was the whole idea of the Commonwealth. When you’re not in that world, it’s not so apparent that there is a Commonwealth family, and that member states are still very active in getting together. It was very interesting.”



Diana joins staff in Green Park for the annual summer party with games and refreshments.

A difficult start

Suitably intrigued, was the job what she had expected?

“In many ways, it was quite similar to the roles I’d done previously, which had very broad remit; covering everything from Grade I-listed buildings, to education and culture, to visitors and members, to scones, to lavatories, to the public. Everything.”

With such scope in the role, of course, there was always going to be surprises. The decision, taken just a week before Diana joined, to close the Edinburgh clubhouse was ‘a huge disappointment’, one shared by many members at the time. The fallout from that decision became all encompassing for the first few months of her tenure, but eventually the focus had to turn to matters closer to home.

“I think I probably hadn’t appreciated the dilapidated state of the London clubhouse; that worried me the most, speaking as a former operational manager in the National Trust. The less than perfect electrical, fire, heating systems. That did give me sleepless nights. At one point, I was thinking we might have to close the London clubhouse if we couldn’t get on top of it quickly.

“The first winter in London, the boilers packed up and we had no heating, and there was water everywhere. I remember going down into the main kitchen and there was just water pouring out of the wall through the tiles. We couldn’t find where it was coming from, we couldn’t trace the pipe, we didn’t have any records of where

the pipes went, we didn’t know where the stopcock was. It was just such a mess. But then we couldn’t do very much because we had asbestos everywhere, so then it became this very long protracted process to get on top of the issues in the building to make it safe for everybody.”

Building and leading

That process became one of the two largest undertakings while Diana has been at the helm; addressing the dual issues of governance and compliance, within the management structure of ROSL and at the clubhouse, respectively. The aim of both the resulting Governance Review and Master Buildings Strategy have been to move ROSL on to firmer foundations, so that the clubhouse can be enjoyed for generations to come and that the Central Council and management team have the flexibility to take proactive action to ensure ROSL is well managed whatever the world throws at it.

The governance side of the equation is almost complete, with members agreeing to changes to the Bye-Laws and Royal Charter at last month’s AGM that will allow ROSL to be much more flexible in its decision-making and improve risk management. With next week’s EGM slated to ratify these changes, much of the work will be done before Diana’s departure, save for approval from the Privy Council.

The Master Buildings Strategy is a longer ongoing process, as is the maintenance of any historically significant building.

“I’m really pleased that we found Martin Ashley (the architect responsible for the Master Building Strategy), I think he is the right architect for us” explains Diana. “His advice and approach will be absolutely invaluable going forwards. I just hope we give ourselves the time to listen to him in terms of how we approach the refurbishments and building works at ROSL. We haven’t done that in the





Diana meets pianist Joseph Havlat backstage at the Annual Music Competition Gold Medal Final, alongside Chairman Alexander Downer.

past and not properly respected the heritage of the building. To be informed by that heritage, and guided by the skill and knowledge of a conservation architect like Martin, it'll mean that the standard of the work we do will be so much higher; befitting the Grade I-listing of the buildings."

With his guidance, the compliance and renovation works can continue, making the home from home that members cherish better than ever.

Cherished memories

While crucial, neither of these projects have been particularly glamorous. Does her concentration on these 'out of sight' aspects of the organisation mean that she's not been able to enjoy some of the parts of club life that initially attracted her to the job?

"I suppose I thought I would have more time to spend on cultural activities," says Diana ruefully, "but my focus initially had to be on Edinburgh and all of the ramifications of that decision, and then trying to get the London clubhouse up to scratch.

"That doesn't mean there haven't been highlights. Undoubtedly, the music and visual arts programmes – especially the Annual Music Competition, the wonderful exhibitions in our clubhouse, and our Edinburgh Fringe programme. I've also loved our staff gatherings in Green Park and sitting in the garden on a summer's evening – oh, and the view from my office window all year round."

All these memories are made by the people that were a part of them; the members, the staff and those artists, musicians and young people ROSL has supported.

"It's the people you miss; colleagues and members. I love chatting to people, I really enjoy the social side of ROSL, most obviously through our wonderful events programme, I will miss that. The music and the exhibitions are of extraordinary quality.

"Musicians and artists have been so great in supporting ROSL. For example, pianist

Ashley Fripp, I've seen him perform in London, in Edinburgh, in the Lake District. You see these people regularly and they're all such wonderful supporters of ROSL, it gives a warm glow to the heart!"

Some events will stick long in the memory, especially the concert celebrating 20 years of ROSL's involvement in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which featured the Marmen Quartet, cellist John Myerscough, guitarist Sean Shibe, soprano Jennifer Witton and pianist Simon Lepper, all past prizewinners.

"I absolutely loved that gala concert; it was one of the most extraordinary musical experiences I think I've ever had. The whole hour went in a flash, it was so wonderful. I had the feeling it was something very special I was seeing that night."

The future

With less than a month to go before her successor takes the reins, what will be her abiding memory of her time spent at ROSL?

"The thing that has struck me, between ROSL being a membership organisation, and other charities or similar clubs, is the friendship that there is amongst members. The members I meet are helpful and supportive and have made a decision to be at ROSL, rather than somewhere else, and what they like about ROSL, and what I like about ROSL, is its inclusivity. Everyone's welcome. We're not stuffy and we don't stand on ceremony. We don't judge people by their clothes or their ethnicity or their gender or anything else, and we try to treat everyone equally. That, for me, really stands out. That's the language of ROSL, that equality."

With that, it's time to draw the Zoom call to a close, and for Diana to get back to the task at hand, steering the ROSL ship through the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the other problems she has already dealt with, ROSL should come out of the other side fighting fit and ready for her successor to take on the mantle.



Dr Annette Prandzioch

Dr Annette Prandzioch will take up her role as ROSL's new Director-General on Monday 29 June.

Annette brings to ROSL extensive experience and significant networks both in and beyond the Commonwealth. A Barrister for 18 years by profession, Annette specialised in commercial and property law, and brings strong advocacy and analytical skills, as well as an understanding of negotiation and dispute resolution. She gained management experience in her chambers as a member of the board of directors and remains a door tenant.

Annette subsequently left legal practice to take up the position of Chief Operating Officer of the Royal Commonwealth Society where she was responsible for leading the team, ensuring the smooth running of the organisation and managing external partnerships. In this role, she strengthened collaborations with High Commissioners and created new stakeholder relationships. In her current external relations and business development role at the International School for Government at King's College London, Annette has worked on charting the strategic direction of this newly established school, from its formal launch to acting as its ambassador and building from scratch a network of global relationships.

In 2018, Annette was elected a governing Master of the Bench of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, an Inn of Court with a worldwide membership, where she sits on committees making strategic decisions that encompass broad-ranging issues including international engagement and renovation projects.

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REFLECTIONS FROM RICHARD LUCE

After 18 years' service as the President of the Royal Over-Seas League, Lord Luce announced his retirement from May 2020, not only from his role at the club, but also drawing to a close his professional career which has taken in service for Queen and country across the world

It has been an immense privilege to serve as President of the Royal Over-Seas League for 18 years. I remember so clearly when Stanley Martin (later Chairman) came to my office at Buckingham Palace in 2002 when I was Lord Chamberlain. He invited me, on behalf of the Central Council and subject to The Queen's approval, to succeed the admirable Sir David Scott as President. I had no difficulty in accepting with pleasure!

The role of the League reflects my varied experience of life. It started in 1910 with Sir Evelyn Wrench's vision of an organisation that could reflect an Empire transforming one day into a Commonwealth of nations: supported by members from many parts of the world, though not quite fulfilling Sir Evelyn's ambition of one million. We have gradually developed such a wide variety of activities for members ranging from the Commonwealth to all aspects of culture including the great Annual Music Competition and the arts.

In the same way, my life began whilst the Empire was still at its height. As a child, I watched my father help to steer the Sudan to independence, serve as Governor of Aden and then as Political Resident in the then Persian Gulf. Later, as Special Representative to the Gulf for the Foreign Secretary, he negotiated our final withdrawal from the Gulf and Middle East.

My own experiences were reflected in my memoirs *Ring the Changes*, where I described what it was like to be the last District Officer in the Kenyan Administration, later on as an MP and as a Minister in the Thatcher Government for ten years. All this gave me responsibilities for the changing role of Britain overseas in Africa, the Middle and Far East and of our

wonderful range of arts, as Arts Minister. The League's activities reflect so many of my own experiences. My first memory of ROSL goes back to the time when my uncle, Admiral Sir David Luce, was the Chairman (1968-71). He had been First Sea Lord but resigned in 1966 as he disagreed with the government's plans for phasing out aircraft carriers in the Far East. Clearly, he enjoyed his time at the League but sadly he died suddenly after three years in the job. I am proud to have that family link. Over the years, I remember attending some events at Over-Seas House and above all I recall the formidable figure of the President, later Grand President, Lord Grey of Naunton who has been a distinguished Governor in Nigeria, amongst other tasks. Much has happened to ROSL in my time as President. A landmark year was our Centenary attended by The Queen and Princess Alexandra at St James's Palace. We do have a very special link with the Monarchy. The Duke of York (later King George VI) served as President for 14 years before the War and was succeeded by the then Duke of Kent. My wife Rose and I have attended all the Annual Music Competitions, mainly held at the Southbank Centre or in

Cadogan Hall and so regularly attended by our Vice Patron, Princess Alexandra. I recall very many other arts occasions. With every long-serving institution, we have had our difficulties. Since our Centenary, we have had to adjust to a fast-changing world and Director-Generals ranging from Robert Newall, to Roddy Porter and Diana Owen have done their bit to lead the way. In 2015, we suffered great blows in the saddest loss of our Director of Arts, Roderick Lakin and, soon after, our new Chairman Simon Ward. This was followed by the decision to close our

We have developed such a wide variety of activities for members, ranging from the Commonwealth to all aspects of culture, including the great Annual Music Competition and the arts



WELCOME TO LORD GEIDT

Central Council has appointed Lord Geidt as ROSL's next President with the endorsement of ROSL's Patron, HM The Queen. Lord Geidt has had a distinguished career in public service, latterly as The Queen's Private Secretary (2007-2017). Lord Geidt is a member of the House of Lords and Chairman of King's College London. He will be the ninth President in ROSL's 110-year history. The Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League, Alexander Downer AC commented that:

"Lord Luce's contribution has been outstanding and he will be missed by our staff and members. I am delighted that Lord Geidt has agreed to take up this role."



Lord and Lady Luce entertaining esteemed guests Henry and Nancy Kissinger, Lord and Lady Carrington, and Sir John and Dame Norma Major

clubhouse in Edinburgh, which was sadly damaging our overall finances. It took time for the organisation to recover and to adjust to a new world.

The fact that my wife Rose and I have been able to stay, since 2016, in Over-Seas House each week when the House of Lords has been sitting, has given us great pleasure. We have got to know so many of the staff at all levels, who have given such cheerful service to the League and much pleasure to Rose and me.

The striking thing about the League is that we are unique. There is no other organisation in the UK with its special range of objectives; to serve our loyal members, to be a social centre for the Commonwealth and to reflect British and Commonwealth culture. That is an exciting challenge for all of us.

We are truly a national, international and Commonwealth social centre in the best location in London overlooking Green Park and in a historic building. We have branches in many parts of the UK and throughout the world. We are proud of our special links all over the world and especially in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, but with reciprocal arrangements on all continents.

Through our ROSL Trust, we are able to support music and other scholars from all parts of the world. And we must not underestimate the value of our charitable investment project in Africa where in Namibia, Botswana, Kenya and others, we support African schoolchildren.

And we have this admirable *Overseas*

quarterly journal to keep our members well informed.

But first we have to face the most formidable challenge for us which is the coronavirus and somehow we will emerge after the worst is over ready to grow again and to rebuild.

We have been lucky to have two Chairmen in Sir David Brewer and now Alexander Downer to see us through these challenging times and we are grateful to Diana as Director-General, and all staff for steering us through the forceful undercurrents to a new future.

For my part, I have been hugely privileged to have been able to serve in so many varied walks of life. My father taught me the importance of having a sense of service and duty to our country. And it was my mother, who reinforced in my childhood and school days, that we must realise that people are more important than anything else, that we all have something to offer and that we need to draw the best out of each other.

We have to face the most formidable challenge for us, which is the coronavirus and somehow we will emerge after the worst is over ready to grow again and to rebuild

The thing I know for sure is that I could not have coped with all the challenges of my life without the most wonderful love and support of my wife Rose. Together, we have so much enjoyed being part of the life of the Royal Over-Seas League.

Rose and I cannot contemplate full retirement. For a start, I will support the publication of my wife's memoirs which are to be called *Rose's Ramblings!* and we will look forward to staying at the League from time to time.

All my experience of life indicates that we shall always be ready to expect the unexpected.

SUPPORT US

At this difficult time, your donations are more important than ever. Continue to support your home from home in the heart of Mayfair by donating to ROSL via our charitable arm, the ROSL Trust. Your generosity will give young people around the world an education, it will give talented young musicians, artists and writers the chance of a career, and it will safeguard the future of your beautiful Grade I listed clubhouse.

To donate, visit www.rosl.org.uk/supportus or call +44 (0)20 7408 0214



Tania Dolvers Photography London

MIND THAT MATTERS

Mindfulness has become one of the foremost techniques used to ease the demands of the attention economy. Ross Davies looks at how this contemporary form of meditation might be applied to renew the mind and help us better reconnect with ourselves

Such is the pace of the modern world that our ability to live in the moment feels almost impossible.

There are just too many distractions.

In search of the next dopamine hit, the average Briton checks their phone – without prompting – around 1,000 times a week, revealed a recent study. Even with the most abstemious of intentions, a pitstop on our Twitter feed can lead us down that interminable rabbit hole of memes and videos of cats doing silly things.

Most of us recognise this as being symptomatic of the attention economy, in which the worlds of digital technology and social media compete for our time – and our money. In recent years, research has even suggested that social media addiction might be classified as a mental health disorder.

Our apps might serve as a welcome diversion on the morning commute, but that shouldn't be all there is when we have downtime. "Take rest – a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop," said the Roman poet Ovid. In contemporary layman's terms, that reads: "Put down your phone once in a while – you might feel better for it."

In a twist of irony, even the big tech players have become wise to the impact that being constantly online can have on our mental health. Apple recently introduced a new feature on its iPhone, which lets users set up a daily permitted screen time on certain apps, apparently to encourage us to spend more time away from our devices.

But arguably the most popular technique deployed – in the western world – to help us refresh the mind and better connect and focus on the here and now is mindfulness. Such is its mainstream adoption, there are purported to be over 100,000 books on sale on Amazon that include either the word "mindful" or "mindfulness" in their title.

For the uninitiated, mindfulness is a meditation technique that serves to help us experience the present moment, with a focus on breathing and being. Widely recognised by scientific community and health organisations – including the NHS – it is commonly prescribed to help patients control symptoms of depression, anxiety and chronic pain.

With mental illness recognised as a global scourge – according to a report by the Lancet Commission, it could cost the world economy upwards of \$16 trillion by 2030 – the rise of mindfulness is not altogether unsurprising.

Arguably its main appeal is that it can be practiced anywhere and anytime, and for free – if you choose to eschew the subscription-based apps and literature. It can also be applied to almost any activity, from mindful dog walking and tree-climbing to gardening and tv-watching.

While its roots can be found in ancient Buddhism, mindfulness's origins date back to 1979, when first pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn at his Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Despite a grounding in Zen Buddhism, Kabat-Zinn's decision to soft-pedal the meditation's



spiritual origins has helped it become accessible to those who wouldn't be caught dead in the spirituality section of a bookshop.

Tessa Watt is a London-based mindfulness teacher and writer. A former BBC radio producer, she first started practising mindfulness to counteract the effects of "an exciting but stressful job", before becoming a full-time practitioner. She runs workshops in organisations and workplaces, including Westminster, where she says there has been an increased uptake of her mindfulness programme among parliamentarians.

"Obviously, Parliament is a really chaotic environment, which includes demanding work and difficult hours," she says. "We run a drop-in session every week for MPs and peers, who find it helpful for feeling more grounded and stable within their environment."

An increase in "randomised control trials and countless peer-reviewed research papers" has lent mindfulness scientific credence in recent years, says Watt, which has been reflected in adoption across the wider general public. But just how does it work? And how, for instance, might it be applied to assuage a prolonged period of work-related stress?

"Stress is measured in terms of various measures through heart rate variability or by cortisol levels," she says. "It's been shown again and again that mindfulness helps us reduce stress by allowing us to move into the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the calming aspect of our nervous system."

"The same applies to anxiety and depression, when we get trapped in cycles of negative thinking and worrying. Mindfulness provides us with the tools to step back through simply grounding ourselves in our bodies and what's present, as opposed to worrying about the future or regurgitating the past."

But what I really want to know is how meditation ties into the theme of self-renewal. A common symptom of poor mental health is the sense of being in a rut; of feeling beholden

to the demands of daily life, be it work deadlines, checking messages or updating profiles: the feeling that there is never enough time in the day to get things done.

It could be reengaging with nature through a walk on a spring morning; savouring every drop of Argentinian Malbec after a long day at work (mindful drinking is also a practice in its own right); or losing oneself in a piece of music.

How do we reset our mindset to become fully conscious of the simple things we take for granted?

"Human beings tend to go on autopilot," explains Watt. "For much of our waking hours, we are not really present. We are not experiencing our life as we are going through it. We are missing out through always thinking about the next thing we need to do."

"What happens with mindfulness is that we are able to anchor ourselves in the simplicity of what's actually happening right here, right now. The focus on the five senses allows us to reconnect with the simple joys of life. This creates a freshness and vividness to everyday life, in contrast to that stale feeling where we take everything for granted." ◉

For much of our waking hours, we are not really present. We are not experiencing life as we are going through it. We are missing out through always thinking about the next thing we need to do

Mindfulness has its critics, however, such as Ronald Purser, Professor of Management at San Francisco State University. Purser is the author of *McMindfulness*, a 304-page critique of modern meditation that argues that in its stress on the private individual, the contemporary practice of mindfulness does little to engage with the actual roots of mental health problems across society.

He also questions the co-optation of mindfulness among corporations (NB Google has its very own mindfulness tsar, whose business card reads “Jolly Good Fellow”) as a means of getting employees to be more productive in the name of good capitalism, as opposed to having anything to do with mental and physical wellness.

Even the US Army has implemented mindfulness into its military strategy in recent times in a bid to sharpen the senses of its soldiers. According to Purser, this only goes to show how contemporary appropriation should never be confused for the Buddhist tenets from which it is derived.

“Right mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition is not merely a therapeutic approach focused on stress relief just for one’s personal self,” says Purser. “Instead, it is an actively engaged and expansive awareness, which cultivates a way of life that results in liberation from attachment to the self-ego and the existential suffering of human existence.

“In fact, one could argue that right mindfulness is closely allied with the development of cognitive discernment, which is a discursive and analytic approach.”

Purser’s hesitance to conflate mindfulness with spirituality is also shared by Jinpa Thupten – long-time interpreter of Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama – who, in a recent paper published in *Current Opinions in Psychology*, argued that “a

MINDFULNESS
TOP TIPS

Breathing awareness

Try concentrating on how you breathe and being aware of each breath, in through the nose, out through the mouth.

One thing at a time

Try ordering your thoughts by creating lists, keeping a diary, or categorising tasks, so things don't get too much.

Get gardening

Those lucky enough to have a garden should get out there as it can help reduce stress and fatigue and boost self esteem.

Thought provoking

Having space between you and your thoughts by noticing how they come and go into your mind will help with calmness.

more fruitful approach” would be to look upon modern mindfulness as an entirely “new phenomenon”.

“Yes, the practice is derived from Buddhist sources, but it is also, if proclaimed to be secular, different... Having this kind of clarity helps all around... Theoretically, however, it makes more sense to consider contemporary mindfulness to be morally neutral, that is independent of ethics and compassion.”

In spite of his convictions, Purser says he has no wish to pooh-pooh anyone who has found mindfulness to be therapeutically beneficial. That is perhaps just as well, as many of us struggle to come to terms with COVID-19, the pandemic that has shut down much of the world.

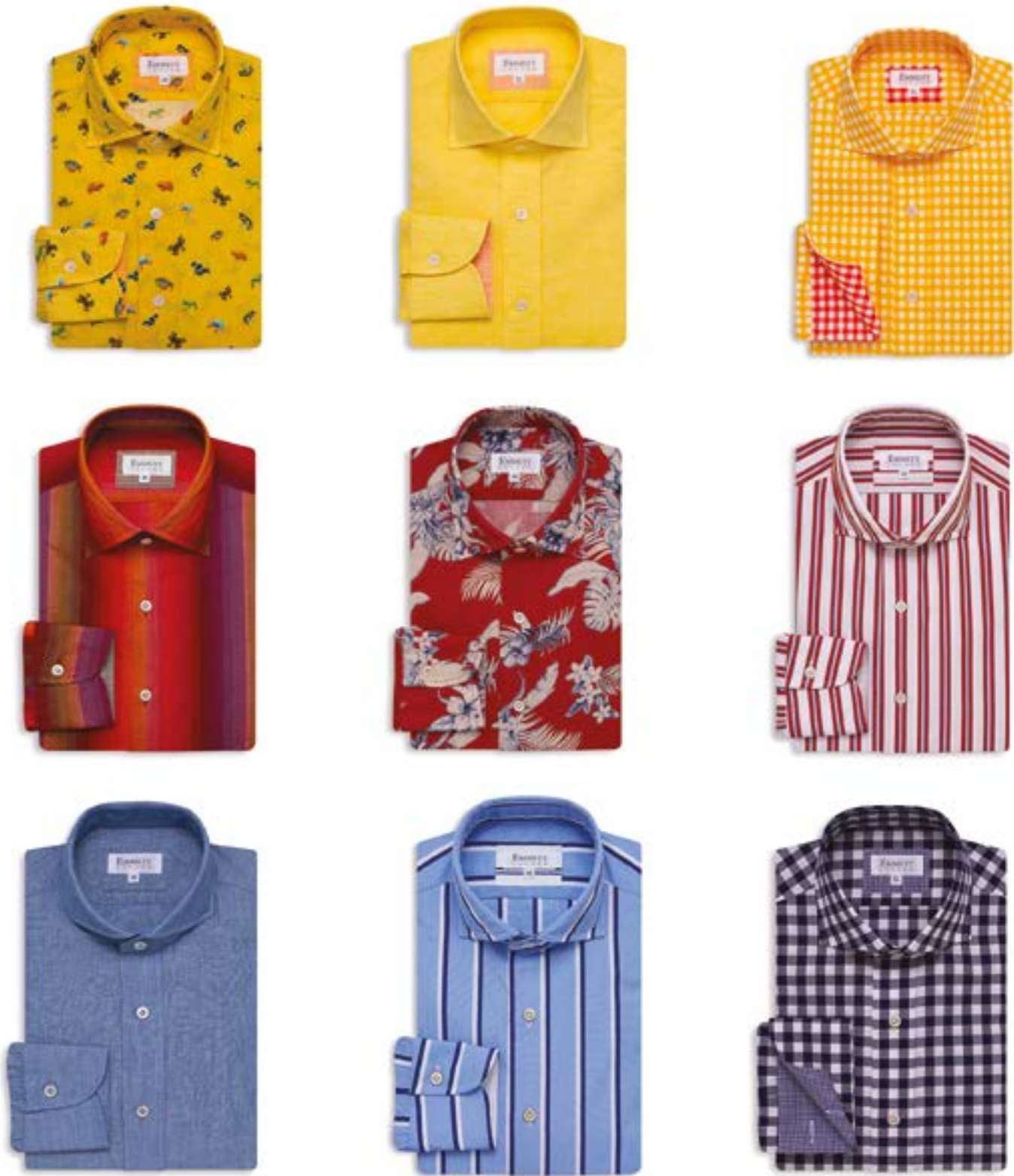
At the time of writing, society remains under lockdown, with many confined to their homes, anxious over income, job security, and the health of family and loved ones. For all the wonders of Skype and Zoom, relationships can be hard to maintain amid isolation. All the perfect storm for a mental health crisis, warn experts.

“I’ve actually been busier than ever over the last few weeks,” says Watt, who has started teaching an eight-week online mindfulness course in response to the pandemic. “It seems timely. A lot of people

are either wanting to learn mindfulness right now or are reconnecting with it.”

COVID-19 will be brought to heel eventually, but the world left behind is likely to be a very different place. In order to make sense of it, this could require a recalibration of societal priorities. A renewal, if you like, of our focus on what really counts.

This might be as simple as being conscious of how our chest rises and falls when we breathe – the rhythm of life itself.



EMMETT
L O N D O N
112 jermyn Street

Hannah

Lesley Arimah, winner of the ROSL Readers' Award at last year's Caine Prize for African Writing, presents her specially commissioned short story for ROSL members, *Hannah*

Forty minutes late. And no Lagos traffic to blame, either. Figures the girl was still a mess. Chikamma Ekwerehadu exchanged her phone for a madeleine and bit into it, savouring. Too much sugar, not nearly enough lemon zest. After a brief, intense struggle, she decided that eating the rest of the madeleine was fine, but the others weren't worth the calories. Munachi could have the rest. Even at her most pregnant, Chikamma's former student had been rail thin, her distended belly easily obscured with a loose shirt and blazer. The girl could eat Chikamma's husband under the table and had done so many times while living under their roof. Ike had been apprehensive at first but had grown fond of Munachi. One couldn't help it. She was endearingly disastrous, what Antoinette—the first friend she'd made upon moving to Minnesota—would have called “a hot mess”.

A second madeleine crooned at her, and Chikamma distracted herself with the café's patrons. A study group had annexed several tables and occupied a corner. It wasn't hard to overhear that an exam a mere 1.5 days from now would determine most of their grades. It didn't bode well for said grades that none of them had figured out an eight-person study group wasn't going to get anything done. She'd always told her students to find one person (maybe two), preferably someone who cared just as much or as little as they did. Munachi—chronically

late, chronically missing books, pens, paper—could never find anyone to pair with. Hadn't mattered though; the girl had aced every test or, as in Chikamma's history class, turned in water-stained essays that were unambiguously brilliant. But in the end, that hadn't mattered, either.

A text came through, an update from Munachi, surely. It wasn't, but Chikamma's annoyance melted when she saw her daughter. Hannah's school did things like send picture updates and host parent luncheons and ban peanuts and other allergens from the premises. Chikamma and Ike could probably have found Hannah such a school in Nigeria, for sure Lagos, but her university often went months without paying salaries, and while he did okay in engineering, they would have buckled under the cost. In their Edina neighborhood, Hannah's school was public, free, and if the move to the States had cost them much, it had eventually been worth it.

That girl laughed so hard at her own joke it became contagious and Ike had found the two of them bent at the waist, breathless. As she'd suspected, a child had eased the tension in their marriage

Hannah grinned photogenically, one of two dark faces among pale ones. The other was Antoinette's daughter, who Hannah had somehow convinced to partner with her for Costume Day—so in the midst of superheroes, boarding school wizards, freezing princesses and various livestock, stood Bert and Ernie, bros for life. As she bit into the second madeleine, Chikamma calculated her calories so far. 2,930 and it was early afternoon. Sighing, she scrolled through the rest of the photos, looking for Hannah. If there was only one thing she'd done right, it was raising this child. ▶



Just the other day, Hannah had leaned into her while she stirred dinner and said, “I’d give you my kidney.” And in the gut punch of that moment, before Chikamma could muster words, her daughter had added “...BEANS! I’d give you my kidney beans!” Hannah then ran around the kitchen island handing out invisible high fives. That girl laughed so hard at her own joke it became contagious and Ike had found the two of them bent at the waist, breathless.

As she’d suspected, a child had eased the tension in their marriage. Her in-laws had often berated her for not giving their child a child.

“Did a spirit born him? You, who have married someone’s child, will you not provide a child for someone to marry?”

The relentless reproach calmed but continued in its own fashion after her infertility was confirmed. It was only when Ike stopped defending her, after years of presenting an impenetrable united front, that Chikamma began to worry about her future. At her age, she could hardly return to the marriage market and erect a stall peddling youth. Add infertility, a mediocre job, and a body that had quit a long time ago. But then Munachi in a spot of trouble, pregnant and disowned, crying outside her office. A pregnant 19-year-old with no resources, few, if any, close friends; and none with the wherewithal to be of any use.

Munachi had started as a grateful, reluctant guest, but soon became family. Ike was endlessly amused by her, the little sister he never knew he’d wanted. They could hold entire conversations quoting absurd Nollywood lines. She continued calling Chikamma Professor, despite objections, and took to calling him Mr. Prof. Chikamma taught her to cook, and Munachi introduced her to wild romance novels and something called twerking. She felt for Munachi what a mother would for a daughter. At least she’d thought so until Hannah. Sometimes, Chikamma and Ike would just look at Hannah—singing, baking, doing cartwheels that she’d emailed them an e-vite to watch—and then they’d look at each other and grin. We did that. This lovely force of nature? Us. High fives all around.

When Munachi gave birth, they’d all three been in the delivery room. Chikamma joked that after having their

knuckles squeezed to oblivion and taking turns to sit with her through nine hours of labour, the baby was theirs, too. The girl was christened Sylvia, Chikamma’s middle name, and they called her Sylvie or Sliver. Lil CaCa when she stank. And, eventually, Hannah.

And if Munachi thought she could take the girl back, Chikamma would be happy to complete her education.

Munachi had reached out last week through a borrowed email address to say she would be in America, in Chikamma’s city, and they should catch up. After a frantic internet search of the name in the borrowed email handle, Chikamma gathered that Munachi worked for some prominent Cameroonian family. Relief. No court would take a child from a stable, American home to live with a housegirl in Africa, no matter how eminent her

employers. She’d imagined the picture she would paint to the judge, one of naive young housegirls, certain their future held more, only to find themselves feeding the children of the children to whom they’d given their first baths.

A hand waved away her daydream, and she looked up to see Munachi trying for her attention.

There are certain women who are so well put together—by nature, money and their own fashion knowhow—that it’s useless to be jealous. It would dissolve you. And despite her calorie counting and weight watching—which tested her maths but did nothing to contain her figure—Chikamma had never been the sort to compete with other women, shrugging off envy with ease. Munachi had, somehow, become one of those women. Tasteful brocade trousers, chic button down with billowy sleeves. Chikamma blanked, unable to reconcile this woman with the scrawny, disheveled teen. Then, unexpectedly, fear. This was no housegirl to be dismissed by any court.

She waited for Munachi’s expression to match in anger what she felt in fear, but the other woman lit up. She actually squealed and trapped Chikamma in a tight hug. When they released each other, Munachi was tear-stained and Chikamma had gathered herself.

“Ah, Professor,” she said, holding onto Chikamma’s hands and glancing down at her. “You have become comfortable, well done!” It was said with such congratulatory cheer, Chikamma felt churlish annoyance at herself for feeling some way about the note on her increased weight.

The intervening decade had been so kind to Munachi as to ignore her, and her 29 looked much like her 19 with a stunning fullness to her figure.

“Munachi,” she managed. “How?”

The younger woman gave a delighted spin, as a child would show off a new Easter dress. She bumped into a nearby table and apologised, which the occupants waved away, charmed.

“Don’t ask me how, it’s God, o. You would not believe me if I told you. Did you know your friend rescinded that my job when I arrived? He offed his phone or maybe the network was down because I couldn’t reach you or Mr. Prof and...”

What followed was a fascinating and horrifying account of Munachi’s first years in Kumasi, but Chikamma was less interested in the details than in filtering them for any latent desire to take Hannah back. While Munachi had apparently been sleeping in secret spots to avoid street boys, Chikamma had been packing to start a new life, one where she wasn’t pitied for having to raise the “bastard child of some small, immoral girl”, a phrase that was the straw that sent the camel applying for a visa lottery to the United States.

“...and do you know that man, the very same one, was the pastor of the largest church in the whole country. I am telling you, God is good. It wasn’t up to three years after that I met my husband. I tried finding you in that time, but they said you people have moved. Hai, I could have cried. My Sylvia, my Prof. They must think I’m dead.”

“Hannah.” My Hannah. “Daughters don’t carry their mother’s name, so we changed it.”

She emphasised daughters, mothers, with mild infection while her hands clenched in her lap. Munachi laughed, clapped.

“Do you know, I prayed that you would treat her as your own. Remember what you said at the airport? ‘God will bless you for blessing me.’ I just thought you were trying not to distress me. But He did it. He gave my child a mother.”

Munachi’s loving gratefulness uncoiled a knot of dread she’d carried in her stomach for ten years. Munachi wasn’t coming for her daughter. She knew Hannah was

Chikamma and Ike’s. Chikamma surprised herself, Munachi, the staff behind the counter and

eight doomed students by bursting into tears. Munachi hugged her and made soothing noises. She diverted the curious onlookers, procured a glass of water, fished out a handkerchief.

As Chikamma calmed, her decade-old dread gave way. The possibility that her daughter could one day be taken had been such an unfathomable horror that she’d had no imagination left to feel guilty. But with that gone...

Chikamma had joked shortly after “Sylvia’s” delivery that the child belonged to them all. But buried inside that joke was the truth of Chikamma’s sudden, blinding envy. Every time she handed the child back to Munachi, every time Munachi took the girl into her bedroom and shut the door. Even Munachi’s admirable vow to breastfeed for a full year roused Chikamma’s envy. She wanted to feed the baby, too. She wanted to hold her without someone standing over her shoulder, waiting to take her back. She wanted to nap in her own chair, in her own house, cradling a child that wasn’t borrowed.

She’d gone from wanting a baby to wanting this one, with the bounteous shock of crinkled hair and that gurgling laugh. The hair, the laugh, the girl, all had grown into the smartest, silliest, dearest wonder of the modern world. 10/10. Would raise again.

Munachi distracted her with questions about Hannah, and she was so careful to call her Hannah, to reassure Chikamma that the girl was hers alone. Chikamma’s guilt made a meal of that tender reassurance, growing stronger, stretching its legs, beginning the chase. She’d never considered that Munachi wouldn’t work out that the job offer that’d lured her away from her baby, from her country, wasn’t real. That Chikamma had colluded with an old friend to draw Munachi away

so that she and Ike could keep the “abandoned” child. Chikamma hadn’t wanted to think of what could happen to a penniless young woman living on the streets of a foreign country. And so, she didn’t. She told herself the girl had died peacefully on the Kumasi-bound flight. She told Ike nothing. He would have combed the streets until he found his “little sister” or her remains.

Chikamma answered Munachi’s questions. Hannah’s first words. Hannah’s first steps, Hannah first friend. And after exhausting those questions, Chikamma volunteered story after story: Hannah at four returning the favour and offering Ike piggyback rides. Hannah storing Halloween candy throughout the house like a squirrel prepping for winter. The memories poured at a velocity that outpaced her shame and Chikamma began to pull ahead, powered by joy.

There are certain women who are so well put together—by nature, money and their own fashion knowhow—that it’s useless to be jealous. It would dissolve you



Lesley Arimah

Lesley Nneka Arimah was born in the UK and grew up in Nigeria and wherever else her father was stationed for work. Her stories have been honored with a National Magazine Award, a Commonwealth Short Story Prize and an O. Henry Award. Her work has appeared in The New Yorker, Harper’s, McSweeney’s, GRANTA and has received support from The Elizabeth George Foundation and MacDowell. She lives in Las Vegas and is working on a novel about you.

Creativity

IN ISOLATION

ROSL launched its brand new Composition Award in March and despite the upheaval the world has seen since, our period of enforced isolation could prove creatively rewarding for entrants. Composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad, one of the judges for the award, discusses where she gets her inspiration from and the importance of nurturing young talent



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As I sit down to write this article, about a week after the UK went into lockdown as a result of COVID-19, I am just starting to get some semblance of a concentrated work routine back. I am in an exceptionally lucky position: I have work to be getting on with over the next few months, I am used to working at home for long stretches by myself, and I am in good physical health. But, like many others who work in the arts, I've found it very hard to be creative recently: despite best intentions, I've found myself glued to the news channel, caught up in alternative waves of despair at the tragedy unfolding in front of my eyes, and determination to use time productively and for creative good.

For those of us lucky enough to not be directly affected by the virus, there is ample time to reflect. Why compose at all? What are the conditions that you really need in order to be at your most productive, and does it matter what inspires you? I am sure, in the coming year, we'll see a range of artistic reactions to this global pandemic: some artists will engage directly with what has happened, others will steer clear of writing music that is 'about' anything. I find myself more inclined than ever to take inspiration from nature: a little violin and piano piece that is next on the list will likely take the idea of

an opening blossom, as I've been paying a lot more attention to the developing buds on the apple tree in our garden this past week. It won't be necessary to know this when listening to the completed piece, and I won't be trying to paint a picture in the music: rather, I think that I will experiment with harmony that gradually expands outward, or turns one way and then another, as if following the path of the sun. Of course, in its own way, this piece will be a reaction to the coronavirus crisis: for me, current events have reminded me not to take beautiful, perishable things for granted.

As a composer, I often take inspiration from extra-musical sources: poetry, art, science, or even, in one piece called *Game On* from 2016, economics and Game Theory.

Recently, in preparation for a talk I was giving about my work, I looked out my workings for this piece, and found pages upon pages of note rows that I had generated from number grids usually used to find the Nash Equilibrium. Try as I might, I *could not* work out how I'd gone about doing this: what had made perfect sense at the time now seemed like total gobbledegook.

I experience this sense of cluelessness a lot when looking back over pieces, even ones I've only recently finished. In 'the flow', patterns and pertinent reasons for making certain musical choices leap out at me, but as soon as these creative connections have served their purpose and helped me make something musically meaningful, their logic is forgotten. In *Game On* [WATCH HERE](#), creating long streams of notes based on number grids helped me to create a music that felt relentless, unpredictable and motoric. I'd have found it much more difficult to do this if I'd 'just written' what came in my head. For me, this is the purpose of 'being inspired' by something: in my recent piano concerto, using a novelist's

We'll see a range of artistic reactions to this global pandemic: some artists will engage directly with what has happened, others will steer clear of writing music that is 'about' anything

description of a river that flows for miles spurred me to create a long series of chords that change only very gradually (like those spelling games, where you go from one word to a completely different one by changing only one letter at a time). Using these chords as a basis for long melodic

lines then enabled me to create musical phrases that seemed to go on forever, and I achieved a feeling of tautness that I would have found very difficult to create otherwise.

Even after 20 years of working to commission, I still find composing, and concentrating on my work, incredibly hard. In recent years, I've resorted to using software that blocks the internet on all my devices during work hours, and I try to keep to a regular timetable: I expect a lot of people are currently discovering that time vanishes easily at home if you don't make a concrete plan for the day! I do have friends who still stay up all night writing pieces, but I gave up on that habit years ago, and now find that keeping to regular working hours, with enough breaks for walks (even if only

OVER 100 YOUNG COMPOSERS ENTERED THEIR WORKS INTO THE INAUGURAL COMPOSITION AWARD, COMPRISING:

NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED

United Kingdom
South Africa
Singapore
Ireland
Cyprus
Canada
Australia
New Zealand

INSTRUMENTATION

Solo 5 entries
Duo 13
Trio 12
Quartet 28
Quintet 16
Sextet 23

WRITTEN FOR:

Voice
Woodwind
Brass
Strings
Electronic
Percussion
Keyboard

around the garden these days) works best. Composing is a constant feedback loop between craft and inspiration, and on the days where I feel empty of ideas, I still persevere, relying on technique until something sparks my imagination.

I am so looking forward to being on the panel for the first ROSL Composition Award in November: it will be more vital than ever to nurture our future composing talent in the years to come, and I can't wait to listen, in the same room as others, to the new creative voices of the future.

RENEWAL

OR

REHASH?

Has the world run out of original ideas? With Hollywood remaking old movies, tech giants lauding flip phones as the next big thing, and fashion influencers returning to looks of decades past, **Abi Millar** asks why the world is finding such comfort in the familiar

If you were anything like me, you probably grew up imagining a future of flying cars and spacesuits. Our TV shows would be cutting-edge sci-fi, our music would be computer-generated, and our clothing would be holographic.

Sadly for my childhood self, 2020 is not entirely as she anticipated. For sure, our technological prowess would have struck her as nothing short of magical. But our pop culture would have looked disappointingly familiar. Rather than casting relentlessly onwards into futurity, we would barely seem to have moved on from her own era.

To give just a few examples, *Friends* – a sitcom that ran between 1994 and 2004 – was the UK's most streamed show of 2018. *The Lion King* remake was a 2019 box office hit, along with a staggering array of sequels. Retro-styled flip phones are making a comeback, while 90s games consoles (like SEGA's Mega Drive and Nintendo's SNES) are being relaunched.

Fashion influencers, who have long rocked a 1990s-inspired aesthetic, are now paying homage to the 2000s (think blue eyeshadow on the 2020 Grammy's red carpet). Eighties-tinged synth pop is rarely out of the charts, and Charli XCX's 1999 (referencing everything from Titanic to Britney Spears) was one of the big hits of 2018.

Personal nostalgia is de rigueur too: at the time of writing, there are 527 million posts on Instagram tagged #tbt ('throwback Thursday'), along with 21 million tagged #fbf ('flashback Friday'). It's no wonder that marketing teams have dubbed millennials 'the nostalgia generation'.

Jenna Gottlieb and Jayna Maleri, who run a nostalgia-focused website called Haystack Stories, think there might be a few reasons for younger adults' obsession with the past.

"We think it might just be as simple as the 90s being a formative

time for this generation, the same way a lot of our parents feel nostalgic for the 60s and 70s," they say. "But personally, we also just think the 90s were really cool. The clothes, the music, the movies, the trends – it was a time that feels easier and more innocent, especially when you think about the early aughts and what a scary time that was for a lot of people."

There's also the fact that the millennial generation are the last ones to remember a time before the internet. In other words, there's a whole piece of our early lives that wasn't documented in the same way as the rest of it.

"We call it 'The 90s Black Hole' because that's really what it feels like," say Jenna and Jayna. "Certain childhood touchstones – foods, TV shows, brands, stores – are really hard to find online. So we think that's part of it, that we might feel a stronger sense of nostalgia because a lot of what we loved isn't instantly accessible, but it's collectively shared in our minds. It's essentially absence making the heart grow fonder."

Dr Krystine Batcho, a Professor of Psychology at Le Moyne College in New York, has been researching nostalgia since 1995 and is known for developing the Nostalgia Inventory Test (a measure of how often and deeply people feel nostalgic). She says that, while her research is not definitive, it does suggest that young adults are more nostalgic today than they might have been 20 years ago.

"In recent years, scientific and technological progress has transformed the way we live in dramatic ways," she says. "Although such progress is highly valued for how it has enhanced the quality of our lives, it also constitutes tremendous change. Change, both good and bad, is stressful – in part because it forces us to adapt, and in part because it poses uncertainty."

She adds that, while the capacity for nostalgia has always been part of us, the tendency to express it does wax and wane in line with circumstances. ●

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS HAS TRANSFORMED THE WAY WE LIVE IN DRAMATIC WAYS. CHANGE, BOTH GOOD AND BAD, IS STRESSFUL – IN PART BECAUSE IT FORCES US TO ADAPT AND IN PART BECAUSE IT POSES UNCERTAINTY



We feel it more at transitional life stages (such as graduation or retirement), as well as during times of social upheaval.

"Uncertainty makes people feel that they might be losing control, or that so many things out of our control are changing so rapidly we might not be able to keep up," she says. "Loneliness, stress, fear, uncertainty, changes in life stage, and significant changes in lifestyle can all increase feelings and expressions of nostalgia."

Dr Wijnand van Tilburg, a nostalgia researcher at the University of Essex, points out that nostalgic memories are inherently bittersweet. On one hand, they involve a sense of loss for things that are no longer there. On the other hand they allow people to reconnect with what is missing.

"What my colleagues and I have found is that psychological threats, such as loneliness or boredom or a lack of perceived meaning in life, tend to elicit nostalgic reverie," he says. "This in turn helps people to feel more socially connected and more positive about themselves, and see life as more meaningful. So it's not just an escape into the past – it tends to help people deal with the present."

It's interesting to note that, until fairly recently, nostalgia was mostly viewed in a negative light. The term itself, from the Greek words 'nostos' (returning home) and 'algos' (pain), originally referred to an extreme form of homesickness. It was coined in 1688, and for the next 300 years was seen as maladaptive.

"It was considered a sign of weakness, a symptom of an underlying disorder such as depression, and an unhealthy preoccupation with the past that inhibits growth and progress, among other unflattering portrayals," says Batcho. "Moving towards a favourable picture of nostalgia has removed the stigma, freed people to share their nostalgic experiences and liberated artists to explore nostalgia creatively."

Since Batcho began her career, the research community has come to see nostalgia as a mostly healthy experience that is associated with a number of psychological benefits.

For instance, one 2012 study found that nostalgia can foster empathy and social connectedness. Another 2015 study suggested it can be a stabilising force, strengthening our sense of personal continuity despite all the changes we may have been through.

NOSTALGIA CAN BE A VALUABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCE DURING THIS TIME OF UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY. HOWEVER, IT MAY CREEP INTO HARMFUL TERRITORY IF A PERSON BECOMES TOO ISOLATED

"A sense of connectedness with one's past and future is very important," points out Emily Hong, a nostalgia researcher at the University of Southampton. "Think about yourself at four, or yourself at 60. If you find either of them to be strangers, you will deem your past to be meaningless, and your future uncertain. Nostalgia makes self-continuity possible by narrating your life events into a coherent story."

Perhaps it stands to reason, then, that social media feeds would be bursting with pictures of Jennifer Aniston's 'Rachel' haircut. And it makes sense that brands and marketers would seek to cash in on our wistfulness. Studies have found that, if a product is branded in a nostalgic way (say 'Grandma's Apple Pie' versus 'Delicious Apple Pie'), people are more willing to buy the product and more inclined to pay more for it.

Jenna and Jayna at Haystack Stories describe nostalgia as a way to take a mental break without having to turn your brain all the way off.

"It's more like you're just redirecting it to focus on something that you love, that is fixed, that won't do anything or become anything that you don't want it to become. That's why we have such mixed feelings about reboots," they say.

A more complicated question is whether we are losing something artistically by continuously feeding on the past. While all art takes inspiration from what has come before, any artwork worth its salt will add something new as well. Arthur Chu, in a 2015 *Salon* article, lay into our 'toxic remake culture', pointing out that 'every act of remaking is a tension between nostalgia

and innovation... and right now it seems like nostalgia has the upper hand'.

Kurt Andersen, in a 2012 *Vanity Fair* article, made the case that our technological progress is linked to cultural stasis, arguing: "People have a limited capacity to embrace flux and strangeness and dissatisfaction, and right now we're maxed out... we are clinging as never before to the familiar in matters of style and culture."

Eight years on, his words sound not just true but prescient.

All this said, we don't have to look far to find counterexamples – films, TV shows and art that allude to familiar tropes without regurgitating them wholesale. For every lazy film remake, there's a movie like *Black Panther* that takes its genre in a new direction. And for every re-run of *Friends*, there's a show like *BoJack Horseman*, that subverts our very obsession with 90s sitcoms.

More broadly, art has always needed to confront the legacy of the past and interrogate how that fits into the present. This is never more the case than at times of dislocation and change, when the very act of remembering may be seen as a key to renewal.

If we go back a century to the Modernist movement, we find Marcel Proust lost in nostalgic reverie in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. We also find TS Eliot 'mixing memory and desire' in *The Waste Land*, as he layers together scraps of allusion and shores up 'fragments... against my ruins'. Pertinently, both these works were published in 1922, just as the world was recovering from the double blow of World War I and the Spanish Flu.

With the world now in the grips of the coronavirus pandemic, it remains to be seen how this devastating experience will affect our appetite for the familiar. As van Tilburg puts it, it seems likely that

REMAKES AND MORE

MOVIE MAGIC

A Star Is Born was remade for fourth time in 2019 to critical and commercial success, but it's far from the most remade movie. *A Christmas Carol* has seen an incredible nine iterations over the past century.

MUSICAL MEMORY

Eleanor Rigby by the Beatles is said to be the most covered song in chart history, with no fewer than 131 versions having been recorded by the likes of Aretha Franklin, Joan Baez and more.

GAME THEORY

Such is the demand for the familiar that *Monopoly* is said to have been produced in more than 2,500 different versions over the years. People want their local town or well-known characters and Hasbro is happy to provide them.

we'll find solace in nostalgia. But at this stage, social scientists don't really have the data.

"We need some time to figure out if people indeed use nostalgia to deal with some of the loneliness or disconnectedness that comes with the outbreak," he says. "Obviously there are lots of challenges and many of these are related to social isolation. It might well be that nostalgia is one of the tools people use to feel more connected to each other."

Dr Batcho feels that nostalgia can be a valuable psychological resource during this time of uncertainty, social distancing and anxiety. However, she warns that it may creep into harmful territory if a person becomes too isolated.

"Social distancing due to the pandemic is an example of conditions of high risk for the development of maladaptive nostalgia in people who lack a social support network," she says. "Reaching out to others to share nostalgic memories, hopes, and fears is important to maintain the benefits of nostalgia during difficult circumstances."

Anecdotally, many of us are seeking out those benefits. According to *The New York Times*, shoppers are returning to the processed foods of their childhood to bring comfort during the pandemic. Instagram feeds are full of odes to 'what I already miss'. And the BBC has committed to broadcasting a 'summer of sport nostalgia', which will include the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games and matches from Euro '96.

It's a safe bet, then, that the nostalgia trend will continue for a while. But with time to reset and regroup, this is also a time in which ideas can form and take shape. It could be that something entirely new is about to rise from the ashes.



ROSL AT HOME

With the clubhouse closed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we have all been finding ways to stay connected and engaged with the outside world. For the young musicians, artists and writers we have the privilege of supporting, it is also their aim to stay creative. Take a look at some of the ways in which ROSL alumni are making sure their artistic output isn't diminished by the isolation we all find ourselves currently in



MUSIC AT HOME

Saxophonist Jonathan Radford, winner of the Gold Medal at the 2018 Annual Music Competition, performs his own arrangement of Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. He writes:

"I've always been enchanted by Barber's *Adagio for strings/Agnus Dei for choir* and have often thought how great it might sound for saxophones. The lockdown period has been an opportunity for me to try new ideas, one of which being making my first multitrack video. When ROSL Arts invited us to make short films for the ROSL at Home series I thought it was the perfect opportunity to combine these two ideas. The project took on an extra dimension when during a walk I noticed the way the sun was shining through some trees next to where I am spending lockdown in Suffolk, I was mesmerised by the beauty of the light and thought it would be great to include in my short film."

[WATCH HERE](#)

Pianist Ashley Fripp, winner of ROSL Keyboard Prize at the 2011 Annual Music Competition, plays Chopin's *Impromptu No 1 in A flat major, Op 29* from home. Of the video, Ashley said:

"I am so grateful to ROSL for this wonderful initiative to keep the creation of music and audience's engagement with it alive during these uncertain times. It is amazing to feel so supported by a family at the moment who are doing everything possible to keep the arts and


creativity alive using all the media possible. It is simply amazing! For my home recording, I wanted to play Chopin's first impromptu principally for its ineffably carefree nature. It bubbles with unshadowed joy in its outer sections and even the central section, in the minor key, has a radiance and charm to it. The piece simply offers such happiness and positivity at this time that, for four minutes, it is so easy to lose oneself and just adore life again."

[WATCH HERE](#)






 **Violinist Eleanor Corr**, winner of the ROSL Strings Prize at this year's Annual Music Competition plays *Joc* from *Baladă și joc for Two Violins* by Ligeti, quite a feat when in isolation! Watch her perform alongside herself and we look forward to her returning to compete for the Gold Medal at the AMC later in the year. [WATCH HERE](#)

 **Missing attending the Annual Music Competition?** Worry not, we're bringing the best of our musical alumni to you! Enjoy this specially curated Spotify playlist, which features prizewinners from the past decade of the AMC, from 2010 Gold Medal winner Jonathan McGovern *baritone*, all the way up to last year's winner of the Keyboard Prize Joseph Havlat *piano*.

[LISTEN HERE](#)

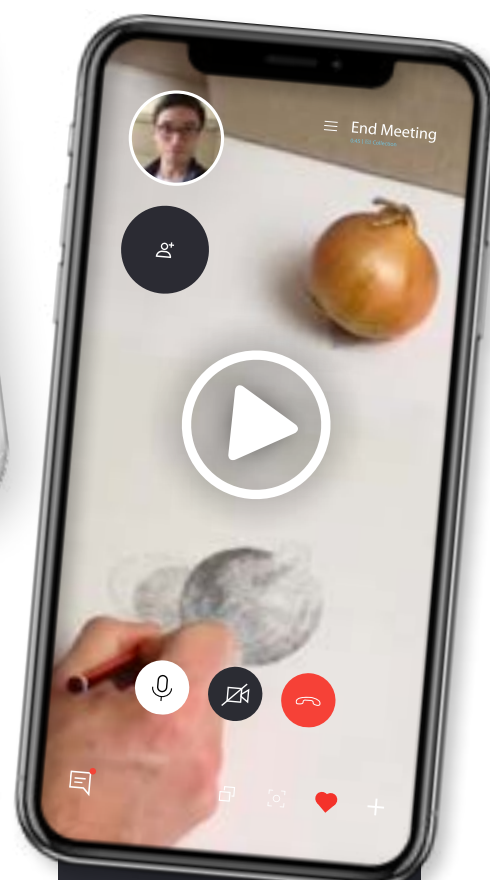
ART AT HOME

 **Looking to improve your drawing skills?** Then why not join artist Francis Martin, who will take you through the steps of how to draw a spherical object in our first Draw at Home video. All you need is a pencil, paper and a spherical household object! Francis will be back with more videos before joining us at the clubhouse later in the year for a class. He is a widely exhibited, award winning artist; experienced teacher; and graduate of The Royal Drawing School and Winchester School of Art.

[WATCH HERE](#)

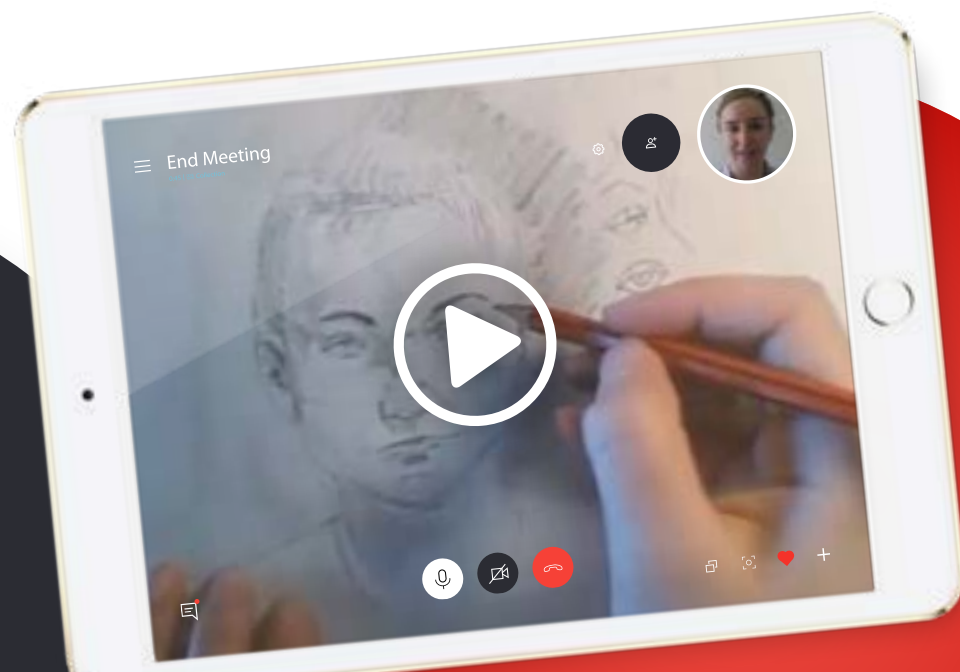
 **Learn the secrets of portraiture from Josie Deighton.** The Royal Drawing School graduate, artist and teacher, who you may remember from life drawing classes at the clubhouse last year, shares her knowledge of drawing portraits in this easy-to-follow video.

[WATCH HERE](#)



Watch and read more at www.rosl.org.uk/rosl-at-home

This project would not be possible without the generous support of members all over the world. Thank you to the generosity of donors such as Ian and Susan Pettman, who have allowed us to pay a small fee to the artists you see here for their work. If you would like to support the livelihoods of these young musicians and artists, please visit www.rosl.org.uk/supportus.



I N C
O G N
I T O

Why not take part in ROSL's biennial charity exhibition

INCOGNITO

Submit your own anonymous postcard artwork and help to raise money for the arts and education programmes ROSL supports around the Commonwealth and beyond

At the beginning of 2020, ROSL launched the call for entries to be displayed at our Incognito charity exhibition in December 2020. We are inviting artists to create and donate 'postcard' artworks to be exhibited anonymously, and in this callout we asked artists to send their postal information to receive a pack later this year. Considering many of us are currently in isolation, we would like to share the artwork requirements with the hope that this charity project can give a creative focus to some of our time indoors.

- Each artwork is to be on A6 card or paper (105 x 148 mm, 4.1 x 5.8 in)
- Please do not sign the front of the work, the sale is anonymous.

- On the reverse, please write your name and sign the work here, also include artwork title, media used and if you are able, please include any contact information (website, social media, email address) so the buyer may find out more about you.
- There is no limit to the number of artworks that can be submitted.

Please post submissions to ROSL ARTS, Royal Over-Seas League, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LR. If the work meets the above requirements the artwork will be offered for sale on a first-come, first-served basis for £50, with the artist's name only revealed after the artwork is purchased.

Taking place in December 2020, this is the third edition of our Incognito charity art exhibition and sale. Following the success of the 2016 and 2018 editions, which presented over 307 submissions and raised over £6,000, we are looking forward to 2020 and seeing what is created and donated. All the money raised from each sale will go to support the work of the ROSL Trust (Charity No.306095), focusing on our work encouraging and enabling arts education around the globe.

Sale Launch Tuesday 15 December, exhibition open until 2021.

For further information please contact Eilidh McCormick, ROSL Visual Arts Curator.
emccormick@rosl.org.uk
0207 408 0214 x213

NEWS & EVENTS

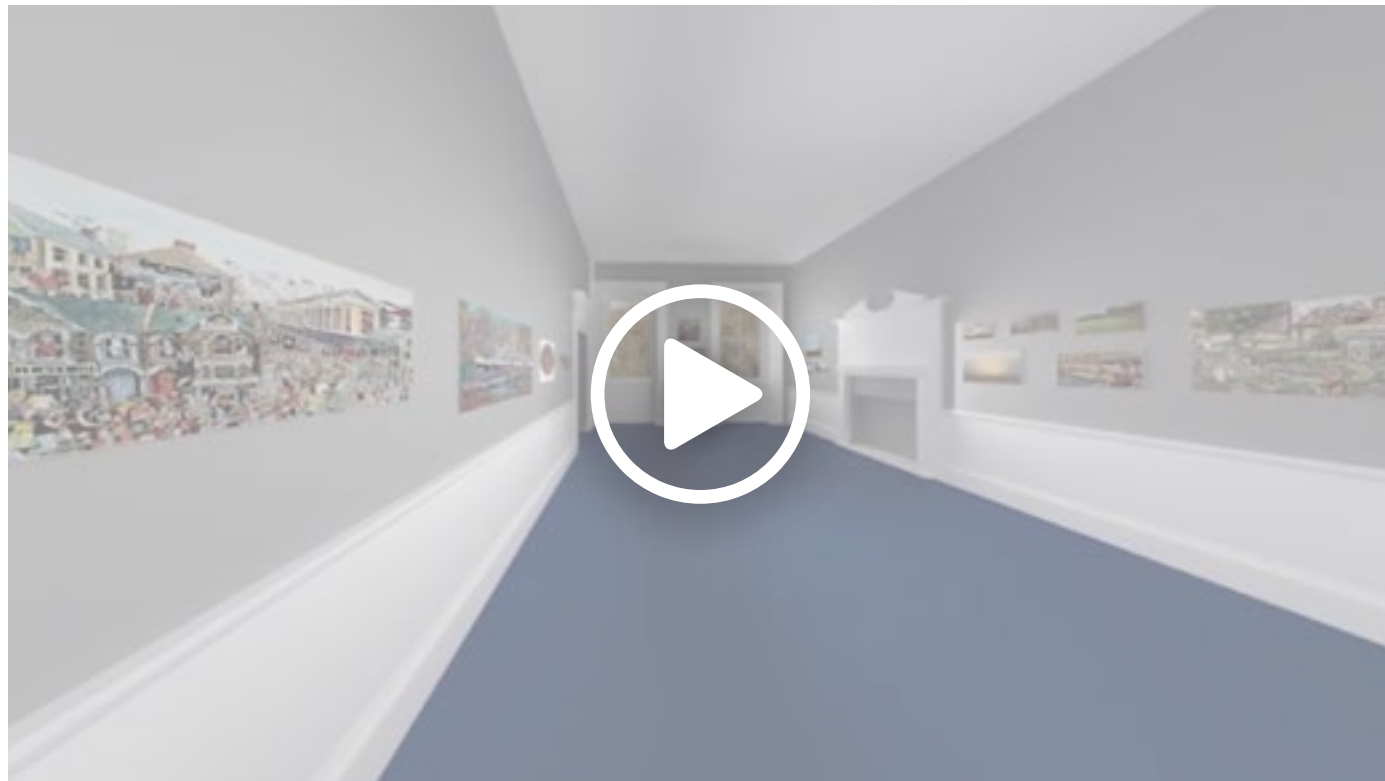
The latest from our clubhouse; branches; and art, music, and education projects

Corporate membership

COULD YOUR ORGANISATION
BENEFIT FROM MEMBERSHIP?

Contact membership@rosl.org.uk or
+44 (0)20 7408 0214 x214/216 for
details and an application pack

News & views
ROSL NEWS



Creativity goes virtual

Eilidh McCormick takes you through some of the best online spaces the art world has to offer, including a virtual Duke of York Bar

At the Royal Over-Seas League, shortly before COVID-19 caused widespread closures, we opened RBA Start Students with The Arts Society and the Royal Society of British Artists. Luckily, we were able to host the Private View and welcomed many of the young artists to Over-Seas House to celebrate the show and we have since shared the images of the work on our website and across social media. With the international lockdown that followed, ROSL, like many other creative organisations, has had to adapt to the digital to share art. Many large galleries have led the charge to the web and have given us an impressive show; The Rijks Museum in Amsterdam has launched interactive explorations of some of the work in their collection [VISIT HERE](#), Getty Images in California

is using the web to share their work [VISIT HERE](#), The National Gallery in Trafalgar Square has virtual tours so you can enjoy the work without the crowds [VISIT HERE](#), The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark presents videos about art on their website and YouTube channel [VISIT HERE](#), the Whitechapel Gallery in East London has taken to film, embracing their Artists' Film International initiative founded in 2008 by sharing these films as well as artist blogs on their website [VISIT HERE](#), while the Tate family of galleries has

“
Many large galleries have led the charge to the web and have given us an impressive show



adapted to online exhibition displays with collections, exhibitions and performative works available to view [VISIT HERE](#) and the Vand A have opened their collections online [VISIT HERE](#).

On the smaller scale and at commercial galleries; The ICA on the Mall in London has been sending out daily art emails as well as hosting lectures, essays and films on their website [VISIT HERE](#), Pace Gallery has embraced the digital with online events and exhibitions [VISIT HERE](#), Hauser and



Above: Annie Boisseau RBA Twilight, Osterley Park
Below left: Melissa Scott-Miller London community garden

Wirth are presenting an abundance of films as well as online exhibitions to explore [VISIT HERE](#) and finally, one of the most commendable contributions, Firstsite in the East of England is encouraging creativity with online artist activity packs from the world's leading artists [VISIT HERE](#).

Moving from art in galleries to art in the armchair, at ROSL, we are also taking creativity online with our upcoming exhibitions being planned for a digital exhibition space and sharing on our website. 'Women by Women' with Liberty Gallery will share the work of Marcelina Amelia, Rosie Emerson, Delphine Lebourgeois and Maria Rivans on our digital space. The exhibition will be accompanied by artist interviews, providing further insight into the artists and their work.

Already online, As They Were And Will Be Again in partnership with the RBA, depicts artwork in the clubhouse's Duke of York Bar with the theme of community and the outdoors. The works act as a reminder of what we look forward to enjoying again.

Lockdown and the appreciation of art at a distance has certainly caused a change in behaviour, but as more international galleries become available in our homes, it will be interesting to see what long-term effects this troubling time will have on the art world when things begin to return to normal.

Visual arts scholarships postponement

We look forward to working with The Art House in Wakefield again in 2021, who will host our international scholars

Our 2020 ROSL International Residency for visual art with The Art House in Wakefield has been postponed until 2021. With travel restrictions caused by COVID-19, the decision has been made to postpone by a year. All applications submitted will still be considered for the new dates and the application will remain open until 9 August 2020.

The residency offers two artists from Commonwealth of Former Commonwealth countries the opportunity to spend two months

in the UK with time both in London and Wakefield. At The Art House in Wakefield the artists will occupy a studio space and use of their fully accessible facilities, including a printmaking workshop and digital art suite. Fully funded, there will also be exhibition and networking opportunities for the two successful applicants.

Artists are invited to submit an application for the new residency dates, 6 September-29 October 2021



An introduction to new Director Jon Kudlick

"I am very pleased to have joined the team at ROSL. We are a unique organisation with the combination of our heritage and our mission, and I love the fact that we stand for international friendship, as well as supporting music and the arts. This, has of course, been an unexpected way to start the role, having to work remotely after only a few weeks at the clubhouse. I have been so impressed by the way my colleagues have dealt with the challenges posed by the virus, and have been doing their best to keep business as usual as much as possible. I have also been encouraged by the ongoing support of our membership, including those who have sent us donations and those helping us by encouraging their friends to join. We are looking ahead to when we are back in the clubhouse, and we are already making plans on events and other exciting activities. I look forward to meeting many of you in the near future."



Children's Oratorio update

As the final preparations were being made, we were excitedly awaiting the premiere of our recent co-commission, a Children's Oratorio in partnership with Buxton International Festival. This was due to be performed by 40 Griffin Schools Students in Coventry with the Multi-Storey Orchestra, before progressing to be performed as part of the Buxton International Festival. Sadly, due to the recent COVID-19 developments, all live arts events were thrown up in the air and both the scheduled premiere and Buxton International Festival have had to postpone the planned events. This amazing work, however, will live on and we are currently in talks to reschedule the premiere and the subsequent performances, which were due to feature ROSL alumni singers as well. So watch this space for more information on the future of

the Children's Oratorio.

This co-commission aims to give a voice to the hopes and fears of the young people who will inherit our world. Entitled Our Future in Your Hands, this new work was composed by Kate Whitely and written by Laura Attridge. The oratorio focuses on how over the last 20 years the global scientific community has been raising the alarm about climate change. International and government action has been stuck in red tape with endless debate. The process to make any change stalled. This inaction was too much for our young people who decided to go on a strike to protest the lack of action in the face of climate change.

Our Future In Your Hands uses the oratorio to give voice to the hopes and fears of the young people who will one day inherit our world.

LEAVING A LEGACY

"Heritage does not mean just preserving the past; it also means providing an inheritance for ROSL members of the future"

When you make your will, please consider leaving a gift to the Royal Over-Seas League. Gifts in members' wills are a vital source of income for us, enabling us to invest in the clubhouse and plan for the future with confidence.

The maintenance of the heritage buildings that make up our clubhouse is a vast undertaking. Our priority now is to ensure that we maintain the buildings at the standard our members rightly expect and, where funds allow, to improve them.

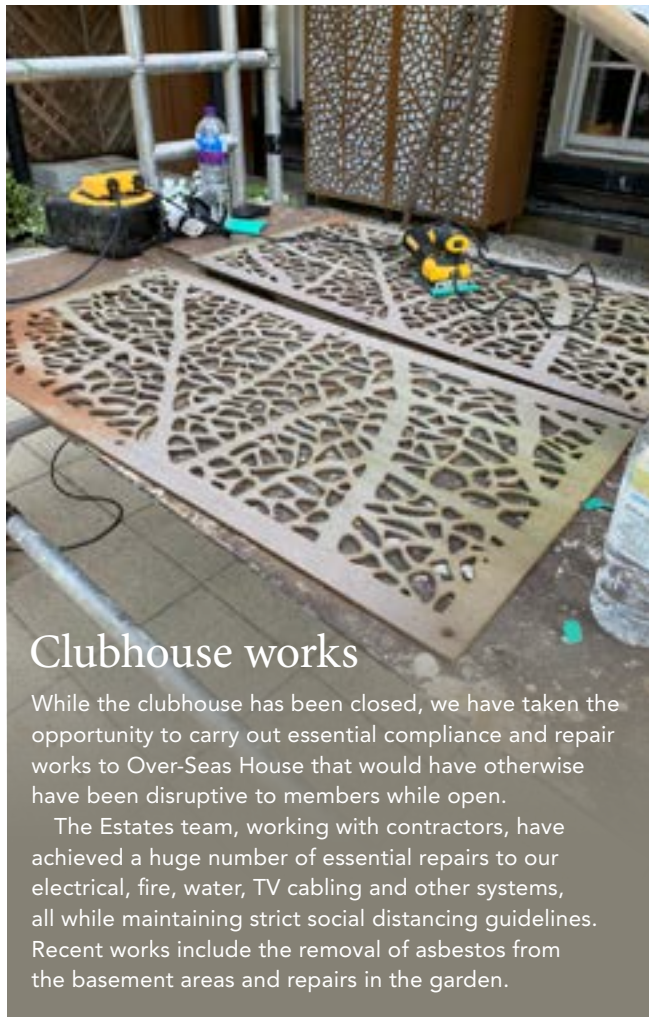
Unless you specify otherwise, all gifts in members' wills will be placed in our building fund and used to invest in our facilities. When drafting your will, please leave any gift to 'The Royal Over-Seas League'.

Everyone who leaves us a gift in their will and tells us that they have done so is invited to join the ROSL Fellowship. Fellows receive invitations to exclusive events at the clubhouse and updates on our work. For more information please see the section on our website dedicated to the ROSL Fellowship at: www.rosl.org.uk/supportus.

If you have left us a gift in your will, please email us at legacy@rosl.org.uk or telephone us at +44 (0)20 7408 0214, quoting your name and membership number to receive your invitation to the next Fellowship event.

THANK YOU for your support!

The generosity shown by members in donating to ROSL has been a huge boon to our financial health and staff morale. So far, members have raised in excess of £15,000. Thank you! Continue to support your home from home in the heart of Mayfair by donating to ROSL via our charitable arm, The ROSL Trust (ROSL Golden Jubilee Trust, Charity No.306095). Your generosity will give young people around the world an education; it will give talented young musicians, artists and writers the chance of a career, and it will safeguard the future of your beautiful Grade I-listed clubhouse. Visit www.rosl.org.uk/supportus today.



Clubhouse works

While the clubhouse has been closed, we have taken the opportunity to carry out essential compliance and repair works to Over-Seas House that would have otherwise have been disruptive to members while open. The Estates team, working with contractors, have achieved a huge number of essential repairs to our electrical, fire, water, TV cabling and other systems, all while maintaining strict social distancing guidelines. Recent works include the removal of asbestos from the basement areas and repairs in the garden.



Meet Will Duncan

Hear from the latest member of our Younger Member Committee and how he will help shape future activities

How did you first hear about ROSL?

My father was a member back in his youth – he actually had his 30th birthday in what is now the Wrench Room. When I moved to London, I thought I'd join too.

What do you enjoy about being a member?

Probably having somewhere with a bit of peace and quiet in London! It might be a bit cliché, but it's a real refuge. I also really enjoy the Younger Members' events and Interclub events.

What made you want to become a part of the Younger Member Committee?

I'm always keen to be part of something I'm passionate about. When I heard there was a committee position open, I therefore leapt at the chance.

What sort of events would you like to see younger members do more of?

I'd like to do a few more small-scale events. I think, with Interclub included, that we're really spoilt for choice when it comes to grander occasions. Maybe a chance to use the clubhouse on the weekends to watch sport or an opportunity to get into the countryside and escape the clutches of Zone 1. I'm sure the rest of the committee has plenty of experience in what works and what doesn't, though!

How are you staying connected with fellow members during lockdown?

Social media and messaging, like most young people!

Keep up to date with all the upcoming Younger Member events by joining their Facebook Group at www.facebook.com/groups/roslym/

Evelyn Wrench portrait restoration completed

We are pleased to announce that the restoration of the portrait of Sir Evelyn Wrench by Sir Oswald Birley had been completed, thanks to the generous donations of members. Once removed from the frame, it was found that much of the canvas had begun to disintegrate and we had scheduled these repairs just in time. With new canvas backing, paint and varnish retouches, as well as the addition of protective framing, the work is now preserved and will continue to capture a moment in ROSL's history. Once normal life resumes, the portrait of his wife, Hilda Henrietta, Lady Wrench by John A A Berrie is next for restoration.

If you are interested in supporting our work to restore the art in the club to its former glory and therefore securing it for many years to come, please email Eilidh McCormick on emccormick@roslarts.org.uk to find out more



AMC update

Only partially completed before lockdown, find out the plans for rounding off this year's competition

The Annual Music Competition is always an eventful time in our calendar, and this year proved to be no exception as we progressed through February and March. Our four solo Gold Medal finalists were selected over an exciting four weeks, which saw such stiff competition that the panel decided they had to put through five soloists into three out of the four Section Finals. In the end, flautist Sirius Chau, soprano Siân Dicker, violinist Eleanor Corr and pianist Dominic Doutney were selected as the overall Section Final winners. As you will be aware, as 2020 progressed so did the COVID-19 pandemic and we were forced to curtail the competition, unable to complete the final week. We did however manage to hold the String Ensemble Section Final, where the Fitzroy Piano Quartet impressed the panel with a passionate performance of the *Bridge Phantasy in F# minor* and the rousing finale of the Schumann *Piano Quartet in E flat major*. Sadly, the last two finals, Mixed Ensembles

and Overseas were unable to go ahead due to some of the travel restrictions that had begun to fall into place and the number of musicians and members of the panel who were already starting to social distance due to symptoms and guidance. The Southbank Centre has also now been forced to cancel our Gold Medal, which was due to take place in early June, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst it was a sad decision to make, it was definitely the right one. We will now have the chance to reschedule the last of the competition Section Finals and then the Gold Medal, and we are aiming to schedule them as soon as we are able to. We will of course keep you up to date with this, keep your eyes on the website for more information. If you missed out on attending this year's competition or just want to relive some of the fantastic performances, visit our Royal Over-Seas League YouTube channel to watch the winning performances from this year's competition.

Sir David Brewer portrait completion

As is tradition with all past ROSL Chairmen, ROSL has commissioned a portrait of Sir David Brewer to remember all that he did for the organisation during his tenure up until his retirement on 9 May 2019. Sir David selected the artist Jonathan Sundaram to paint his portrait. Born 14 February 1995 in Germany, Sundaram is a self taught artist currently based in the UK. He predominantly paints portraiture in a contemporary, representative manner; attempting to update what is considered a traditional subject matter, to make it more relevant to audiences of today. Thus far he has showcased some of his work via the Royal Society of Portrait painters.



Right: Wessex Branch meeting in January with Denise Kennedy and Central Council's Dr Monica Seeley. Far right: Emily Sun, Laurence Mattheson and Jonathan Radford perform for Victoria Branch members earlier in the year



ROSL around the world

With much of the world hunkered down, branch activity has dwindled to a trickle. Read on for messages of support from branch representatives, as well as thank yous from students of Selwyn College, Solomon Islands, making use of their ROSL-funded computer lab

Sussex Branch

DAVID KAY
Chairman, Sussex Branch

Our early summer gatherings have of course been cancelled but it is possible that we will be able to hold our regular lunches on 7 October and 2 December, as usual at the Windsor Hotel, Worthing, so do keep these dates in your diary. If you are not on our mailing list and would like to join us do get in touch - see the Contact Details for our email address. Because of data protection laws we are not able to mail members in Sussex directly unless they have contacted us first, so this is an opportunity to get in touch and then we can keep you informed of our events and plans to extend across both East and west Sussex. We hope

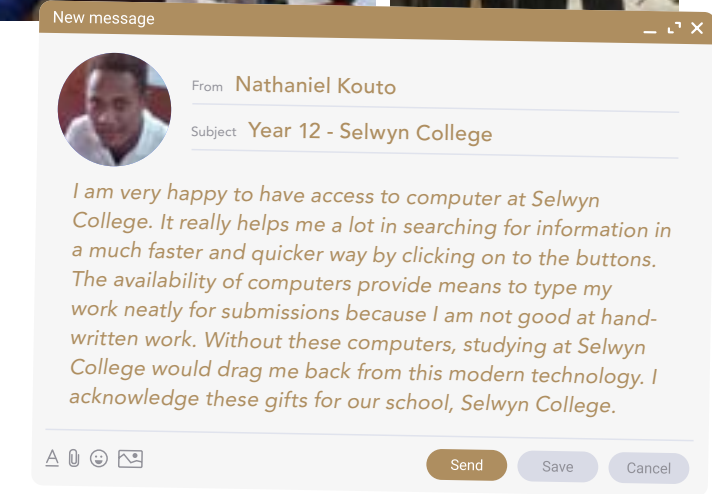
you are all keeping well and extend our best wishes.

London Group

MAUREEN HOWLEY
Vice Chairman, London Group

On 16 March we were preparing to send out to our members of the London Group the latest Programme of Events covering talks and visits from April to July this year and our Annual General Meeting in April but unfortunately we had to cancel this when it was decided to close the clubhouse on 23 March.

So I hope that you and your families are well and managing to cope with the current crisis. There are a number of events shown on the ROSL website that you can watch and enjoy and keep in



touch with other members. We had planned to have two interesting talks on the subjects of 'Bees in the City' and 'Florence Nightingale', very appropriate now, and we are sure that our speakers will be happy to come and talk to us at some other time. And, of course, we had to cancel four proposed visits but hopefully these can be included in a future programme. We look forward to being in touch again when the future looks brighter. Take care!

New Zealand Branches

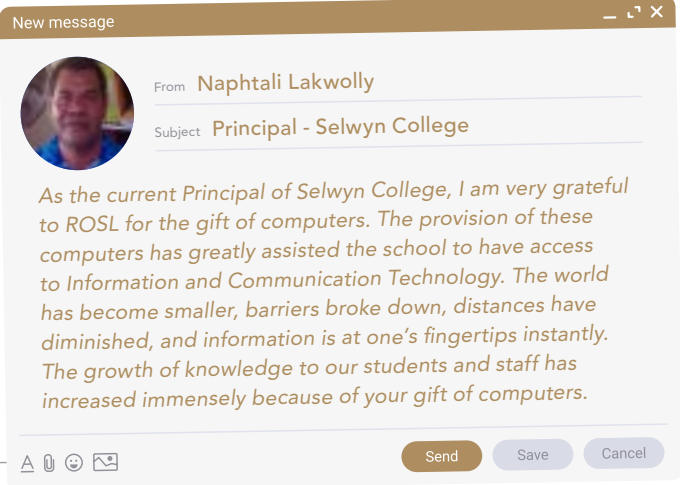
LYN MILNE
Director, ROSL NZ

My lockdown has been spent to date in Wanaka enjoying the well-known spectacle of autumn colours around the lakeside. Finding the time to read lengthy novels, experiment in the kitchen, chat to previously unknown neighbours, listen to the regular NZSO Engage concerts and be entranced by the Royal NZ Ballet Company's splendid backlog of productions fills my day like many

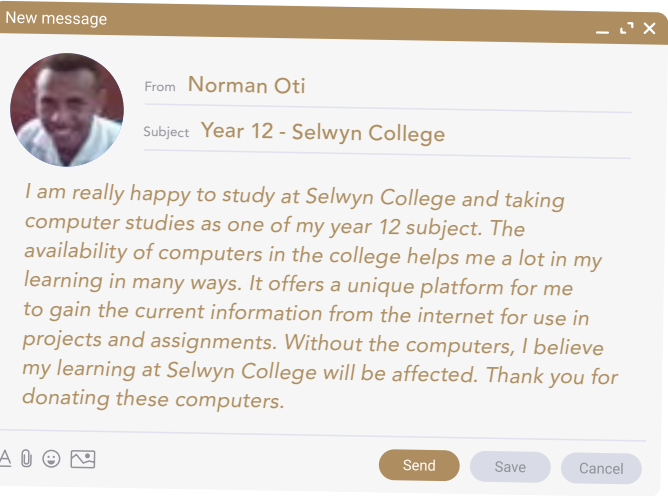
other New Zealanders. At over 70 and classed as "elderly", our shopping is delivered to the door. Exercise is permitted in our local region at Level 3 but Level 2 is looming. With no international flights in or out of NZ other than repatriation, it is hoped the easing of lockdown will offer the opportunity to discover more of our own beautiful country. My thoughts and warm wishes to all ROSL members and their families at this strange surreal time. Kia kaha. The Southland, Oamaru and Christchurch Branch Committees are in regular contact with their members during the restrictive Level 3 lockdown period. These calls have proved invaluable and established a stronger link between its members. Daily local walks have an added diversion from admiring the magnificent autumnal colours to a watchful eye for the ever-changing displays of teddy bears adorning street facing windows! The creativity of some displays has been truly amazing and many folk are so pleased to



have their endeavours admired, not only by children but also by some "young at heart" oldies. On Sunday 8 March, a Commonwealth Day Service was held at the Transitional Cathedral in Christchurch. Dean Lawrence Kimberley presided over a most well-thought-out and relevant service at the packed Cathedral. Bunting representing all 53 Commonwealth flags adorned the walls and the main Commonwealth Flag was presented to the Dean and placed on the Altar. We were welcomed by a "haka" performed from pupils from Cathedral Grammar School, followed by some beautifully sung hymns from various local choirs and naturally the very special Cathedral Choir. The Queen's Message, "Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming", was read most



eloquently by Committee Member, Lorraine Logan. The address was given by Jake Bailey, a young man, who delivered a most moving oration about "Resilience". Due to a horrific experience with cancer when Head Boy of Christchurch Boys' High School, Jake is held in high esteem throughout New Zealand and to quote the Dean's words "is a beacon of hope to many others and beyond". This was a Service of connectivity not only honouring the Commonwealth, but also of the youth and the elderly respecting each other. Our General Meeting following Commonwealth Day was held on 11 March. In order to commemorate this special day we placed Union Jack Flags on tables and served morning tea with appropriate British serviettes. Ruth Harwood, our Patron, read the Queen's Message. Our

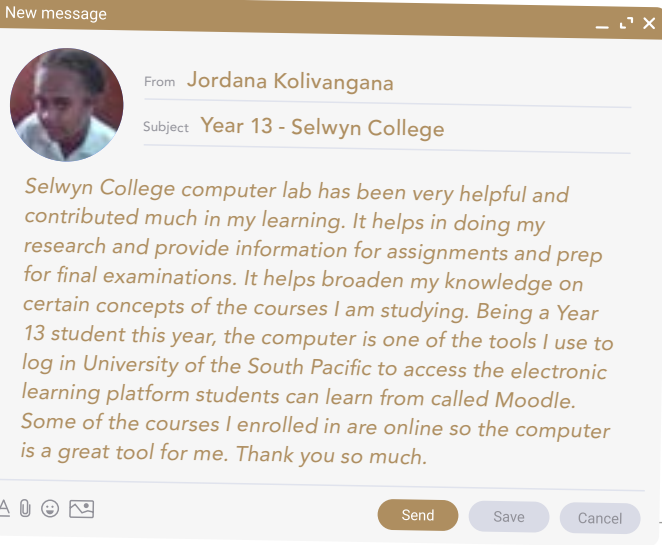


speaker, Philip Aldridge, ONZM, spoke on the heritage buildings in Christchurch known as The Arts Centre. Formerly the old University of Canterbury, this site now home to many artistic enterprises, including Rutherford's Den, a boutique cinema and the University of Canterbury's Music Centre, is being gradually restored to its former glory of being the largest heritage site existing in Christchurch after the disastrous earthquakes in 2011.

Victoria Branch

KEIR WATT
Branch Secretary, Victoria

Back in summer, before Victorian branch members enjoyed a recital featuring past ROSL Annual Music Competition Gold Medal winners Emily Sun *violin* (2016) and Jonathon Radford *saxophone* (2018), and joined by Laurence Matheson. Held in the intimate surrounds of Di and Lino Bresciani's home, the photo shows Emily, Jonathan and Matthew, following their wonderful performance. The Victoria Branch, pivotal in arranging the building of a computer lab at Selwyn College in the Soloman Islands, has received an update from the Principal and students at the college, who are now making full use of their computer lab, as can be read around this page.



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Home for now, hope for the future

Although the clubhouse is temporarily closed, ROSL's support for far-flung communities in the Commonwealth continues through its Education Projects. As many ROSL bursary recipients return to their villages during lockdown, Margaret Adrian-Vallance looks at how Project partners, monitors and students are faring, as well as a new project in Bangladesh

John K Adam told Overseas in a previous edition that he supported these projects because they 'made him feel closer to the Commonwealth'. Other generous members and branches have done so because they believe in the power of education or help for the vulnerable. But how do things stand at these difficult times?

With lockdown, many students like ROSL bursary recipient Antony Wareru in Kenya, are back at home. Having obtained A grades in his recent BA exams in Nairobi, Antony emails to say he is now in Gilgil helping his family plant vegetables and trees.

In Antony's case, in-country pastoral care and monitoring is provided by ROSL's partner organisation, the Langalanga Education Trust. Chairman Geoffrey Nield says, "The first few cases of COVID-19 were reported in Kenya in mid-March and a decision was made to suspend learning in all educational institutions on 15 March.

"We provided a small additional allowance for scholars to enable them to pack up their belongings and pay the costs of transferring them home or into storage. We also confirmed a commitment to meet their full allowance until the end of May.

"This is under review for June and beyond as most scholars do not any longer pay accommodation fees whilst schools and universities are closed. We are in touch regularly with the scholar leadership team and are told that all are safe and well."

In Namibia, on the other hand, there was a mid-April re-opening date for schools and universities. With its population of under three million and closed borders, there have been 16 confirmed cases, three recoveries and no deaths at the time of writing.

Until recently, potential COVID-19 samples had to be sent to South Africa for testing and a lock down on schools was imposed for a month starting 14 March. The bursary alumni from the remote areas of Tsumkwe,



Women at Sreepur Village are given training into how to properly protect themselves and others from COVID-19

Gobabis and Mokaleng areas that I have been in touch with are well and preparing for schools to reopen. Some schools are also feeding centres and far from a hospital so we all hope the virus does not reach these isolated places.

At the University in Windhoek, Rachel Shanyanana from the Management Team at Khomasdal Campus, where

ROSL supports students studying education, writes, 'We are so grateful for ROSL's caring hearts and constant support. The campus is busy finalising the 2019 ROSL Bursary Recipients Annual Report for you and targeting to submit it by mid-April as the University is on lockdown from 30 March to 16 April. Yours with grateful heart'.



Across the border, all of Botswana's Parliamentarians, including President Masisi are in quarantine for 14 days after a health worker, who was screening them for the virus, herself tested positive on 9 April. ROSL members and supporters are keeping in touch via Facebook and emails. One writes, 'I cannot believe that ROSL has temporarily closed its doors. I hope all this ends soon and

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ROSL bursary recipient Antony Wareru in Kenya is back at home. Having obtained A grades in his recent BA exams, he is now in Gilgil helping his family

we can meet up again in the ROSL bar, drink red wine and put the world to rights!" A safari expert who managed to leave Ethiopia for Australia just before lockdown, laments the difficulties now facing the tourist lodges in Africa.

In India, the PestalozziWorld Village at Dehradun has also taken safeguarding measures. Catherine Breen says, "With schools in many countries closing, we took the decision to send students back home until they reopen. Grades 10 and 12 at the Village are staying behind as their Board exams are still taking place. Staff are taking all safety precautions and following all measures to ensure their health and safety during this time. I am sure Cheme, the Village Director will be happy to send you updates." We will follow up on this when exams are over.

With Zoom and other ROSL video conferencing facilities now on stream, it may emerge that we can all get closer to project centres like this in the future.

In this connection, we were able to contact the ROSL-funded computer lab at Selwyn College in the Solomon Islands, where students have been making the most of their new equipment to aid their studies. Read thank yous from students and the principal over the college on pages 38 and 39, to see what a difference ROSL funding can make thanks to your generous donations.

Back in the UK, the ROSL Golden Jubilee Trust (GJT) had its first meeting of the year on 2 April by combined video/telephone conferencing. Amongst many agenda items, the Trustees agreed support for the Sreepur Village project in Bangladesh, a country facing many challenges of its own even before the advent of COVID-19.

The village, around 50km north of Dhakar, provides a safe haven for 150 impoverished single mothers and children where they can live for three years whilst learning crucial livelihood skills so they can provide for themselves in the longer term. Further updates will be in the next Overseas and newsletters.

Other items discussed at the ROSL Trust meeting included the development of literature and videos about the work of the Trust which covers its work in the three areas of heritage, education and the arts; updated education funding applications and contracts with partner organisations and memoranda of understanding; the possibility of a new logo and new ROSL Trust flag; plans for reconfiguring the Simon Ward Music Centre in Kenya for more general education purposes; how to celebrate the ROSL Trust's 60th anniversary this year, and much else.

In the meantime, please take care, stay safe and keep in touch.