

BRIGHTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL – BRIGHTON, UNITED KINGDOM

Key words: place | by habit | by choice | by surprise | partnership | data | community rooted | place | organizational change

Synthetic data sheet

Full name	Brighton Early Music Festival
Address	Ham Cottage, Albourne Road, Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, UNITED KINGDOM
Legal status	Company limited by guarantee / Registered charity
Year of establishment	2002
Website	http://www.bremf.org.uk/
Social Media	Facebook, Twitter
Area of activities	Music: pre-classical and classical music and the performing arts
Kind of activities	Festival, educational activities throughout the year
Total amount of budget	205.000 £
Source of funding	30% public funding (Arts Council and Brighton & Hove City Council), 36% private funding (Trusts & foundations and individual donors) and 34% ticket sales
Number of annual attendances	4.000 people
Number of employees	4 part time employees + 80 volunteers

Data refer to 2015

Background information

Brighton Early Music Festival (BREM³) was co-founded by artistic directors Clare Norburn and Deborah Roberts as a pilot project in 2002 in Brighton, East Sussex.

To date it's the largest early music festival (with a Brighton twist) in the South of England.

The main activity of the charity is the festival, which takes place in late October and early November.

The charity objectives are:

³ The end of year reports from 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 are available on the website <http://www.bremf.org.uk/docs/BREM%20accounts%20to%20Jan2015.pdf>

Catalogue – Case studies – Study on audience development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

- To encourage, advance, develop and maintain public education in appreciation of and involvement in pre-classical and classical music and the performing arts, by promoting periodically a series of public concerts, dramatic performances, exhibitions and other cultural events.
- To promote and assist in the advancement of public and professional education by the provision of workshops, lectures and educational events for people of all ages.

BREMF continued the successes of the previous years in fulfilling the objectives of the charity: 26 festival events in 10 venues across Brighton, attended approximately by 4,000 people, workshops, family concerts, 3 community choirs, activities for young singers, working with homeless people, etc..

Throughout the year it carries out educational activities with schools, young artists and the community.

Brighton is a city with a vibrant cultural offering and audiences are not afraid of innovation and trying something new.

Currently the organizational structure, governance and management is:

- Board of Trustees
- Management committee
- Artistic directors
- Freelance Festival Producer
- Freelance Concerts manager
- Volunteers

A group of the charity's volunteers administer the operations alongside the 2 appointed freelance Artistic directors, 1 freelance Festival producer and 1 Concert manager. This group together with the other volunteers constitutes the Management Committee that advises on detailed planning and policy issues.

The festival benefits **from an extraordinary level of committed support from around 80 volunteers**, acting under the guidance of the management committee. These volunteers are mostly local people from all ages, many of them skilled amateur musicians, who bring to the organization a wide range of abilities.

The programme is both art and audience led. Arguably early music can be called *niche* music. Therefore alongside events specifically for early music they organize events that combine music with theatre, dance or film to attract a broader audience. The Festival has always sought to encourage new audiences (which is one of the priority of the Arts council), and in 2014 wanted to explore the barriers around young people attending

classical events. To target young audiences they established a User Group for 16-30 years olds, starting with 6 members, and growing to 13 as the year progressed. They identified ticket prices as one key area that was stopping people attending and so introduced Prom tickets which are £5 and available for nearly all events.

BREMF events take place in a variety of venues across Brighton and Hove often up to 15 different venues, such as pubs, churches, etc.

What do they want? Goals and achievements

Their AD strategy aims at broadening audiences, increasing numbers and diversifying audience experience:

New audiences are vital for the growth and development of our organisation.

1. Diversifying audiences:

- A range of appealing and distinctive events, which challenge stereotypes about what, a classical concert can be – for example using cabaret format with atmospheric lighting *"We challenge the idea of the audience sitting quietly in a row.* (audience by choice/(audience by habit);
- collaborating with different art forms such as theatre and dance (For example, in 2015 BREMF produced an Opera appealing to an audience of Opera goers but not necessarily of early music audience. As well as experimental collaboration with different art forms for example – aerial dancers.) (audience by habit);
- taking events to new and unexpected spaces eg. pubs and clubs - Taking early music performers into existing open mic nights in Brighton pubs (audience by surprise);
- working with their 16-30 User Group (audience members and young volunteers) to target younger audiences (Brighton has a large student population) (audience by choice). Ideas suggested by this group include their very successful £5 Prom tickets;

Cost was a real problem for younger people, they found concerts very expensive." *"We were happy that we reach 200 in the first year, with a different type of demographic from our existing audience: much younger and more likely to decide at the last minute".*

- strengthening their digital offering on social media working with their Ambassador Group and making promotional films (a new film for 2016 is being produced with the 16-30 User Group) (audience by choice/ audience by surprise).
- 2. Widening the audiences** reaching out to audiences who are already attending cultural events but don't regularly attend Brighton Early Music Festival. The BREMF Ambassadors AD group are key to this objective – they tap into their own networks to spread the word about the festival through word of mouth marketing. Initiatives spread by the BREMF Ambassadors led in increased penetration among family audiences, a preview article on Gscene and LGBT magazine; and scheme members bringing groups to the event (audience by habit).

Catalogue – Case studies – Study on audience development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

Attracting new audiences brings also a fresh look, although people from Brighton are willing to take a risk.

Our AD strategy is based on increasing the reach among our younger audiences, spreading the word of mouth through the group ambassadors and changing the format of the events making sure that are different.

Throughout their work to attract new audiences they have been mindful of the need not to alienate their current audience (deepening and diversifying audience experience).

Ticket sales in 2015 showed a 10% increase on 2014 and data collected via audience surveys indicates that this is due mainly by new attenders. This could have happened for many reasons, however *taking a more active AD strategy was one of those reasons.*

Their AD strategy tries to balance their financial, artistic and social goals. *We can't market only to our existing audiences, otherwise we would have shrinking audience numbers, [since there are quite old] but because we want to put up exciting projects and we need the budget we look at increase number of audiences and different audiences.*

Their future AD challenge is to **keep being relevant to their new audience** and to increase the number of ticket sales over to 4,000.

At this stage the festival doesn't have a specific strategy for reaching ethnic communities. This has not been a priority because there are no large ethnic communities who aren't culturally integrated in the central Brighton area.

How do they do it? Making it happen

Their AD strategy is key to their development as an organization.

The audience-centric approach is embedded in their mission and values.

The Festival Producer Cathy Boyes, (a new role created in 2012) leads on AD work and this is a growing part of her responsibilities, overseen by Co-artistic Director Clare Norburn who has a strong background in AD and traditional marketing. Whereas the other director is very involved in building the music community in Brighton and she knows the barriers of accessing music.

Communicate your vision, we have a lot of volunteers and we talk to them a lot! Communicate with all our stakeholders." *"It informs our programme as well as our marketing.*

What is interesting is that everybody in BREMF is focused on the audience goals outlined above. From the artistic directors to the volunteers they are keen to reach out to new audiences. The view of the artistic directors trickles down to the whole the organization.

"Keep an open mind – open to new ideas and listen to everyone who is involved. Even though your immediate reaction is all this will not work!

The establishment of their two AD groups (the 16-30 User Group in 2014 and the BREMF Ambassadors in 2015) has enabled them to embed this work fully into their organizational structure. For example for the club night events – concert in a pub, they have been working with their AD groups to see how they could market them more effectively.

Both of these groups are vital to their AD and help them to work on challenging prejudices around what the Festival might be – eg. Too expensive, too niche; too classical; too formal.

They also have an AD and marketing plan that sets out the key objectives and steps in their AD strategy (attached to this report).

Evaluation and the use of data and insights is embedded in their way of working. They use the results to support their decision making in AD strategies.

Listen to new ideas and equally listen to people why things don't work and what that is.

They carry out evaluation activities with the 2 AD groups.

Each year They circulate questionnaires at their events and also an online questionnaire, aiming at understanding how many attenders, if are they regular attender or this is their first event, where they are from, reasons for attending, etc.

Every 3 years on a cycle, they have an external company that carries out a more formal evaluation.

For their new website they use Google analytics to improve the user experience. Use social media to gain feedback from the audience.

Interview: Cathy Boyes - Festival Producer

Interviewer: Antonia Silvaggi – MeltingPro (Italy)