

Dramatic shake-up for town orchestra

THE Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra which has provided professional concerts for the town for more than 50 years, is to undergo a dramatic shake-up.

For the first time since it was established as the municipal provider of classical music under Crossley Clitheroe in 1944, the philharmonic is to free itself from the constraints of a formal standardised concert series and stretch its wings.

The problems facing the orchestra and the solutions being planned are similar to those facing professional music all over the UK.

Traditional concert venues like the Civic Hall, which was designed specifically as the orchestra's home in the 1960s, are out of date, too big, expensive and inflexible.

Traditional audiences are getting older, smaller and less and less musically adventurous. Guildford Borough Council, which funds and promotes the orchestra, has been getting increasingly concerned at the exclusive and elitist market.

The change from Conservative to Liberal Democrat control, with councillors arguing for a much wider range of musical events, has challenged the orchestra's cherished position under the council's wing.

With the appointment of Nicola Goold as the enthusiastic new orchestra manager the clamour for change has been translated into an action plan

to take it into the new century.

Miss Goold has challenged the whole meaning of philharmonic. She argues that it should mean anything from a large symphony orchestra of 75 musicians to a single percussionist: no combination or ensemble is ruled out.

She wants children involved in live performances, workshops, competitions, and music taken into hospitals and day centres.

Concerts will no longer be limited to Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon slots and a wide flexible range of ticket offers will be available, with better prices and incentives.

Miss Goold plans to use all sorts of different venues from Holy Trinity Church to the Castle Grounds, Hatchlands and Spectrum. The Electric Theatre will also provide an important new concert hall. And programmes will be expanded to suit a wide range of musical taste. Pop classics, family concerts, Viennese nights, themed concerts, mini proms, jazz, cabaret, late night soloists, music and theatre, whatever – all can be accommodated by the versatile musicians who make up the orchestra.

Miss Goold is strengthening ties with the Guildford business community and other borough arts organisations and wants the orchestra to play a key part of the borough's PR profile.

"We have got to get the

audience excited again about classical music in the broadest sense," she said. The shake-up will become noticeable from next summer, at the end of the current season of concerts.

Art of the book cover

THE surreal imagination of leading British book illustrator Justin Todd is celebrated in an exhibition of some of his best-known work from the 1970s and 80s, which continues until December 21 at the James Hockey Gallery, Surrey Institute of Art & Design, Farnham.

A graduate of London's Royal College of Art illustration course, Todd designed the book covers for most paperback publishers in the 1970s, then moved into children's book illustration, where his distinctive blend of softly magical with super realism was used to best effect in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books.

Keenly observed, meticulously detailed and smoothly finished, Todd's illustrations have a polished aloofness that lends the most bizarre images immediate authority.

He tackled a dizzy variety of titles from science and philosophy to the paranormal and fairy tales but, as the original paintings prove, he never failed to come up with an unexpected, arresting twist to grab the attention.

Beatrice Phillpotts