

BRISTOL CONCERT ORCHESTRA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ashton Park School
at 8:48 pm on Monday 8 October 2012

Present: the Conductor, the Officers and c.35 members of the Orchestra

Apologies were received from Sam Elson, Jane Hickson, Andrew Rees, Siân Rees, Gill Richards and Sam Roome.

1/12 Minutes of AGM on 10 October 2011

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
(Prop. Andrew Stephen; Sec. Bob Pinniger; carried unanimously).

2/12 Matters Arising from Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

3/12 Conductor's Report

Wendy Lewis expressed many thanks to Stefan Hofkes for continuing to motivate, inspire and challenge us in what she thought was another great year of music making. The bar is being lifted and she hopes that Stefan feels that we are rising to the challenges and goals set. It might be difficult to find a challenge to top Daphnis and Chloé though! On behalf of the committee she thanked Stefan for all the time, energy and enthusiasm he puts into working with us. She then called on him to give his report.

"Let's see: a very good year, with three very strong main concerts. Several highlights: Prokofiev Cinderella, Shostakovich 10 (glad the roof stayed on!) and Ravel Daphnis et Chloé Suite, all major works, very well played, and not just bluffing through. Very sensitive and insightful playing, with a lot of notes to deal with. Thanks to everyone for this.

Swan Lake was an absolute joy, and a great team builder as well. The Sinfonietta concert was possibly the strongest yet.

People have taken more responsibility for playing; it makes a real difference.

A few improvement thoughts:

- Request you all write in rehearsal pointers, instructions, otherwise we still need to repeat too much. It can get very frustrating saying the same thing five or six times!
- Practise early as always, as it helps with rehearsals, and take responsibility for your playing, but also attendance – more critical in ww and brass.
- Know your stuff, and consider whether or not you are able to commit to a first position if your work commitment is crazy or you don't have enough practise time for any other reason. Step down if you can't commit.

Also we do perform 3 main concerts plus one or two extra concerts; these are very much part of the BCO scene. We realise that not everyone can do every date, but dismissing out of hand any extra concerts over and above the normal three is doubtful, again especially for ww and brass players, as you have individual parts. If you are not able to play, help find a dep – it's only reasonable.

Looking forward to the season; well done for last season!"

4/12 Chairman's Report

Wendy Lewis started her report introducing the members of the committee. She then gave her report (copied here from her prepared statement):

“This report is mostly a resumé of the work the committee have been doing during the past season.

The committee are the trustees of the orchestra and are responsible for its management. Also, as most of you know, BCO is a charity and as such we have to make sure that we meet with our charitable aims. We are accountable to the Charity Commission in this respect and are mandated to produce an Annual Return that includes an Annual report and the Accounts.

As you might imagine organising 5 or 6 concerts a year entails a lot of work and, as always, over the past year the committee have put in a huge amount of effort making sure that things happen and run smoothly. On your behalf, I would like to thank all of the committee very much for all their hard work. In particular a lot of extra work was put in by some of the committee for the children's concert in April. I would also like to give many thanks to those members of the orchestra who, although not on the committee, give us such a lot of help, such as the string section leaders, the assistant librarians and those who transport the timsps to and from concerts.

To facilitate the running of the orchestra we held three committee meetings during the year and discussed many things by email in between meetings. The wonders of modern technology make communication much easier! The committee are very grateful for the all work Stefan puts in for us and for the support and guidance given throughout the year.

The committee work involves making sure things are running smoothly for the current season and planning for the next (and future) seasons.

In February the committee planned the three main programmes for current season. These are based on suggestions made by BCO members. If you don't already know what we chose, you can find the details on the BCO website (of which, more later). Obviously we can't choose to play all the suggestions on the list. If we didn't pick yours for this season, please suggest it again for next year if you'd like to. The list will be opening online on our web site at half term. There will also be a paper list at rehearsals for you to make suggestions.

In choosing our programmes for the present season, we had to bear in mind:

1. Our financial responsibilities to make the books balance
2. Our responsibility to our members to offer sufficient challenge, potential for musical development and enjoyment in making music together
3. Our charitable obligations namely (to quote the constitution) “to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of music in all its aspects”

Of course only time will tell how successful we have been in these respects but the outcomes will help inform our future programme choices. However, it's worth remembering that we plan our programmes in February, well before we have the financial results of the current season. So the effects of our decisions won't be seen until the following season.

As well as the three 'end' of term concerts during the current season, BCO is playing in Tewkesbury Abbey in June 2013 with the South Cotswold Choral Group. We will also be putting on a children's concert, probably in April, and a BCO Sinfonietta concert. Phil has been involved in a lot of work regarding the Tewkesbury concert, in particular, and I'd like to thank him for this. I would also just like to emphasise that the Tewkesbury and children's concert are considered to be as much a part of the BCO calendar as our 'end' of term concerts.

Following discussion at our May meeting, the committee decided to increase ticket prices for our St George's concerts.

One of our members suggested that we might apply to the Delius Society for a grant; grants are available to societies putting on live performances of the works of Delius. Consequently an application was submitted – thanks to Andrew Coombs for drafting this – and I am very pleased to say that we are to be awarded a grant of £750, which will be paid during next summer term, when we will be playing Delius's *Légende* and *Fantastic Dance*.

After the subject was raised at last year's AGM, we revisited the idea of seeking sponsorship for BCO. The matter was discussed at our February meeting but the committee decided not to proceed with it.

Last autumn the committee decided to invite various long-standing BCO members who have now left the orchestra to become Honorary Life Members. This is partly as a mark of respect and thanks for loyal support over the years and partly because we would like to keep in touch with players who we enjoyed playing alongside and whose company we miss on Monday evenings. All those approached were pleased to accept and it was clear from some of the responses I had that it meant a great deal to them to be offered HLM.

During 2011-12 the charity collections at our concerts raised:

- Dec 2011 Dr Jenner's House £340
- Mar 2012 Kampala Music School £310
- Jun 2012 St Peter's Hospice £289

The charities concerned were very grateful.

For the present season the committee has chosen the following charities from members' nominations:

- Dec 2012 Parkinson's UK
- Mar 2013 Motor Neurone Disease Association
- Jun 2013 Friends of Bristol Royal Hospital for Children

I hope you all feel that we are fulfilling our aim of keeping you well informed - by email, on the website and paper copies on the committee table at rehearsals; I'd again like to thank Phil, in particular, for the excellent job he does in this respect. If you're having any difficulty in keeping informed, particularly anyone who doesn't have access to a computer, please let one of the committee know. Also, Phil has created a Facebook 'page' for BCO and has opened a Twitter account (now maintained by Andrew Coombs) so you can now 'follow' BCO. If you need help accessing these or have any questions, please ask Phil or Andrew.

I want now to talk about the BCO website which is kept up to date by Phil – and thanks are due for all the excellent work he does in this respect. I thought it might be worth just highlighting a couple of features available in the Members' Area of the site.

Firstly, the dates of concerts. In the Members' Area if you click on 'Concert Planner' you can download a PDF file that gives the dates of concerts, term dates for rehearsals and dates of public holidays. Currently we have some concert dates confirmed as far ahead as autumn 2014.

You can also find the rehearsal schedule, the Constitutional documents and the AGM documents.

The last thing I want to mention is the BCO Welcome letter, which is also available to view/download from the Members' Area. This is something we've introduced fairly recently so some of the longer-standing members may not be aware of it.

Can I draw your attention to/remind you of the following points in particular:

1. Please can you let someone know if you can't attend a rehearsal (and ensure a deputy has been arranged if you're a wind/brass player)
2. Please can you be proactive in selling concert tickets. This will help ensure that we don't incur losses at our concerts and playing to a full house is so much more enjoyable than to a half empty one. It's worth mentioning too, that if you buy your tickets from BCO we avoid having to pay St George's (15%) commission on the sale.
3. Please make sure that the Membership Secretary – Tim – has your contact details and please sign the register each week.

That's all I have to say at the moment. Are there any questions or comments?"

Gareth Williams asked if we could have advance info about 2013 extra concerts. Wendy Lewis answered with our latest information:

- Children's concert: 21 April 2013 (to be re-confirmed with BGS) à *action: Phil Ellwood*
- Tewkesbury: 29 June 2013 (already on BCO web site)

- Sinfonietta: 21 July 2013 (to be re-confirmed with David Shaw) à *action: Stefan Hofkes*

5/12 Treasurer's Report

Wendy Lewis thanked Tim Barrett very much on the members' behalf for all his hard work and the very efficient way in which he looks after the orchestra's finances. She then called on Tim to present his report and the annual accounts.

Tim opened his remarks by checking that everyone had access to a copy of the 2012 accounts and then highlighted the key figures of £3,802.80 operating loss (£3240.80 in 2011).

Tim explained that BCO had done well for the first six or seven years playing concerts at St George's Bristol, regularly profiting by £1,000 or more per concert. Things have deteriorated since then and the last concert to break even was in December 2008.

The factors that have driven the losses since 2008 seem to be:

- Escalating costs of hiring St George's Bristol
- Music hire for our chosen programmes
- Declining ticket sales, especially BCO sales
 - Previously, we had attracted audiences in upper 300s / lower 400s
 - Now it seems we are 60-80 tickets lower on average
 - St George's Bristol box office sales holding up quite well

Tim remarked that we (BCO members) needed to redouble our efforts in selling tickets.

Discussion then started, with various points being made by BCO members:

- Jenny Dent-Young and Andrew Coombs mentioned that clashes with other orchestras and choral societies can be a factor for low ticket sales; Phil Ellwood answered that we do collaborate extensively with the other Bristol Orchestras, but sometimes clashes are driven by availability of venues of the other orchestras, notably the Victoria Rooms for NBS
- Jo Walker suggested that we make a nominal charge for children at our children's events
- Linda Bearbark suggested that we could stop printing programmes
- Brenda Stacey mentioned, as an aside, that inviting children to come and try musical instruments was not something she welcomed
- Liz Bagshaw suggested that we find more proactive ways of selling tickets, as she had seen in other orchestras
- Christine Davis suggested a 'commitment sheet' for BCO members
- Tim Barrett remarked that we are due payment for a Gift Aid claim, which will help
- It was noted that our Spring concerts are particularly difficult to get big audiences
- Gareth Williams said that we needed to be more aggressive about the need for BCO members to sell tickets (as is the case in NBS). He also suggested that we should consider having only two concerts per year in St George's Bristol and one in another (cheaper) venue.
- Stefan Hofkes suggested that we should work out budgets in advance and set our musical programme choices accordingly
- Joan Heaney said that key sales figures should be announced to the full orchestra
- Sponsorship was mentioned; Christine Davis said it was an OK idea but needed a dedicated volunteer to be effective

Tim remarked that the auditing of the accounts was not yet complete. à *action: Tim Barrett*

The Treasurer's Report and Accounts were accepted by the members. (Prop. Mary Ingram; Sec. David Benson; carried unanimously).

06/12 Subscriptions for 2012-2013

Following the discussion on the Treasurer's Report, particularly the losses, there was much further discussion about subscription levels.

BCO members raised several points:

- It is better to increase subs incrementally, every year.
- Some people felt that concessions on subs were unnecessary; other people disagreed.
- The view was expressed that even if we were to increase subs to say £50 per term, the weekly equivalent would still be low compared to other activities, including other orchestras.
- The idea of a mandatory annual subscription was mentioned.

Various suggestions were made on the levels: £42/£28, £50 full, £48/£32 and £45/£30.

In the end, two votes were taken: the first to agree the principle that an increase in subscriptions was needed (*carried by a simple show of hands*); and the second to set the new figures.

By a majority show of hands, it was agreed to increase subscriptions to £45 per term (concs. £30), each with a £5 reduction if a full year's subscription is paid in the Autumn term. (Prop. Tim Barrett; Sec. Brenda Stacey).

7/12 Election of Chairman (Secretary in chair)

Wendy Lewis stood down and Phil Ellwood took the chair. Phil thanked Wendy for her excellent leadership of the committee; for her comprehensive annual report read out earlier; and for her hard work acting as the voice of the orchestra in front of the Charities Commission.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Chairman: Wendy Lewis. *Wendy was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/12 below.* (Prop. Rosemary Penketh; Sec. Jenny Dent-Young).

8/12 Election of Secretary

Wendy Lewis offered very many thanks as usual to our Secretary, Phil Ellwood for his very hard work, efficiency and excellent organisational skills that contribute so much to the running of the orchestra. She had already mentioned in her report some of the ways in which Phil ensures that the management of the orchestra runs smoothly and that we are all kept well informed. She was delighted to say that Phil had agreed to stand again as Secretary.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Secretary: Phil Ellwood. *Phil was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/12 below.* (Prop. Tim Barrett; Sec. Rob Bartlett).

9/12 Election of Treasurer

Wendy Lewis remarked that not only were our thanks due to our very efficient Treasurer, Tim Barrett for all his hard work both with the finances, as already mentioned, but also for the not inconsiderable amount of work he contributes in other ways towards the running of the orchestra. She was delighted to say that Tim has agreed to stand again for the post of Treasurer.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Treasurer: Tim Barrett. *Tim was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/12 below.* (Prop. Peter Collins; Sec. Bob Pinniger).

10/12 Election of Committee Members

Wendy Lewis noted that we had three committee members who had come to the end of their three-year term of office: Andrew Coombs, Mary Ingram and Mike Organ.

Mary had indicated her wish to stand down from the committee. Mary and Wendy had worked together on the committee for many years and Wendy took the opportunity to thank Mary very much for all the years of hard work she has put into committee work, for her kind hospitality in

hosting meetings and for her support. Wendy said she will very much miss Mary's common sense and wise counsel.

Wendy was very pleased to say that Andrew and Mike have agreed to stand again for committee also and that Julia Kraus has agreed to offer her services as a new committee member.

As only one nomination had been received for each of the posts available, the Chairman proposed a block vote (also covering posts of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer – see above):

Andrew Coombs	Prop. Phil Ellwood; Sec. Mike Parks
Julia Kraus (new)	Prop. Gill Richards; Sec. Cath Barnes
Mike Organ	Prop. Phil Ellwood; Sec. Sue Tyley

By show of hands, the members voted to accept the five candidates as elected unopposed.

11/12 Any Other Business

a. Wendy Lewis informed us that sadly, three of our members or ex-members had passed away during last season. BCO was represented at the funerals of Lucy Lambert, Chris Lapworth and Gabriel Laszlo and cards of condolence were sent on behalf of the members. From the responses Wendy had received to these it is clear that playing with the orchestra was very important to these members. *[Post-meeting note: If anyone would like to see these letters please ask Wendy].*

b. Our Christmas Party – normally at The Colston Arms (formerly Micawber's) and normally on the Monday following our December concert – had not yet been booked. After a short discussion and noting the late hour and the ebbing attendance at the AGM it was decided to ask the full orchestra their thoughts and ask for a show of hands of interest at the next Monday rehearsal. *[Post-meeting note: Wendy sent an email to members about the Christmas party, rather than announcing it at rehearsal].*

The meeting was closed at 10:02 pm.

Date of next meeting (proposed): Monday 14 October 2013

Compiled: Phil Ellwood

Approved: Wendy Lewis

25 October 2012