

BRISTOL CONCERT ORCHESTRA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ashton Park School
at 8:57 pm on Monday 21 October 2013

Present: the Conductor, the Officers and 31 members of the Orchestra

Apologies were received from Joan Heaney, Stephen Mooney, Vanessa Pinniger and Will Singleton.

1/13 Minutes of AGM on 8 October 2012

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

2/13 Matters Arising from Minutes

Item 5/12 Treasurer's Report: Wendy Lewis explained that a lot of points about finances had been raised by members at the last AGM. Since then the committee had met and considered the points. Some of these had since been implemented and others were still under consideration.

3/13 Conductor's Report

On behalf of the orchestra Wendy Lewis expressed many thanks to Stefan for providing such excellent leadership and musical direction for the orchestra and for motivating, inspiring and challenging us. 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.

"I've worked with two other orchestras, similar to BCO. Each has its own way of working and approaches to rehearsing. BCO stands out as taking a relaxed 'let's go for it' attitude. While that is positive please stay concentrated, especially when tuning.

The Mahler 5 concert created a need to rehearse well and early, which paid off well. We had a great audience for the concert – pleasantly surprising. The Dvořák 9 concert was perhaps easier, delivered on fewer rehearsals, but we still gave a good result.

Tewkesbury: the orchestra sounded very good from within the audience.

Thanks to all the section leaders for all their efforts.

Keep up the good work; we have an exciting season ahead of us."

4/13 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):

"We have had a busy year with our three concerts at St George's and the Children's, Tewkesbury and Sinfonietta concerts. It has been largely successful both musically and financially. Ticket sales have improved, even when we've been competing for audience with other events. The concerts certainly seemed to have been well received and we've had plenty of positive feedback.

As you will see from the accounts, our financial situation has improved also so that for the year just gone we are showing a surplus.

There have been various factors that have contributed to this improved financial situation. We believe that the increase in ticket sales has resulted, at least in part, from the programme choices we made in February 2012 for the 2012-13 season; our aim was to provide a balance between music that would have popular appeal with that which would be satisfying and sufficiently challenging to play.

We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Delius Society towards our December and June concerts. Two members of the Delius Society came to the June concert and I had very enthusiastic and positive feedback from them.

Last November we successfully rolled out our online ticket facility. This enables members of the public to book their tickets online through BCO; members of the orchestra can also reserve tickets online and then pay for them at rehearsal to avoid paying the booking fee. You should all have received instructions on how to go about this from Andrew Coombs; if you are unsure about it, please speak to him. Thanks are due to Andrew for setting up and managing online ticketing.

Behind all the concerts, rehearsals, ticket sales and so on, are the work of the committee without which we wouldn't be doing any playing! On your behalf, I would like to thank them all very much for all the very hard work they have put in over the past year, as always.

The committee are very grateful for the all work Stefan puts in for us and for the support and guidance he gives us throughout the year. Thank you, Stefan.

Can I also 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 timps to and from concerts.

The committee held three meetings during the 2012-13 season and a short extra one this month to discuss the accounts. There is also quite a lot of discussion and decision-making conducted by email between meetings.

In February the committee planned the three main programmes for the current season. These are based on suggestions made by BCO members. In choosing these programmes, we had to bear in mind our financial responsibilities, our responsibility to our members to offer sufficient challenge, potential for musical development and enjoyment in making music and our charitable obligations.

This year we introduced an extra step in the planning process and didn't commit to any of the programmes until we had checked the costs which mostly involved finding out the cost of hiring the music, the soloists and any extra players needed. This resulted in us greatly revising the programme we had chosen for June 2014. We also had to revise the March 2014 programme due to soloist unavailability.

Following concerns raised at last year's AGM, we discussed and decided upon a strategy for the children's concert regarding children trying out members instruments. In the event, on the day we decided not to offer this at all but some children tried out members instruments anyway!

We discussed sponsorship again, and it was suggested that perhaps members could ask their companies for sponsorship, using personal connections rather than general appeals. It was also felt that asking for a donation for a specific cost might be more likely to meet with success.

Following this discussion one member of the committee asked her employer if they might be prepared to offer sponsorship. As a result we received a donation of £200 which was put towards the Children's Concert. This goes to show that there's nothing to lose by asking for sponsorship and we'd encourage you all to think about doing the same.

The committee are the trustees of the orchestra and, as well as for its management, are responsible with regard to our charitable status. We are accountable to the Charity Commission and earlier in the year we submitted to them, as we are mandated to do, an Annual Return that includes the Annual Report and the Accounts.

During the current season, as well as the three concerts at St George's, we have a Sinfonietta concert in Olveston on July 19th.

In order to avoid over-crowding the late spring/summer with concerts, we are planning to schedule our Children's concert for October 2014 instead of April. Discussions with BGS and the speaker (David Barrell) are underway; and the likely programme is Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. Also there will be no Tewkesbury concert in 2014 or 2015; the earliest one they are planning is June 2016!

The organisers of Chipping Sodbury Festival approached us recently, with the prospect of BCO performing in their 2014 Festival. Unfortunately the dates offered and orchestra size required was not compatible with our current programming.

You can find details of all the concert dates – as well as rehearsal and term dates – in the members section of our website under, 'Concert Planner'.

- A surplus on the Tewkesbury event: c. £500

Phil pointed out that we had improved our ticket sales considerably too, thanks to another set of factors: on-line shop, price increases, and popular programmes bringing in good audiences.

Tim invited questions from the members.

Sophie Cottrell asked if the amount of Gift Aid would be similar in future years. Tim outlined the Gift Aid claim procedure and the complexity of assessing how much of members' subscriptions could be claimed as Gift Aid, depending on what element of 'tuition' is deemed to be covered by subscriptions. He advised that following advice from Making Music we will claim 100% of members' subscription as Gift Aid. This should lead to an additional income of c. £1,000 per year.

Jenny Dent-Young asked why the cost of extra players for the Tewkesbury concert was high. Tim and Phil answered that there were some higher than normal costs for this concert, e.g. two harps, and higher than expected percussion costs – but that we had all this covered in our budget and fee and in the end we enjoyed c. £500 surplus.

The Treasurer's Report and Accounts were accepted by the members. (Prop. Hilary Ross; Sec. Roger Levett; carried unanimously).

06/13 Subscriptions for 2013-2014

Tim Barrett reminded everyone that subscriptions had been increased by £5 per term last year and £2 per term the year before. In view of this and the improved finances this year, Tim proposed to maintain subscriptions at current levels: £45 (concs £30) per term. He also remarked that we may even consider reducing subscriptions in subsequent years if things continue to improve.

BCO members raised several points:

- Peter Collins thought there was a disconnect between the idea of cheapening concerts to improve our finances on one hand, and talking about reducing subscriptions on the other.
- Stefan Hofkes expressed his concern and stated that we must keep the balance of interests between finances and the development of the orchestra.
- Andrew Coombs explained that BCO's subscription levels are the highest among the Bristol orchestras / choral societies. He also outlined how our ticket prices will increase by £1 per adult seat starting in Spring 2014. In effect we will take advantage of the impending removal of the St George's Bristol £1 levy from box office sales, by increasing our base prices for both BCO and box office sales by the same amount. The advertised price to the public (£15 top price) will be the same as it is today. This seemed the simplest thing to do (rather than reducing advertised prices) and will bring in extra revenue for us next year.
- Brenda Stacey expressed concern that we should not get ourselves into the same trouble as St George's Bristol had, concerning the 'optional' levy applied automatically to ticket prices bought through their box office. Andrew Coombs and Phil Ellwood explained this would not be the case as we will increase our base prices by an amount equivalent to the optional levy, but going forward everything would be fully transparent. In effect this is a price increase for us and is NOT an optional levy.
- Roger Levett remarked that he'd seen various sets of accounts from amateur orchestras and ours were very good and the best he had seen. He also agreed with Stefan.

By show of hands, it was agreed unanimously to keep 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. Brenda Stacey; Sec. Roger Levett).

7/13 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.* (Prop. Melanie Arnot; Sec. Siân Rees).

8/13 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 also mentioned his work as BCO Webmaster and in keeping us well informed about BCO matters. 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.* (Prop. Lyn Harradine; Sec. Andrew Stephen).

9/13 Election of Treasurer

Wendy Lewis remarked that not only are 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 had 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.* (Prop. Gareth Williams; Sec. Bob Pinniger).

10/13 Election of Committee Members

Wendy Lewis noted that we had four committee members who had come to the end of their three-year term of office: Linda Bearpark, Helen Hook, Vanessa Pinniger and Andrew Stephen.

Linda and Helen had indicated their wish to stand down from the committee. They have both been much-valued members and Wendy was very sorry that they were standing down but she did understand their reasons. Both had been on the committee for many years and Wendy took the opportunity to thank them very much for all the hard work they had put in. It had been much appreciated.

Wendy was very pleased to say that Vanessa and Andrew had agreed to stand again for committee also and that Hilary Ross had agreed to offer her services as a committee member. As there had been only three nominations for four committee member posts, we will have one vacancy which will be carried over to next year.

As we had received fewer nominations than posts available, Wendy proposed a block vote:

Vanessa Pinniger	Prop. Sophie Cottrell; Sec. Melanie Arnot
Hilary Ross (new)	Prop. Wendy Lewis; Sec. Peter Collins
Andrew Stephen	Prop. Rob Bartlett; Sec. Phil Ellwood

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

Wendy congratulated all three electees and welcomed Hilary to the committee. The next meeting is on October 28th.

Gareth Williams noted thanks from the members to Linda and Helen for their contributions.

11/13 Vacancy for Ticket Sales Manager

Phil Ellwood explained the need to fill this important role and that it could be filled anyone in the orchestra, not necessarily a committee member.

Linda Bearpark gave some detail about what the job entails and said that it could be shared between two or three people quite easily.

Wendy Lewis asked for volunteers. As none was forthcoming, she asked members to think about it and to contact a member of the committee with any questions or to volunteer.

12/13 Any Other Business

Wendy Lewis announced that she could arrange a party for Monday 9 December at Colston Arms. Before we decide for definite, we need to gauge whether or not there is enough interest so Wendy proposed to send out an email as she did last year. *[Post-meeting note: e-mail sent on 23 Oct 13].*

The meeting was closed at 9:42 pm.

Date of next meeting (proposed): Monday 13 October 2014

Compiled: Phil Ellwood

Approved: Wendy Lewis

12 November 2013