

BRISTOL CONCERT ORCHESTRA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ashton Park School
at 8:55 pm on Monday 10 October 2011

Present: the Conductor, the Officers and c.45 members of the Orchestra

Apologies were received from Lyn Harradine, Christine Davis and Stephen Mooney.

1/11 Minutes of AGM on 11 October 2010

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

2/11 Matters Arising - not already on the agenda

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

3/11 Conductor's Report

Wendy Lewis remarked on how lucky we are to have Stefan Hofkes, who provides such excellent leadership and musical direction to the orchestra. She then called on him to give his report.

Stefan said he felt that the last year had been another great one.

In December, the concert had carried the risk that an old 'warhorse' like Tchaikovsky 6 might have been taken for granted – as something that we already know very well. In reality, after a slightly nervous start, the performance came off very well.

In March, Bruckner 7 was a fantastic experience and was performed very well. The Beethoven Piano 4 with Ashley Wass was poignant, and signified Ashley's return to playing after a gap of six months following a family bereavement.

In our summer concert the Bernstein went very well and was great fun. The work we had all done early in the term had definitely paid off.

For the new season, Stefan's key message was to 'continue to work early on the pieces'.

He also remarked that attendance had been a problem in some areas. Better discipline and communication is required; and that people with solo parts have special responsibilities.

Stefan closed his report by thanking everyone for all their work.

4/11 Chairman's Report

Wendy Lewis started her report by asking the members of the committee to stand up for a moment to make themselves visible. She then gave her report (copied here from her prepared statement):

"The committee are the trustees of the orchestra and are responsible for its management. Over the past year they have put in a huge amount of effort making sure that things run smoothly. I would like to thank all of the committee very much for all their hard work. In particular a great deal of extra work was involved in honouring our commitment to the Verdi Requiem in Tewkesbury. 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 and those who transport the timps to and from concerts.

We held our usual three committee meetings during the year. Of course things often crop up at times when we're not due to meet but thanks to modern communication methods we can usually

sort things out by email. The committee are very grateful to Stefan for the help, support and guidance given to us throughout the year.

Our aim is to keep our members well informed throughout the year - by email, on the website and paper copies on the committee table at rehearsals - and I think that Phil does an excellent job in this respect. If anyone who doesn't have access to internet and email is having difficulty in keeping up to date with information, please let one of the committee know. For those of you who are not already aware of it, Phil has created a Facebook 'page' for BCO and has opened a Twitter account so you can now 'follow' BCO. If you need help accessing these or have any questions, please see Phil.

During the year we finished the revision of the job descriptions for Conductor, Leader, String Section Leaders and Woodwind and Brass Section Organisers. You can see these in the Members' Area of our website under Constitutional Documents.

Following a suggestion from one of our members, Phil made MP3 files of our June concert available to listen to on line via a members' log in. You should have received details of this via email. If you have any questions or feedback, please speak to Phil.

Our three main concerts met with varying degrees of support in terms of audience and varying financial outcomes. In June we were experimenting with a Sunday afternoon concert – due to St George's double booking our original (Saturday evening) date. We were unfortunate that the Sunday in question happened to be Father's Day – which prevented some of our usual audience from attending – and it was a nice sunny afternoon. This meant that the size of the audience was disappointing. Also we had chosen to put on an expensive concert – to meet our charitable object, namely “to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of music in all its aspects”; to avoid accumulating too much money, which is a requirement of our charitable status; and to give our members the opportunity to play some different repertoire that we hoped they would find interesting, challenging and enjoyable (this was something that BCO members had requested us to do). Nevertheless, the committee will be bearing the financial result in mind when deciding on future programmes.

In April we put on the workshop on Peter and the Wolf as part of the (postponed) Bradley Stoke Arts Festival. This was in lieu of our children's concert for 2011. I wasn't able to be there myself but I understand that it was very successful and that we are likely to be invited to take part in future events.

In June BCO took part in the South Cotswold Choral Group's very successful performance of Verdi's Requiem in Tewkesbury Abbey. Our contribution was very much appreciated and we have had very positive feedback. The fact that the concert fell on the Saturday of half-term week meant that many BCO members weren't able to play. Some members of the committee put in a lot of extra hard work sorting out extra players.

In July the newly-named BCO Sinfonietta (to avoid confusion with Bristol Chamber Orchestra) put on a very well received concert in Olveston.

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 in the season's brochure, which is available on the committee table, or on the BCO website. Thank you to Andrew for producing such a stunning brochure. 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.

We are also planning to put on a children's concert – but the details are yet to be finalised – and a BCO Sinfonietta concert in July, the date and programme for which have yet to be decided.

During 2010-11 the charity collections at our concerts raised:

- Dec 2010 Hop, Skip and Jump £476.56
- Mar 2011 CLIC Sargent £303.91
- Jun 2011 Dance Voice £174.80

The charities concerned were very grateful.

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

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

We had a lot of worthy charities nominated and unfortunately we aren't able to support them all. If your nomination wasn't selected please suggest it again for next year."

5/11 Treasurer's Report

Wendy expressed her thanks to Tim Barrett for doing a great job as Treasurer over the previous year. Tim had put in much hard work and had been very efficient. She then called on him to give his report.

Copies of the Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Account and Concert Breakdown had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Tim opened by saying that we had made only a small profit last year, following a number of years where we had made profits of £1,000 or more. This year, however, we made a significant loss of around £3,200.

Tim went on to explain that loss is not as bad as it seems, as we have a good chance of receiving some Gift Aid on our subscriptions. There is a risk to this, as HMRC have issued new guidelines indicating that there are some elements of our subs that cannot be claimed, e.g. the proportion that covers conductor's fees. There was an amnesty on introduction the new guidelines until August – and there had been an issue with a missed step in BCO's registration process. Nevertheless, Tim will follow this up and try to get the best result for BCO.

The three main concerts and the three extra events had enjoyed a variety of financial results. The main concerts at St George's Bristol had all suffered individual losses, totalling around £4,400. The summer concert alone (Bernstein, etc) had lost £2,744, mainly as a result of the combination of high production costs (music, extra players) and poorer than expected audience numbers. It was noted that this concert was the Sunday afternoon one, effectively forced on us by a double-booking error on our original date by St George's Bristol. For the additional events, Peter and the Wolf had made a £208 profit, Verdi Requiem a £5 loss, and the Sinfonietta concert a £157 loss – giving £46 profit overall for the extra events.

Tim invited questions from the floor and received the following:

Bob Pinniger asked about the estimation process for our concerts and if it might be possible to set our prices nearer to the time of the concert, when we have a good idea of the expenses that would be involved. Tim and Phil explained that things have to be done quite a long time in advance, owing to lead times on publicity, both for us and for St George's Bristol.

Roger Levett said that he didn't think that the committee need to be apologetic for the summer concert because as Wendy had already explained, there were good justifiable reasons for the decisions about the summer concert loss, and that we still had a comfortable level of reserves, and could therefore continue to try things for musical / community / educational reasons.

Mike Parks asked why the extra players were so expensive. Tim explained that the main element was percussion, which is expensive, but includes transportation and hire of instruments. Some concerts last year (e.g. Bernstein) had needed lots of percussion. Stefan added that it was necessary to pay these sorts of costs if we wanted to people who could play well on the day, on just one rehearsal. The alternative would be to engage local amateur players but with some risk on the musical outcome.

Tim remarked that the auditing of the accounts was not yet complete.

The Treasurer's Report and Accounts were accepted by the members. (Prop. Andrew Stephen; Sec. Rosemary Penketh; carried unanimously).

06/11 Subscriptions

Tim Barrett remarked that subscriptions had been maintained at the current level of £35 per term (concs. £24) for around four years. Overall subscription income seemed to be a little lower than in the previous year – possibly as a result of some players being absent and deputies being engaged to cover. He also told us that the costs of hiring Ashton Park School had increased over this period, from £40 + VAT to £60 + VAT per rehearsal evening, with (new) additional costs for separate rooms for sectional rehearsals. On this point, Nigel James asked if our hiring of APS could be considered as ‘educational use’, thus possibly not liable to VAT. Gareth Williams confirmed this should be the case. Tim agreed to investigate this further.

Tim proposed an increase in subscription rates to £37 per term (concs. £25). This would raise an additional £350 per year in subscription revenue, plus Gift Aid reclaim. He invited discussion from the members with various comments and alternative proposals then being made:

Melanie Arnot asked if absentees could be made to pay a retainer subscription. Wendy remarked that it was an interesting idea but that we need to check for any constitutional issues.

Stefan Hofkes informed us that Reading Symphony has an annual fee of £110 per a year and it seems to work well. He also said this was ‘on the low side’ in the Berkshire area.

Brenda Stacey wondered if we are selling ourselves short, when compared to the cost of attending evening classes.

Roger Levett informed us that Brunel Sinfonia subscriptions are £40 per term and that this includes two ‘free’ concert tickets. Further, New Bristol Sinfonia has a policy of voluntary subscriptions, at £20 per term.

Gareth Williams made a new proposal for subscriptions: £40 per term.

Andrew Stephen made another proposal: £40 per term or £100 per year.

Linda Bearpark and others expressed a concern that if too many people elected to pay annually, then we may not see an increase in revenue.

In the end a modified proposal emerged: £40 per term (concs. £26), with a £5 reduction if the full year’s subscription is paid in the Autumn term.

By a majority show of hands, with one abstention, it was agreed to increase subscriptions as finally proposed: £40 per term (concs. £26) with a £5 reduction if a full year’s subscription is paid in the Autumn term. (Prop. Andrew Stephen; Sec. Roger Levett).

7/11 Election of Chairman (Secretary in chair)

Wendy Lewis stood down and Phil Ellwood took the chair. Phil thanked Wendy for her excellent committee leadership over the last year; and for her human relations skills in dealing with issues that arise from time to time.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Chairman: Wendy Lewis. *Wendy was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/11 below. (Prop. Bob Pinniger; Sec. Roger Levett).*

8/11 Election of Secretary

Wendy thanked our secretary Phil for his efficiency and organisational skills, noting that the past year had been particular demanding. She was delighted that Phil had agreed to stand for office again.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Secretary: Phil Ellwood. *Phil was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/11 below. (Prop. Peter Collins; Sec. Hannah Smith).*

9/11 Election of Treasurer

Wendy expressed her thanks to our very efficient treasurer Tim for all his hard work with the finances and the many other ways he contributes to the running of the orchestra. She was delighted that Tim had agreed to stand again for office.

Only one nomination had been received for the post of Treasurer: Tim Barrett. *Tim was re-elected unopposed – see block vote at 10/11 below.* (Prop. Hilary Ross; Sec. Charles Read).

10/11 Election of Committee Members

Two committee members came to the end of their three-year term of duty at this AGM.

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 Rees	Prop. Siân Rees; Sec. Helen Hook
Sue Tyley (new)	Prop. Jenny Dent-Young; Sec. Melanie Arnot

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

11/10 Any Other Business

a. Librarian – Wendy reminded everyone about our need to find someone to act as music librarian, while Christine takes time off to do her MA. Wendy assured that any volunteer would receive plenty of support from the committee and invited any volunteers to approach Christine or any member of the committee.

b. Summer 2013 – Phil explained where we were on discussions with South Cotswold Choral Group, about their invitation for us to perform at Tewkesbury Abbey again, in June 2013. A recent e-mail poll had shown that there was plenty of interest in the project, but we had to be careful not to commit our members to too much: in terms of concert dates and volume of music to be rehearsed to a performance standard. Further, there were some concerns raised about the possibility of dropping our regular concert in Bristol, in favour of the Tewkesbury project. Some ideas came from the members about securing commitment of players earlier; and about doing a reciprocal concert in Bristol. Discussions will continue, on the basis of proposing to do Tewkesbury in addition to our St George's Bristol concert, but with some shared programme material, to minimise rehearsal effort and risks to performance quality. Phil will keep everyone up to date by e-mail and announcements where needed.

c. Our Christmas Party at The Colston Arms (formerly Micawber's) has been booked for Monday 5 December, starting at 7 pm. After a brief discussion about catering it was agreed to increase the ticket price to £10 per head.

d. Nigel James mentioned the idea of sponsorship for BCO. Tim remarked that we had tried it before but it had proved to be a lot of effort and hassle for little return. Nigel countered that it had been a recent trend in private sector companies, to encourage 'corporate responsibility towards community' and that it may be good to look again – coupled with our new charitable status. Some concerns were raised about the possibility of sponsors interfering heavily in programming decisions. Wendy said that we would look at the subject again in committee.

e. Andrew Stephen informed that the new issue of the membership address list was available and that tonight was the last chance to check it for correctness before it is re-printed.

The meeting was closed at 9:55 pm.

Date of next meeting (proposed): Monday 8 October 2012