

BRISTOL CONCERT ORCHESTRA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2003

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ashton Park School
at 9.00 pm on Monday 6 October 2003

Present: the Conductor, the Officers and 30 members of the Orchestra

Apologies were received from Kate Brown, Stephen Mooney, Chris Storey and Andrea Jenn.

The Chairman, Wendy Lewis, opened the meeting by thanking Andrew Stephen for providing the PA system. She then introduced the members of the committee to the AGM.

1/03 Minutes of AGM on 23 September 2002

There were no comments and the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

2/03 Matters Arising - not already on the agenda

There were no matters arising from last year's minutes.

3/03 Election of Chairman for 2003-2004 (Secretary in chair)

Wendy Lewis stood down and Nick Day took the chair. Nick thanked Wendy for her hard work in keeping the orchestra running smoothly over the past year. Only one nomination had been received for the post of Chairman: Wendy Lewis. *Wendy was re-elected unopposed.* (Prop. Nigel Boosey; Sec. Gill Richards).

4/03 Election of Secretary for 2003-2004

Nick Day had decided not to stand for re-election as Secretary this year. Wendy thanked Nick for his dedication and hard work as Secretary of the last five years. She recalled that this five-year stint had resulted from volunteering to stand in for a colleague one time in May 1998! Only one nomination had been received for the post of Secretary: Phil Ellwood. *Phil was elected unopposed.* (Prop. Andrew Stephen; Sec. Lyn Harradine).

5/03 Treasurer's Report for 2002-2003

Copies of the Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Account and Concert Breakdowns were circulated prior to the meeting.

Concert Breakdown: a mixed season, with small ups and downs, with a bottom line of a £91 loss. We were fortunate to receive £350 from the Paragon Concert Society for their underwriting of our Colston Hall concert. The breakdown shows that concerts at St George's *can* be profitable, but we have to sell plenty of tickets (and keep our costs reasonable) to do so. It was noted that the costs associated with the hire of St George's were steadily increasing, almost concert by concert.

Profit and Loss Account: over £15,000 flowed into the bank account this year, the majority of that being attributable to ticket sales and subscriptions. Some items were treated as Exceptional Income - the largest input for this being for the sale of the old timps, etc, to Longwell Green Orchestra, generating £420. It was noted that Exceptional Income is *not* included in the Operating Profit.

Regarding the Operating Profit of £169, the Treasurer remarked that although this sounds good, it is in fact a *very* small margin on the total inflow of £15,576. [Post-meeting note: only 1.07% in fact]. The costs of just one additional rehearsal or repertoire session would have nearly wiped

out this profit. It was noted that a new ticket pricing structure will come into force from the December concert onwards; and it is expected that we will benefit from increased revenue. Nevertheless, the Treasurer proposed that we needed to increase subscriptions to make the operating margin more secure. (See item 6/03).

Wendy stated that Andrea Jenn had agreed to ask her husband to audit the BCO accounts and that it was very likely he would agree to do so.

6/03 Subscriptions for 2003-2004

Given that the Operating Profit represented the cost of approximately 1¼ rehearsals (see 5/03 above), the Treasurer recommended that subscriptions should increase by either £1 or £2 per term. The majority of the members present supported a £2 increase, so that figure was agreed by a majority vote. The new subscription rate is therefore £32 (conc. £16) per term.

Linda Bearpark proposed the introduction of a £5 (conc. £3) 'late payers penalty' for subscriptions, to act as an incentive to prompt payment - ie payment by four weeks from the beginning of a term, as written in the BCO Constitution.

This proposal generated a vigorous debate. Peter Rayner asked what proportions of members do not normally pay within the four weeks. The Treasurer replied that the normal pattern was for him to be chasing 7 or 8 people for subs as late in the term as the concert date. This had been steadily improving (there were none that late in the term before last) but had slipped back a bit last term.

Maureen Sharpe and Ida Miller voiced their support for the idea of penalties for late payments.

A show of hands revealed that the idea was supported unanimously, at least in principle.

Discussion and various amendments ensued and then a show of hands was taken on the amount of the penalty: either £5 (conc. £2.50); or £3 (conc. £1). After two counts (each by two committee members!) the result was 17:16 in favour of the £5 (conc. £2.50) figure. [Post-meeting note: this decision will be announced to the members at the next rehearsal].

7/03 Election of Treasurer for 2003-2004

Wendy thanked Tim Barrett for undertaking the onerous job of Treasurer with admirable efficiency and diligence. Only one nomination had been received for the post of Treasurer: Tim Barrett. *Tim was re-elected unopposed.* (Prop. Vicky Morrissey; Sec. Corinne Westlake)

8/03 Election of Committee Members for 2003-2004

Two committee members (Mary Ingram and Ida Miller) came to the end of their three-year term; and one member (Geraldine Roberts) had decided to stand down from the committee.

The Chairman explained that Geraldine had been on the committee for over 10 years and had been responsible for the excellent membership list. She had overseen the transition between a paper-based membership list and a computer-based one. She had also been a loyal member of the committee, missing very few meetings. Geraldine was thanked for all her hard work over the years; she will be missed at committee meetings. Andrew Stephen was thanked for stepping forward to carry out the Membership Secretary role.

The Chairman thanked all committee members for all their hard work in keeping BCO running. She expressed particular thanks to Phil Ellwood who had not only put in a lot of work on the organisational side of things but had also very good at keeping us all informed about what's going on via the website, e-mails and the newsletters.

The net result of the above movements, together with an additional requirement created by Phil Ellwood being elected as Secretary, was that we had four vacancies this year. There were four nominations for these four vacancies:

Nick Day	(Prop. Linda Bearpark; Sec. Rachel Howell)
Mary Ingram	(Prop. Geraldine Roberts; Sec. Maureen Sharpe)

Ida Miller (Prop. Sophie Cottrell; Sec. Howard Knight)
Mike Organ (Prop. Wendy Lewis; Sec. Christine Davis) * new member *

These members were elected unopposed.

9/03 Conductor's Report for 2002-2003 and Musical Plan for 2003-2004

Wendy thanked Stefan for an excellent year of musical direction of BCO and remarked how lucky we were to have him as our Conductor. She then called on Stefan to give his report.

Stefan opened by commenting that it had been a good, consistent year. We had struck a good balance between our status as amateurs and the demands of performing in professional venues.

The Autumn 2002 concert had gone extremely well, especially the Sibelius 7, the recording of which Stefan still plays and enjoys today. Also in that concert, we had pulled off the Nutcracker excerpts very well.

For Spring 2003 our main work was the Dvořák *New World* (comparable with the Brahms 2 the year before?), which was performed very well indeed, albeit with a few 'exciting' moments. The Saint-Saëns Violin had proved a little disappointing, showing the difference between works we had dedicated ourselves to and those we had not. It should have been better.

The climax of the year was the Elgar Gerontius concert in the Colston Hall in July. There had been difficulties: a smaller than expected choir, which had a big impact on ticket sales; and some rehearsals were frustrating, through poor attendance and lack of dedication. People who had decided not to play in the concert, just because they didn't like the work, had particularly incensed Stefan. Despite these problems, the performance was a fantastic occasion for all concerned. The choir performed brilliantly well. Massive work: incredibly hard: superb performance!

This coming year, the works are harder: Mussorgsky *Pictures* and Elgar 1 especially. Stefan asked for all members to take extra personal responsibility for personal practice, etc.

He then gave us two points to consider:

1. For some people two rehearsals then a performance of a work is OK. For others, they can do more than they think and shouldn't hide 'in the desk'. Stefan felt very positive about the recent rotations within the sections. He felt people had been enjoying the challenge. The next stage is to break down perceptions between 1sts and 2nds, who should be seen as equals. He will talk to leaders about rotations between the sections.
2. We need to be more careful about the choice of deputies for concert performances, especially in WW & Brass single-player positions. We should consider that if a member cannot play for a concert, then, where possible, a deputy should be brought in for the whole term. Otherwise, there can be problems with the member's attitude to practice and rehearsals when they know they are not playing in the concert.

In his closing remarks, Stefan asked us to believe in ourselves, and have even better fun and challenges. In summary: a good year, and looking forward to next year.

10/03 Minor amendments to the Constitution

At the committee meeting on 1 September 2003, the committee drafted some revisions to the BCO Constitution (and associated Job Descriptions) to come into line with current practices and to improve clarity. Only the Constitution actually needs to be ratified by the AGM, but all were made available before the AGM for the sake of completeness and openness.

The Chairman read through the main points of change in the draft revision to the Constitution and the amendments were accepted as a total package. (Prop: Gill Richards; Sec: Linda Bearpark; carried unanimously).

[Note: the Conductor asked for the Rule D.7 (committee responsibilities regarding appointment of professional Leader) to be looked at again at a future committee meeting].

11/03 Any Other Business

1. Our nominated charity for 2002-2003, the National Autistic Society, had benefited by over £1700 during the season. £700 of this was for retiring collections (two at St George's and one at Colston Hall); and the other £1000 was a very generous donation by Colston's Girl's School and their Governors, at the Elgar Gerontius concert in July. We had received a very appreciative thank-you letter from the NAS.

For 2003-2004, the Chairman advised these choices of charities: Bristol Samaritans for Dec 03; 'Grooms' for Mar 04; and (TBD) for Jun 04. It was noted that our policy now was to not allow speeches at our concerts, but we would instead make an announcement about the retiring collection. An exception will be made for Bristol Samaritans, as we had agreed previously that they could make a short speech, if they wished to.

2. The Chairman reminded all members of the "General points for rehearsals" section of the latest Newsletter.

3. It was noted that more organisation of rehearsal venues was needed, but it was very likely that Red Maids' School would be used for most if not all of the Summer Term.

4. The Christmas Party was confirmed: Micawber's, Mon 8 December, tickets £5 - coming soon.

5. Mary Ingram advised that 'Grooms' will be updating a house for physically disabled people in Bristol over the coming months and that they were delighted to be chosen as beneficiary for the retiring collection for the March 2004 concert.

The meeting was closed at 10.04 pm.