

BRISTOL CONCERT ORCHESTRA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2005

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Ashton Park School
at 9.00 pm on Monday 3 October 2005

Present: the Conductor, the Officers and 33 members of the Orchestra

Apologies were received from Chris Storey, Gill Richards, Sue Tyley, Richard Parkes, Sophie Cottrell, Melanie Arnot and Mary Ingram.

The Chairman, Wendy Lewis, opened the meeting by introducing the members of the committee, giving a brief explanation of their current duties.

1/05 Minutes of AGM on 4 October 2004

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

2/05 Matters Arising - not already on the agenda

Item 5/04 - Treasurer's Report for 2003-2004 - Wendy advised that Matthew Bird had completed the auditing of the 2003-2004 accounts. A letter was produced to this effect.

Item 6/04 - Subscriptions for 2004-2005 (and rehearsal venues) – the action to find out the dates when we will not be able to use the main hall at APS has not been completed. This action is ongoing (with Mary Ingram).

3/05 Election of Chairman for 2005-2006 (Secretary in chair)

Wendy Lewis stood down and Phil Ellwood took the chair. Phil thanked Wendy for her hard work, dedication and sensitive leadership over the past year. Only one nomination had been received for the post of Chairman: Wendy Lewis. *Wendy was re-elected unopposed.* (Prop. Joan Heaney; Sec. Karen Hill).

4/05 Election of Secretary for 2005-2006

Wendy thanked Phil Ellwood for his hard and diligent work as Secretary and Webmaster over the last year. Only one nomination had been received for the post of Secretary: Phil Ellwood. *Phil was elected unopposed.* (Prop. Lyn Harradine; Sec. Richard Parkes).

5/05 Treasurer's Report for 2004-2005

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

Profit and Loss Account: a very satisfactory year, notwithstanding the huge loss in the Spring 2005 concert. The operating profit for the year was £1190. Tim explained that a number of factors contributed to this success and that a significant one was the increase in revenue from a combination of a regular subscription increase plus raising the concessionary rate from half to two-thirds of full rate, as decided at the last AGM.

Concert Breakdown: We generated a great profit for Autumn 2004; we then 'blew it' in Spring 2005; and we nearly broke even in Summer 2005, thanks to the generous, voluntary reduction in fees for Stefan and Gina, when we feared a big loss. Overall, we suffered a small loss of £204 over the season.

Some members expressed concern about the reduction of fees for Stefan and Gina. Tim and Phil explained that this was done at a time when we feared a big loss, and it was some days later before we knew this was not the case; and it was explained that it was always understood that (some of the) soloist's and conductor's performance fee was subject to financial success of the concert. Stefan indicated he was fine about what had happened. Nevertheless, people felt we should do something to show our appreciation to Gina, for her flexibility with this. It was proposed that we should write to Gina, to assure her that we will normally pay a 'full' fee; and that we should send her a bottle of her favourite wine (and one for Stefan too!); and that we should offer to play her favourite concerto, the Dvořák. The members accepted this idea.

[Post-meeting note: Stefan has spoken to Gina and she is delighted with our kind thoughts. She is looking forward to sharing a couple of bottles of Sauvignac Blanc with Stefan and to performing the Brahms (not Dvořák!) with us at some time in the future. PE].

Tim accepted an action to organise the auditing of this year's accounts.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted by the members. (Prop. Terry Evans; Sec. Linda Bearpark; carried unanimously).

6/05 Subscriptions for 2005-2006

Tim remarked that given the healthy operating profit announced, and the prudence exercised in our programme planning, he didn't think that subscriptions needed to rise. This generated an interesting discussion, revealing some diversity of viewpoints. Nigel Boosey suggested that we should put subscriptions up by a modest amount anyway, to avoid sharper increases in the future. Andrew Stephen thought that an increase of £1 a term would be appropriate. Gabriel Lazlo questioned how wise it was to exercise 'prudence' in programme planning; he suggested that members might actually be willing to pay more in subscriptions, for the privilege of being able to play interesting repertoire. Stefan supported this view by remarking that the orchestra needed to be continually stretched; however, he acknowledged the need to get lots of people into the hall too, otherwise we could not survive. John Broggio questioned the policy of setting the hire of music against the concert account. Tim and Phil explained that this policy generally works well and gives good overall visibility of the large variables related to each concert, and each season as a whole.

At the end of this discussion, a proposal emerged: that we should put up the subscriptions by £1 to £34 (concs. £23) and that the additional revenue generated should be earmarked for funding better repertoire (subject to balance of overall season programme planning). *The members voted and accepted this proposal.* (Prop. Andrew Stephen; Sec. Jane Hickson).

7/05 Election of Treasurer for 2005-2006

Wendy thanked Tim Barrett for his hard work as our Treasurer over the last year. Only one nomination had been received for the post of Treasurer: Tim Barrett. *Tim was re-elected unopposed.* (Prop. Hugh Barnes; Sec. Hilary Ross)

8/05 Election of Committee Members for 2005-2006

Two committee members (Kate Brown and Peter Rayner) came to the end of their three-year term; and one member (Nick Day) had left the orchestra earlier in the season. Peter had indicated that he would like to stand down from the committee to make way for another volunteer. Wendy thanked Peter for his contribution to the running of the orchestra,

For the three resulting vacancies, there were three nominations:

Hugh Barnes	(Prop. David Benson; Sec. Gabriel Laszlo)
Kate Brown	(Prop. Gill Richards; Sec. Christine Davis)
Gill Richards	(Prop. Kate Brown; Sec. Janet Martin)

All three candidates were elected unopposed.

9/05 Conductor's Report for 2004-2005 and Musical Plan for 2005-2006

Wendy thanked Stefan for his inspiring leadership and another excellent year of musical direction of BCO then called on Stefan to give his report.

Stefan opened by giving a quick review of the 2004-2005 Season.

The Autumn 2004 concert was both exciting and popular. Sleeping Beauty went down a treat; the Tchaik 5 was one of our best ever performances; and the Debussy Rhapsody was a good introduction to impressionist repertoire, with the 'edgy' but highly successful performance perhaps influenced by Nick's car breaking down on the way here!

For Spring 2005 we took on Copland's Appalachian Spring and Stefan was very glad we did. However, playing this piece served to remind of the basic rules of successful ensemble playing: remember someone is out in front, hacking time; always watch carefully; don't go into panic mode; and always play as part of the ensemble, rather than as an individual. Hansel and Gretel was beautiful – well done. Dvořák Cello? – well, bless, it came good in the concert, with Mirel calming down, showing excellent interpretation, and becoming the true professional he is.

For our final concert of the season, in Summer 2005, we played the VW London, which Stefan very much enjoyed. It was our best concert for detail playing. The Berlioz Roman Carnival was great, and Gina's Mendelssohn was lovely.

This coming year, we have some very good music planned. For Spring 2005 we have dropped Shostakovich 10 (for box-office risk reasons) and will now be doing Brahms 3, the composer's least-played symphony, but a great work and hard one to do well. For Summer 2005 we will have the Symphonie Fantastique – very exciting!

Stefan thanked everyone for their sensitivity to his ideas. He reminded us of the need to rehearse diligently – as 'part of the job' of performing concerts to the public. Further, he stated that in this sense we must regard ourselves as professionals. We mustn't waste time by taking too long on the basics of learning the notes, etc.

Stefan remarked that people shouldn't hide in the back of sections. Related to this, he was pleased with the success of the rotation policy, noting that section plans seem not to be needed, with section leaders making informal arrangements.

Bowings: section leaders must get together – the process is taking too long at the moment.

Finally, Stefan wound up by urging everyone to keep working hard!

10/05 Initiatives for increasing ticket sales

Phil Ellwood opened by reminding members that sales of tickets was the most important factor in the overall success of concerts and the general financial health of the orchestra, and that fluctuations in sales made a much bigger impact than other factors, such as subscription levels. He urged everyone to be bold with his or her circle of contacts and really 'push' ticket sales for our concerts.

Ideas forthcoming from the floor were:

Cath Barnes: Have 3 for 2 offers. (It was noted that St George's have a 'buy 10 get 1 free offer').

Stefan: BCO members could do 'leafleting' activities at other orchestral concerts.

John Broggio: Use local soloist like Allan Schiller and Roger Huckle. Although these people may cost more in fees, they would bring their local followers along, thus boosting ticket sales.

Linda Bearpark: use a form to get feedback from concertgoers.

Committee: prize draw (£10 voucher) – was implemented last term.

The committee will now look at all these ideas.

11/05 Keeping track of orchestral parts

Mike Parks said (prior to the AGM) it was up to Section Leaders to organise their sections and ensure music was returned after concerts. Tim Barrett remarked that we had lost quite a lot recently, but fortunately this hadn't cost too much in money terms. John Broggio informed that at other orchestras music is allocated to a desk and the occupants of the desk are expected to agree responsibility between them. *The committee will look at this idea.*

12/05 Concert Dress – review opinions of 2004-2005 experiments

After the experiments during the 2004-2005 season, feedback from the floor was requested. The following comments were made:

Stefan said that the all-black arrangement was definitely the best, from feedback he had received.

Terry Evans remarked that although he was originally against the move from DJs to open-neck black shirts for men, he is now pleased we made the change. Michael Taylor also said he was pleased with the change.

Cath Barnes told us that her friends had remarked that the 'coloured tops for ladies' concert looked a mess.

Wendy Lewis felt that if we were to try a 'coloured tops for ladies' concert again, we would need to use co-ordinated shades of the same colour, rather than a mixture of colours.

A proposal was made to carry on with the all-black dress code for women. Men will continue with the black open-neck shirt arrangement. This proposal was carried. (Prop: Linda Bearpark; Sec: Geraldine Roberts). The possibility of wearing (co-ordinated) coloured tops for a special occasion will be discussed if the need arises.

13/05 Any Other Business

1. Wendy advised us that our nominated charities for 2004-2005 had benefited very well from the retiring collections. We had received letters and e-mails of thanks from both charities: Julian Trust (£428); and Cancer Research UK (£298 + £286 = £584 in total). For 2005-2006, the charities are: 'Macmillan Cancer Relief', for Dec 05; 'Bristol Cancer Help Centre', for Apr 06; and 'SHIPS – Supporting Head Injured Pupils in School', for Jun 06.

2. The Christmas Party is confirmed: Micawber's, Mon 5 December, tickets £6 - available soon.

3. Phil advised that concert tickets will be available next week and posters should be available too, but there was a slight risk on the latter, owing to us still not knowing the name of the Philips work.

[Post-meeting note: The name of the new work has been announced ("Far Fantastic Bells: A Poem for Orchestra") and the posters will be available on 10 October. PE].

4. Nigel announced that Stefan, Nick and Joke de Vin would be performing a recital at the Wigmore Hall on 19 May 2006.

5. Andrew advised that tonight was the last opportunity to add to or edit the new membership list before he goes to print with it.

The meeting was closed at 10.20 pm.

PE 10/10/05