

MINUTES

The Berlioz Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Berlioz Society,
held on Tuesday 4 April 2023
at 6pm BST, remotely via Zoom

Present:

Alastair Aberdare (Chairman)	Diana Bickley	Anne Bongrain
Jonathan Burton	David Cairns (President)	Linda Edmondson
William Edmondson	Ed Elsey	Olivier Feignier
Christopher Follett	Martin Grossel	Gethin Hopkin
Simon Jones (Notes)	David Lucas	Shelagh Marston
Peter Payne	Helen Petchey	Martin Price
Adam Ridley	Julian Rushton	Lucie Sims
Molly Skardon	Alan Taylor	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Adrian Brown	Peter Curbishley	Stuart Hamilton
Gareth Jones	Tim Moorey	

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM, HELD ON 21 APRIL 2022

2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous AGM.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 SECRETARY'S REPORT

4.1 Membership of the Society stands at 187. Although this represents a reduction, it is a gentle one and a straw poll of other music societies shows the trend is general rather than specific to the Berlioz Society. That said, it needs addressing and any thoughts from members would be gratefully received.

4.2 The June meeting at Adam and Biddy Ridley's home made a very welcome return in 2022, beginning with an illustrated talk on 'Troy' by Andrew Shapland, co-curator of the 2019 British Museum exhibition 'Troy: Myth and Reality'. In the afternoon, David Cairns gave a tribute to Josephine Veasey, accompanied by

- reminiscences and excerpts from the 1963 Chelsea Opera Group production of *Les Troyens*.
- 4.3 The Festival Berlioz 2022 took place in La Côte Saint-André in late August. Alastair has written in detail about many of the highlights in the Bulletin. Pieces performed included *Béatrice et Bénédict*, two Prix de Rome cantatas, *La Mort de Cléopâtre* and *La Mort d'Orphée*, and *Tristia*.
- 4.4 The Members' Weekend last November, held as usual at the Art Workers Guild, focused on the women in Berlioz's life. Concerning his great loves, David Cairns spoke about Camille Moke and Peter Bloom about Marie Recio (Harriet Smithson having been covered during the Shakespeare Weekend). Pascal Beyls explored Berlioz's special relationship with his sister Nancy. Linda Edmondson spoke on Pauline Viardot, one of the great mezzos of the 19th century who collaborated closely with Berlioz, and Clair Rowden focused on mezzo-soprano Anne Charton-Demeur, who sang the roles of *Béatrice* and *Didon* in the 1860s.
- 4.5 Live performances of Berlioz songs were performed by Finnish mezzo-soprano Aino Konkka accompanied by Diana Bickley at the keyboard. Malcolm Sinclair was once again the voice of Berlioz, reading letters (translated by Bulletin editor Julian Rushton) with Shelagh Marston as the various female correspondents.
- 4.6 Dinner was held on Saturday evening at the nearby Montague on the Gardens Hotel, when David Cairns reminisced about his life in relation to Berlioz.

5 TREASURER'S REPORT

- 5.1 Deficit £3,450 – previous four years, cumulative surplus of £5,000,
- 5.2 Income from subscriptions slightly higher in 2022. Slightly inflated.
- 5.3 Weekend deficit. Zoom has been quite successful as a means of including members remotely in future events.
- 5.4 Audiobook – low sales, hope for increase with new avenue Spiracle.
- 5.5 Gift Aid. The claim on 2021 subscriptions (£680) was received in the current year, 2023, and would otherwise have increased revenue.
- 5.6 Increased postal charges and the engagement of a new typesetter have combined to drive up the costs of producing the Bulletin.
- 5.7 A donation of £1,000 for the Society had been made to the Berlioz 150 project *Fantastique! for schools*.
- 5.8 Overall, the financial position for 2023 looked good, with an anticipated surplus of £750.

6 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- 6.1 The Society had moved bank accounts from Coutts to NatWest. As a result of problems involved in this move, four Committee members (David Cairns, Christopher Follett, Shelagh Marston and Julian Rushton) had decided to stand down as trustees. They wished to remain as Committee members – however, under the current terms of the Constitution all members must be Trustees.
- 6.2 Any change to the Constitution must be agreed by Society members. The Committee therefore sought agreement from the meeting to allow all current Committee members to continue in their rôles in anticipation of a specific amendment to the Constitution being tabled at the next AGM.
- 6.3 This was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

- 6.4 The Members' Weekends have been a major feature of the Society's year since 2003, but recently they had become more expensive, more difficult to organise and less well attended. Whilst everyone wanted to continue the tradition of an annual get-together, a one-day format may be the way forward.
- 6.5 The Committee was also looking at using modern communications technology to hold online events such as Webinars.
- 6.6 If any members had ideas for attracting younger members these would be gratefully received.
- 6.7 Another major event for the Society, the 'Ridley Day' at Adam and Bidy Ridley's home in Fulham, would be held this year on 25 June.
- 6.8 The Bulletin, under Julian Rushton's superb editorship, continues unabated.
- 6.9 A very sad event had been the recent death of Nicholas Snowman, a loyal Society member. An astonishing career included founding the London Sinfonietta, heading the Southbank Centre, Glyndebourne and the Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg and he was the recipient of both the OBE and the Légion d'honneur. For the Society he was editor of the Bulletin in the 1960s and he was also a Trustee of Berlioz 150. He will be hugely missed.
- 6.10 Simon Jones will be standing down as Secretary by the next AGM.
- 6.11 Alastair Aberdare intends to retire from the Chair by the end of this year. He has greatly enjoyed being Chairman, but was delighted to announce Diana Bickley was willing to take on the rôle. She has great enthusiasm and experience within the Committee.
- 6.12 The Committee is always willing to welcome new members. It is not necessary to take a particular office.

7 ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

- 7.1 No nominations having been received for any Committee positions, the existing Committee expressed its willingness to serve for the next year.
- 7.2 The Committee as re-elected was as follows:
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| • President | David Cairns |
| • Chairman | Alastair Aberdare/Diana Bickley |
| • Vice Chairman | Adam Ridley |
| • Treasurer | Martin Price |
| • Secretary and Website Manager | Simon Jones |
| • Membership Secretary | Peter Payne |
| • Editor of the Bulletin | Julian Rushton |
| • Media Manager | Christopher Follett |
| • Weekend Coordinator | Helen Petchey |
| • Summer Event Coordinator | Shelagh Marston |
| • Technical Advisor | William Edmondson |
| • Member without portfolio | Linda Edmondson |

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Alan Taylor informed the meeting that a documentary, 'Viola; the unsung hero', presented by Ruth Gibson, begins on Easter Sunday on Radio 3. It is highly likely to touch on Berlioz's relationship with the instrument.

- 8.2 Avril Godfrey had informed Helen Petchey of a performance of the Te Deum at St Alban's Cathedral on 15 July.
- 8.3 The subject for the coming Members' Weekend would be 'Benvenuto Cellini'. This is likely to be the last traditional Weekend, but it will also be available to members who wish to engage online through Zoom.

The meeting finished at 6:45 pm. It was followed by a video recording of a performance of the Te Deum directed by Claudio Abbado at the Alte Oper, Frankfurt in 1992. The musicians were José Carreras (tenor soloist), Martin Haselböck (organist) with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna State Opera Choir, the Prague Philharmonic Choir and two children's choirs, Aurelius Sängerknaben and Tölzer Knabenchor.