

MINUTES

The Berlioz Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Berlioz Society,
held on Thursday 15 April 2021
at 5pm BST, remotely via Zoom

Present:

Alastair Aberdare (Chairman)	Pierre Achard	Diana Bickley
Anne Bongrain	Adrian Brown	Jonathan Burton
David Cairns (President)	Linda Edmondson	William Edmondson
Ed Elsey	Olivier Feignier	Christopher Follett
Piero Gasparini	David Glynn	Martin Grossel
Gareth Jones	Simon Jones (Notes)	Peter Payne
Helen Petchey	Philip Petchey	Martin Price
Adam Ridley	Julian Rushton	Lucie Sims
Molly Skardon	Nicholas Snowman	Alan Taylor
Jenny Toomey	Martin Toomey	Maynard Wheeler

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Shelagh Marston	Stuart Hamilton	Mark Noble
Humphrey Norrington		

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM, HELD ON 18 JUNE 2020

- 2.1 Alastair Aberdare asked whether anyone would object to the meeting being recorded. No objections forthcoming, the recording went ahead.
- 2.2 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous AGM.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1 2.2 The planned massed choir event had been put on hold once again, due to the uncertainty resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 3.2 3.5 The Festival Berlioz, cancelled last year, was rescheduled for August this year.
- 3.3 5.4 The Society's Members' Weekend was likewise cancelled in 2020 but will hopefully run this November.
- 3.4 5.6 The audiobook of David Cairns' translation of the Memoirs of Berlioz, narrated by Malcolm Sinclair, was produced but due to technical obstacles Glassboxx were not the final producers.

4 SECRETARY'S REPORT

- 4.1 All the Society's scheduled events for the past year had been cancelled in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, as had all public gatherings including concerts and the Festival Berlioz in La Côte Saint-André.
- 4.2 The Festival will hopefully run this year, from 17 to 30 August, with the theme "Berlioz ou le Retour à la vie", apt in view of last year's cancellation – with the anticipated highlight a concert performance of the second part of Les Troyens - Les Troyens à Carthage - conducted by François-Xavier Roth. Details were due to be made public on 4 April but this had not yet happened.
- 4.3 Membership of the Society had fallen slightly to 196, in part down to the lack of recruitment opportunities afforded by physical presence at live LSO Berlioz performances. Gift Aid forms had been sent to relevant UK members. Once in place, Gift Aid allows charities such as the Society to claim 25p for every £1 donated by UK taxpayers.
- 4.4 One very positive development during this period of disruption had been the Society's production of an audiobook version of David Cairns's translation of Berlioz's Memoirs, narrated in masterly fashion by Malcolm Sinclair and published via Findaway Voices. Unfortunately ACX, Amazon's audiobook outlet and the world's largest distributor of audiobooks, were demanding time-consuming changes to the layout before they would circulate it, but this was being resolved. The Memoirs could still be purchased directly from the Society through Authors Direct, using details available on the Website.
- 4.5 David Cairns had continued to produce Bulletins of the usual superb standard throughout the lockdown, Adam Ridley then arranging distribution with the printers, Blissetts. Five members had written to express their appreciation to the Society for continuing to send out such high quality material despite the present difficulties.
- 4.6 In the (hopeful) absence of any further obstacles, there should be a Members' Weekend this year over the weekend of 20 and 21 November. The subject, "L'enfance de Berlioz", would focus on the composer's early life and influences.
- 4.7 Assuming the relaxation of restrictions allowed concerts to resume, details would be posted on the website.

5 TREASURER'S REPORT

- 5.1 With free funds of more than £19,000 the Society was in a very healthy financial position.
- 5.2 Income from subscriptions was markedly lower in 2020 than 2019, as many members paid their 2020 subscriptions during the previous year.
- 5.3 The audiobook of Berlioz's Memoirs was made possible mainly due to a bequest from long-term Society member Michael Wright, along with other donations totalling £4,600. Initial expenditure covered the recording itself and a copyright fee for using an LSO recording as introductory music.
- 5.4 Gift Aid was expected to bring in over £500. Any received as part of audiobook donations would be recorded separately.
- 5.5 The other main expenditure during 2020 had been production and distribution of the Bulletins. Costs for the physical production of the issues remained stable but postal charges kept increasing. A possible future option would be to offer members the option of notices and Bulletins in electronic format.

6 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- 6.1 Alastair Aberdare began by thanking his colleagues on the Committee for their hard work over the past year: David Cairns for producing issues of the Bulletin to a continuing high standard; Adam Ridley for arranging their distribution so efficiently; Martin Price for his fastidious handling of the Society's finances; Peter Payne for maintaining contact with the members during the pandemic; and Simon Jones for his duties as Secretary and the arrangements for the audiobook.
- 6.2 When the audiobook was distributed by Amazon it would be accompanied by a new marketing drive. If members had any ideas in this area they would be very welcome.
- 6.3 The Committee had been looking into the possibility of hosting webinars, comprising talks and discussions by Berlioz experts on various aspects of his life and work. As well as being available to members across the globe, these could also be made accessible to a wider, and hopefully younger, audience.
- 6.4 Berlioz 150 was set up in 2019 as a registered charity devoted to creating opportunities for large numbers of young people to enjoy classical music and singing, both for themselves and in order to assure the future audience for classical music. Under the generic title "Fantastique!", projects underway included the largest ever children's choral event ever held in the UK; and free online resources, based on Berlioz's life and works, for teachers to deliver key elements of the music education curriculum in an engaging and practical way. Five lessons were available and soon to be piloted.
- 6.5 The Society was therefore in good shape and heart despite the trials of the past year.
- 6.6 David Cairns thanked Alastair Aberdare for his hard work in the rôle of Chairman.

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 Adrian Brown proposed that the Committee be re-elected. This was seconded by Nicholas Snowman, and passed unanimously by the meeting.
- 7.4 The Committee as re-elected was as follows:
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| • President (and editor of the Bulletin) | David Cairns |
| • Chairman | Alastair Aberdare |
| • Vice Chairman | Adam Ridley |
| • Treasurer | Martin Price |
| • Secretary (and Website Manager) | Simon Jones |
| • Membership Secretary | Peter Payne |
| • Media Manager | Christopher Follett |
| • Weekend Coordinator | Helen Petchey |
| • Summer Event Coordinator | Shelagh Marston |
| • Member without portfolio | Linda Edmondson |
| • Member without portfolio | Julian Rushton |
| • Member without portfolio | Diana Bickley |

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Adam Ridley would be able to organise a “Ridley Day” at short notice if it became possible, possibly around early August.
- 8.2 Olivier Feignier informed the meeting of a new CD of works by Auguste Morel, a good friend of Berlioz from the 1830s on. Titled “Mélodies, scènes et romances”, it is available on the Forlane label.
- 8.3 Alan Taylor asked what further developments were planned as part of the Berlioz 150 project. Future Berlioz-related teaching resources might be based on one or more of his vocal works, such as *Béatrice et Bénédict* or *Roméo et Juliette*.

The meeting finished at 6 pm. It was followed by a showing of a section of Leonard Bernstein’s 1973 lecture series “The Unanswered Question” focusing on the innovative aspects of the “Roméo seul - Grande fête chez Capulet” movement from *Roméo et Juliette*.