

MINUTES

The Berlioz Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Berlioz Society,
held on Thursday 21 April 2022
at 6pm BST, remotely via Zoom

Present:

Alastair Aberdare (Chairman)	Diana Bickley	Adrian Brown
David Cairns (President)	Linda Edmondson	William Edmondson
Olivier Feignier	Christopher Follett	Martin Grossel
Terry Heard	Gareth Jones	Simon Jones (Notes)
Shelagh Marston	Peter Payne	Helen Petchey
Martin Price	Julian Rushton	Chris Sims
Lucie Sims	Alan Taylor	Jenny Toomey
Martin Toomey	Peter Curbishley Woodford	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Jonathan Burton	Jim Hart	Natividad Jimenez
Anne Dolbey Jones	Adam Ridley	

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM, HELD ON 15 APRIL 2021

- 2.1 Alastair Aberdare asked whether anyone would object to the meeting being recorded. No objections were raised and 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 There were no matters arising.

4 SECRETARY'S REPORT

- 4.1 Relaxation of Coronavirus-generated restrictions meant there were some activities to report in 2021.
- 4.2 The Festival Berlioz in La Côte Saint-André in August was aptly named 'Berlioz ou le Retour à la vie'. Highlights included Berlioz en Italie, a concert comprising the Corsaire overture, the cantata Herminie (with soprano Sophie Koch), and Harold en Italie, with the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire conducted by Pascal Rophé with viola soloist Sindy Mohamed. Véronique Gens sang Berlioz's cantata La mort de Cléopâtre with the Orchestre National de Metz conducted by

- Constantin Trinks. The highlight came on the Sunday evening with François-Xavier Roth and his Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz – Isère giving a magnificent performance of *Les Troyens à Carthage*. The cast included Isabelle Druet as Didon, Julien Dran as Iopas and Mirko Roschkowski as Énée (the role he took in the 2019 production of *La prise de Troie*).
- 4.3 The Musée Berlioz mounted a splendid exhibition on *Les Orientales de Berlioz*, as well as an international seminar on ‘Berlioz, Flaubert et l’Orient’ with contributions from Cécile Reynaud of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Peter Bloom and Anastasiia Syreishchikova.
- 4.4 2021’s Members’ Weekend, ‘L’enfance de Berlioz’ last November was a welcome return to form after the hiatus of 2020. Several speakers were able to attend via conferencing technology, including David Cairns who opened the event with a fascinating talk on Berlioz’s early years, and Pascal Beyls who explored the complex relationship between Berlioz and his father. Henrik Löwenmark introduced the Czech/French composer Antonin Reicha, counterpoint tutor of Berlioz at the Paris Conservatoire. Julian Rushton gave an excellent talk on the Prix de Rome Cantatas, and Peter Bloom concluded the first day guiding us through Berlioz’s ‘Year of Medical Studies’. The guest speaker at the dinner was award-winning international concert pianist, lecturer, writer and musicologist Emilie Capulet. David Charlton opened Sunday speaking on early musical influences on Berlioz, after which Julian Rushton and Diana Bickley gave a presentation on the early songs. Both these talks were illustrated with live performances. Alastair Aberdare interviewed Nicholas Kenyon, and then updated us on the progress of *Berlioz 150*. The Weekend concluded with Jim Hart, Peter Payne and David Cairns introducing their favourite Berlioz recordings.
- 4.5 Membership of the Society remained at 196, having seen three new arrivals and three departures.
- 4.6 The audiobook version of David Cairns’s translation of Berlioz’s *Memoirs*, narrated by Malcolm Sinclair, continued to sell steadily if not astronomically. The largest global distributor, ACX (Amazon’s audiobook outlet), only allows audiobooks to be published in parallel with another format. To remedy this the Society is negotiating with Everyman, publishers of the hard copy, with a view to sharing their Amazon page. The *Memoirs* can still be purchased directly from the Society through Authors Direct, and details are available on the Website. This is the preferable option from our point of view as we receive a higher proportion of the profit.
- 4.7 Julian Rushton has taken over from David Cairns as editor of the *Bulletin* and the latest edition, 214, marked his debut. The superb standard set by David (and admired by many other music societies) has been splendidly maintained. Thanks are due to our printers, Blissetts, for the very high quality of the editions, and to Adam Ridley for his organisational skills in ensuring speedy and accurate distribution.
- 4.8 In the coming year, the Spring meeting will return on 12 June, the subject this year being Troy. The Members’ Weekend will be held this year on 26 and 27 November, focusing on ‘The Women in Berlioz’s Life and Imagination’. Details of both events will be issued nearer the time.

5 TREASURER'S REPORT

- 5.1 2021 was a year when the Society began to return to normal as the Coronavirus pandemic disruption lessened. The November Weekend event was able to go ahead and the result was financially satisfactory with a deficit of £393 (to which should be added the expenditure of £242 made in 2020), with slightly reduced member participation, but with costs which were largely fixed. No Spring meeting was held in either 2020 or 2021. Martin Price thanked Helen Petchey for the work she put in to make the Weekend such a success.
- 5.2 Subscription and donation income in 2021 was exceptionally high, although as reported last year, the 2020 income was lower than normal as many 2020 subscriptions were paid in late 2019. Audiobook sales were lower than hoped as described in the Secretary's Report, to which are added in the accounts summary Gift Aid reclaim on donations made in 2020 (tax deductible members contributions).
- 5.3 No Gift Aid reclaim on 2018 subscriptions and donations was made in 2019 and reclaims for both 2018 and 2019 were made in 2020, resulting in a high figure. The lower figure reported for 2021 represents the reclaim for the single year 2020. A donation of £500 was made to the Berlioz150 organisation to contribute to development of their classical music learning programme *Fantastique! for Schools* (<https://fantastique.school/about>).
- 5.4 Overall the Society made a surplus of £1,119 against a deficit of £1,124 in 2020, and remains in a strong financial position with free funds of £20,272.

6 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- 6.1 Berlioz 150 has a target to get the *Fantastique!* programme into 150 schools by the end of 2022 - which will cost an estimated £82,000. This is a considerable sum but steady progress is being made. A second set of resources, to be devised soon, will focus on vocal music and will probably use *Béatrice et Bénédicte* as its base.
- 6.2 The programme for the 2022 Festival Berlioz, in the composer's birthplace of La Côte-Saint-André, is due to be published next month. Details will be posted on the website when they are known.
- 6.3 A new development the Committee is looking into is the creation of webinars, involving Berlioz experts in conversation. These should increase the Society's profile. This would ideally be in place by the next AGM.
- 6.4 The Society currently has historically banked with Coutts: however they announced their plan to introduce a tariff later this year. To avoid this the Society is looking to change bank details, but this would entail changes to any standing orders set up by members.
- 6.5 Julian Rushton had taken over editorship of the Bulletin from David Cairns. The Chairman thanked both David, for setting such a high standard, and Julian, for continuing to produce publications of the same quality.
- 6.6 Sadly, three Berliozians had died in the previous year: Margaret Bond, longstanding Society member and member of Chelsea Opera Group; Pierre Achard; and Josephine Veasey, who gave such powerful interpretations of the rôle of Cassandre with the Chelsea Opera Group, at Covent Garden and on the 1969 Colin Davis recording of *Les Troyens*.
- 6.7 The Chairman thanked all members of the Committee, and reminded everyone that new members were always welcome to come on board.

- 6.8 The Committee in turn thanked Alastair for his untiring efforts on behalf of the Society.

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 position of Bulletin Editor had been omitted from the list of officers sent out to members. It was now included.

- 7.3 Gareth Jones proposed that the Committee be re-elected. This was seconded by Alan Taylor, and passed unanimously by the meeting.

- 7.4 The Committee as re-elected was as follows:

• President	David Cairns
• Chairman	Alastair Aberdare
• 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
• Member without portfolio	Linda Edmondson
• Member without portfolio	Diana Bickley

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Olivier Feignier announced the release of a new CD containing a pianistic tribute to Berlioz, due to come out in June. He will send further details.

- 8.2 A new production of *Les Troyens* was slated to premiere in Munich in May. Peter Payne wondered whether there was any information available about this.

- 8.3 Martin Toomey asked whether the the Society could use the St Paul's performance of the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* as an opportunity for publicity. Chris Follett would investigate but felt that a table may not be made available for this, as this was unique to the Barbican (so far).

- 8.4 Following up on Berlioz 150, Alan Taylor had contact with two Scottish orchestras. He will approach them to see the level of interest, and report back.

The meeting finished at 6:45 pm. It was followed by a streamed performance by the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, of the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale*, from 2013. An encore by mezzo Héloïse Mas (*Ascagne* in *Les Troyens à Carthage* at La Côte Saint André in 2021) singing the aria 'O ma lyre immortelle' from Gounod's first opera *Sapho* was an additional 'lollipop'.