



Annual General Meeting Wednesday 3rd November 2010

Minutes

Present: Ross Bridges, Eloise Carpenter, Jon Cooley (Secretary), David Coronel, Helen Davies, Catherine Dimmock, Nim DiRicci, Pippa Fotheringham, Polly Fox, Pippa Hashemi, Gemma Juma, Anita Laybourne, Richard Miller, Sharon Moloney (Chair), Brendan O'Neill, Andy Robinson, Godfrey Salmon, Nicky Wallace, Richard Whitehouse, Isobel Williams (Treasurer), Jane Willis Latimer, Gillian Wood

In attendance: Simon Hewitt Jones (Leader), Lindsay Ryan (Conductor), Malcolm Sentance

1) Apologies

Received from Marie Burkhart, Kevin Cody, Alex Fleming and Marianne Inman

2) Chair's Report

See attached

3) Treasurer's Report

Main points:

- Noted that we still owe rehearsal venue for 2 terms (cheque not cashed yet)
- Noted that Lindsay is still working for free as our conductor and it is thanks to her that we are in the black
- Approval of the 2009-10 accounts proposed by Godfrey Salmon and seconded by Catherine Dimmock and Richard Whitehouse
- Hoped that gift aid income in 2010-11 will be higher than budgeted

4) Musical Director's Report

See attached

5) Changes to the constitution

Following discussion, the following changes to the constitution were proposed by Richard Whitehouse and seconded by Jon Cooley:

5b becomes "The officers shall be the Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian".

Insert a new clause in between 5b and 5c which will read "Ordinary members may also be elected to the Committee, to a maximum of 5" (number chosen to match the number of officers, but this clause means we could get away with having no ordinary members if necessary)

Clause 7 becomes: "The accounts of the Orchestra shall be audited annually if the turnover exceeds the threshold specified by the Charity Commission at the end of the financial year. In this situation, an official auditor shall be appointed by the Committee and his appointment shall be ratified at the Annual General Meeting. If the turnover is below the specified threshold, the Committee shall conduct an internal audit of all accounts. In both cases, the audit must take place within 6 months of the end of the financial year."

6) Election of committee members

The following were elected to serve on the committee for 2010-11:

Chair: Sharon Moloney (proposed by Nim DiRicci, seconded by Catherine Dimmock)

Vice-Chair: Jon Cooley (proposed by Godfrey Salmon, seconded by Eloise Carpenter)

Secretary: Catherine Dimmock (proposed by Jon Cooley, seconded by Pippa Fotheringham)

Treasurer: Isobel Williams (proposed by Gemma Juma, seconded by Jane Willis Latimer)

Librarian: Alex Fleming (proposed by Nim DiRicci, seconded by Brendan O'Neill). NB Although absent from the meeting, Alex agreed in advance to stand for this post.

7) Any other business

No other business was reported.

Chair's Report

It's hard to believe that just one year ago we came here for our first rehearsal wondering what was going to happen and who was going to turn up. It's great to be able to stand here now and say that our first year has been successful and we have built up an orchestra to be proud of.

It really has been a steep learning curve for all of us, with plenty of challenges. We started the year with a concert in memory of Laura Howard, a friend of Lindsay's who had recently died of cancer. Amongst other things, we learnt how hard it is to fix a string section, sort out lighting issues and generate an audience – issues that we have continued to learn about ever since! At our second concert in March we had acoustic issues and seating arrangement issues, and then for our third concert in July we developed an outreach programme adding another aspect to our work and giving us a whole new learning experience. In addition, we had a last minute venue crisis when it was revealed that the church had double booked us with a wedding – giving us a crash course in crisis management and negotiation skills.

Despite all of these challenges, we have been able to make good music with an excellent group of people who are all willing to put the work in and to "muck in" on concert day. It has been hard going but with help from all of you we have been able to pull it off. It really is your orchestra, you have all done part your part in helping to make it so and we are very grateful to you for that. We now have a core membership of around 30 and it is steadily growing. Thank you to all of you for being part of this orchestra, and especially those of you who were here from the beginning and who have stuck with us all the way.

It seems wrong to single any of you out but I feel I must. So special thanks to the committee - Alex, for sorting out all the music, Iso, for handling all the money and Jon for being an excellent Secretary. Outside of the committee, thanks must go to Malc for maintaining the website, and David who supplies us with percussion instruments at every concert. And of course to Lindsay, whose vision this orchestra was and who continues to lead us with passion and enthusiasm.

As I've already said, this is your orchestra, so please do let us know any suggestions you have and any repertoire you would like to play. I encourage you to stand for the committee if you would like to become involved in helping to run the orchestra. Thanks once again to all of you for an excellent first year, and hopefully many more years of music-making to come.

Musical Director's Report

A year on, I reviewed the blog posts that I've written about Harmony Sinfonia on MusBook:

Most people's responses to starting an orchestra have been positive, with many "Wow! That's fantastic!" to "Wow, really?". My responses have generally been a huge smile, and "Yes, really."

So, how do you get a group of random musicians together to be a part of something new, in a borough which isn't particularly good at promoting new artistic ventures? The answer so far, has been the power of the internet and advertising, and some wonderfully enthusiastic committee members - some of whom are practised at starting groups. The committee's undying devotion to the idea of getting Harmony Sinfonia off the ground has certainly inspired me to shake off any negativity - what if no one comes? What if they think I can't conduct? What if we go bankrupt trying to put on one concert? The committee have been steadfast in their vision, and from that I have learnt a lot already.

I met Marin Alsop, the female conductor in charge of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra among others, in December at an NYO event, one of the Bernstein project. Her response to Harmony? "Fantastic! That's the way to do it!"

We've certainly faced some challenges starting a new orchestra in London. Apparently you need 80,000 people to support an amateur orchestra, according to the lovely woman in the Guardian who has rediscovered amateur music in her own right.

In positive terms, we made a tiny profit on our first concerts, and had wonderful feedback from audience members and musicians. We also have been awarded a substantial sum from the ward of Brockley in Lewisham to provide workshops in primary schools. Our biggest challenge is membership - it's still fluid, and fluctuates every rehearsal. We need a really strong bank of string players to count on, as our wind and brass are very strong players, and deserve to have equal footing in the balance of sound. Everyone has a great time at our rehearsals - the vibe is enthusiastic, enjoyable and quality! It's not often you get this combination.

It was fascinating to read over these blog entries - I'm by no means a regular writer, but they give a flavour of what was happening at the time, at least in my mind!

My goals this year are to consolidate our membership, performance venue and core audience. Personally, it would be great to get HS to the point where it could pay a conductor's salary, but that time will come! Other important issues are funding and sponsorship, as well as our fledgling outreach programme - we have the capacity and energy to do a lot in this regard, but without funding either from the public sector or private donation it makes it incredibly difficult. If anyone has any contributions to make towards the orchestra in terms of ideas for outreach, repertoire, concert venues, marketing and fundraising, please know that the committee are incredibly approachable and would love more contributions.

Overall I'd like to thank the committee for their hard work and devotion to a shared vision of an amazing orchestra. We've worked our butts off this past year to get to this point, and right now, I'm even more excited about our future than this time last year!