

Minutes of the 2014 AGM of the Anton Bruckner Choir

Held at 5.30pm on 22 February 2014
at the London Inter-Faith Centre, 125 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6RG

34 members were present.
Minutes taken by Gordon Banner.

1. Approval of Minutes of 2013 AGM

Proposed by Charlotte Nicklin, seconded by David Willink, passed nem. con.

2. Treasurer's report – Graham King

Graham reported that the Monteverdi concert had been an outstanding financial result – a profit of £1300.

He remarked that that was the benefit of selling out: £1300 represents the sale price of the last two rows of seats, so all the others were needed just to break even. That profit looked handsome, but we should bear in mind that the next big concert, the St Matthew Passion, would be an expensive concert, with large costs for orchestra and soloists.

Graham thanked Will Hale for administering GiftAid and Sian Rees for the Friends, both of which helped the finances.

Looking at the financial results page, Graham noted a few items needing explanation:

- The value for depreciation of scores was negative, meaning that the music collection had actually gained value (owing to a donated copy!)
- There were outstanding credits shown because at the moment the figures were taken, we had an outstanding cheque sent to one of the Monteverdi soloists (now cashed) and a couple of early subscriptions for the March 2014 concert.

So the summary was that this had been a much better year than expectations, with much more money left in the bank account – but we needed to hold this for “investment” in the Bach next year.

Rosemary Hadfield asked about expectations for the upcoming concert, but Graham didn't have any strong guess – it would very much depend on ticket sales on the door.

Approval of the accounts was proposed by Alex Churchill, seconded by Aidan Liddle, and passed nem. con.

3. Chairman's report – Samantha Job

We had only given one concert in 2013, but what a concert! We needed to use the same tactics and effort to sell tickets for smaller concerts...

Sam expressed her thanks to everyone for their help, though it wasn't possible to name everyone who had helped out, whether serving tea, moving chairs... In particular though:

- Richard Hubbard – thanks *in absentia* for the website, which was so helpful in the running of the choir and saved so much effort for the committee and helpers.
- Sian Rees for running the Friends
- Carolyn Steel, who was now standing down from the committee, but had done so much for publicity for the Monteverdi
- Philip Pratt – having taken over the venues management this year, had now got everything booked for the next 18 months.
- Graham King – every penny managed and accounted for
- Gordon Banner – manic scribbling on the minutes
- Emma Anderson – super programmes for the Monteverdi, which had actually made money from the sales
- Lulu Chivers – for holding everything together, including the conductor!

Sam made a general appeal to everyone: please do volunteer for stuff, even if it's only small; if lots of people take on small things, it spreads the load.

She was glad to note that Anne Mitchell and Anna Moses had offered to share Librarian duties, but there was a gap for a Publicity officer since Carolyn Steel had stepped back. Karen Gilbert indicated she might help.

Sam went on to suggest that we had a problem – we were victims of our own success, with the choir now over 50 members. "What size we should we be? Should we have different size lists for different occasions?" She asked members to think about it...

Sam then spoke about Pauline Thompson, and the enormous contribution she had made to the choir over a long period. She had shown such dignity through to the end, and it had been wonderful that she was able to sing the Monteverdi. We now hoped to do a great concert for her. This would be a very important event for us – so everyone should try to make all rehearsals.

Lastly Sam thanked our Musical Director, Chris, for all his effort choosing and arranging the programmes, as well as conducting – "the reason we're all here".

4. Musical Director's report – Chris Dawe

Chris started with the previous concert – the Monteverdi Vespers. This had been the third time we had performed it. He thought the previous occasions (in St Clement Danes) had been fine concerts, but this one had been the best yet. The choir had sung sensitively – and did not oversing the orchestra. The soloists and orchestra had been hugely impressed by the quality of the choir.

He went on to discuss the size of the choir. We used to have 40-ish for smaller concerts, but now around 50 – a significantly larger choir. This was leading to problems with repertoire – Tudor stuff might be off limits to a choir of this size, likewise intricate chamber music. We might end up with too much recycling of the limited repertoire that was suitable. Of course some repertoire would still be OK for us – Finzi, Bruckner, even (surprisingly) some Poulenc, Rachmaninov Vespers – but the Poulenc *Figure Humaine* for example would be too virtuosic, and the size could start to limit us. He would like to do more early/Tudor and contemporary music. We had discussed it in committee, with no obvious solutions. This was a tricky problem – any thoughts from members would be welcome.

Chris added his thanks to various people – the old committee under Alex, and the new committee who had come in with fresh ideas. Although we had had a sabbatical period, we had “kept the show on the road”. In particular he thanked Sam for her energy as Chairman, and Phil for his super-efficient work as concert organizer. Many thanks to all the volunteers doing stints in the little roles too. And lastly he remembered Pauline and noted the huge hole left by her.

On to the memorial concert for Pauline. This consisted of her “desert island discs”, and would introduce her favourites to people who wouldn't normally come to such a concert. It would include *Spem in Alium*, the Martin *Mass*, the Tippett *Spirituals*, Poulenc, and more. The Bach *Ruht Wohl* at the end would be for everyone to participate.

We would use an abbreviated form of the normal ABC rehearsal schedule. Pauline had left money for music and other costs, and it would be held in St Sepulchre's church.

Graham remarked that the concert would effectively be Pauline's funeral – she had left her body for scientific research so there had not been a conventional funeral.

Lastly Chris mentioned the Autumn programme for October 11th. It was planned to consist of Italian and German items – Schutz, Brahms (maybe *Warum is das Licht Gegeben*), perhaps Monteverdi madrigals. We would have a cittern player for accompaniment.

5. Appointment of Committee

The proposed Committee was as on the Agenda, with the addition of Karen Gilbert.

Approval was proposed by Rosemary Hadfield, seconded by Frank Taylor, and passed nem. con.

6. Any other business

The topic quickly reverted to the topic of the size of the choir, and became an open discussion. Please note that many of the suggestions below were offered in the spirit of floating all possible ideas, rather than as definite recommendations.

Georgia Lowe and Rosemary Hadfield suggested dividing into two groups for some items – where each group would take a turn to sit out some pieces.

Graham warned it would need careful stage management as people went on and off. Ruth Harris remarked that Londinium Voices did this successfully.

We discussed the logistics of partial rehearsals where some people would not be involved in certain pieces – could this be arranged with staggered lunch/coffee breaks? We already do this occasionally with all-female or all-male pieces, but it could become awkward if taken too far.

Rosemary remarked that size did slow things down, because the core (who knew a common repertoire) were a smaller proportion of the group.

Georgia wondered if interspersed readings (as we used to do) and instrumental interludes would help with the logistics of swapping places.

Judy Elias asked if choosing a smaller subset would be on a first-come-first-served basis? Chris replied: to some extent yes, but he would obviously need to balance parts, for numbers and strength of voices. Phil noted that the mailing list was about 120 people.

Gordon remarked that this used to work “magically” where the smaller concerts attracted a smaller choir – what had changed? Karen wondered if perhaps this was because now we usually only do two 2 concerts per year

Mark Stedman mentioned that the BBC Chorus had a points system to award places, but Rosemary thought that was unduly complex – “don’t go there!”

Examples of “list choirs” were mentioned – The Joyful Company of Singers and the Holst Singers.

Sam felt that we don’t want to have our repertoire dictated by our size.

Emma Anderson asked if we could do more multi-part music to split up the group.

Abi King suggested running one large concert and two smaller ones with separate choirs.

The discussion did not reach any firm conclusion. We adjourned with the request that any further ideas should be sent to the Committee.