

# BELSIZE BAROQUE

## HIRING THE ORCHESTRA

### **Introduction**

This is a short guide for choral societies and other groups who'd like to hire the orchestra.

### **About Belsize Baroque**

Formed in 2002, Belsize Baroque is one of the leading amateur baroque orchestras based in London. It is comprised of young professionals, students and committed amateurs. The orchestra performs on period instruments in an historically informed style. It collaborates regularly with leading baroque directors to give orchestral performances as well as working with choral groups.

### **Getting Started**

The most important thing is for you to give us plenty of notice, and precise details of your schedule and logistics. This will allow us to respond quickly, letting you know whether it's feasible and the costs involved.

Before we can do any kind of fixing, you need to:

#### **1. Finalise your Programme**

Decide on your major works, so you know what instruments you need. Obviously if you substitute one string concerto for another, nobody will mind, but if you suddenly need extra instruments, it will be difficult.

#### **2. Finalise your Schedule**

We need to know the *start and stop times of all rehearsals*, and when we're expected to be in place for the performance itself.

We don't need a movement by movement schedule at this stage, but we do need to know which sessions will involve which sections. Something along the lines of "strings from 11 to 1, lunch at 2, wind at 3, tutti at 4" is detailed enough. If we don't have this information, it is almost impossible to fix players, and this will increase costs. We will provide you with a pro forma rehearsal schedule.

#### **3. Leave Plenty of Time**

Give us plenty of notice, *at least three months*, but if you're planning something particularly large (e.g. *Israel in Egypt*) we will need longer.

Bear in mind that seasonal works (in particular, Easter and Christmas) will need to be planned the best part of *six months in advance*, as both venues and musicians will be in short supply.

### **Logistics**

You'll need to make some decisions about logistics:

- how big a string section — don't forget to check for unusual distributions (e.g. French music typically needing only one violin section, but two or three viola sections)
- edition — who will provide, how will it be distributed to the players (we have access to a number of music libraries, but hire costs will need to be added to the bill)
- preferred amateur to professional ratio — we normally engage a pro as leader, plus principal cello if necessary — but for high profile gigs some people prefer a pro at the head of each section

- keyboards — decide whether you need harpsichord, organ, or both — we can provide keyboard players, but generally will not provide the instruments, although we can put you in touch with people from whom they can be hired
- virtuoso parts — some parts, for example, trumpet solos in Bach cantatas will require experienced professionals
- space — will it all fit in your performance and rehearsal venues?
- Rehearsal venues – you will need to provide a rehearsal venue at your cost.
- parking — we will need somewhere to deliver keyboards, percussion etc
- concert dress — unless otherwise informed our standard is all black
- changing area — will there be one or will the orchestra need to arrive dressed to play?
- music stands — are they provided by the concert/rehearsal venues or do players need to provide their own?

### **Costs**

The costs are going to depend on

- how many professionals are required and at what level, and whether they're required for additional rehearsals
- hire costs for the edition if we're providing it
- how many keyboards need to be hired, tuned, and/or trucked around
- seasonal factors (in particular, if we're in "Messiah Season")

### ***Contracts and Payment***

When the costs are agreed, we will provide you with a contract letter, to be signed. Payment is normally expected in advance of the performance.