

WIMBLEDON CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 3rd October 2016 at The Space, Wimbledon Library, Wimbledon

The meeting began at 19.30 with Sarah Hendry in the chair and approximately 125 members in attendance.

Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 5th October 2015

Approval of these minutes was proposed by Colleen Spalding and seconded by Neil Dennis. The minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer thanked Annette Cowley who has taken over as Independent Examiner of the accounts. Income for 2015 had been significantly enhanced by the concert at the Royal Festival Hall. As a result comparable income for the year ended 30 June 2016 was lower. Membership numbers had also fallen to a more manageable 180 leading to lower income from subscriptions. For the first time the music library has made a profit by hiring out scores from the choir's stock of music. The Treasurer thanked the Librarian, Vicky Isaacs, for her work on developing this initiative. The Golden Circle film generated £1500 in fee income but also resulted in a big increase in accruals as the money for the Golden Circle choir was received and paid to the singers over the year end. For the year ended 30 June 2016 the choir generated net income of £1461. The committee decided to place £19000 into restricted funds to pay for the commission of two works – a requiem by Cecilia McDowall and a carol by Chris Hutchings. The Treasurer commented that the tenor bursaries are currently paid from reserves but it is hoped that sufficient income will be generated in future years to cover these from income. The appeal to fund the project for a concert hall in Wimbledon raised £2400 from choir members which the choir increased to £4000. Members were once again encouraged to sign gift aid declarations.

The adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts for y/e 30 June 2016 was proposed by Gillian Clarke, seconded by June Gilmore and carried unanimously.

The Treasurer proposed that subscription rates for full members be increased to £132 (£130) and to £66 (£65) for registered unemployed/under 26's. The rate for full-time students will remain at £25. The subscription rates were proposed by Christine Evans, seconded by Corina Scott and carried unanimously.

Election of Executive Group and Officers

The following officers were proposed for election to the Executive Group of the Committee: -

Sarah Hendry	Chairman
Christine Evans	Vice-Chairman
Deborah Raymond	General Secretary
John Bright	Treasurer

These elections were proposed by Martin Wake, seconded by Tilly Richardson and carried unanimously. The role of Publicity Officer remains vacant.

The following officers were proposed for election to the Committee: -

Vicky Isaacs	Librarian
Laura Stewart	Membership Secretary

These elections were proposed by Janis Guthrie, seconded by Gwen Clayton and carried unanimously.

The following Voice Representatives were proposed for election for a two-year term: -

Helen Edwards (Sop 2)
Diana Tsung (Alto 1)
Andrew Oliver (Tenor)
Jeremy Collis (Bass 2)

These elections were proposed by Sally Hopkins, seconded by Ashley Spalding and carried unanimously.

Music Director's Report

Neil thanked the choir for an amazing year of music making. He also thanked the outstanding team on the committee who make his job such a delight. A number of points emerged from the strategy Day in May. Neil will be working on making the audition process more approachable. 2 sections will be heard in the summer of 2017 with the remaining 2

sections to be auditioned the following summer. It is noticeable that a number of members have been having singing lessons. He is also considering ideas such as scrambled seating for some rehearsals and learning more pieces from memory for a concert performance. Neil commented that Wimbledon Choral is acknowledged as one of the leading choruses in London. A belief that is backed up by what he hears at gatherings of other choral directors. The commission of a requiem from Cecilia McDowall is a serious statement by the choir and he thanked all those who had taken part in the committee for the commission. Neil finished his report by thanking Michael Higgins who is such an important part of the rehearsal process and one of the best accompanists in the business.

Summary of survey results

Dominic Beecher gave an overview of the findings of a survey conducted amongst choir members in the summer of 2016. He commented that 115 replies had been received and that it was hard to summarise such a wide variety of responses. There was no consensus on favourite concerts or musical works. In general, members enjoyed performances which sold out and singing in major venues. The choir was split on whether the 2 ticket rule should be lifted or higher subscriptions introduced. The main problem with the rehearsal venue was identified as the lighting. The choir's website was viewed as a strength and some respondents submitted ideas for improvements/additions. On the social side, over 80% said that they knew between 6-20 people in their voice part and a fair percentage agreed that they knew a reasonable number of people in other voice parts. The annual quiz and the Ceilidh held in 2015 were both popular events. On being asked why members liked the choir, a reasonable number cited working with Neil and Michael. They also enjoyed belonging to an excellent choir with a friendly membership.

Chairman's Report

- This report was the Chairman's first Annual Review since being appointed at the 2015 AGM.
- Although membership had dipped after the choir's centenary year, the choir continued to draw in new members.
- The last season had included a stretching programme of music including the challenge of Bach's Christmas Oratorio and the enjoyable Rossini's Petite Messe Solonelle which had received our first professional review. The Ikons concert, which included singing in church Slavonic, was demanding but rewarding. Other music opportunities during the year included our participation in the Festival of Remembrance (organised by Neil Dennis), ABCD conduction courses, and the Requiem to Cancer event run by Simon Wood.
- Sarah is keen to foster the choir's local roots which was demonstrated by participation in the Merton "Sing Xmas" CD, the Raynes Park Christmas Festival, the tree festival at Wimbledon URC and the remembrance ceremony at the Wimbledon war memorial.
- Sarah thanked all those who volunteered for the choir and detailed a long list of people who helped with all the different tasks and ensured the smooth running of the choir.
- There is much to look forward to in the coming season including the Festival of Remembrance, the Brandenburg Festival and being part of the stage choir for the BBC Big Sing.
- The Strategy Day covered many topics including the future direction for the choir, potential venues, and new opportunities. One aim could be to perform in a large central venue at least once a year. Additional community involvement in the form of participation in the Wimbledon International Music Festival, collaboration with the Merton Music Foundation and providing support for the new concert hall was also discussed. Involvement in events staged by other organisations will be continued ensuring that participation is shared amongst the membership. Consideration will be given to creating a members area on the website.
- A Publicity Officer is in the process of being hired to run the choir's marketing effort. Damian O'Malley has been assisting in identifying and appointing someone to this role. The choir will have to pay for this service but it is hoped that this will be recouped by increased ticket sales at bigger venues. If the choir does manage to grow its audiences to a significant extent, it may not need to be so dependent on the 2 ticket rule.
- Sarah invited questions and comments at the end of her report. A point was made that to help set up chairs in The Space, it would be helpful to have a set layout and a trolley. A suggestion was made that to help determine who was buying tickets, a code could be used on publicity flyers. Sarah added that the new Publicity Officer should be able to help the choir understand its audience and where it comes from. A question was asked about the number of members in the choir. There are about 180 members of which around 150 perform at any one time in a concert.

Any Other Business

1. Before the AGM, members had been asked to submit nominations for the charity which would benefit from a collection at the end of the 2016 Christmas concert. 7 nominations were received and members were asked to vote for their preferred option at the end of the AGM. Friends of Perseid School received the most votes.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20.30.