

WIMBLEDON CHORAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 2nd October 2017 at St Mark's Church, St Mark's Place, Wimbledon

The meeting began at 19.30 with Sarah Hendry in the chair and approximately 120 members in attendance.

Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 3rd October 2016

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

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Music Director's Report

Neil commented that it had been another wonderful year both musically and socially. He thanked the committee for its willingness to embrace new projects such as October's Singfest. He also thanked Michael Higgins for his leadership and contribution to the music team and the new addition to the team, Sarah Burston. He highlighted the work of the choir's librarian, Vicky Issacs, the membership secretary, Laura Stewart, and the voice reps and thanked them for all their work. He expressed his appreciation to the whole choir for their understanding on his move to the BBC Symphony Chorus and for their continued readiness to grow, learn and embrace a challenging repertoire. The choir has a couple of exciting seasons ahead culminating in the performance of a commissioned work at the Royal Festival Hall in May 2019. Neil added that he was always open to suggestions for additions to the repertoire. Reviewing comments from last year's AGM, he noted that those who attended the tour to Tallinn had performed the Arvo Part from memory. He will aim to include scrambling in one of the pre-Christmas rehearsals.

Chairman's Report

- Sarah thanked Neil for his report and commented on how varied and challenging the programme had been in the past season.
- The 2016/17 season included a varied concert programme of French Gothic, Christmas carols, Monteverdi Vespers and the AnthemFest. The Vespers were a highlight and the reaction to the performance had been ecstatic and spontaneous.
- The choir commissioned a carol from a young composer, Chris Hutchings, which was enjoyable but challenging to perform. Another carol has been commissioned for Christmas 2017.
- Other highlights of the year were the tour to Tallinn, very ably masterminded by Christine Evans, and participation in the Brandenburg Festival. Although the choir has not been invited this season to participate at the Festival of Remembrance, it was included in the BBC Big Sing at the Royal Albert Hall for the first time. In July the choir promoted a joint concert with the Central Band of the Royal British Legion at G-Live in Guildford. The audience, choir and band enjoyed the programme although the concert lost money due to the small audience.
- Sarah added her thanks to the music team and to Neil for his inspiring leadership.
- Last year's AGM reflected on the results of the survey which had identified a wish to perform in bigger venues, highlighted mixed views on the 2 ticket rule and a desire to attract a wider audience. Addressing some of these ambitions has involved taking a few calculated risks. Last season the choir returned to Cadogan Hall which is expensive to hire and involved a lot of hard work to fill the 900 seats. G-Live in Guildford was used for the first time in July and it was a struggle to sell seats. The Royal Festival Hall has been booked again for May 2019 for the performance of a new work commissioned by the choir. Everyone will have to make an effort to sell seats for that concert. To increase the choir's profile and develop a local audience, Alex Gray was employed for a year although this has not continued. The choir was also involved in the project to build a concert hall in Wimbledon and in Merton's bid to be London borough of Culture in 2019. October's SingFest, promoted by the choir, aims to raise the profile of music and singing in the borough and will succeed if everyone works to support it.
- 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.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer thanked Annette Cowley who once again acted as Independent Examiner of the accounts. For the year ended 30 June 2017 there was a deficit (negative net movement in funds) of £4844. Income from subscriptions increased by £1000, the anticipated loss on concerts was £5000 lower than budgeted but expenditure on administration was up by £6000 due to the costs of employing a marketing professional. The Treasurer explained the difference between restricted and unrestricted reserves and highlighted that £20000 had been committed to the choir's commission of a major work of which £9000 had already been paid to the composer. The adoption of the Annual

Report and Accounts for y/e 30 June 2017 was proposed by Liz Neale, seconded by Colleen Spalding and carried unanimously.

John also discussed the anticipated loss on the G-Live concert which will appear in next year's accounts. He explained that this loss was to be covered by realising some of the gain on the choir's investments. He then responded to questions on the following concerns:-

- The choir's financial liability for events outside its usual 4 concerts a year such as the G-Live concert, SingFest and Brandenburg and the fact that members should be made aware of any additional financial commitments undertaken by the choir. The Treasurer explained that both Brandenburg and SingFest had separate budgets but these events relied on members buying tickets. He admitted that the assumptions on G-Live were over-optimistic and had not anticipated the negative impact of the hot night, relaxation of the 2 ticket rule and performing away from the choir's home base.
- The increase in unrestricted funds. This was due to a gain on the choir's investments.
- The high level of prepayments. This was due to payments made on Golden Circle after the year end.
- Progress on SingFest. Ticket sales on these events were not as high as expected. It was suggested that the choir should talk to the organisers of the Wimbledon BookFest to learn from their experience and expertise.

The Treasurer proposed that subscription rates for full members be increased to £134 (£132) and to £67 (£66) 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 Gwen Clayton and carried unanimously.

Promoting and Marketing WCS

Damian presented an update on this topic. One of his goals is to develop the choir's local profile to increase ticket sales to people unconnected to choir members. The relaxation of the 2 ticket rule at the G-Live concert illustrated how reliant the choir is on ticket sales generated from within the choir. As the choir is no longer paying Alex Gray, the money saved will be used on other initiatives such as a 2 year contract for a poster at Wimbledon station. Another publicity effort has been a leaflet drop within the Wimbledon area prior to a concert. Alexandra Kedward has volunteered to assist with social media and press coverage. Damian appealed to all digital natives to help with social media and spreading the word. The Cecilia McDowall commission, which marks the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death, will also increase the choir's profile. Damian responded to questions on the following issues:-

- The success of the leaflet drop in generating ticket sales. It is difficult to track this although ticket sales are analysed after each concert.
- Efforts made to promote concerts staged outside Wimbledon. The choir liaises with the venue who often publicise the concert in a marketing drop.
- Becoming involved in the Wimbledon Music Festival. There is constant dialogue on this but it is impossible to accommodate the whole choir in the venues used in the Festival.

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
Damian O'Malley	Publicity Officer		

These elections were proposed by Diana Tsung, seconded by Janet Gout and carried unanimously.

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

Vicky Isaacs	Librarian	Laura Stewart	Membership Secretary
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These elections were proposed by Dominic Beecher, seconded by Corina Scott and carried unanimously.

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

Gwen Clayton (Sop 1)	Corina Scott (Alto 2)
Peter Hickson (Bass 1)	

These elections were proposed by Peter Lindsay, seconded by Damian O'Malley and carried unanimously.

Any Other Business

1. For the second year running, members had been asked to submit nominations for the charity which would benefit from a collection at the end of the 2017 Christmas concert. 4 nominations were received and members voted for The Amber Trust based in Southfields.
2. The poor lighting at the church was raised. Dominic Beecher is looking into the issue and possible solutions.
3. Several comments were made about the website and its need for updating. It was agreed that the site needed modernising and that this was an action point for the future.
4. A member suggested that an events coordinator should be found from within the choir to organise the next SingFest.
5. Members were reminded that the church welcomed donations to the hamper in the entrance.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20.57.