

Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting Held at 7.45pm Tuesday 29th November 2016 at the Performing Arts Centre of Wycliffe Prep School

Attendees: Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), Rosemary Robinson (Secretary), John Cooper (Treasurer), Peter Hankins, Judith Morris, Richard Pryce, Pam Thorne, Bridget Fletcher and thirty-six fully paid members of 2016/17 choir season.

1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies.

Nigel Baldwin welcomed everyone to the eighth annual general meeting of the Choral Society as an independent charitable society.

Apologies were received from Angela Scrivin, Sheelagh Witcombe, Alice Adams and Gill Oberlin-Harris

2. Minutes of the seventh AGM held on 1st December 2015

The minutes had been circulated to all members and were approved by those members who had attended the meeting and signed with no amendments.

3. Matters Arising.

Ann Cooper said she believed that the change to the minimum number of committee members had not been approved constitutionally as paragraph 14 of the Society's Constitution states that 14 days' notice should be given to members of the proposed change.

Rosemary replied that members were informed by e-mail of the impending change two weeks prior to the AGM, but as some members may have not received this notice they were asked to advise the committee of any objections to the change by 12th January 2016 and the committee would discuss any further action necessary at their meeting. As no objections were received it was considered that this motion was carried.

To ensure there was no ambiguity, the meeting was asked if there were any objections to the change, and as there were none the amendment stands.

4. Reports

4.1 Musical Director's report.

Chris Swain presented the attached report (Page4) to the meeting, and emphasised the thanks due to Nick Gregory and Adrian Palmer (Wycliffe College & prep school Headmasters), Gemma Russell and Rosie Taylor (Heads of Music) John and Ann Cooper (posters and programmes), Sheelagh Witcombe (selling advertising), Nigel (publicity), James Anderson Besant (accompanist, courtesy of Adrian Partington) Pat Bibby (transporting James) and the committee.

4.2 Chairman's Report.

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report (page 6) to the meeting.

4.3 Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts

John Cooper had circulated copies of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts, the Profit and Loss Summary, Ticket Sales History and Financial Assets documents to members prior to the meeting. He gave the attached report (Page 8) to the meeting.

John explained that the financial results of last week's concert were not yet completed. He also emphasised that the membership had dropped from 105 to 90, with a consequent lowering of income by £900pa

5. Election of Officers and Ex-Officio Committee members

Chris Swain took the chair, and it was proposed by Peter Hankins and seconded by John Cooper that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman. This was unanimously agreed

Nigel Baldwin retook the chair and the remaining officers, John Cooper (Treasurer) and Rosemary Robinson (Secretary) agreed to continue in post. Peter Hankins agreed to stand as Vice Chair.

Chris Swain agreed to continue as Musical Director (ex-officio), and Gemma Russell has agreed to stand as Wycliffe College Liaison (ex-officio)

Sectional reps Celia Harris (Soprano), Patrick Marks (Bass) and Judith Morris (Alto) Julian Plested (Tenor) will continue in their roles.

Val Nesbitt and Roseanne Jamieson will continue as librarians.

It was proposed by Robin Harris and seconded by David Homer that these officers and ex-officio members be elected en block. This was unanimously agreed.

6. Election of Committee members

Committee members Bridget Fletcher, Sheelagh Witcombe, Judith Morris, Richard Pryce, agreed to continue in post.

Caroline Hensley was nominated by Pam Swain and seconded by Bridget Fletcher

Donna Burns was nominated by Peter Hankins and seconded by Nigel Baldwin.

Katie Poole agreed to serve on the committee once her membership is confirmed.

It was proposed by Robin Harris and seconded by David Homer that this committee be elected en block. This was unanimously agreed.

7. Appointment of Bankers.

John Cooper, Treasurer, sought the approval of the meeting to continue with CAF Bank, He explained that the CAF bank (owned by the Charities Aid Foundation) uses HSBC for paying-in and allows payments with dual signatories.

This was proposed by Nigel Baldwin, seconded by Rosemary Robinson and unanimously approved.

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts

The Treasurer stated that the recently re-named GCSD (previously Griffith Clarke), Chartered Accountants, Stonehouse, had again examined the accounts this year and had done so without charge. It was proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Robin Harris and unanimously approved that Griffith Clarke remain as Account Inspectors.

9. Charity Commissioner's compliance

Peter Hankins reported that the Annual Return would be submitted to the Charity Commissioners on line prior to the April deadline.

The following policies can be found on the website:

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals
- Financial Management
- Volunteers
- Complaints
- Conflicts of Interest
- Data Protection
- Risk Assessment and Management

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Social Events:

A Dinner will be held on Friday 3rd February at Egypt Mill, Nailsworth

There will be a trip to Symphony Hall, Birmingham for an *Elijah* workshop on Sunday 19th March

10.02 Patrick Marks requested that the postcode of the rehearsal and concert venues be included on the website. Rosemary Robinson agreed to facilitate this.

10.03 Further to the choir's trip to Slimbridge last winter, Mary Matthews gave an update on the flight of Sacha Dench following the migration of the Bewick Swans.

10.04 Thanks were expressed to Chris Swain for his leadership and the pleasure he brings to the choir members

The next Committee Meeting will be Thursday 26th January 2016 in Queens Road, Stonehouse. There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Rosemary Robinson, Secretary, Wycliffe Choral Society.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Date:

Music Director's Report for AGM 29th November 2016

I think we have to begin by congratulating ourselves on Sunday's concert – I was very pleased with how it went, as I hope you were. As Marin Alsop said in her interview before her Proms performance, Verdi's Requiem is essentially an opera without scenery and costumes, and I think we managed to convey quite a bit of the drama with a fair degree of success. We were aided and abetted in this, of course, by our quartet of soloists, Jessica Robinson, soprano, Beth Moxon, mezzo, standing in at short notice for Christine Byrne who was unwell, Andrew Henley, tenor and Blaise Malaba, all of whom, apart from Beth, were singing their first Verdi Requiem and I think that we will agree that they passed the test with flying colours. Their performance was even more impressive, given that Andrew and Beth has spent 3 hours stranded just outside Paddington in stationary trains due to engineering works overrunning, and didn't arrive at the rehearsal until 5.05, having travelled from Swindon by taxi. That left us just about enough time to go through their solo passages with the orchestra, but we'd had to rehearse all the tricky ensembles without them, which meant that the first time they sang together as a quartet was in the performance. It was a great tribute to the musicianship and professionalism of all 4 of them, that they stayed calm, outwardly at least, and were able to give such splendid performances. Fortunately I had been through the whole work in Cardiff with Jess, Andrew and Blaise a week ago, Christine had a doctor's appointment so couldn't make it – arranging a time when all us were free was a long tortuous process, and I wasn't sure that it was going to come off at all until the last minute, but come Sunday afternoon I was very relieved that I had persisted, as I would have been much more concerned by Andrew and Beth's late arrival, had I not known how good they were. I'm sure that all 4 have great careers ahead of them, and we shall certainly try to entice them back. We also had a great orchestra, including just about all the available trumpeters in Gloucestershire, and I hope that the altos' hearing has recovered from sitting behind the brass and percussion. As you know, I normally do my best to restrain the orchestra, but I took the view on this occasion, that it was all part of the drama, and that I would be wasting my breath anyway. However, I suspect that you would be surprised how well the choir came over, and all the note bashing we had done on the *Libera me* and the *Sanctus* certainly paid off as they sounded really confident. I was particularly pleased also with the unaccompanied passages – *Te decet hymnus* in the first movement and *Requiem aeternam* with the sop soloist in the last, both of which stayed more or less in tune, and the soloistic passages, such as the basses *Dum veneris* and various *Dies iraes* all of which came over very well. Most pleasing of all, was that generally most of you were watching most of the time and sang with heads up, which meant that for the most part we were together which is always a good thing in choirs and the diction was pretty good too so well done everyone. David Stone's recording is available as two CDs.

Our May concert as some of you may remember was a very different kind of programme, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, *Chichester Psalms* and *Zimbe!* It was not to everyone's taste, but I think those who stayed the course found it ultimately one of the most enjoyable and memorable concerts we have done in over 30 years. I was very keen to do *Zimbe!*, not only because it was such a contrast to our usual repertoire which I thought members would enjoy, but also because it was scored for both a children's choir and a semi chorus, and I hoped that we would be able to involve singers from Wycliffe College and the Prep School. Both Gemma Russell, DOM at Senior School and Rosie Taylor, her counterpart at the Prep School, were enthusiastic about the idea, and after some careful negotiation, especially with the Prep School, we managed to get it off the ground. I would like to record officially our thanks to Nick Gregory, the Head of Wycliffe and Adrian Palmer at the Prep school for their support, and to Gemma and Rosie for all their hard work in preparing for the performance – they couldn't have been more supportive and helpful, and both choirs did a great job in the performance. The children and young people absolutely loved it, and I've no doubt that they will look back on it as one of the musical highlights of their time at Wycliffe. We also received very positive feedback from the senior management teams at both schools, and I am confident that they would look favourably on any future combined projects – the problem being to find something suitable, as works with a similar combination are virtually non-existent. There are a few which might involve one or other of the schools, however, and I'll be having a good look at those, Britten's *St Nicholas* for example. The challenge of *Zimbe!* for us was not so much the

notes, though there were a few tricky passages, as the words in a variety of African languages as well as English – *Wai bamba wai* and *Thula mama* embedded themselves in our brains fairly quickly, but others were rather more challenging especially at a fast tempo, and it was only at the last couple of rehearsals by constant repetition, that they began to start tripping off the tongue. The children and young people picked them up like lightning of course, and in the end, all came together with the brilliant Jazz Quintet, to make for a wondrously joyful performance. With hindsight, it was probably a mistake to include the *Chichester Psalms* in the same programme, as the Hebrew words of this made the various African languages seem a bit of a doddle, and in the Bernstein, they were nearly all set to quite challenging notes at a fast tempo, but we just about got there in the end, and it was lovely that we were able to have young Alex Taylor, Rosie's son from the Cathedral as our treble soloist. Alex was joined by two of the Cathedral lay clerks for *Rejoice in the Lamb* and with Will Peart on the organ, the whole concert strengthened our association with the Cathedral. It was also particularly pleasing that the bass soloist was Jack Evans, an Upper 6th Wycliffe pupil and son of Sally-Anne Evans, one of our contraltos.

There's much more involved in putting on successful concerts than the music, of course, and I would like to thank John and Ann for producing such first-class posters and programmes, Sheila and others for collecting all those Adverts and Nigel for looking after the publicity. We are also indebted to those who organized and helped with the front of house, selling tickets, car parking, moving furniture etc. - some of them partners, who are not here this evening - please pass on our thanks. I would also like to thank the small band of folk who spent over 2 hours cleaning up scores this morning – hopefully we may a few more next time. I must also officially thank in his absence, James Anderson Besant, both for his outstanding accompanying and taking the sectional rehearsals, and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit.

When we resume on January 10th, we have another, but very different Requiem to look forward to, that by John Rutter which we last performed in 2004 and if you don't know it, put all thoughts of Verdi out of your mind except that it does have in common some great tunes. The other choral work in the programme is Mozart's *Vespers*, an extrovert and joyous work which is lovely to sing, and the programme will be completed by an orchestral work, which may be Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* played by a Wycliffe pupil – to be confirmed in the New Year. Do encourage anyone whom you think might be suitable and interested to come and join us – they are two very different but equally attractive works. Those of us coming on tour to Riga will perform them 3 more times with James on the organ, when the soloists will be our old friends Mary Morgan and Roland Kitchen, the bass Steve Foulkes who was a memorable Christus in our *St John Passion* a couple of years ago, and our very own Fiona Henderson as the contralto whom I'm very grateful to, for once again taking this on – we're very lucky to have her. I have not made any definite decisions for the 2017 – 18 season as yet, though at some stage in the not too distant future I am keen to do *Elijah*, if finances permit. If anyone has suggestions of other works we should consider, please do have a word with me.

My final thanks go to our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and all members of the committee, who have given of their time and expertise so tirelessly and generously to ensure that we have had another successful and enjoyable year. I would ask you to join me in showing our appreciation to Nigel, Rosemary, John, and all members of the committee in the usual way.

WCS AGM 29 Nov 16 - Chairman's Report

Introduction

If you are like me, you are still getting your breath back from Sunday evening. Chris made the point some time ago how stimulating Verdi's *Requiem* would be to perform - I think we must be most grateful to him for bringing us to the standard we eventually reached. Having the organizational skills and experience that Chris most fortunately has enabled him to find over several months of conscientious work and then contracting the splendid soloists and the large orchestra required. We too, the ordinary members of our choir, can take some credit and have a warm glow for all the many things we have to do to create such a successful evening. So, pats on the back all round. Very well done everybody.

Looking back over the year:

We began 2016 in splendid fashion when 30 of us joined about 1300 other singers in Birmingham's Symphony Hall where, under the direction of Simon Halsey, the Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Chorus, we had a great time one Sunday singing much of Haydn's *Creation* accompanied by the magnificent CBSO. We will be encouraging you all shortly to take part in next year's similar event - this time, elements of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in the Symphony Hall on Sunday 19 March. I can't recommend the opportunity enough.

We all remember the spring concert of course - *Zimbe*, Bernstein's *The Chichester Psalms*, and Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. But we have also done other things including, at Peter Hankins's initiative, an excellent day out by coach last May to Ragley Hall and to Worcester Cathedral. Both fascinating places and much enjoyed by all of us. And Chris has continued to organize Saturday morning walks around the Painswick area

So, several activities which all go to make membership of our choir so satisfying.

A brief mention of activities with other local choirs: Rosemary, Chris and I continue to represent us in meetings of the South Cotswold Choral Group (SCCG) - made up of Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale and ourselves. Several members of our choir took part in the 2016 "Big Sing" in June in Gloucester Cathedral singing Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in the Cathedral. The next major project of the group will be to sing Berlioz's *Requiem*, again in the Cathedral and this time with the City of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, on Saturday 14 July **2018**. During this coming year, on Saturday 29 April, there will be an all-day workshop on the Berlioz *Requiem* in the Cathedral.

Finally, let me turn to Chris and to the Committee and to thank them for all the conscientious work they do to keep our choir afloat. I thank you all especially Rosemary Robinson, our Secretary, and John Cooper our Treasurer, but also all our other colleagues including our librarians, for your enthusiasm and hard work. A lot goes on behind the scenes from selling and fixing ticket sales both before and on the concert evening, advertising, car parking ('special thank you here for David Scrivin

and Brian Witcombe - David will have spent a miserable hour or so out in the cold on Sunday evening), library functions, constructing the programmes for the concerts (and here I must emphasize thanks to John and Ann Cooper and Chris for creating last Sundays' marvelous programme). I would like to particularly thank Shelagh Witcombe too for getting us so much advertising. Other choir members helped to organize outings and walks, set out chairs in the chapel, man the entrance at concerts, decorate Rosemary's Christmas tree in St Laurence's church last week, and not least work so hard to make our after-concert and this evening's parties so convivial (Judith I thank you especially)— and then clearing up afterwards, and putting the Chapel back together late at night when everybody is exhausted. And not to forget this morning's "rubbing out" party - 10 of whom turned up to grind their way through all the very many pencil markings left in the scores.

Also, and I have said it before, we should be particularly grateful to Pat Bibby for collecting and returning our brilliant accompanist James Anderson-Besant from Gloucester every Tuesday evening.

Finally, I thank you for the privilege of being your Chairman over the last year. It has been a pleasure to work with my splendid and hard working Committee and with the other choir members who help to make our Society hum along. Next year, we have much to look forward to not least the trip to Latvia. Thank you everybody.

Treasurer's Report 2015-16

Introduction

I will begin with a few explanations, which will be much the same as for previous years. Many of you will have heard them before, but they are needed for those who are new (or have forgotten).

In their reports, Chris and Nigel have talked mainly of the calendar year now ending. However, the accounts I am presenting are for the financial year which began at the start of July last year and closed at the end of June this year. The accounts themselves have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, which means that they record all transactions taking place during the financial year, even though some of those transactions relate to events occurring in the preceding or following financial years.

Although the accounts are broken down under various headings, again there is no breakdown by event. So that you can see how the various events turned out I have also provided a Profit and Loss Summary for the year. This includes all transactions relating to particular events during the year, whether those transactions were in the financial year or not. It shows, under Original forecast, what we planned at the beginning of the year and under Current, how things actually turned out. Since the accounts themselves do not show clearly the Society's total assets at the year end, I have provided a table that does and that also shows the history to date. I have also prepared a chart and table of ticket sales for our main concerts

The actual figures

We had a satisfactory year financially. Those who were here last year may remember me reporting that for the previous year, like the one before it, we had budgeted for a deficit, in this case of £440 and that the final outcome was a deficit for the year's events of £805.

When planning for last year, the Committee were yet again faced with rising costs as well as the fact that we were already running at a loss. However, the annual deficit had been reduced somewhat, mainly due to our decision the previous year to increase the subscription rate. As a result, we felt able to continue planning for a small deficit, in this case of £337.

The year turned out to be more successful financially than expected and we actually made a surplus of £1160. There was no single major cause for this; many items of expenditure turned out a little lower than expect and many items of income turned out a little higher.

The level of ticket sales for the two concerts was reasonable, but well below the average for the previous three years. If we were able to get back to the level of the best sales for concerts in those years, the Society's income would rise by £1000 a year.

As usual, our turnover was distorted by overseas tour payments. Although technically part of our turnover, for most of the tour payments we are effectively agents of the tour company, just collecting travel and accommodation payments from members and passing them on to the company.

I do not propose to go through the figures in detail, but will be happy to answer any questions at the end.

This year

When planning the year from last July to next June, although we were still running a deficit, we decided to keep our subscription rates unchanged. However, our ticket prices had remained unchanged at £10.00 since the Society's formation. A survey of ticket prices for concerts given by other societies in the area showed that some charged a bit more than us, while others charged a lot more, in some cases more than double. As a result, the Committee decided that an increase to £12.50 was very reasonable.

Last year, I reported that our membership had fallen substantially. Over the last two years it fell by about 10 each year. When planning for this year, we selected a concert program designed to be attractive. Although so far this year membership numbers have risen, they are still well below the level of two years ago.

I still believe that the Society offers excellent value for the subscription we charge and I think that again we should all consider what we can do, both individually and together, not only to encourage more people to join us, but also what more we can do to make existing members feel valued so that they stay and to encourage those who have drifted away to return.

The Society has a lot to offer, but perhaps we could do more to sell those benefits.