

**Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting  
Held at 7.45pm Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
at the Performing Arts Centre of Wycliffe Prep School**

**Attendees:** Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), Rosemary Robinson (Secretary), John Cooper (Treasurer), Peter Hankins, Richard Pryce, Katie Poole and twenty-seven fully paid members of 2017/18 choir season.

**1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies.**

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

Apologies were received from Patrick & Angela Marks, Sally Slee, Donna Burns, Sheelagh Witcombe, Caroline Hensley, Celia Harris, Jenny Lindop, Val Nesbitt, Drusilla Fairgrieve and Sue Alexander

**2. Minutes of the eighth AGM held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

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.**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Musical Director's report.**

Chris Swain presented the attached report (Page 3) to the meeting, and emphasised the thanks due to Gemma Russell (Head of Music for her support and facilitating the junior singers) John and Ann Cooper (posters and programmes and Ann for her support during John's illness), Sheelagh Witcombe (selling advertising), Nigel (publicity), George Gillow (accompanist, courtesy of Adrian Partington) Pat Bibby (transporting George) and the committee.

**5. Chairman's Report.**

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report (page 5) to the meeting.

**6. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts**

John Cooper had previously circulated to all members 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 7) to the meeting.

Fiona Henderson asked for an explanation of the 'unsecured loan' and 'members tuition'. John said that the former was use of his own funds to facilitate quicker movement of funds and the latter referred to the amount of membership fees not eligible to gift aid.

Nigel Baldwin pointed out that we had sold 32 fewer tickets for Elijah than for Verdi with 52 tickets sold at the door. The members sold only 81 tickets in advance, averaging one per member.

It was proposed by Nigel Baldwin and seconded by Fiona Henderson that the accounts be approved and adopted.

**5. Election of Officers and Ex-Officio Committee members**

Peter Hankins took the chair, and it was proposed by Richard Pryce and seconded by Mary Matthews that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman. This was unanimously agreed

Nigel Baldwin retook the chair and the remaining officers were elected by unanimous agreement:

John Cooper (Treasurer) - proposed by Pam Swain, seconded by Mary Matthews

Katie Poole – proposed by Robin Harris, seconded Caroline Segelov

Peter Hankins (Vice Chair and social events) – proposed Rosemary Robinson, seconded Patricia Jones

Rosemary Robinson (Secretary) – proposed Nigel Baldwin, seconded Peter Hankins.

Richard Pryce – proposed by Mary Matthews, seconded by Pam Swain

Donna Burns – Proposed Rosemary Robinson, seconded by Pam Swain

Jenny Lindop – proposed Rosemary Robinson, seconded Nigel Baldwin

Jennifer Thorne – proposed by Pam Thorne, seconded Rosemary Robinson

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 Donna Burns (Soprano), Patrick Marks (Bass) and Caroline Segelov (Alto) Patrick Marks (Tenor) will continue in their roles.  
Val Nesbitt and Roseanne Jamieson will continue as librarians.

### **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. There are four authorised signatories – John Cooper, Katie Poole, Nigel Baldwin and Rosemary Robinson

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

### **8. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts**

The Treasurer stated that GCSD, 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

The data protection regulations are under review in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations which come into effect in May 2018.

### **10. Social Events:**

Peter Hankins proposes to organise two events in the next term:

- a trip to Symphony Hall in Birmingham to sing German Requiem on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and
- a day out in May, possibly to Winchester including a visit to Jane Austen's house.

Further details will be circulated in early 2018.

The next Committee Meeting will be Thursday 25th January 2018, **7.45pm**, at Hilcott, Queens Road, Stonehouse.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 8.40pm.

*Rosemary Robinson, Secretary, Wycliffe Choral Society.*

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Date:

## Musical Director's Report for AGM 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Chris Swain

I think we have to begin by congratulating ourselves on our performance of *Elijah* – I was very pleased with how it went, as I hope you were. As I said at the final couple of rehearsals, I was keen above all else that we should convey the drama, and I think we managed to do so with a fair degree of success. We were aided and abetted in this, of course, by our quartet of soloists, Hannah Swain, Juliet Curnow, Andrew Henley, and James Geidt as Elijah. I was very pleased that we were also able to involve Alex Taylor, a Cathedral chorister and son of Rosie Taylor, DOM at Wycliffe Prep, and 3 Wycliffe pupils who gave up part of their Exeat to sing *Lift thine eyes* and *Holy, holy* with Hannah, for which I would like to thank formally Gemma Russell, the DOM. The orchestra played a major part in the success of the performance too, of course, especially as we only had 2 ¾ hour to rehearse a work that lasts well over 2 hours, and that for the recits, they only had the words in German, which meant that they were totally dependent on watching me for us keeping together.

I'm very aware that you would have had no idea how it all sounded, but in spite of the large orchestra, I can confirm that you came over very well. As you now know, not only is *Elijah* a very long work, it also contains an awful lot of choruses, so with only 11 weeks to learn them all, I have to confess I was a little apprehensive as to whether we would make it in time, and I'm very grateful to all those who come to the Saturday morning workshop back in September, without which I suspect that we may not have done. In the end though, all the note bashing we had done over those 11 weeks certainly paid off, as we sounded really confident throughout, and there were some great moments in both the loud and the quiet passages. Most pleasing of all, was that most of you were watching most of the time, and sang with heads up, which meant that for the most part we were together - always a good thing in choirs, and the diction was pretty good too. I received several emails after the performance of which the following is typical.

I just wanted to congratulate you on the super concert last night. The choir sang really well, and the soloists were great, well done everyone!

More recently some of us were here last Tuesday and sang on Saturday at the Stonehouse Goodwill – we had a reasonable turn out in the end, and our participation was certainly appreciated. I have a letter here from Teresa Watt, chair of the Stonehouse Council:

It seems a very long time since our May concert when, as some of you may remember, we sang Mozart's *Vespers* and Rutter's *Requiem*, and Beth Hiatt, a Wycliffe 6<sup>th</sup> former, played Mozart's *Clarinet concerto*. This was the first time for some years that we have had a pupil playing a concerto, and I'm hoping that it won't be too long before we have another, indeed all being well, it could be in our next concert. I think that we all enjoyed the contrast between the largely extrovert *Vespers* and the more sombre *Requiem*, and although they had their challenges, compared with *Elijah* there was rather less of them, and the rehearsal process went pretty smoothly, leading to a confident performance in which we able to focus on such matters as phrasing, dynamics and diction. Our soloists were old friends Mary Morgan, Roland Kitchen and Stephen Foulkes joined by Juliet Curnow who was singing with us for the first time. Juliet lives just the other side of Stroud and, as you know I had no hesitation in inviting her back for *Elijah*. The relatively small orchestra did a great job for us too, making for a most enjoyable and successful evening.

Some of us then went on to give 3 further performances of the Mozart and Rutter in Latvia. Our soloists were Mary, Roland and Steve joined by our very own Fiona as the contralto and I would like to thank Fiona for once again fulfilling this role with such great aplomb. Our organist was last season's accompanist, James Anderson-Besant, who was both delightful company and did a most amazing job for us. None of us will ever forget our concert in Sigulda when the organ developed a cipher near the start of the rehearsal - no problem says James, I will sort it, and once the key to the organ's innards had been located, he went in on his hands and knees armed with a small torch and did just that, thereby saving the day – he also added a Bach Fugue to the programme for good measure. I subsequently discovered that it was a toss-up whether he was to read music at Cambridge or engineering. Look out for his name – I'm sure that he has a great career ahead of him.

Musically the tour fulfilled every expectation – notwithstanding the cipher, James was pleased with the organs in the 3 churches that Rosemary and I had visited on the inspection visit, and as one of our travelling audience members said, the first concert was good, the second very good and the third excellent. The confidence that comes with singing the same programme more than once meant that by the time of the final concert, people were singing more or less from memory, so that we were able to concentrate on interpreting the nuances in the music which made it immensely satisfying for the choir, not to mention the conductor. Riga itself was a wonderful destination, and as it is fairly compact, and our excellent hotel was perfectly situated, we were able to fit a lot into a relatively short time including 2 trips outside

to Rundale Palace and to Sigulda, so that we saw something of the countryside too. Overall it was a most wonderful tour, and I would like to record our thanks to the 11 extras, largely recruited from other choirs, Gloucester Choral Society, the Cappella Singers and Tyndale without whom it would not have been financially viable, as the per person cost as usual was calculated on a party 50.

Meanwhile back in Stonehouse, 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, and also to take this opportunity to say how delighted we are to see John back amongst us after what has been an extremely difficult period for both him and Ann, and to thank Ann for all she did when John was out of action. We are also grateful to Sheila Witcombe and others for collecting all those Adverts, to Nigel for looking after the publicity, and to those who organize and help 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 nearly 3 hours cleaning up scores last Tuesday. I must also officially thank in his absence, this year's organ scholar George Gillow and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit. I would like to give a special word of thanks to Rosemary who in addition to everything else she does so efficiently, shouldered the lion's share of the work of treasurer during John's illness – we owe her an enormous debt.

Looking forward to 2018, we resume on January 9<sup>th</sup> when we shall start rehearsing Britten's *St Nicolas* which we last performed in 2004. Apart from it being a charming, dramatic and moving work and great fun to sing, it has a major role for a semi chorus which I'm delighted is going to be sung by members of Wycliffe Prep School Choir. The part of Nicolas will be sung by Andrew Henley who did such a good job for us in *Elijah*. The other choral work is *The Five Mystical Songs* by Vaughan Williams which contains some of the composer's most moving and stirring music culminating in the triumphant hymn of praise *Let all the world in every corner sing*, and the programme will be completed by an orchestral work, which may be Bach's E Major Violin *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. I have not made any definite decisions for the 2018 – 19 season as yet but am conscious that after the Verdi *Requiem* last season and *Elijah* this, we will need to keep an eye on our finances. If anyone has suggestions of works we should consider, please do have a word with me - I have already received a strong request for a Bruckner Mass and/or his *Te Deum* both of which we have done before but not for a long time, and as John will know, require a large orchestra.

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.

## Chairman's Report for AGM 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Nigel Baldwin

### Introduction

Chris has just well covered our activities since the last AGM a year ago, so I won't repeat much other than to say how much we seemed to collectively enjoy preparing for and then performing both of our concerts: the Rutter Requiem and Mozart Vespers last May and of course the fantastic Elijah some 10 days ago. Chris does so much to train us and then contract the soloists and the orchestras required, and he puts so much energy into encouraging us. Without his expertise and conscientiousness, we would be lost. On the orchestral point, we are surely lucky to have such talented, mostly local, musicians that add so much to our endeavours. We pay them of course - not too much individually but the costs add up. Last May, the 23 musicians were paid a total of £2300 and the soloists £1350. "Elijah" cost broadly the same so you can see why we try so hard to encourage everybody to sell tickets and appreciate those who get advertising for us. John Cooper, our Treasurer, will talk about money shortly but I can tell you that we run quite a tight financial ship and we don't have an excess of money in the bank. Your Committee's policy is to try to keep member's annual subscription at £70 and the concert ticket price at £12.50 for as long as we can.

### Looking back over the year:

Besides the concerts, we have enjoyed some other activities including a coach trip to one of the Cardiff Singer of the World heats and a couple of Saturday morning nature rambles. I am particularly grateful to Peter Hankins for fixing the Cardiff trip (and bearing the emotional burden of losing two of our members in the back streets of Cardiff at 11 o'clock at night. Wearing another hat, I'm involved with the charity "Combat Stress" - I nearly had to call their 24 hour helpline!). Thank you too Chris for arranging the walks.

But our biggest adventure was the very successful tour to Riga, the capital of Latvia. Again, all mostly organized by Chris. The trip went like clockwork (except for dear Celia and Robin Harris) and I'm sure we all thought it was very worthwhile.

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

On other matters, Rosemary, Chris and I continue to represent us in meetings of the South Cotswold Big Sing Group (SCBSG) - made up of Cirencester, Fairford, Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale, Yate and ourselves. The next major project of the Group will be to sing Berlioz's *Requiem*, in the Cathedral with The British Sinfonietta with Adrian Partington conducting on Saturday 14 July. Some of you will have attended the all day workshop on the Berlioz *Requiem* last April in the Cathedral. When I last checked, about 40 of our choir have signed up for the big day - the maximum size of the combined choirs will be 250.

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 Brian Witcombe), library functions, constructing the programmes for the concerts. Here I must emphasize thanks to John and Ann Cooper and Chris for creating the posters and *Elijah's* marvellous programme - of all the many and varied concerts I go to over the year, our programme is in a class of its own. It must be the best value for £1 in the musical firmament. I would like to particularly thank Sheelagh 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, keep the registers, 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 and Tricia 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 last week's "rubbing out" party - 13 of whom turned up for three hours to grind their way through all the very many pencil markings left in the scores mostly by our choir I'm disappointed to say.

Also, and I have said it before, we should be particularly grateful to Pat Bibby for collecting and returning our two brilliant accompanists this past year James Anderson-Besant and George Gillow from Gloucester Cathedral every Tuesday evening.

Finally, I thank you for the privilege of being your Chairman for another year - it is about time someone took over from me, but 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. Thank you everybody.

Before I turn to John Cooper our Treasurer to tell us about our financial state, I must say how much we on the Committee have admired the way he and Ann coped with John's serious illness which set in nearly a year ago. With a lot of help especially from Rosemary and more recently from Katie Poole, he is now back on top of things as far as our Society is concerned and we are all mighty pleased.

## Treasurer's Report for AGM 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

### **Introduction**

I would like to start on a personal note by thanking the members of the choir and committee for their concern and support when I was unwell earlier in the year. Your good wishes were much appreciated.

I will continue 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 less than satisfactory year financially. When planning the year, although we were still running a deficit, we decided to keep our subscription rates unchanged. However, we did decide to increase our ticket prices. Despite this, we still forecast a substantial deficit for the year, partly as a result of selecting a concert program designed to be attractive, but also expensive. It was hoped that this would address the twin problems of falling membership and ticket sales. As it turned out, membership recovered somewhat, but ticket sales did not; we actually suffered a larger deficit than forecast.

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, we decided to increase our subscription rates by £10, but to keep ticket prices unchanged. We planned to make a small surplus, but to achieve that we needed to improve membership numbers and ticket sales. The results from the first half suggest that we were probably overoptimistic; I have provided a Profit and Loss Summary for the year, showing the results for the first half and the forecast for the second half. I feel we now need to give thought to ways in which we can make the society more attractive, both to members and to concert goers, and I should be glad to hear if anyone has any good ideas.