



**Minutes of Wycliffe Choral Society Annual General Meeting
Held at 7.45pm Tuesday 4th December 2018
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, Donna Burns, Jenny Lindop, Jenny Thorne and thirty-one fully paid members of 2018/19 choir season.

1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies.

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

Apologies were received from Sheelagh Witcombe,

2. Minutes of the eighth AGM held on 5th December 2017

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

5. Chairman's Report.

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

6. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts

6.1 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.

It was proposed by Peter Hankins and seconded by Robin Harris that the accounts be approved and adopted.

6.2 Nigel Baldwin commented that advertisements in the Stroud News and Journal are expensive and asked if any members had joined the Society as a result of the advertisements. Several members confirmed that this was the case.

6.3 Steve Chandler suggested that Facebook is a cost-effective form of advertising, and Jenny Thorne agreed to take on responsibility for keeping the Society's *facebook* and *twitter* messages up-to-date.

5. Election of Officers and Ex-Officio Committee members

Peter Hankins took the chair, and it was proposed by Rosemary Robinson and seconded by Robin Harris that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman. This was agreed by a show of hands and Nigel re-took the chair.

Jenny Lindop agreed to stand as vice-chair, proposed by Nigel Baldwin and seconded by Peter Hankins. This was agreed by a show of hands

Peter Hankins has resigned from the committee, and Nigel Baldwin expressed the Society's gratitude for his work since the society became a charity.

Tricia Floyd agreed to stand on the committee. Proposed by Rosemary Robinson and seconded by Nigel Baldwin. This was agreed by a show of hands

It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by Geoff Hudson and agreed by a show of hands that the remaining officers were elected:

John Cooper (Treasurer)
Rosemary Robinson (Secretary)
Katie Poole
Richard Pryce
Donna Burns
Jennifer Thorne

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. 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 Donna Burns 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 Rosemary Robinson, seconded by Vagn Madsen and unanimously approved that GCSD (previously known as Griffiths Clarke) remain as Account Inspectors.

9. Charity Commissioner's compliance

As Peter Hankins has resigned as a trustee, Katie Poole has agreed to take over the duty of submitting the Charity Commissioner's Annual Return. Peter will assist her with this in January 2019.

10. Social Events:

Arrangements are well under way for a dinner to be held on 2nd February 2019 to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the Choir. This will be held in Selsley Scout HQ and catered by ladies of All Saint's Church as a fund-raiser for the church. The cost is £20 per head and the venue can hold 52 diners. The places therefore initially will be restricted to choir members and one guest. The venue has no license, so guests are invited to bring their own alcoholic beverages.

There is no Symphony Hall 'come and sing' in Birmingham in 2019

The Cardiff Singer of the World takes place 15-22 June 2019, but there are no plans to arrange a choir trip

A choir walk is proposed for 9th March 2019

David Homer asked if there were plans to record Choir concerts. Although this has been done in the past, it is important to ensure that it is safe and not intrusive (no trailing wires and obtrusive microphones). It was suggested that the School's media department may find this an interesting project. Chris Swain will discuss this with Gemma Russell (school liaison).

The next Committee Meeting will be Thursday 24th January 2019.

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:

WCS AGM 4 Dec 18 – Music Directors' Report

I think we have to begin by congratulating ourselves on our performance of *Messiah* – I was very pleased with how it went, as I hope you were. I hope you have also had a chance to read Jenny Baldwin's review, in which she wrote that she couldn't recall us giving a better performance, with which I would certainly agree. We were aided and abetted in this, of course, by our quartet of soloists, Hannah Swain, Juliet Curnow, Andrew Henley, and Bruce Saunders who all did a fantastic job for us, as did our instrumentalists. We are enormously fortunate that pretty much the same players are happy to come back over and over again – they are all brilliant, but I would particularly like to single out George Ewart our leader who now travels from Derbyshire to be with us. George holds everything together and always remains calm when things get a bit rocky, which they can easily do when we have so little rehearsal time. We only had 2 ¾ hour to rehearse a work that lasts well over 2 hours, so except for the recitatives, there wasn't time to rehearse any of the solos complete, so Jenny's praise for the orchestra and the soloists was well justified. She singled out our lead trumpeter, Stuart Ellsmore, for particular commendation and rightly so – *The trumpet shall sound* is one of the most notorious trumpet solos in the whole repertoire – not only for its tessitura and length, but also for the fact that the poor player sits there for nearly 2 hours before playing it.

Not only is *Messiah* a long work, it also contains an awful lot of choruses, and although many members had sung it before, quite a few hadn't, and it's easy to forget just how demanding they are with all those semiquaver runs, so with only 11 weeks to rehearse them, there was quite a lot of the note bashing to be done, but it certainly paid off. We sounded really confident throughout, and there were some great moments in both the loud and the quiet passages – one of Hannah's godmothers who has sung the work with Bristol Choral Society many times from memory, was particularly impressed with the quiet start of *For unto us a child is born*, and there were some other lovely quiet moments, notably *Behold the lamb of God*. Especially pleasing 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. Well done everyone and it was pleasing that we had a good audience to appreciate it.

Working backward through the year, during the summer heatwave, some of us were involved in the SCCG Big Sing, which this year was the Berlioz *Grande de Messe des Morts*. I had not done the work before and am not likely to do so again, as its resources are way beyond anything we could afford or stage, which is why these Big Sings provide such a great opportunity. I think all involved would agree that it was a fantastic experience and I would like to thank our representatives Jenny Lindop, Nigel Baldwin and Rosemary Robinson for their contribution to bringing it to fruition, and in his absence, pay tribute to Jos Gregson without whom these big sings wouldn't happen.

The next one is scheduled for Gloucester Cathedral during the Cheltenham Festival in July 2020 with rehearsals and workshops during June 2020 and is going to be Mahler 8 - *The Symphony of a Thousand*, so do bear this in mind when making your long-term travel plans. Workshop at Crypt School on 27th April next year to whet your appetite.

It's even longer ago since our May concert when, as some of you may remember, we sang Britten's *St Nicolas*, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, and Parry's great anthem *I was glad* to mark the centenary of his death, and the strings contributed Holst's *St Paul's Suite* to complete an entirely British programme. The three choral works were unfamiliar to many, and although technically relatively straightforward compared with *Messiah*, they had their challenges, not least the chorus *Serve the faith and spurn his enemies*, which I still find myself humming at the strangest of times. Overall the rehearsal process went pretty smoothly, leading to a confident performance, in which we were able to focus on such matters as phrasing, dynamics and diction. It was a delight for me to have Bruce Saunders to sing the VW – I had worked with him a great deal during my years in Oxford, and Pam knew him even before that – he conducted our marriage and is one of Tom's godfathers – and, as you will have discovered is a really superlative musician. He gave a great performance as did our adult St Nicolas, Andrew Henley. It was good to have Alex Taylor with us again as the Boy Nicolas, and our accompanist, George Gillow was the organist both for this and the Parry. The orchestra included a piano duet and a large percussion section, which added great colour and interest to *St Nicolas*, and the strings did a great job for us as ever, except for one sticky moment when our principal viola player skipped a line in the *St Pauls Suite*, but overall it was a most enjoyable and successful evening.

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. We are also grateful to Sheila Witcombe, Jenny Lindop 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 those who spent a couple of hours cleaning up

scores last Tuesday, and particularly our indefatigable librarians, Rosanne Jamieson and Val Nesbit, who perform their role with impressive efficiency and cheerfulness, from which we all benefit. I must also officially thank in his absence, this year's organ scholar Chris Too, 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 for all she does not least in keeping us all informed via the weekly newsletters.

Looking forward to 2019, we resume on January 8th when we shall start rehearsing Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* for the first time in our 35-year-old history. Rossini was 72 when it was first performed in Paris and described it as 'the last mortal sin of my old age'. His sense of humour is also apparent in its title, as it is famously neither little, lasting nearly an hour and a half, nor solemn. As one would expect from a composer of operas such as *The Barber of Seville*, it is full of wonderful tunes and, not surprisingly, proved an immediate hit with performers and audiences alike and has continued to be so ever since. We are performing the work in its original highly unusual scoring for piano and harmonium, and if you haven't come across it before, I promise you that you will love it. It requires 4 soloists, and their arias are quite operatic, so those of you who remember our Verdi *Requiem* a few years back, will be pleased to hear that I think I have managed to entice back Blaise Malaba who is currently singing *Porgy and Bess* and Britten's *War Requiem* with ENO. Andrew Henley and Juliet Curnow are also returning, so I just have to finalize the soprano. I have not made any definite decisions for the 2019 –20 but am thinking that it's a while since we did Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor* and indeed Mozart's *Requiem* and if you have suggestions of 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 4 Dec 18 - Chairman's Report

Chris has highlighted our musical efforts over the year and told us what to expect next year. I would just like to add how much we in the choir continue to appreciate his efforts and hard work in leading us in such a satisfying direction. 10 days ago, with a first-class performance of The Messiah, I think we did as well as I can ever recall. And much of that achievement was down to Chris of course.

It seems to me that our choir remains about the right size, but we must continue to seek replacements for those who leave us. We are far better balanced between the four sections than we were a few years ago but we need to continue to gently recruit. We are delighted that Eve Chandler has joined us not least because she can sing in tune, but her presence lowers the average age of the choir quite a bit!

The Messiah is of course a popular and well-known work. The challenge for us in a month's time will be to encourage recent newcomers to stay in the choir as we begin preparing the not so well-known Rossini.

Chris has well covered our activities since the last AGM a year ago, so I just want to say how much we seemed to collectively enjoy preparing for and then performing both of our concerts. You may not realize that Chris does all the work to contract the soloists and the orchestras required. On the orchestral point, we are lucky to have such talented, mostly local, musicians that add so much to our endeavors. We pay them of course - not too much individually but the costs add up. The 21 musicians including the soloists we used to support The Messiah cost us just under £3000 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 continue to run 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 members' annual subscription at £70 and the concert ticket price at £12.50 for as long as we can. The recent experiment of giving a £1 discount if tickets were bought early seems to have been a success; we'll continue it next time round.

Looking back over the year:

Besides the concerts, we have enjoyed some other activities including a coach trip to Symphony Hall, Birmingham to sing Brahms's German Requiem with the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Simon Halsley; and then a day out to Winchester to visit the Cathedral and then to Jane Austin's house in Chawton. I am particularly grateful to Peter Hankins for fixing the trips and rather hope that, despite leaving our Committee, he will at least help us plan any future expeditions. And while mentioning Peter, I would like, on behalf of the choir, to thank him formally for all the work he has done for us all over very many years - from the beginning 35 years ago Peter? He was, of course, my predecessor as Chairman and he knows I am very reluctant to let him leave the Committee. He will shortly become the Society's eminence grise I suspect.

As most of you know, with so much uncertainty around travelling in Europe next year, we decided not to organise an overseas visit although I am grateful to Chris and Fiona who spent quite a lot of time looking into possibilities. On the other hand, we can look forward to a celebratory 35th anniversary dinner on Saturday 2 February in Selsley's Scout HQ - in effect, our village hall. Peter and I will master mind that event - we will advertise it to the choir shortly.

On other matters, we continue to take an interest in the South Cotswold Big Sing Group (SCBSG) - made up of Cirencester, Fairford, Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale, Yate and ourselves. On 14 July, several of us sang Berlioz's Requiem, in the Cathedral. Chris helped train about 50% of the singers over several rehearsals. I am grateful to Jenny Lindop who represents us in Group committee meetings especially when I can't attend.

Finally, let me turn to Chris and to all of the Committee 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 and Katie Poole who helps him and looks after the membership but also all our other colleagues including our librarians

Rosanne and Val for your hard work. A lot goes on behind the scenes from selling and fixing ticket sales (Richard Pryce particularly deserves a pat on the back) 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 (and here I must emphasize continued thanks to Ann and John Cooper and Chris for creating last Sundays' 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 £2 in the musical firmament. I would like to particularly thank Jenny Lindop for getting us so much advertising. Other choir members helped to organise outings and walks, Patrick Marks and David Homer wrestle with Patrick's diagrams and organise the setting out of chairs in the chapel, others man the entrance at concerts and prevent people falling into the unlit pond, Rosanne who helped Jenny and me put up and decorate Rosemary's Christmas tree in St Laurence's church last Friday (if you get half a chance, do visit the church with its over 150 decorated trees for this year's Christmas Tree Festival - it runs all this week and concludes with Community Songs of Praise next Sunday afternoon) and not least those who 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 last week's "rubbing out" party - 15 of whom turned up for over two hours to conscientiously go through all the scores to remove the many pencil markings.

Also, I would like to thank those of you who have taken some of the load from Rosemary and me of collecting and taking back home our young Gloucester Cathedral accompanist and organist Chris Too. Please be prepared to help us next term.

Finally, I thank you for the privilege of being your Chairman for 2018 - as I said this time last 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.

WCS AGM 4 Dec 18 - Treasurer's Report 2017-18

Introduction

I will start 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, ending the financial year with only a nominal decrease in the financial reserve. The figures in the accounts are a little deceptive; although cash funds were significantly lower than those at the previous year end, most of this was due to the liabilities to creditors at the end of the previous year. In other words, the previous year was actually quite a bit worse than it looks at first sight and the 17-18 year was actually quite a bit better than it looks at first sight.

Last year, we were concerned about the twin problems of falling membership and ticket sales. In the year, membership recovered somewhat, although it was still less than we had forecast, but ticket sales fell again. This seems a good point for some comments about the current year. Subscriptions seem to be heading down a little again, however ticket sales for the Messiah concert rocketed, almost breaking our record. It might be useful if members could explain why they were able to sell far more tickets than usual; we could use the information to help with future planning.

I do not propose to go through the figures in detail but will be happy to answer any questions if anyone has any. Thank you.