



Attendees: Chris Swain (MD), Nigel Baldwin (Chairman), John Cooper (Treasurer), Richard Pryce, Katie Poole, Donna Burns, Jennifer Thorne, and 27 fully paid members of 2019/20 choir season.

1. Introduction, Welcome and Apologies

Nigel Baldwin welcomed everyone to the 11th annual general meeting of the Choral Society as an independent charitable society.

Apologies were received from Celia Harris, Rosemary Robinson, and Jenny Lindop.

2. Minutes of the tenth AGM held on 4 December 2018

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 to the meeting

5. Chairman's Report

Nigel Baldwin presented the attached report 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 to the meeting. The accounts had not yet been inspected by the accountants and so could not be adopted at the AGM. It was agreed that a Special General Meeting will be opened in January 2020 for approval of the accounts once inspected.

6.2 Nigel Baldwin commented that advertisements in the Stroud News and Journal continued to be expensive and asked if any of the new members had joined as a result of those advertisements. No members present had done so. It was also noted by Chris Swain that both Stroud News and Journal and the Gloucester Citizen were less inclined to post reports from concerts or articles about upcoming choir events.

7. Election of Officers and Ex-Officio Committee Members

Katie Poole took the chair and it was proposed by Pam Swain and seconded by Pat Lewis that Nigel Baldwin be re-elected Chairman. This was agreed by a show of hands and Nigel re-took the chair. It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by David Homer and agreed by a show of hands that the remaining officers were re-elected:

John Cooper (Treasurer)

Rosemary Robinson (Secretary)

Jennifer Lindop (Vice Chair)

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

Val Nesbitt and Rosanne Jamieson will continue as librarians but expressed a wish to stand down after the Spring term.

8. Election of general Committee members (maximum of 8)

Tricia Lea-Floyd has resigned from the committee.

Pam Thorne agreed to stand on the committee, proposed by Peter Hankins and seconded by David Homer. This was agreed by a show of hands.

It was proposed by Peter Hankins, seconded by David Homer and agreed by a show of hands that the remaining Committee members were re-elected:

Katie Poole

Richard Pryce

Donna Burns

Jennifer Thorne

Sectional representatives Donna Burns (soprano), Caroline Segelov (alto), Richard Pryce (Tenor), and Patrick Marks (bass) agreed to continue in their roles.

9. Appointment of Bankers

John Cooper, Treasurer, sought the approval of the meeting to continue with CAF Bank. There are four authorised signatories - John Cooper, Nigel Baldwin, Katie Poole and Rosemary Robinson.

This was proposed by Christine Browne, seconded by Roseanne Jamieson, and agreed by a show of hands.

10. Appointment of Auditor or Certifying Accountant

The Treasurer stated that GCSD Chartered Accountants, Stonehouse, had agreed to examine the accounts this year without charge. It was proposed by Katie Poole, seconded by Nigel Baldwin and approved that GCSD remain as Account Inspectors.

11. Charity Commissioner's compliance

Katie Poole will submit the Charity Commissioner's Annual Return.

12. Social events:

12.1. Fiona Henderson reported that there had been difficulties booking social events this year - we had missed the group booking deadline for Carmen, there was not enough interest in a week-day trip to the Royal Mint, and other concerts and outings had been prohibitively expensive. It was commented by Ann Cooper that week-day trips were only suitable for retired members and suggested that the choir organize trips for the weekends instead.

12.2. Peter Hankins commented that the social events really added value to the life of the choir and that it was a shame there had not been an outing this year.

12.3. Mary Matthews proposed a Burns Night social event.

12.4. It was suggested that the committee circulate a questionnaire to choir members to find out what they might be able to do for the choir in terms of social events, and what sort of events they might want to join in with.

13. Any other business

13.1. Angela Marks asked about a trolley with wheels for moving the piano. Chris Swain replied that he had spoken to Wycliffe about it, but that the piano is a non-standard size, so trolleys are not commercially available. Angela suggested that somebody local might be able to make one.

13.2. John Cooper remarked that although we are able to attract plenty of new members at the beginning of each term, a large proportion do not stay for the full term. It was commented by several members that reading music is challenging and that we might run a workshop to build sight-singing skills. This might also encourage members from other local choirs, which do not work from scores, to try the Choral Society out. It was noted that the rehearsal aids are priceless. In addition, it was suggested that section representatives find 'buddies' or mentors for new members to make them feel more welcome and valued. John Cooper also suggested that we have more socializing time. Nigel countered that an increase in social time would mean a decrease in rehearsal time, making the Musical Director's job harder. Katie Poole suggested that cold drinks or snacks could be available at the front during the mid-practice break to encourage members to move about and chat to one another.

The next Committee Meeting will be on 23rd January 2020

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 9.00pm

WCS AGM 3 Dec 19 - Chairman's Report

When I began thinking about what to say to you this evening, I reviewed what I said last year. I don't mind now repeating how lucky we are to have Chris as our Musical Director: we would be lost without him, he leads us along paths both traditional and new, and we are all the better for that.

Our spring concert this year, as you will remember, was Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle - a distinctive work with its own challenges - and 10 days ago, we took on Haydn's magnificent The Creation. The latter, I think, was one of the better of our most recent performances not least because of the talented group of soloists and instrumentalists Chris had managed to find but also how well we as a choir were able to support them.

A 'special thank you to those of you who helped to put the concert together with ticket sales (Richard), the creation as always of the most excellent programme (Ann), the control of the finances (John and Katie), and, on the day, the car parking (Caroline Hensley), the seating plan and set up (Patrick), my wife Jenny and Liz Holmes for collecting tickets in the cold draft of the entrance to the Chapel, and Donna for looking after sales of programmes and some of the more fragile audience members, and especially to Pam and Chris for no doubt hosting the soloists. And to all of you who helped set up the Chapel and put it back together again after the performance. And to Rosemary of course for her excellent weekly newsletters which kept us up to speed. And thanks too to Val and to Rosanne for looking after the scores. All round a great team effort - well done everybody. There will be some names I've missed too.

As you know, we concluded the term a couple of days later with the singing of some Messiah and Creation choruses at Stonehouse Methodist Church - all of which seemed to have been appreciated.

John, our Treasurer, will tell us about our financial position shortly but, in sum, we are surviving but don't have a lot in hand. Concert costs are our major expenditure - the best part of £4000 for the soloists and orchestra for The Creation for example. We are very fortunate that, unlike many similar choirs, we are not charged for the use of the Preparatory School and the Chapel. The best value we get for the free tickets I give away before each concert must surely come from those I send to the Head of Wycliffe College and to the Head of the Prep School. I had a supportive and appreciative message from Mr. Nick Gregory, the College Head, immediately after The Creation which made me feel good. Long may that relationship continue.

At the moment, 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 are bought early seems to continue to be a success; we'll continue it next time round. But I am sure you appreciate the emphasis must always be on overall ticket sales and that's where you all come in.

We continue to take an interest in the South Cotswold Big Sing Group (SCBSG) - now made up of Stroud, Thornbury, Tyndale, and ourselves. The next major project for the Group will be taking part in next year's Cheltenham Festival in a performance of Mahler's 8th Symphony in Gloucester Cathedral on Saturday 11 July. The Group is hoping to recruit 200 singers from the various choirs, and I know some of you have already signed up. Chris as usual will be training about 50% of the singers mostly here in Stroud.

I am grateful to Jenny Lindop who represents us in Group committee meetings especially when I can't attend. And also to Rosemary too who recently got me out of a recent clash.

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've already thanked many of you who help make our concerts so successful, so I won't repeat myself other than to thank Jenny Lindop for getting us so much advertising for the excellent programme. Thank you too to Patrick Marks and David Homer for wrestling with Patrick's diagrams and organizing the setting out of chairs in the chapel; also Roseanne who helped Jenny and me put up and decorate Rosemary's Christmas tree in St Laurence's church in central Stroud last Saturday (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 at 4 pm) and not least those of you who work so hard to make our after concert party last spring and this evening's parties so convivial (Judith I thank you especially)— and then clearing up afterwards; and also putting the Chapel back together late at night when everybody is exhausted. And not to forget tomorrow mornings' "rubbing out" party when I hope many of you will turn up to 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 Mary. In particular, Eve Chandler's parents are now transporting her regularly which is a great relief.

Finally, I thank you for the privilege of being your Chairman for the 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.

Nigel Baldwin

Music Directors Report for AGM 3rd December 2019

I'd like to begin by thanking all those who sang at the Methodist Church on Sunday evening and Sue Alexander for inviting us and organising it – I think we all enjoyed having the opportunity to sing some choruses from *Messiah* again on virtually no rehearsal or note bashing. I don't know about you, but I was impressed how well everyone had remembered it – as I've said before, people tend to underestimate how challenging the *Messiah* is, and I think we did a pretty good job. I'd particularly like to thank Katie Poole and Fiona Henderson for their solos and Peter Holmes for joining the trio in *The Heavens are telling*. We were made extremely welcome by members of the church community and much appreciated the refreshments that were laid on for us both before and after the concert – please pass on our thanks to all concerned Sue.

The previous Sunday we had performed the whole of *The Creation* of course, and as I said last Tuesday, I thought we gave a very good performance – the ensemble was good, the dictation was clear, there was some dynamic contrast, and the intonation was pretty good overall – in fact I had no anxious moments in any of the choruses which was very pleasing. We were also very well served by our orchestra and soloists, Hannah Swain, Sam Dressel and Jonathan Pacey who all did a fantastic job – I shall certainly hope to entice them back again.

As to our orchestra, 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 again George Ewart, our leader, who 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 there wasn't time to rehearse any of the solos complete. It was particularly pleasing to have Darcy Beck with us on the timps, she did brilliant job as did her Mum on 1st oboe and her dad on 2nd trumpet – sister Katrina was unable to get home from university on this occasion but I'm hoping that one day, we shall have all 4 of the Becks with us. I have heard lots of positive comments on the whole evening as I hope you have, so well done everyone.

In May, as many of you may remember, we sang Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* for the first time in our 35-year-old history. Rossini described it as '*the last mortal sin of my old age*', and his sense of humour is also apparent in its title, for as those who hadn't come across it before discovered, it is famously neither little, lasting nearly an hour and a half, nor solemn. There is rather less choral work in it than in some works that we have done recently, and I was concerned in advance that there mightn't be enough to keep us busy for 12 or so rehearsals – how wrong I was. I am sure that you will all remember the *Cum sancto spiritu* all 22 pages of it, not to mention the 21pp of *Et vitam venturi* which gave us plenty to get our teeth into. Overall, however, 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. We performed the *Petite Messe* in its original highly unusual scoring for piano and harmonium - Julian Elloway did a great job on the piano and Robert Lucas from the Forest of Dean, both provided and played the harmonium, and I think we all enjoyed the novel duets with which they opened the programme. The solo writing in the *Petite Messe* as you will remember, is quite operatic, and we were well served on the whole by our 4 soloists, 3 of whom had sung in our Verdi *Requiem* a few years back, Jess Robinson, Andrew Henley and Blaise Malaba. They were joined by Juliet Curnow, and although it didn't draw the crowds, 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 Jenny Lindop and others for collecting the 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 give up their time to clean up scores for us, and if you have not yet taken part in this fun activity, you have the opportunity tomorrow Wednesday morning – 9.30 in the Methodist Church Hall – Elm Road. I would particularly like to thank our indefatigable librarians, Rosanne Jamieson and Val Nesbit, who perform their role with impressive efficiency and cheerfulness, from which we all benefit, and Pam Swain who has assisted on number of occasions recently, as Val is very busy caring for her husband who has recently returned home from a spell in hospital. I must also officially thank in her absence, this year's organ scholar Mary Pan, and Adrian Partington, the Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, whose cooperation enables this arrangement to continue to our great benefit, and those who volunteer to drive Mary to and

from rehearsals. I would like to give a special word of thanks to Rosemary in her absence for all she does not least in keeping us all informed via the weekly newsletters. We should also record our thanks to Wycliffe College for providing our rehearsal and performance facilities at no charge and Gemma Russell, Wycliffe's DOM, for organizing the fantastic Faure workshop in September.

Looking forward to 2020, we resume on January 7th when we shall start rehearsing Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* for the first time in our 36 year old history, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, The *Missa Solemnis* is one of the greatest and most thrilling of choral works and needs a big choir, Our chairman has written to his counterparts in other local choral society's inviting any of their members who might be interested in joining us for this one concert, and we have received a trickle of replies, particularly from members of Stroud Choral Society, but we would certainly welcome some more, so do please spread the word. The *Missa Solemnis* should be on all choral singers' bucket lists, and opportunities to sing it do not come around all that often. The soloists will be Jess Robinson, Juliet Curnow, Andrew Henley and Jonathan Pacey, I have not made any definite decisions for the 2020 –21, but I am thinking that we should go for something like Mozart's *Requiem*, which is popular with singers and audiences alike, 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.

Chris Swain

Wycliffe Choral Society

Treasurer's Report 2018-19

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 charts of memberships and of ticket sales for our main concerts.

The actual figures

We had a satisfactory year financially, ending the financial year with a nominal increase in the financial reserve. The figures in the accounts are a little deceptive; although there was a small excess of receipts over payments compared with the large deficit the previous year, our financial performance was actually similar; the previous year's deficit was mostly due to the liabilities to creditors at the end of the year before that.

In planning the year, we were concerned about the continuing problems of falling membership and ticket sales. Unfortunately, membership declined again. Ticket sales were mixed; in the autumn, Handel's Messiah attracted a near record audience, but for Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle they were down to a near record low.

This seems a good point for a brief word about the current year. Subscriptions remain down and ticket sales for the Creation concert were little better than for the Rossini. Your Committee have already discussed ways of making the choir more attractive both to potential members and to audiences. This year, we did attract quite a few new members, but unfortunately most soon left again. I think perhaps that we all need to make efforts to ensure that they feel welcome, to help with any difficulties they may experience and to encourage them to believe that it is well worth persevering.

Finally, 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.

John Cooper