

MINUTES

of the 2011-12 Annual General Meeting of the Whitehall Choir
held at St Stephen's Church, Rochester Row, on Tuesday 10th July 2011, at
6.30pm

In the Chair: *Jonathan Williams*

1. **Apologies:** apologies were received from Alison Williams, Ian Williamson, Katherine Macdivitt, Christina Scharff, Ruth Eastman, Jacky Erwtemann, Maya Freedman, Kate Hand, Danny Tomkins, Graham Hand, Alastair Tolley, Malcolm Todd, Claire Morgan.

2. **Minutes of the 2010 Annual General Meeting**

The minutes of the 2011 Annual General Meeting were accepted as a true record (proposed by *Mark Graver*, seconded by *Helen Audaer*).

3. **Secretary's report**

Liz Walton, Secretary, gave her report on the year's activities. This noted the retirement of Rose Chandler as librarian and the choir expressed their appreciation for the work Rose had done for the choir over the years.

4. **Treasurer's report**

Patrick Haighton, Treasurer, presented figures of the end of year position on the Choir's finances. He explained that while the choir had a small surplus of around £1700 on expenditure against income, that surplus would have been £3500 if the choir had sung to full houses at the last two concerts. His message was that the choir had to sell more tickets. At the St Peters concert only about a third of tickets sold were bought by choir members before the concert and of those a large proportion were bought by a handful of members. Other choirs in central London appeared to manage to sell more tickets for their concerts.

In spite of the need to put more effort into sale of tickets he recommended that the choir should vote to support no increase in subscription. *Ben Nicolls* proposed the vote, seconded by *Kate Goulden*, and the motion was carried. Subscriptions for the 2012-13 season therefore remain at the levels for 2011-12.

5. **Conductor's report**

Paul Spicer, Conductor, made his report on the year's activities. He was thanked for his support throughout the year and especially in arranging young talented soloists for concerts.

Following presentation of the three reports, the floor was opened to discussion.

- a) The choir still needed to focus on recruitment. Paul considered the balance was not bad but would be improved by a few more altos and basses. The choir was asked to distribute the recruitment flyers over the summer. However it

was pointed out that most new recruits come via website searches for choirs in Westminster.

- b) It was agreed the Brahms Requiem Come and Sing with the Whitehall orchestra had been a great success and that a similar joint event should try to be repeated in the coming season. Paul expressed concern about the layout and sight lines possible at St Sepulchre's
- c) The Rossini concert itself at St Peters had been a success. Paul suggested that it could be a suitable venue for a programme using the organ which was well placed for the choir and conductor. However, members felt the church was most suitable for a summer concert when the outside portico could be used for interval drinks.
- d) It was felt that, while most people had enjoyed the workshop with Ghislaine Morgan on July 3, more preparation for such workshops including discussion between the facilitator and Paul on structure and choir needs was needed to ensure the choir got the most out of such sessions.
- e) In order to widen the publicity coverage, Patrick Haighton suggested that all members should provide contact details of those they knew who regularly attended concerts plus others who might be interested. While members were anxious to increase the size of audience the general view appeared to be that such contacts were already alerted to concerts directly by members and that there could be Data Protection issues in circulating e mail addresses.
- f) It was suggested more effort should be made to recruit from civil service departments as there now few departmental choir groups.
- g) The question of press tickets and reviews was raised. Tickets were available and distributed to the press but because of the number of concerts in London critics rarely attend concerts by amateur choirs. The specialist press however sometimes gave reviews as in the case of the performance of Dyson's Blacksmiths.
- g) Members were asked whether they felt there were better or worse days of the week for attracting audiences for concerts. It was concluded that a lot of members preferred not to have concerts at the weekend but that there was little difference in attracting an audience between weekdays.

6. Changes to Choir Constitution

Patrick Haighton tabled a motion recommending changes to the constitution. The changes included:

- a) reference to the choir being a charity with the officers of the choir registered as its trustees responsible for its conduct as a charity
- b) dropping the requirement that one member of the committee being from DTI (now BIS) to wording that requires a member of the Committee to be responsible for formal relations with BIS.
- c) addition of reference to the Jubilee Fund with custodians of the Fund elected at the choir AGM.

Ken proposed the motion supporting these changes and Fiona... seconded it. The Motion was passed unanimously.

7. Committee elections for the 2011-12 season

Philip Pratley was confirmed as the Returning Officer for the elections. Before conducting the election he expressed the thanks of the choir to three members who

for the first time for several years were not among those standing for positions on the committee. These were Laurie Grace, Rachel Nixon and Rose Chandler. He thanked them for their service to the choir and members also showed their appreciation. The choir expressed their thanks to the work of the officers and other committee members over the last year.

Single nominations were received both for the three Officer positions on the Committee, and for all of the other posts. The following members were elected unanimously to serve for the 2012-13 season:

Chairman Jonathan Williams
Proposer Jean Orr
Seconded Jackie Cheng

Secretary Liz Walton
Proposer Polly Fortune
Seconded Jean Orr

Treasurer Patrick Haighton
Proposer Alastair Tolley
Seconded Ben Nicholls

Business Manager (joint) Penny Prior; Katherine Hertzberg
Proposer (jointly) Helen Audaer
Seconded (jointly) Ken Holmes

Librarian: Mark Graver
Proposer Rose Chandler
Seconded William Longland

Publicity (joint) Martin Humphreys; Ruth Eastman;
Proposer Sam Foley; Kate Hand
Seconded Rose Chandler; Rachel Nixon

Webmaster: Richard Grafen
Proposer Ian Williamson
Seconded William Longland

BIS Rep David Rawlings (co-opted)

Sop Rep Kate Goulden
Proposer Kate Hand
Seconded Rachel Nixon

Alto Rep Alison Williams
Proposer Miranda Douce
Seconded Katherine McDivitt

Tenor Rep Alastair Tolley
Proposer Kevin McManus

Seconders Ben Nicholls

Bass Rep Daniel Lambauer
Proposer James Gourlay
Seconders Clarence Moore

Jonathan Williams thanked the Committee for their support to him throughout the year and all those who contributed to the successful running of the choir on a week to week basis.

He announced that James Longford was resigning from his post of accompanist and would leave the choir at the end of the autumn term. An open recruitment for the post would be run in the autumn. The choir recorded their thanks to James for his work with the choir.

8 Any other business

The chair outlined some ideas that were being explored for commemorating the choir's 70th season in 2013. The Committee had discussed with Paul the possibility of holding a competition for a new work by a young composer (under 30) to perform at the Banqueting House Concert in July 2013. Ben Nicholls had agreed to explore and prepare proposals for such a competition to put to the committee in September and would act as a co-opted member of the committee for this purpose.

Paul had also suggested that the choir should work towards another recording, focusing possibly on an Easter theme and if appropriate including the newly commissioned work. He also considered a choir weekend away from London would be positive for developing choir morale.

Members present were supportive of these ideas and the chair agreed to consider options with the committee.

Liz Walton
Secretary