

**Minutes of the Whitehall Choir Annual General Meeting 2018/19 season  
held at St Peter's Eaton Square, at 6.30 pm on Tuesday 2 July 2019**

**Item 1 – Minutes of previous season's AGM**

The Minutes of the 2017/18 AGM were accepted as a true record.

**Item 2 – Music Director's Report**

Jo Tomlinson, Music Director, gave her report – copy attached.

**Item 3 – Chairman's report**

Philip Pratley, Chairman, gave his report – copy attached.

**Item 4 – Secretary's report**

Ruth Eastman, Secretary gave her report. As Ruth brought her time as Secretary to an end, she reflected on the tremendous progress the Choir has made under Jo Tomlinson's direction and on the wide range of tasks the Committee takes on in running our Choir. She also welcomed the Choir's growing ambition, including the autumn concert with Cantus Novus Wein with all the detailed logistic arrangements involved. Philip proposed a vote of thanks to Ruth for her time on the Committee; this was passed with acclamation.

**Item 5 – Treasurer's report**

Patrick Haighton, Treasurer gave his report. The Choir's financial position was satisfactory, with good audience figures for the autumn, Christmas and summer concerts in St Peter's. As a result of the Christmas concert ticket sales, the Choir had been able to make a £1200 donation to St Peter's in support of their projects. Patrick also explained the continuing importance of the Gift Aid scheme. As part of the overall financial balance of the Choir, Patrick had been able to arrange to repay the remaining loan from the Jubilee Fund, and more recently the Choir had also purchased a new piano for the rehearsal room, a project in which we were grateful to Ian Tindale, our accompanist, for his detailed support.

Patrick explained that the ticket sales for the Creation concert in St John's Smith Square were below expectations; only through late sales had they recovered to a level which was manageable financially. Income from ticket sales was directly linked to the financial health of the Choir, and the Committee's aspirations to hold subscriptions at the current levels. The orchestral concert in a season is our major cost and also had to be our main effort for ticket sales. While some members were selling substantial numbers of tickets, it was apparent that others were not selling any. As Patrick was beginning his handover to the incoming Treasurer, he particularly wanted members to understand the importance of ticket sales. Philip proposed a vote of thanks to Patrick for all his work in so many areas and particularly as Treasurer. This too was passed with acclamation.

## **Item 6 – Election of the Committee**

The following officers were elected unopposed:

### **Whitehall Choir Trustees**

Chair – Philip Pratley

Proposed by Rachel Nixon, seconded by Chris Williams

Treasurer – Patrick Haighton

Proposed by Fraser Wigley, seconded by Alison Maydom

Treasurer Elect – Sarah Rollinson

Proposed by Franki Hackett, seconded by Jacky Erwteman

### **Other Whitehall Choir Committee members**

Soprano Rep – Kate Goulden

Proposed by Ruth Eastman, seconded by Fiona Graph

Alto Rep – Anne Courtney

Proposed by Sarah Rollinson, seconded by Gill Carruthers

Tenor Rep – Simon Hunter

Proposed by John Turner, seconded by Patrick Haighton

Bass Rep – Ian Williamson

Proposed by Daniel Lambauer, seconded by William Carruthers

Librarian – Alison Williams

Proposed by Helen Ward, seconded by Jean Orr

Business Manager – Laura Lowenthal

Proposed by Jeremy Lucas, seconded by Laurie Grace

Publicity Manager – Martin Humphreys

Proposed by Laurie Grace, seconded by Fraser Wigley and William Longland

Webmaster – Richard Grafen

Proposed by Ian Williamson, seconded by Jeremy Lucas

Afternote: at an SGM on 10 September 2019, the following officer was elected unopposed:

Secretary & Trustee – Jo Dacombe

Proposed by Hilary Davies, seconded by Daniel Lambauer

### **Item 7 – Election of Jubilee Fund Trustees**

The following were elected, unopposed, as Jubilee Fund Trustees:

Mark Graver. Proposed by Catherine Harnell, seconded by Alison Williams  
Ian Williamson. Proposed by Kate Goulden, seconded by Simon Hunter  
Jacky Erwtaman. Proposed by Gill Carruthers, seconded by Anne Courtney.

### **Item 8 – Opening week of the 2019/20 season and Come & Sing event**

Martin Humphreys will be circulating a promotional video and flyer for the Come & Sing. A request will also be made for choir members to bring cakes. Jo confirmed that attendance at the Come & Sing will count towards a choir member's attendance record.

Jo Tomlinson will be circulating at the beginning of the new season a schedule of rehearsals and full set of cuts in the Messiah, for the performance and the Come & Sing. She emphasised the importance of the Come & Sing day as part of our preparation for the 28 November concert, as well as a workshop day in its own right. Looking ahead to the November concert, Jo said that this would be an exceptional performance of Messiah and that we had outstanding soloists for the performance.

Jo also noted that she needs to be consulted by choir members who cannot make it to the last evening rehearsal before each concert as this is always such an important rehearsal.

### **Item 9 – Open Forum**

The following matters were raised in the Open Forum.

- a. Lesley Raymond wondered what lessons had been learned from the relatively poor attendance at The Creation at St John's Smith Square. There followed a discussion about the ticket pricing policy at St John's. Patrick Houghton explained that St John's have already started advertising the tickets for the Messiah concert using the same policy as for The Creation, which includes more tickets at £35 than the choir would like. One option will be for the choir to sell tickets which we consider too expensive at a discount, even if we might still have to pay St John's their commission based on the undiscounted price. Kate Goulden asked if we could change the block size for difference pricing levels to reduce the number of higher priced tickets. Patrick said that this would not work and Philip explained that the discounting proposal would be considered by the Committee to address the problem.
- b. Daniel Lambauer asked if the choir was going to be asked to learn more by heart. Jo said that she had no particular plans to do this. The main reason why she had asked the tenors and basses to learn a particular piece by heart for the Summer concert was to ensure no-one in these parts kept their heads in their scores, which would particularly inappropriate for this piece.
- c. Kate Goulden raised the problem of inadequate lighting in St Peter's for the last concert.

- d. Lis Warren asked if we could stand more frequently in rehearsals. Jo explained that the problem is that people in the back rows cannot all see. This was why she always tries to have a part of the rehearsal without chairs.
- e. Paula Nobes said that she had enjoyed mixing parts for the Creation and wondered if we could do it again for the Messiah. Jo said that it was probably not appropriate for the Messiah as there was too much polyphony. Equally, it was not be suitable for the Rachmaninov. However, she would do it again if it was appropriate for the music. She also explained that she thought that the adverse comment we had received on-line about the mixing for the Creation was misdirected. The problem with the configuration for the Creation was not so much the effect of the mixing but that the choir was too far back with the sound being lost above the stage. This will be changed in future SJSS concerts, by bringing the choir further forward.
- f. Following earlier discussion of the choir accepting card payments for tickets and programmes, a contactless payment system would begin next term at the Come & Sing.
- g. Jack Joseph asked if the choir had considered selling merchandise and also doing more “rent a choir” performances. There was considerable interest in the idea of merchandise but choir members explained difficulties with respect to “rent a choir” concepts in particular: the cost to the choir; and the difficulty finding suitable opportunities to promote us when this had been researched in the past.
- h. Daniel Lambauer raised the question of alternative venues to St John’s Smith Square. In the discussion which followed the following possible venues were suggested: Cadogan Hall, Grosvenor Chapel, St Martin in the Fields, Marylebone Church, St Mary-le-Bow, Music Colleges, St Mary Abbots. The Committee would investigate these options.
- i. Martin Humphreys explained that he was trying to improve the visibility of our concerts in Whitehall departments, and more generally to attract more civil servants to our performances. He asked people to contact him with any ideas for this. In discussion, members commented in the need not to appear to conflict with the Civil Service Choir. (Afternote: On the initiative of our President, Committee members are working with DIT Internal Comms to explore ideas.)

#### **Item 10 – Subscription levels for forthcoming season**

It was proposed that the subscriptions for the 2019/20 year should remain unchanged. No objections were raised to this proposal, which was passed unanimously.

#### **Item 11 – Any other business**

A number of choir members wished to promote particular concerts. Philip Pratley asked them to send details to him by email and he would look to promote them on social media.

The meeting closed at 8pm