



Barts Choir

Registered Charity No. 273180

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St Bartholomew's Hospital Choral Society Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Monday 12th July, 2010 at St Sepulchre's Church, Holborn Viaduct

Present: Alistair Chesser (Chairman), Kate McGuire (Hon Secretary), Chris Yates (Hon Treasurer), Jennie Boyce, Jonathan Startup, Sue Gardiner, Lois Allender and approximately 115 choir members

In attendance Ivor Setterfield (Musical Director), Chris Lee (Accompanist)

Apologies Agnes Howers, Cathy Waring, Will Quekett, Penny Holroyde

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 2009 AGM were agreed as accurate and approved after correcting the spelling of Liz du Parc's name.

2 Matters arising

None.

3 Chairman's Report

Alistair Chesser thanked the committee for all their hard work and paid tribute to Lois Allender and Agnes Howers who are standing down from the committee after many years of service.

4 Musical Director's Report

Ivor said that the Holland Park concert, Elijah and the Creation were all great and 'we got there in the end'. He thanked Chris Lee for all his input and reminded all choir members that we need to continually recruit new members in order to increase audience numbers.

5 Secretary's Report

Kate McGuire seconded Ivor's points that the last twelve months saw a fantastic set of concerts. Holland Park as a venue was an experiment but one that worked and was popular. She noted that we seem to have started a trend of not covering concert costs: we lose our nerve about selling tickets when rehearsals are not going so well but we must remember that we always pull off a great concert in the end and we should keep our faith and keep selling tickets throughout the rehearsal process.

The committee is always reviewing the economics of the concerts as well as trying to plan further ahead. It is proving challenging to get a regular slot at The Royal Festival Hall which is holding up planning for next year.

The committee is considering the future direction the choir should take and if you have any ideas or comments you should let the committee know.

Kate mentioned that later in the meeting we would be considering the proposals to update the constitution and separate out the governance side of running the choir from the operational, day to day work.

In Kate's view, the work of running the choir is shared amongst too few people, putting a heavy burden on them and limiting what we can achieve. The committee has drawn up a list of tasks that are required for running the choir and once it is shared volunteers would be sought to take on tasks for which they have suitable skills.

Kate thanked the committee and all the additional helpers such as voice reps, ticket sellers, score sellers and programme/flier designers and producers. She thanked Ivor for the inspiration he provides and Chris Lee for accompanying us.

6 Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Annual Report and Accounts

Chris Yates presented a two page summary called Extracts from the 2009 Report and Accounts. The choir made a loss of £1,300 for the year (last year we made a profit of £14,500 overall). He said that we can absorb the losses



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this time but we cannot continue to do so if we want to keep on putting on big pieces in professional venues with professional orchestras. We have reserves of £93,000 and cash of £91,000.

Questions/comments from the floor

Does the choir run fundraising events other than concerts?

- No, largely because of a lack of people to organize them. A volunteer would be welcome to set something up.

Why does it matter if we don't make a profit, given the size of our reserves?

- We cannot continue to eat into our reserves because they need to remain at a level where we could cover the costs of a whole concert if we had to cancel one. A typical Albert Hall concert costs around £60,000, and £80,000 for the Mahler in 2011. If we don't make a profit, we cannot donate any money to our partner charity.

Ours is an amateur way of selling tickets. We need to spend money on professional public relations support. For example we could commission a professional to sell out the Albert Hall as an experiment rather than relying on same members and same ticket buyers – we should aim to reach new audiences. Can we exploit Ivor's PR value?

- A wider and more diverse membership is key to selling more tickets because it means we're not always relying on the same audience members. We are considering the possibility of hiring a professional to support our PR and marketing activity.

We could set up a group to look at this issue as a professional activity – please can the committee consider this.

Can we increase the subs for people who can afford it or offer a way for people to pay more voluntarily since we are the cheapest choir in central London?

- Some people felt our subs are too low, others felt that any higher and we would alienate some people. The suggestion that £35 a term could be a minimum contribution was welcomed by the committee, who agreed to consider this point.

Importance of new members was acknowledged – could we encourage people eg by offering family membership or discounts for younger singers.?

- The committee agreed to consider options for concessions although it was stressed that this may mean more work for voice reps and others.

Have we considered a system where members have to buy tickets – eg quota or vouchers?

- All such schemes require additional time from those operating them, and time is in short supply amongst a relatively small group of people.

What percentage of members sell what percentage of tickets?

- It is difficult to be accurate about how many tickets each member sells because many people go directly to the Box Office rather than buying tickets at rehearsals.

Proposed: Ed Budden; seconded: Lois Allender.

APPROVED.

7 Appointment of Independent Examiners

Chris Yates suggested that Gotham Erskine remain in office.

Proposed: Frank Althaus; seconded: Hamilton Hay.

APPROVED

8 Appointment of Charity Trustees/Committee Members

Kate McGuire as Secretary and Chris Yates as Treasurer serve a three year term and so automatically continue as Trustees/Committee Members, and Alistair Chesser as Chair serves a five year term. Lois Allender and Agnes Howers are standing down. Jennie Boyce, Sue Gardiner, Will Quekett and Jonathan Startup stood for re-election. There are more places available on the committee and new members can be co-opted onto the committee until the next AGM, when they can be formally elected.

It was made clear that this meeting was being held under the existing Constitution. If the new Constitution was to be approved by the meeting, its provisions for committee membership would be operational by the next AGM.



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Proposed: Sue Cockle; seconded: Anne Hay.

APPROVED

9 Amendments to the Constitution

The Constitution has been re-drafted for number of reasons:

- Best practice suggests we should have fixed terms of office for trustees, which ensures that new ideas flow into the committee and that it is representative of a changing choir membership
- We need to modernise some of the Constitutional terms – eg there is currently no provision for electronic banking and communication
- We need to be up to date with new legislation.

Although the new Constitution looks different to the old, the only fundamental change is to terms of office for trustee/committee members: currently, trustees are elected on an annual basis with no limit to the length of service. The proposed Constitution suggests the election of trustees/committee member for a 3 year term with the option for one re-election (with any exceptional extensions being elected on an annual basis by the AGM). After a maximum six year term, trustees would then need to stand down for a three year term before seeking re-election. The position of Chair remains as a five year term (with no term limit), and those of Secretary and Treasurer as three year terms and a maximum of six years from the date of their appointment into those roles.

The rest of the changes are simply clarifying and re-ordering. The AGM was the chance for members to ask questions and make their views known but the vote could only be for or against the proposal.

Questions/comments from the floor

Delighted that committee is considering updating constitution. Suggest looking at skills needed for more member involvement. Would like to see information available on committee activities, meetings and agendas etc.

If a committee member is co-opted is it for one year or a full length term?

- It's until the next AGM when the individual can stand down or stand for election.

On the desire to introduce electronic banking, does that include the payment of subscriptions?

- This is not excluded in the Constitution but it would require a communication process from the Treasurer to the voice reps about who had paid and who was still outstanding.

Could you clarify who appoints the Secretary and Treasurer?

- Choir members elect the committee, the committee selects the Secretary and Treasurer from among the elected committee.

Thank you for everything you do to make concerts so successful because audience's reactions make us feel good.

Alistair Chesser explained that the Constitution was last amended in the early 1990s but never filed with the Charity Commission. The Commission have suggested that, if the new Constitution is adopted at the AGM, that the new version be filed, incorporating all the intervening amendments.

Proposed: Edward Budden; seconded: Anne Hay. All attendees in favour.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Alistair Chesser thanked Chris Yates for all his work on the new Constitution.

10 Any other business

Can gentlemen wear something other than dinner jackets in next summer's concert as this year the heat was stifling.

- Noted.

Could we print the date of next concert on the stub of tickets?

- This might be logistically difficult, and one venue might not want to promote a future concert at a different venue.

Can we routinely use black folders as they look more professional?



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- Show of hands revealed an even split on membership's feeling towards folders.

Have we considered sponsorship?

- We have had sponsorship in the past but it needs someone to organise it. We would be grateful for any volunteers with the skills to do it properly.

Could we have more details about the operational responsibilities so we can judge whether and how we could be involved?

- There will be one Trustee meeting per term to cover governance issues (instead of twice per term currently, to cover all business) and a separate process to cover operational issues. A list of tasks is being prepared and the committee is considering some practical issues about how to make the relationship between Trustees and an operational group work effectively. The list, and gaps in our skills base, will be advertised to the choir in due course.

The Barts website is disappointing.

- A redesign is underway, and the committee is aware of the website's drawbacks.

We need to look at the skills people have and ask them directly for help.

- The review of tasks will help us do this.

Meeting ended at approximately 9.15pm, Alistair thanked everyone for staying.