

Minutes of Annual General Meeting Wednesday 20th September 2023 8.30pm

1	Apologies: Pauline Tregellas, Helen Milner, Mary Prestwood and Dick King (Patron).
2	Minutes of the AGM 2022 Minutes from last years AGM were accepted, subject to a date amendment in the Treasurer's Report year ended 2021 – should have read 30 June 2022 and it was the 2021-22 Accounts that were approved by the choir last year.
3	Matters Arising from the minutes None.
4	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>Treasurer's Report year ended 30 June 2023 (which had been circulated in advance)</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that the accounts for the previous Choir Year ended 30 June 2022, as presented at last year's AGM, were duly reviewed and approved by an independent qualified accountant. Those accounts formed the basis of the 2022 Annual Return to the Charity Commission, which was filed in February 2023. The format of the 2023 accounts is unchanged from prior years, so hopefully you will be familiar with the layout.</p> <p>The Choir remains in a reasonable financial position after another challenging season, with cash reserves of £15,355 (2022- £18,036) at the end of the year.</p> <p>This was the second year of our ambitious post-Covid Relaunch! 2021-2024, and pleasingly audience numbers were up 25% on the previous year. Over the four concerts, we sold a total of 601 tickets (2022-481), with a very satisfactory 201 tickets sold for the Elgar Music Makers and Faure Requiem and 150 for Handel's Messiah. As a result, our concert revenues for the year show a 30% increase on last year (boosted by an increase in ticket price to £17).</p> <p>Despite the welcome uptake in attendance, our concert programme still generated a loss of £7,174 (2022-loss of £10,514). To put this into perspective, we would have had to sell another 400+ tickets to break even. The Choir is also not immune from inflationary pressures. We are facing increasing costs for hiring venues, music scores, orchestras and soloists and the committee are very mindful of the need to take all necessary steps to try and reduce the concert deficit.</p> <p>We are very grateful for the continuing support of our members, whose subscriptions and fund-raising efforts are vital in covering the Choirs general account expenditure. Subscription income this year was £9,029 (2022-£7,430). As a reminder, the subscriptions paid by Choir members fund the cost of weekly rehearsals (venue, music director and accompanist) and other routine costs of the Choir and, together with our fundraising efforts, contribute to the shortfall between the cost of promoting concerts and the revenue from ticket sales.</p> <p>Taking all of the above into account, the overall loss for the year of £1,168 is a marked improvement over the previous year (a loss of £7,199).</p> <p>Our broad aim, however, remains to promote a range of concerts that, over a two-year period, allow us to break-even, so we need to work even harder next year to grow revenues and contain costs. There is no room for complacency and, against a background of rising costs, we need to look again at increasing subscriptions for 2023-24.</p> <p>The Committee is proposing an increase in subscriptions of £20 from £160 to £180, and the Chair will explain our thinking on this in his report.</p> <p>Turning to other matters, there was no movement on the Choir Development Fund as no workshops etc. were held in 2022-23. As always, thank you to all Choir members who have signed Gift Aid declarations, which means that for every £80 you donate by way of subscription, the choir receives £20 in Gift Aid to support our music-making at no additional cost to yourself. The Choir's funds have benefited by Gift Aid of £1,715 (2022- £1,565) claimed and paid by HMRC this year.</p> <p>If you are a taxpayer but have not yet completed a Gift Aid declaration, please do contact our Membership Secretary, or our Treasurer, and they will be happy to supply you with a form.</p>

	<p>The Choir's total funds (i.e., accumulated reserves) stand at £15,311 (2022- £16,479).</p> <p>Just a final word from Liz and myself, we have been delighted to be involved as committee members with the work of the Choir over (in Liz's case) many years, and wish the Choir continuing success in the future.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Chair's Report (which had been circulated in advance)</p> <p>Thank you all for another great year of singing. The second year of our ambitious re-launch programme was a great success. The Music Makers in November was new to most of us and drew the biggest audience we've had for years. And if the audience for Messiah in March didn't quite equal that, it was at least back to pre-Covid levels, so it seems like we are doing something right in our attempt to persuade people to come out on a Saturday night. However, there are lots of choirs in the area, and if we want to attract anyone other than the family and friends that you persuade to buy tickets, we have to offer music that is of as high a standard as we can possibly manage, and interesting programmes. Thank you, Oliver, for helping us to make music better than we probably thought possible. This year, Mozart's Requiem, sung by most local choirs at least once over the last few years, is twinned with his Coronation Mass, which I haven't heard performed anywhere. So, you can offer your ticket buyers an old favourite, sung beautifully, and something less familiar.</p> <p>Thank you to the Committee and to everyone else who helps to keep the choir running. Particular thanks to Keith, our outgoing treasurer, and to Liz who has managed the ticket sales for years. Many of our newer members may never have met these stalwarts as Liz has not sung with us since before Covid, and Keith, her husband, has never sung with us. Helen, standing down after 12 years in various committee roles also deserves our thanks.</p> <p>Someone asked me once why my Wednesday slot always includes a plea for volunteers, and the answer is that there are always jobs looking for owners. We have always managed to fill the three major roles, which is just as well as our constitution requires us to have a chair, a treasurer, and a secretary, but it can be harder to fill the smaller roles. These don't have to sit with committee members so are open to anyone in the choir, and they don't have to be for ever. Keith and Helen have both taken on several tasks over the years, not connected with their committee roles, and now that they are leaving, we need to find new owners and spread the jobs out more widely. The Chair's report to the AGM is not the place to list all these, but please have a look at the request in the newsletters and see if there's anything you could do to help. The only two that I will list here are the secretary and chair. Janet will be standing down as secretary after the 2024 AGM, and I intend to stand down a year after that.</p> <p>I'm not going to cover the same ground as the treasurer's report, but I would like to point out some of the reasons behind our proposed increase in subs. Subscriptions are intended to cover the weekly running costs of the choir and contribute to offsetting the loss we make on concerts. Last year the weekly running costs of the choir amounted to around £130 per member. This year with the increases that we know about and those we are anticipating we are expecting costs to be around £160 per member. If we have no increase in subs, we have no money left to offset the concert loss. Our long- term aim is for funds to balance out over a two -year period. Covid made that impossible, and we are anticipating higher expenditure on concerts during the re-launch, but we have to return to financial stability.</p> <p>I don't want to finish on a gloomy note, so let's look forward to the year ahead. Practise, sing well, sell tickets, promote the choir far and wide, and enjoy it all</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Music Director's Report</p> <p>Oliver was very pleased with the success of the hugely ambitious 2022-23 season. A highlight was the Elgar concert in November 2022. A challenge for all, embraced by the choir and supported financially by the Committee. It was good to see a fuller audience who also came back in March for the Messiah. St Alphege was a great venue for atmosphere; however, the acoustics were challenging. We had good student soloists through The Josephine Baker Trust, but will need to look for more mature soloists for the Rossini in Spring 2024.</p> <p>It was also welcome that David Rice had committed the full year to support the choir in 2023-24.</p> <p>Oliver thanked Simon and the Committee for their hard work over the year. Lots of support is needed behind the scenes and Oliver encouraged everybody to become involved. Another important contribution is spreading the word about the choir and selling tickets and he asked everybody to do their best.</p> <p>The choir thanked Olly for his music inspiration and leadership.</p>

<p>7</p>	<p>Election of Committee Members for 2023-24 The committee was elected en bloc. Proposed by Elissa Renouf, Seconded by Helen Kiteley</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Chair</td> <td>Simon Durk</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secretary</td> <td>Janet Thomas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>David Lewis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Membership Secretary</td> <td>Sue Lawrence/ <i>Sue Coates</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bookings</td> <td>Pam Watkins</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Media/Newsletter</td> <td>Vacancy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Committee Member (Making Music Rep)</td> <td>Neil Fricker</td> </tr> </table> <p>Non-committee roles</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Librarian</td> <td><i>Fran Halstead</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tickets</td> <td><i>Carolyn Small</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Design, website & IT support</td> <td><i>Mark Emms</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marketing/Publicity Lead</td> <td><i>Elissa Renouf</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fundraising</td> <td><i>Pam Price</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Concert Management</td> <td><i>Mike Norris</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bursaries</td> <td><i>Vacancy</i></td> </tr> </table> <p>Section Reps</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1st Sopranos</td> <td><i>Barbara Williams</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2nd Sopranos</td> <td><i>Pam Price</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1st Altos</td> <td><i>Janet Gibbins</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2nd Altos</td> <td><i>Carolyn Small</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tenors</td> <td><i>Mark Emms</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bases</td> <td><i>David Lewis</i></td> </tr> </table> <p>Other roles</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Concert refreshments</td> <td><i>Vacancy</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rehearsal refreshments</td> <td><i>Julia Cross and Hazel Duncan</i></td> </tr> </table>	Chair	Simon Durk	Secretary	Janet Thomas	Treasurer	David Lewis	Membership Secretary	Sue Lawrence/ <i>Sue Coates</i>	Bookings	Pam Watkins	Social Media/Newsletter	Vacancy	Committee Member (Making Music Rep)	Neil Fricker	Librarian	<i>Fran Halstead</i>	Tickets	<i>Carolyn Small</i>	Design, website & IT support	<i>Mark Emms</i>	Marketing/Publicity Lead	<i>Elissa Renouf</i>	Fundraising	<i>Pam Price</i>	Concert Management	<i>Mike Norris</i>	Bursaries	<i>Vacancy</i>	1 st Sopranos	<i>Barbara Williams</i>	2 nd Sopranos	<i>Pam Price</i>	1 st Altos	<i>Janet Gibbins</i>	2 nd Altos	<i>Carolyn Small</i>	Tenors	<i>Mark Emms</i>	Bases	<i>David Lewis</i>	Concert refreshments	<i>Vacancy</i>	Rehearsal refreshments	<i>Julia Cross and Hazel Duncan</i>
Chair	Simon Durk																																												
Secretary	Janet Thomas																																												
Treasurer	David Lewis																																												
Membership Secretary	Sue Lawrence/ <i>Sue Coates</i>																																												
Bookings	Pam Watkins																																												
Social Media/Newsletter	Vacancy																																												
Committee Member (Making Music Rep)	Neil Fricker																																												
Librarian	<i>Fran Halstead</i>																																												
Tickets	<i>Carolyn Small</i>																																												
Design, website & IT support	<i>Mark Emms</i>																																												
Marketing/Publicity Lead	<i>Elissa Renouf</i>																																												
Fundraising	<i>Pam Price</i>																																												
Concert Management	<i>Mike Norris</i>																																												
Bursaries	<i>Vacancy</i>																																												
1 st Sopranos	<i>Barbara Williams</i>																																												
2 nd Sopranos	<i>Pam Price</i>																																												
1 st Altos	<i>Janet Gibbins</i>																																												
2 nd Altos	<i>Carolyn Small</i>																																												
Tenors	<i>Mark Emms</i>																																												
Bases	<i>David Lewis</i>																																												
Concert refreshments	<i>Vacancy</i>																																												
Rehearsal refreshments	<i>Julia Cross and Hazel Duncan</i>																																												
<p>8</p>	<p>Proposed increase in membership subscriptions The Chair expressed his thanks to the choir for continuing to sell tickets but stated that we could not be complacent about the year ahead. We had drawn better audiences, but we still made a loss at our Christmas concert. We have the resources to commit to ambitious programmes but must ensure our Reserves remain secure.</p> <p>Geoff Wyatt commented that the choir had always maintained Reserves of approximately £15, 000 to cover one year's expenditure and this should be maintained. Helen Kiteley commented that in a previous year Reserves had been as high as £23,000.</p> <p>We can only expect our expenditure to increase as costs are still rising. The current membership subscription of £160 will just about cover estimated costs but there is no headroom for manoeuvre and could put our Reserves at risk.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Committee proposed an increase in subscriptions of £20 from £160 to £180.</p> <p>The Chair reiterated that we would not want anyone to leave the choir for financial reasons and that if anyone had a difficulty they should, please, raise it in confidence with the Chair or any Committee member.</p> <p>The choir voted and the overwhelming majority were in favour of annual subscriptions rising to £180; there was one vote against.</p> <p>There was some discussion about methods of payment including quarterly payments (with a plea that those paying quarterly conclude their payments before 30 June 2024). Payment options will be put in the next Newsletter.</p>																																												

	<p>The Chair reiterated his ask for a volunteer to take over the responsibility of producing the weekly Newsletter as this had become an essential communication tool for the choir.</p> <p>Patron membership. The minimum payment for Patrons' membership would also increase to £80. It was acknowledged that we are very fortunate to have Patrons who support the choir. Dick King and Bernie & Perry Day were thanked for their generous support.</p>
9	<p>Proposed update to The Constitution (which had been circulated in advance) The Secretary stated that in line with Charity Commission requirements, the Committee had reviewed The Constitution and 2 amendments were tabled for approval by the membership as indicated. They related to meetings taking place via electronic means (e.g., Teams) and payments being made by electronic transfer.</p> <p>Proposed by Janet Gibbins, Seconded by Geoffrey Braithwaite.</p> <p>The choir voted and the proposed amendments to The Constitution were adopted.</p>
10	<p>Special thanks The choir wished to register their special thanks to Liz and Keith Hamilton for all the work they had put into the choir over many years.</p> <p>The choir also recognised the contribution Helen Milner had made as a committee member and Chair over the 14 years she had been with the choir.</p>
11	<p>AOB There was no further business but Janet Ince wished to express thanks on behalf of the choir to the Committee for their work over the year as it was much appreciated.</p>
12	<p>Dates of next AGM 25 September 2024.</p>