

## WIMBLEDON CHORAL SOCIETY

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 30 September 2024 at St Marks Church Wimbledon

The meeting began at 19.30 with Alex Youel in the chair and approximately 119 members and 8 apologies.

#### **Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 25 September 2023**

Approval of these minutes was proposed by Isla Smith and seconded by Anna Lemmon. They were approved unanimously.

#### **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **Music Director's Report – Neil Ferris**

Read by Neil Dennis

My Music Director's Report is mainly a list of 'thank yous' but it would be remiss of me not to congratulate you all on your wonderful and consistent singing during the year.

I know you enjoyed singing *Carmina Burana* in the Royal Albert Hall at the end of October, and you were a superb addition to the Bach Choir – I know David Hill was delighted with your excellent contribution. Your performance of the *Verdi Requiem* in November, in Richard Blackford's new arrangement, was outstanding, passionate and committed.

I feel that the format for Christmas has settled back after the Covid years, and with a slightly tweaked afternoon concert to cater for those bringing families I feel we have the balance about right, bearing in mind the limited preparation time.

The March concert in the Cadogan Hall was superb – you took Richard's *Mirror of Perfection* to your hearts and gave a passionate and moving performance of the beautiful Francis of Assisi libretto. And then a beautiful rendition of the Fauré.

And then to my final concert – the programme of which was decided before I knew it would be my final concert with you, but it ended up being just the perfect programme for it. The quality of singing was just how I would like to remember what we achieved together, and you raised the roof of the splendid Holy Trinity with *Hail, Gladdening Light!*

I cannot ever thank you enough for your extraordinary generosity and the most wonderful send-off in July. The incredible effort that so many of you put in to make

that evening so special was profoundly overwhelming and meant so very much. I have the most cherished memories of you as a choir and individuals, as well as our music making together, and will always be a proud ambassador for Wimbledon Choral wherever I go. I am delighted that you have chosen such a superb new Music Director and I know you will fly under Daniel's leadership.

With love and best wishes to you all, Neil.

### **Chair's Report – Alex Youel**

Thank you for your support, encouragement and tolerance during my first year as your Chair. And it was *quite* a year, dominated by the need to secure the services of a new Music Director to succeed Neil Ferris - happily with a terrific outcome in the person of Daniel Mahoney, whom we warmly welcome into the role and look forward to hearing from very shortly.

And of course this successful and happy outcome isn't actually down to me at all - it's down to you as members of the choir, it's most especially down to the superb small selection committee which undertook the recruitment process with such diligence and determination, and it's down to your excellent full and executive committees in setting the right strategic objectives for the role in the first place. They are Neil Dennis, Michael Higgins, Ian Partridge, Paula Lambe, Sharon Smith, Christine Evans and Tracy Sherman.

So my first year has been rather dominated by this task - but I make no apologies for this fact. There are surely few more important jobs for the Chair of a Choir to undertake than in contributing to the selection of a new Music Director.

Along the way we've had a lot of fun singing some wonderful music in some exciting locations, heavily focussed on Sloane Square but also from St Paul's - in Southfields, that is - to the Royal Albert Hall and to a new, very local venue for us, the auditorium of Wimbledon Girls' High School.

Our year was crowned with a magnificent party for Neil Ferris's farewell, at which, frankly, it was a privilege to be present and an honour to see members of the choir in action masterminding a veritable feast of food, drink, visual delight and great company. Having said that it was such a great and a fitting occasion, I know you will understand me when I say that I don't want to have cause to do it again any time soon!

The fact that we had such a great year is reflected in the strength of our finances. There were even one or two occasions last year when we were in danger of not making a loss at all our concerts! - as we usually do. John will have more to say about this in a moment.

In my closing remarks, and having reflected on last year's activity, I'd now like to take a moment to look forward. You will hear in a moment from Daniel our new Music Director, on whose slim shoulders rest the future musical achievements for our Choir

which are surely to come. We have a new music commission already in play, with local boy made good, Tarik O'Regan.

So in this positive vein I present my report as your Chair, and invite us all to continue delivering great performances, with our trademark passion and precision, which I am delighted and honoured to celebrate as being the distinctive hallmarks of our happy and thriving Wimbledon Choral Society.

### **Treasurer's Report – John Gale**

You have all had a couple of weeks to read and digest the Annual Trustees Report and Accounts (the 'Report') and no errors or queries have been brought to my attention.

Following the annual Independent Examination, the Report was approved by the full Committee at their meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September and signed.

The Society had a very good year financially, with total assets now exceeding £110,000. Whilst some may question why we should require such an amount, we know from experience how one or two poor concerts can have a considerable impact on our finances. This level of reserves also enables us to pay for our latest commission without having to resort to fund raising, something I am sure will please many of you. That is not to say that we do not welcome donations towards the commission, however, and it would be splendid to be able to record it in due course without having to worry about raising a large sum of money.

Before asking the meeting to adopt the Report for the year, I should like to comment upon specific items in the accounts.

Page 5 – Receipts – The reason that nothing is shown for 'tax recovered' is that instead of the 12 days taken in 2023, HMRC took 12 weeks to pay our claim this year and the money was not received until August – the sum in question is however shown on Page six .

Members will remember that the choir was invited to sing at the Royal Albert Hall for a performance of *Carmina Burana*. This was a commercial concert promoted by the Raymond Gubbay Organisation and resulted in our receiving a fee of £1,450 which is disclosed as 'performance fees'.

Quiz – The costs of £135 relate to the quiz held in the previous year.

CDs – Sales have obviously slowed down. Although not disclosed in the accounts, we currently hold a stock of about 450 CDs.

Collections received and paid – most of this was the collection for Neil Ferris. The remainder was donations to the two Christmas charities where people paid by card, resulting in the money passing through our bank account.

Payments in advance – these relate to the leaving party for Neil Ferris which took place at the beginning of July.

Page 7 – Note 2 Concert Income and Expenditure – I have included more detail this year and would hope that the figures do not require further explanation.

Note 3 Unrestricted Funds - Following a request last year, this note now includes our General Fund and you will note that the totals agree with our Statement of Assets and Liabilities on page 6. Non-cash movements comprise the unrealised gain on our M&G investment and the movement on amounts owed to and by the society which of course are not included in receipts and payments of the year.

A few questions were received in advance of the meeting:

1. How are we funding our new commission?

50% has already been paid from reserves and the remaining 50% will (hopefully) be paid from our income this year. Donations towards the commission are welcome, but we hope to fund the cost without the need for fundraising.

2. In our accounts, is there any income from sale of our CD ?

The income is clearly shown in the receipts set out on page 5 - £310.

3. How do the royalties in the accounts accruing to us from da Vinci Requiem arise? Are they from playing on radio or sales of CD or performances of the piece?

Our royalties arise from sales of the recording in the form of physical product e.g. CDs, digital e.g. downloads and streaming and exploitation rights e.g if the recording was used for an advert, in a TV or Movie production.

Royalties from playing of the recording on the radio etc. accrue to the composer via PRS and are collected by PPL on behalf of their artist members. As a choir we cannot be a member of PPL so receive nothing. Each individual who actually sang on the recording is welcome to become a member of PPL, but given the number of airplays to date the amount receivable by each singer would not even amount to one hundredth of a single penny!

Even though we commissioned it, the actual copyright in the work will always belong to the Composer. As a result, we have no financial interest in performances of the work.

4. Have we recouped the cost of the recording from the royalties received?

To date we have received no royalties - our first payment is due in the next few months. We never anticipated that we would ever cover the costs of the recording and to do so would require sales running into the 10's of thousands which rarely happens for any classical recording.

We now ask the meeting to adopt the Annual Trustees Report and Accounts for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The Annual Trustees Report and Accounts were approved unanimously.

## **Membership Contributions for 2024-25**

The proposals for subscriptions are as follows:

Full subscription	£210
Reduced Rate for the Registered Unemployed	£90
Reduced Rate for those aged 25 or younger	£90
Rate for full time students	£30

The subscription rates were unanimously approved by the meeting.

There was a vote of thanks for Annette Cowley who is the independent reviewer of our accounts.

## **Election of Executive Group and Officers**

The role of concert co-ordinator is a co-opted role and appointed by the exec committee and Paula Lambe remains in the role.

The following officers were proposed for election to the Executive Group of the Committee: -

Alex Youel	<i>Chairman</i>	Ian Gleeson	<i>Vice Chairman</i>
Tracy Sherman	<i>General Secretary</i>	John Gale	<i>Treasurer</i>
Anna Lemmon	<i>Publicity Officer</i>		

These elections were proposed by Neil Dennis and seconded by Cheryl Richardson and carried unanimously.

The following officers were proposed for election to the Committee: -

John Britton	<i>Librarian</i>	Laura Stewart	<i>Membership Secretary</i>
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These elections were proposed by Martyn Wake and seconded by Christine Evans and carried unanimously.

The following Voice Representatives were proposed for election for a two-year term:

Therese Kennedy-Laing (Sop 1)	Sarah Harris (Alto 2)
Peter Hickson (Bass 1)	

These elections were proposed by Colleen Spalding seconded by Corina Scott and carried unanimously.

## **New Music Director Daniel Mahoney**

The past several weeks has been a great pleasure and privilege making music with Wimbledon Choral. After such a short span of time, I am enthused for the level of performance that we will achieve at our November concert and the rest of the season. The music this term affords us a great opportunity to focus on superb musical detail while also focusing on vocal technique. The progress on all the repertoire over the just four rehearsals is noteworthy. My apologies to anyone who may feel like we are slightly light on choral material for this first concert. I promise that it will not be the case for the remainder of the season, but I do think that having a more conservative amount of music allows us to get to know one another better as choir and conductor, setting us up for continued success in the subsequent concert cycles. We are excited to be presenting the orchestral version of Cecilia McDowall's *Music of the Stars* for the first time in its entirety in the UK in November, and we look forward to Haydn's *Nelson Mass* alongside Tabakova's *Centuries of Mediations* in April, as well as a standout collaboration with Wimbledon High for Rutter's *Mass of the Children*.

This report is chiefly to let you know more of what I look forward to creating with you all. Members of the Search Committee read in detail my statement on vision for Wimbledon Choral, so I wanted to share with you some of those details and even some progress on those details. First, we've already announced to you, the choir, that our next major commission is in progress, with the premiere planned for our April 2026 performance at Cadogan Hall. I am in the process of arranging to speak with Tarik O'Regan to learn more about the work he is writing for us, *Critical Mass*, and how we can programme the rest of the concert to complement this world premiere. Importantly, that world premiere also holds the prospect of recording Wimbledon Choral's second album featuring Tarik's piece. It is expected that we will build on the success of the *Da Vinci Requiem* with that project.

Following on in the vein of commissioning, I've also already been approached by or had side-conversations with individuals about what other kinds of projects can be explored over the coming years, the details of which I look forward to discussing in greater detail with first the Executive Committee in our next meeting. Commissioning is important for Wimbledon Choral to get our name further afield.

Similarly, I look forward to discussing opportunities for collaborations and even touring prospects in that next meeting. Several opportunities for collaboration already presented themselves with several colleagues querying whether Wimbledon Choral might be willing and able to take part in several specific projects over the coming few seasons. We will begin exploring the feasibility of them.

Lastly, for now, I am excited to have begun the process of new member auditions for this term. I am pleased to announce that we accepted multiple candidates over the past two weeks, and I look forward to continuing that process this evening. My hope is that you will all welcome them warmly into the choir as you have so graciously done for me in over the past several weeks.

## **Any Other Business**

Four charities presented to the choir as to why they should be chosen for the Christmas concerts. They were Wimbledon Guild, Faith in Action, The Dons Local Action Group and Pets as Therapy.

Richard Simon raised the issue of rehearsal times and it was agreed that the voice reps be asked for views which would be given to Daniel Mahoney for a decision.  
The meeting closed at 20.37.

In the interval, the choir voted and Faith in Action was voted to be the charity for the 6pm Christmas concert and Wimbledon Guild was voted to be the charity for the 3pm concert.