

BRIGHTON NORPHEUS CHOIR

Registered Charity 260887

MINUTES OF THE 2020 AGM HELD BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2021 at 7.30pm

Present : Linda Newsom Ray, Sarah Saward, Richard Jayawant, Stella Hull, Nicola Grunberg, Rachel Goode, Peter Wells, David McCormick, Murray Park, Vicky Lywood-Last, Caroline Price

A further 28 members of the choir attended online



1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Linda Newsom Ray thanked everyone for attending online and reiterated the need to hold the meeting via Zoom due to the lockdown restrictions still in place, and that this is the 2020 AGM postponed from October 2020.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Sue Wallis, Margaret Weir and Paul Courtney.

3. Minutes of the last AGM on 16.10.2019

Minutes had been circulated in advance on the Choir's website and were duly approved ; Sarah Saward proposed their approval which was seconded by Simon Moore.

4. Matters Arising

Sarah Saward responded to an enquiry regarding Gift Aid and annual fees; she has taken advice from Making Music which recommends top-slicing the gift-aid element from subscriptions, this was endorsed as standard practice from experience in other choirs by Simon Moore

5. Chair's Report

Linda Newsom Ray started by acknowledging what a very difficult year everyone had been through and thanked all those who had managed to attend the meeting in this new digital format.

She acknowledged that at this time, in the Chair's report, she would normally be saying that the choir is thriving and we are doing OK financially; and thanking everyone who had worked hard during the weekly rehearsals, and who were able to sing in the concerts. She reminded us that we did have the Vivaldi concert in November 2019; and we very nearly had The Creation in spring 2020 until lockdown intervened. Obviously, the summer term was cancelled. Nevertheless, she still wanted very much to say thank you to all of those people who were involved in all

aspects of concert preparation, as the choir cannot operate without all the unsung heroes.

She also expressed how fortunate the choir is to have two wonderful, professional musicians to lead us, in Stella Hull and Nicola Grunberg and added a particular thank you to Stella for cheering us along during the summer months, with her weekly emails and suggestions for music to listen to and to join in with; which a lot of our members really appreciated

Regarding our membership, we still have good numbers in the choir, and our finances are in good shape. Membership subscriptions will be at the same annual rate as previously: but there are two things to note:

1. We will not be collecting subs until January 2022 at the earliest, because last year's subscriptions (and membership) are being carried forward; and
2. The amount will be reduced proportionately, to reflect the reduced number of rehearsals that we are able to hold.

Linda also wanted to say a big thank you to the committee, who, loyally, three or four times throughout the year, meet to discuss the background workings of the choir, to make sure that we are covered for Health and Safety issues, First Aid, Safeguarding, and Charity Commission requirements, as well as handling the finances and accounts. Thank you also to the committee members stepping down, this time Vicki Lywood-Last, thank you for your kindness and your support which has been much appreciated.

Linda also paid tribute to Richard Jayawant's long service as Choir secretary for 13 years and still counting. We have all benefited from his making sure that we have been compliant with all the various regulations imposed on charities, and whose activities sometime involve young and vulnerable people; as well as his meticulous approach to minuting our meetings. Thank you, Richard, we have really appreciated your calm and sensible approach, and your continued support. Also a big thank you to Caroline Price for offering to step forward as his replacement.

Linda went on to pay particular tribute to our former treasurer, Elizabeth Hughes, for her careful management of the finances, for so many years. It was an absolute privilege to have worked closely with her, and she is a sad loss to the choir. I would also, however, on that note, say a big thank you to Sarah for stepping forward to become Acting Treasurer, during Elizabeth's illness. It has not been an easy task and it is much appreciated.

At this point, we should also note the sad loss, a year ago, of one of our Vice Presidents – Dr. Michael Barley. We have not yet appointed a replacement VP, so there is currently a vacancy, which we will review prior to the next AGM.

We are, however, still blessed with having one of our previous loyal and long-serving choir (and committee) members, as our other VP, Valerie Bolton. Thank you, Valerie. And, of course, Professor Gavin Henderson remains in post, as our President.

6. Treasurer's Report

Sarah presented the accounts for 2019-20 and stressed to the choir these were due to the diligent and timely work of Elizabeth Hughes. The choir funds are in good

order currently standing at over £27,000. She acknowledged the generous legacy from Don Pickett, a long standing member of the choir who has sadly passed away. Sarah confirmed that there had been very little movement within choir funds since March 2020.

7. Election of Officers and Committee Members

The committee had received nominations for Linda Newsom Ray, Sarah Seward and Caroline Price for the offices of Chair, Treasurer and Secretary respectively and these appointments were confirmed.

Linda Newsom Ray proposed that outgoing Secretary Richard Jayawant remain in place to October 2021 to effect the handover to Caroline Price; this was seconded by Sarah Seward. The committee noted that two member vacancies to the committee had received no nominations and would therefore remain vacant until October 2022.

8. Musical Director's report and programme for 2019/20

'First of all how lovely to "see" everyone..... It seems unusual to be reporting on only one concert, but, though distant, what a joyful concert it was. This was in December 2019. With the title "Gloria" we began with the ever-popular Vivaldi setting and enjoyed the experience of learning Rutter's *Gloria*, a work of beauty and surprising complexity. We were glad to be joined by the Musicians of All Saints and wish them well in their difficult professional circumstances. It was such a joy for me for the choir to have as our soloists the soprano Shona Knight and mezzo Corinne Hull. To share with you all in such an uplifting concert at the end of 2019 was a great encouragement to myself and my family, also marking as it did my twenty years as musical director of the Orpheus. I was very grateful to the committee and especially Elizabeth for arranging the celebration at Brighton Côte which I'm glad so many of you were able to enjoy.

The next week saw us singing carols on Brighton station and I think that was musically the best we have sung in that setting. The passing public seemed to agree and we were able to raise over £600 for Shelter. It was good to have been joined by some enthusiastic members of the Orpheus Young Singers, ever eager to sing with us. The lively, musical OYSers met until March 2020, with cheerful and infectious musicality. We had held a Cameo concert in November 19 and were all set for another last spring before, as with BOC, OYS came to an abrupt halt. The committee had decided that OYS would not meet for the academic year 2020 -2021 which as it transpires would not in any case have been possible. It has been a privilege to work with so many of these developing singers over five years and Shona and I hope that their love and experience of good singing will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

The choir seemed to greatly enjoy working on Haydn's Creation – such a joyful, uplifting work and one that was ripe and ready for performance. We sang the work through on March 11th, little thinking that that would be the last time we would be singing together for over 12 months.

On the Creation concert day I found myself writing to the choir and then again as the summer term should have begun. Before I knew it I had unintentionally established a pattern of communicating with you on a weekly basis – making suggestions of music

to listen to, scores to read and join in, reminiscences of much loved choir pieces and experiences and the occasional video to watch and be amazed or entertained. I hope these weekly missives enabled us to feel linked together as a choir through those days of strict lockdown – I certainly found it helpful to have a weekly commitment to contact you all.

Through last summer and on through this year your committee has continued to meet through the delights of Zoom set up by Richard. Thank you to everyone for monitoring the ongoing situation. I should like to say a huge “thank you” to Richard for all the years of being a brilliant secretary for us all. He has been a source of exemplary minutes, always promptly presented and somehow has always known the correct procedure and protocol to keep us on the straight and narrow. Thank you Richard for all your hard work and dedication to the choir.

I should also like to thank Linda for being such an excellent chair for us through these times – a cheerful and sympathetic communicator we have all appreciated her mail messages keeping us informed. She has fulfilled so many unnoticed background tasks to help us through this period and I have appreciated her careful thought and friendship.

Sadly one of the tasks that she has had to perform was to keep us informed of the news of choir members. As you know we have recently lost two long standing members: Don Pickett (bass) and Brian Chattock (tenor) who will both be greatly missed. We are also greatly saddened by the loss of Michael Barley, one of our Vice Presidents and a long standing friend of the choir.

This time last year there was no sign of the illness that was to strike our treasurer Elizabeth Hughes so quickly through the late spring and summer before her death in November. I was able to enjoy her company several times outside and was astounded by her bravery. She has been the most marvellous treasurer: thorough yet straightforward, clear and direct. We can't be thankful enough for her dedication and efficiency in calmly steering us financially through the past eight years. Since she took up the position our finances have been in a safe pair of hands and have healthily increased. She dealt with all our rehearsal and concert bookings too and I always valued her wisdom and advice. I hope there will be time in some future concert or event when we can honour those we have lost during these times. Well - we still remain hopeful of singing Haydn's *Creation* – so I hope you still have your copy safely where you know where it is! and be assured we shall be back in action just as soon as it is safe to do so.'

9. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Linda Newsom Ray proposed that we retain the services of Reg Squire as independent examiner and this was seconded by David McCormick.

Sarah Saward suggested we identify an alternative option if Reg is unavailable for any reason and it was agreed that all present would consider if they knew of a suitable candidate.

10. Any other business

Stella has received thanks from Roedean School to all the members of the choir who have responded to their annual invitation to join the school's musical concerts over the years.

Richard thanked the choir for their card and vouchers in appreciation of his long tenure as Secretary.

It was agreed that the next AGM would be held in mid-October 2021 in person, circumstances permitting

The meeting was then treated to a beautiful harp recital by Corinne Hull before closing.