

# **THORNBURY CHORAL SOCIETY**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Thornbury Choral Society held at the United Reformed Church, Thornbury on Monday 7th September 2015 at 8.00 p.m.**

### **1. Present**

Su Joyce (Chairman), Harsha Parmar(Treasurer), Rhona Allgood, Lilian Andrews, Robin Baggs (accompanist), Sue Bird, Ann Birdsall, Pat Brittliff, Annis Clarke, Margaret Costello, Sarah Dalrymple-Smith, Anita Dixon-Lewis, Ian Dobson, Linda Felton, Mark Ferguson, Sheila Ferguson, Liz Firth, Doreen Giudetti, Bryan Grantham, Marjorie Grantham, Jos Gregson (Acting-Secretary), Mags Haggerty, Jacquie Halford, Rosemary Higgins, John Hitchcock, Rita Hitchcock, Jonathan Hunt, Val Ingram, Eleri Jones, Peter Jones, Phil Jones, David Joyce, Lisa Kicinski, Steven Kings (Music Director), Margaret Lugg, Richard Lloyd, Fiona Macaskill, Alison Makepeace, Di Marshall, Annie McMenamin, Peter Minshall, Angie Moran, Valerie Murray, Hilary Newman, Nesta Parsons, Ian Phillipson-Masters, Kate Phillipson-Masters, Jenny Powell, Geoff Stevens, Sue Stevens, Tessa Sullivan, Lynn Summers, Michael Vooght, Frank Walters.

### **2. Apologies**

Carmen Appleby, Sally Appleby, Sue Bird, Nigel Boosey, Penelope Boosey, Mike Elcock, Marion Goalby, Jackie Gumb, Janet Gupta, Sue Higgins, John Howells, Alan Jones, Shuna Lindsay, Heather Loomes, Mary McGinty, Pat Nutton, Julia O'Connor-Beach, Margaret Pinder (Secretary), Ruth Piolle, Sue Thorn

### **3. Minutes of the 2014 AGM held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014**

The minutes were approved. Their adoption was proposed by Frank Walters and seconded by David Joyce.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

### **5. Chairman's Report**

Looking back over this last year I believe our May concert will remain in people's minds for a long time. The mighty Beethoven 9<sup>th</sup> was well received by our audience and the Dvorak, new to many, was a delight. Dick Birdsall's kind critique of the concert was appreciated by all those who took part and I would like to thank him for stepping in to do this at the last moment.

Our November concert was perhaps a slight disappointment in numbers of audience but this could have been due in part to Bristol performing Messiah shortly after us – or perhaps we were simply Messiah-ed out.

As always, the carol concert at Sheiling school was greatly enjoyed - many thanks go to Kate for arranging this and rehearsing us. I know I've said it before, but it marks the start of the true Christmas feeling to me and is a special occasion.

Our Workshop in February was a well attended and successful event. My thanks to Jos, Steven and Robin whose hard work and time make this such a popular occasion. Thanks also to Paul on timps who really brought the Dies Irae to life – frightened those in the front row!

The Big, Big Handel day was a great mixture of fun and learning. Our thanks go to Julia for the arranging and organisation of this event, to Steven for his commitment, enthusiasm and brilliant way with the children, to Robin, as always, for his accompanist skills. The orchestral

members, in their introduction to their specific instruments, brought a smile to all our faces. A very worthwhile day.

In September we look forward to rehearsing Brahms' German Requiem – a glorious work, full of emotion and beautiful music. This should be a crowd puller and we need to make a real effort to work hard on this and give a good concert to a full house audience. The time and commitment which Steven and Robin give should be an example for us to follow.

This year two of our committee are standing down. My thanks go to Rosemary and Anita for their time given to the Society.

I would like to thank all the committee for their time and dedication to the Society; to Harsha and Julia for looking after our finances, to Richard for arranging our orchestras and for getting us out and rambling each May, to Mike for setting up and running our website, to David for concert managing, to Di for providing our hire scores and to Ruth for taking on Ticketing.

I would like to thank Lisa for all the work she has done in Publicity in arranging our programmes – all this as a non-Committee member. She has given her time most generously. Special thanks go to Steven and Robin, without whom we wouldn't exist. The time which they give to us is enormous and I am so grateful to them.

My particular thanks go to Margaret who has gently guided me through this year – the changes since I was Chairman in 2006-8 have been massive and I've been on a steep learning curve! Her knowledge and help, her sensibilities and good humour have been warmly welcomed and I thank her so much.

My thanks to those members who have helped in various ways, for letters, emails and phone calls of support and for the friendship which music brings to us all.

I will be pleased and privileged to continue as Chairman for the coming year – if I'm re-elected!

Su Joyce

The adoption of the Chairman's report was proposed by Frank Walters and seconded by Jacquie Halford.

## **6. Musical Director's Report**

2014-2015 was my tenth season with TCS, and (for me at least) one of the best yet.

### Big Sing!

The first event of the season was our Handel Day; thanks to an enormous amount of work from Julia O'Connor-Beach and many others, both the morning workshop and the afternoon family event were well-attended and hugely enjoyable.

In the morning we saw very committed and enthusiastic participants and a real sense of achievement.

In the afternoon it was lovely to see a good number of children there: responsive and, I think, well-entertained. Anna Feather sang beautifully, Thornbury Orchestra played really well, and contributed to the fun and interest. We received some very useful feedback for **future events**, e.g. MORE for the audience to do/sing, and shorter passages of music (Movements 24-25-26 were too long).

The whole day had a real buzz!

### November concert

Our performance of Messiah was a good one, with TCS giving its usual committed and energetic singing. The four young soloists were excellent, and Thornbury Camerata as precise

and reliable as always. **Members' questionnaire** – I was glad to read positive comments; I completely agree that we should perform Messiah only occasionally, but it's an amazing work that no choral society can ignore!

### Workshop

The Verdi Requiem workshop was yet another successful day, again thanks to the massive efforts of Jos Gregson and his colleagues. I tried, and I think managed, to combine some general input on choral singing with some detailed work on the specifics of the piece – this is what I think workshops should ideally aim to do. If the “performance” wasn't quite as polished as it might have been, it still had some very effective moments – apart from the choral singing, we had four splendid soloists, a superb ten-fingered orchestra, and even the obligatory bass drum.

### May concert

**Members' questionnaire** (Many useful comments were received and will be dealt with in future committee discussion.

In general, members have been very happy with choice of repertoire over the previous three years. Beethoven 9 was always going to be a tricky option, in many ways, and it was the one work which divided opinion more awkwardly. The difficulty of the singing, and of the language, the fact that some members felt there was not enough material for five months of rehearsal, and the issue of balance between choir and orchestra – all these points were made more than once. I can understand these points of view, and it's most unlikely that I would ask TCS to perform this piece again.

THAT SAID – I really do feel that the choir performed superbly in this concert. You are not a mere ornament in the Beethoven – you are completely indispensable to the power and meaning of the music, and you sang with passion and clarity, with alertness and attention to detail, from beginning to end. You had also mastered the substantial challenges of the Dvorak – another beautiful and inspiring piece of music, well-worth performing in every way. We were marvellously well-served by our team of soloists (especially soprano Stephanie Edwards), and it was a privilege to be accompanied (in the fullest possible sense of the word) by the Bristol Ensemble.

If we do want to perform the whole choral repertoire, including works like Elijah and Gerontius, we will occasionally need to use larger orchestras. Whilst I agree that balance is an issue which needs to be borne in mind, I can also say that the AUDIENCE does not find it as overwhelming as we do on the stage. You do come across above the orchestra, even in that hall!

I am immensely grateful to **the choir** for your perseverance with the Beethoven, and for all the good-will and hard-work you have put into everything we do. Huge thanks also go to **Robin Baggs** for his expertise, reliability, and support in our rehearsals and workshops throughout the year. I'm also very grateful indeed to **Kate Phillipson-Masters and Julia O'Connor-Beach** for their assistance with the music and language in the Beethoven. Thanks to the whole **committee** for all that they do: especially to Su Joyce (Chairman), Margaret Pinder (Secretary), Di Marshall (Librarian), Richard Lloyd (Orchestral Manager) and David Joyce (Concert Manager) for keeping my eye on the ball and my feet on the ground.

The coming season is full of treasures.

Brahms Requiem (in German, but you're used to that now!) accompanied by two top-class pianists, Chris Northam and Gus Tredwell. (Plus Stanford and Mendelssohn – in English!)  
Workshop on Haydn's Creation – let's invite loads of people to join us for this.

In May, Rossini's passionate and heart-felt setting of the Stabat Mater, together with Schubert's delightful Mass in G and the William Tell Overture!

Hopefully something for everyone – a mixture of styles, instrumentation, and subject matter, with plenty to get our teeth into. I'm looking forward to it – I hope you are too.

Steven Kings

## **7. Treasurer's Report**

The income and expenditure account shows an improvement from last year with a surplus of £1,111.64 (2014: deficit of £556.69) added to reserves.

The balance sheet shows that the society is in a good financial position with cash balances of £17,054.13.

Income from members, patrons, and supporters has increased and we received subscriptions from 112 members in the year. We are fortunate to receive a significant amount in donations from members and workshop attendees which are now being shown separately. Gift Aid boosts this income yet further as we have signed declarations from a high proportion of members.

The costs for the Handel Outreach Event were substantially covered through ticket sales and sponsorship from Magnox Limited.

Ticket revenue for the autumn concert of Handel's Messiah covered 34% of concert expenditure; this fell to 19% for the spring concert with the additional costs of quality soloists and a prestigious orchestra for the Beethoven 9th and Dvorak Te Deum.

The workshop in February was very popular with 129 attendees, generating a welcome surplus of £1,683.

My thanks to Julia O'Connor Beach for her help and assistance with book-keeping during the year.

The Chairman gave her personal thanks for making the accounts clear and transparent.

Lisa Kicinski raised the costs of programme printing against the revenue raised from advertising. Harsha said that she felt that this probably showed up in a not very good light in the accounts due to the timing of payment for advertisements which could be on an annual or six monthly basis. She would look into the matter.

David Joyce said that he was impressed with the c £1000 profit showing in the accounts and wondered whether we should not have an orchestra for every concert.

Harsha Parmar

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Eleri Jones and seconded by David Joyce

## **8. Election of Officers**

Nominations for Officers had been received as follows: Chairman Su Joyce, Secretary Margaret Pinder, Treasurer Harsha Parmar. These appointments were approved.

## **9. Election of Committee members**

Nominations were received for the following as committee members:

Mike Elcock, Jos Gregson, Janet Gupta, Richard Lloyd, David Joyce, Di Marshall, Ruth Piolle and Tessa Sullivan. All were elected

## **10. South Cotswold Choral Group**

The South Cotswold Big Sing Group is now an autonomous body, separate from the South Cotswold Choral Group, and has its own bank account and its own constitution. We are grateful to Thornbury Choral Society for allowing the setting up of a No. 2 bank account to cover the period before the account was set up. We held a very successful workshop with Brian Kay in April with 155 participants and raised £2000 towards our performance of Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius in Gloucester Cathedral on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2016. Booking has opened for this, the Cathedral, Brian Kay and three soloists are booked and £500 has been paid as a deposit to Gloucester Cathedral

## **Berlioz**

For 2018 we are planning to put on a performance of the massive Berlioz Requiem, again in Gloucester Cathedral with Adrian Partington conducting. Adrian will run a preparatory workshop on the work on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2017

Jos Gregson

## **11. Any other business**

No other matters were raised

The meeting closed at 8.27pm

Jos Gregson                      7 September 2014

**Acting-Secretary**

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