



South Devon Choir

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

23 January 2020

Registered Charity 800116

7.30pm at St Paul's Church Hall, Preston, Paignton

Present: Sally Laird (Chairperson); John Hobbs (President); Simon Dunbavand (Director of Music); Prim Wood (Treasurer); Lisa Prager (Secretary); Committee members Paul Barton, Rosie Clapham, Stella Currie, Ann Gardiner, Jennie Litt; and 62 members of the Choir.

Sally welcomed John Hobbs to the meeting, and presented him with his badge of office as President of the Choir.

- 1. Apologies** were received from Mark Saxelby (Committee Member), and Choir members Jenny Saxelby, Janet Bovey, Jane Easterbrook and Sandra Worrall.
- 2. Minutes of the AGM on 24 January 2019** had been made available to all members prior to the meeting. The Minutes were signed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Chairperson's Report for 2018–2019

Sally reported on the Choir's activities for the year: all 3 concerts were performed at Central Church, Torquay. 'Calm after Chaos', in December 2018, included Haydn's Nelson Mass, Chris Williams' Tsunami Requiem, and Lauridsen's calm O Magnum Mysterium. An open workshop on the Tsunami Requiem was held in December, conducted by Graham Wili and accompanied by Chris Williams, who also arranged a carol specially for the Choir.

Other events in the autumn term included Choir members singing at the Armistice Day service at Churston Parish Church; participation in a celebration of the life of Isabel Brookes, a long-time Choir member who died in September; carol singing in Torquay Market, led by Richard Toll, in aid of local homeless people; and a Choir dinner at the Royal Yacht Club Torquay, organised by Rosie and John Clapham, with carol singing and entertainment by Tony Gregg and Simon Dunbavand.

The spring 2019 concert was Brahms' German Requiem, sung in English. Renovation works had made St Matthias' Church, Wellswood, unavailable. Simon Dunbavand and Ian Curror played the accompaniment as a duet on the church's Steinway piano. Soloists Catherine Hamilton and Darren Jeffery also sang a number of lieder to complete the programme.

Opera Classics, the summer concert, was a mixture of favourite opera arias and choruses, and attracted a large audience. Soloists were Cheryl Brendish and Arthur Swan, while John Hobbs (who was conducting as usual) joined Arthur to perform the duet from Bizet's The Pearl Fishers. The concert was accompanied by Simon Dunbavand. The Choir's ladies enjoyed the opportunity to dress in attractive evening gowns.

Other social and fundraising events during the year included 3 coffee mornings at the Brixham Christian Community Centre, led by Margaret King, which together raised more than £800. Thanks go to the many people who helped as waiters, kitchen volunteers, cake sellers and individual stall-holders. Prim Wood organised a cream-tea and quiz afternoon at Castle Barton tea rooms, Compton. In September Simon Dunbavand gave a talk at the Toorak Hotel, Torquay, entitled Sugar, Silver & Silence.

Sally thanked the many people who helped the Committee in running the Choir, including John Christian for concert recordings and printing concert tickets; Brian Laird, John Clapham and Michael Currie, who helped in many ways, particularly with front-of-house duties at concerts; Ron Morris for auditing the accounts; Mary Mackie for her weekly stall at rehearsal; and Sharron Gibson for organising chairs at rehearsal (now retiring). Sally thanked the Committee members for their commitment and hard work, and particularly Mark Saxelby and all his team, who erected and dismantled the staging for each concert.

Sally thanked Simon Dunbavand for his stimulating work accompanying rehearsals, the weekly voice warm-ups, and for conducting extra rehearsals. Finally, she thanked John Hobbs, now President of the Choir, for a year of stimulating, inspiring and entertaining music-making, for his reliable presence, cheerfulness and positivity, and his willingness to share his musical experience and knowledge.

5. Hon. Treasurer's Report

Prim Wood presented the Accounts for 2018–19. The Income and Expenditure Account showed a surplus of £2,291 for the year, compared to a deficit of £5,768 for the previous year. The largest elements of income were subscriptions (£8,679), social & fundraising (£2,038) and tax repayment on Gift Aid (£1,415). The largest expenditure elements were the deficit on concerts (£3,494), honoraria (£4,727) and hire of the rehearsal hall (£1,878).

From concerts, the total income was £5,708 and total expenditure was £9,110, with a further expense of £92 from the 2017–18 season; the overall total deficit on concerts was therefore £3,494.

The closing balance of accounts at 31 August 2019 was £2,709.32 (£418.42 in 2018).

Prim commented that the main difference to the previous year was the cost of buying staging in 2017–18, but the purchase had been very worthwhile for the Choir. She thanked those involved in fundraising during the year, including Mary Mackie and Simon Dunbavand, and especially thanked Ron Morris who was now retiring after 20 years as the Choir's auditor.

Acceptance of the Annual Accounts was proposed by Tricia Turner, seconded by Fenella Davis, and approved.

6. Music Directors' comments

John Hobbs, as Director of Music to December 2019, commented on the wide range of music for the year, from Handel and Victorian opera to the 20th century, which he termed 'a feast of music-making'. The Choir had been a joy to work with, and it had been wonderful to see the Choir develop. The Choir had worked hard to convey the meaning of the words, and it showed particularly in his farewell concert, Judas Maccabaeus, in December 2019. He thanked the excellent accompanists who were involved over the year, including Simon Dunbavand and Ian Curror. The new staging was a big success, particularly for the tenors and basses.

John particularly thanked Paul Barton, as Music Secretary, who had worked with him and behind the scenes with the soloists and instrumental players. Finally he thanked all the Choir for 12 hugely enjoyable years, saying he would always treasure the Book of Memories presented to him on his retirement from the Choir, and wished the Choir all success in the future with Simon Dunbavand.

Simon Dunbavand, as Director of Music from January 2020, said it had been wonderful working with John for the past 3 years, and recalled that he had first met John 20 years ago in Cornwall, when John was bass soloist in *The Wreckers*, and John's wife Margaret had proved a reliable page-turner.

Simon had seen some great music from a different perspective, playing a piano duet accompaniment for Brahms' Requiem. The two-piano sound would be used again for the concert of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* (December 2020), and in the April 2020 concert of Carmina Burana, which will also feature 6 percussionists, and pianists Alex Wilson and Mariko Akasawa-North performing one of Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances.

Further ahead, Simon looked forward to his first performance of Haydn's The Seasons (April 2021), with orchestra, and also to the Choir's anniversary season (2021–22). He thought the Choir was in a good position, with a good reputation, and interesting and musically fulfilling concerts.

7. Election of Officer and Committee Members

In accordance with the Constitution, the Treasurer and two Committee member posts would fall vacant from September 2020. Prim Wood (Treasurer), Stella Currie and Mark Saxelby were all willing to stand again. In addition, Jennie Litt was retiring from the Committee, and Jill Stevens was nominated to fill her vacant position.

Prim Wood was proposed by Doreen Jevons and seconded by Mike King.
Stella Currie was proposed by Lisa Prager and seconded by Jane Macey.
Mark Saxelby was proposed by Jenny Saxelby and seconded by Rae Gilderthorp.
Jill Stevens was proposed by Prim Wood and seconded by Stella Currie.

As no other nominations had been received, they were duly elected.

8. Other Posts

The following positions were nominated and accepted:

Hon. Auditor	(vacant)	Concert Manager	Mark Saxelby
Orchestral Secretary	Anna Cockroft	Music Secretary	Paul Barton
100 Club Organiser	(vacant)	Librarian/Hire Organiser	Rosie Clapham
Gift Aid Secretary	Jennie Litt	Sponsorship	Mark Saxelby
Publicity Officer	Stella Currie	Data Protection Officer	Lisa Prager
New Members Sec.	Ann Gardiner	Refreshment Organiser	Stan Gardiner

9. Subscription Charges for the 2020–21 Season

Prim Wood said that, following last year's subscription increase from £95 to £100, the Committee was recommending no increase for the coming year (from September 2020). However she warned that it might need to be increased again the following year, as the costs of engaging soloists are rising, and the fees for quality orchestral players are increasing by about a third, meaning an orchestra costing £3,000 now would cost £4,000.

She reminded members that it was possible to help the Choir's finances by sponsoring a player, or by becoming a Vice President at the cost of £70 a year. Such donations could be Gift Aided.

10. Any Other Business

The President congratulated Ann Minton on achieving 30 years of membership of the Choir. Mike Sabel (not present) has also achieved that milestone. A certificate will be presented to each on a future occasion.

Richard Toll asked a general question about Gift Aid; he was informed that Choir members had been able to sign up for Gift Aid for many years. Gift Aid forms will be made available at future rehearsals.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed: Sally Laird, Chair, 21 January 2021