

Chiltern Chamber Choir - Minutes of the AGM, 26 September 2019

Apologies for absence:

Patricia Bandle, Jo Rhoden, Elizabeth Crumpler, Kate Goodwin, Liz Roberts, Chris Sanders, David Brown and Phil James.

Choir Manager's Introduction:

It has been a good and busy year for the choir. We have changed rehearsal venue from the Chapel at Berkhamsted School. No other suitable venue has been found, so for the time being, we will rehearse in the Lady Chapel/Court House. We will continue to look for alternatives.

We have a number of new members, all of whom have been seen and approved by Jeanette Ager. Evelyn Wotherspoon, who died during the year, will be sadly missed by the choir. Dot Watt, another Alto 1, has now left the choir.

Mary Harris has done a huge amount of work in organising our November trip to Lyon. We will have a young French orchestra accompanying us, meaning the cost will be lower than if we had take our own players with us. A lot of good will is being shown to us by both the orchestra and our contacts at the Basilica. Apparently, the orchestra regularly enjoys audiences of 350.

Marie thanked the following people for their contribution to the smooth running of the choir over the past year:

Adrian Davis, Jon Lee, Chris Sanders, Kate Goodwin, Jane Wilde, Kate Perera, Jeremy Biddle, all those who help set up the venue before concerts, Jan Montague, John Wignall, Joan Veysey, Patricia Bandle and David Brown.

Marie also thanked the choir for their contribution during the year, but voiced a little frustration at people not reading her Notices properly. Often people email her to ask a question, to which the answer has already been given in the Notices!

Financial Review, given by Marie in Kate Goodwin's absence.

Our financial position is good - we have £15000 in the bank, so do not need to fund-raise or seek sponsorship. This year, our surplus was a healthy £1700. We made a loss of £1300 on the Zelenka concert, but seen in the light of the gains made at the Christmas and summer concerts, this was acceptable. It had been judged important to have a good orchestra and soloists for the Zelenka concert.

This year, for the first time, we have to pay for our rehearsal venue. So it was suggested that subs be raised by £10 to £100 per annum. This should ideally be paid annually, but anyone in financial difficulty should make themselves known and appropriate arrangements found.

Ticket sales are obviously crucial - it is important financially, and otherwise, for us to attract good audiences.

A question was raised by Sidney Perera about why the revenue from programme sales had reduced compared with the previous year. It was thought that the figure for the sale of Christmas concert programmes had been hard to determine, as ticket sales and programme money had been pooled. In addition, there had been no programme sales for the summer concert, where a free A4 sheet had been produced.

A comment was made by Faith Comminos to the effect that tickets are not properly checked at concerts by the front of house team and that programme sales are not pushed enthusiastically enough. Marie replied that previously the Cowper Society were responsible for Front of House. However this has now changed and has to be done by the choir.

Jan Montague's sons had been very helpful as had Greg Comminos and Richard Brewer. More volunteers to help would be very welcome!

Sidney Perera asked why the subs should go up in view of the substantial surplus in choir funds, but after a vote proposed by David Wilde, the motion to increase the subs by £10 was carried.

Conductor's Report

The Bach Mass in B Minor was good, with much sung from memory. Kyrie 1, however, was almost disastrous!

The soloists: Kathryn Jenkin, Jeanette Ager, Phillip Conway-Brown and Piran Legg were excellent. The orchestra was generally excellent, but disappointing at times - especially in the Agnus Dei.

Audience numbers were not at capacity.

The Palm Sunday Zelenka concert - the choir was much enthused after a few sceptical weeks of rehearsal. They - and the audience - appeared to be completely won over.

Again, the soloists were good: Kathryn Jenkin, Jeanette Ager, Phillip Conway-Brown and Christopher Foster. The orchestra did very well and benefited from some extra trombone parts reinforcing the ATB parts in the Missa - realised by Paul St. John. Smith gratis. The four trumpets gave some brilliance to the occasion.

Jon Lee accompanied dextrously in the Laudate Pueri.

Adrian felt the De Profundis lacked conviction, though the men's voices produced some rich and sonorous moments.

He hopes Zelenka's music will become better known and appreciated. Bach's admiration of his contemporary should be noted!

The audience was surprisingly large for a Palm Sunday concert.

We are very grateful to Marie for hosting the extra rehearsal at Rye Farm - it was an ideal venue for some intensive rehearsing!

Summer concert - an all English programme.

Richard Carr joined us as organist for the Rejoice in the Lamb. Soloists were from the choir: Sally Dussek, Jane Wilde, Humphrey Norriington, plus Oliver Brown, tenor.

This concert was rather lacklustre and under-rehearsed - with some clear lack of commitment in private practice and attendance. The Rejoice in the Lamb and Lay a Garland came off best, whilst the Vaughan Williams' Shakespeare Songs proved too much of a challenge. The St. Cecilia remained a mystery and Moeran's Songs of Springtime suffered from early frosts and failed to blossom.

Not one of our better manifestations, but Adrian feels partly to blame for expecting more of the choir in a relatively short amount of rehearsal time.

Our gratitude to Jon for his superb accompanying and music advice and assistance - a great asset to CCC!

Adrian thanked the committee members and other helpers for their work - on programmes, distribution, parties, catering, seating arrangements, FOH etc. Without them, CCC could not function effectively.

Particular thanks to Marie who keeps Adrian in his place - in the nicest possible way!

Publicity Officer's Report

A consistent logo and branding has been developed for the choir and used across the website, Facebook and Twitter pages, posters and flyers and in mailings to the choir's expanded mailing list.

In addition, concerts are posted to external media, such as Living Magazine, Your Berkhamsted, Aitchinsons and the Facebook pages: Everything Tring, Everything Berko, Berko Music, What's On in Tring, as well as relevant concert websites.

Jane asked if choir members on Facebook could kindly share the Events to their own Facebook pages. She will happily show them how!

Jane and Adrian have promoted our concerts on Chiltern Voice Radio throughout the year.

We will keep the new brand - and a new bookmark with the 2019/20 dates will be available in about 2 weeks.

Anyone in the choir who wants to submit an idea for a choir poster, in keeping with the existing brand, is always welcome to do so!

Thanks to all the choir for emailing their own friends and getting better than previous audiences for the Palm Sunday and Summer concerts in particular. Please keep it up - we need everyone to do their bit to sell tickets!

Committee Re-election

All are prepared to stand again with the exception of Kate Perera. Humphrey proposed that the committee should be re-elected en bloc and this was seconded by Faith Comminos.

Marie would like someone to volunteer to look after tickets and sell them to choir members in the run-up to concerts.

Choir Tour Suggestions

Ruth Bardou told the choir that her contacts in Agde were keen for us to sing there again, perhaps in 2020. Marie will circulate a Doodle poll to gauge the popularity of this/preferred time of year.

AOB

Next week's rehearsal is in the Court House.

Jane Wilde