

Scottish Chamber Choir AGM Minutes 28.09.2020 Online Meeting

- 1. Present:** All current committee members; further 20 ordinary members, Conductor Ian McLarty.
- 2. Apologies:** Amy, Alasdair, Roy, David, Michael

3. Minutes of last AGM approved: Proposed: Guen, Seconded: Julie

4. Matters arising: Nil

5. Chair's report: Pauline McClellan

Well this has been a rather unusual year!

It started off well with a successful concert in St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral where we performed Vaughan Williams Mass in G minor and the Leighton Mass for Double Choir. The concert was attended by Leighton's son and his wife who were very enthusiastic about our performance. Next we chose to perform a concert on International Women's Day which luckily fell in early March. We performed a very interesting programme of works by women composers through the ages in the wonderful setting of St Giles. Although we did not gain any income from this concert we did have a large and appreciative audience and hopefully helped establish our reputation as a choir worth going to listen to.

Reflecting on the past season I think that we have done pretty well all things considered. Although our singing activities were curtailed by the Coronavirus we have adapted and thanks to Milda and Iain have managed to meet up together virtually. Our Zoom meetings are never going to be the same as singing together in person but at least we can keep in touch and learn our notes to help us when we can resume rehearsals. I would like to thank Iain for his continued dedication to the choir and his hard work preparing for these meetings and putting together the recording of 'Ceilidh'.

We will continue to be optimistic and make plans for the future, adapting as we need to. We still have our booking for the Christmas Concert in Greenbank Church, a March concert in Old St Paul's, and concerts in Roslyn Chapel and Limekilns in June. The Brahms Requiem joint concert plan with Calton Concert and Meadows Chamber Orchestra has been postponed until 2021.

I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work this season keeping the choir running smoothly and a special thanks to Guen who is stepping down this year from her role as Concert Secretary. She has served on the committee for many years and fulfilled her role very efficiently – she will be sorely missed. There are also others who make a significant contribution to the working of the choir – Jim for his work on the website, Catrina for Facebook, Martin for the programmes, and all those who help out with the coffee. Thanks to you all. You will remember that we altered the constitution last year to limit the term of office for committee members to three years. This means that there will now be a regular fall off from the committee and new members will need to be recruited on a more regular basis. Beware you may be approached at any time!

Last season we discovered how bad we were at pub quizzes. This season we discovered how bad we were at skittles! Let's hope we have the chance to meet up socially again next season so that we can discover what else we are bad at!

A final thanks to all of you, the membership, for making choir such an enjoyable and musically worthwhile experience and for your commitment to Scottish Chamber Choir.

6. Treasurer's report. Graham Drew Accounts circulated.

Examination of the circulated accounts will show the choir made a loss last year of just under £2,000. Most of this is accounted for by the losses made on both the November and March concerts. We had anticipated some of this to be offset by profits from later concerts, which unfortunately never took place.

The Choir's financial position remains robust, however.

For the coming year, subscriptions from the current membership will approximately cover the anticipated costs of the Musical Director and general administration. On that basis, and anticipating that membership remains at its current level, the Committee does not propose any rise in the annual membership subscriptions.

7. Musical Director's report: Iain McLarty

2019-20 will always be the year which we remember for having our first virtual choir rehearsals but there were some excellent performances in the first two-thirds of the year. In the autumn we began with a programme of Double Masses by Vaughan Williams and Leighton. This was a wonderful opportunity to sing in St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral and to collaborate again with Simon Leach. These were tricky pieces but we did an excellent job with them and the audience were extremely enthusiastic. It was also good to be able to give lots of solo opportunities for members of the choir. Our spring concert was "early" as we had arranged to perform on International Women's Day and that proved fortuitous with many other groups having to cancel performances in late March. This concert was intended as a chance for us to raise our profile with a free event and to explore some repertoire that may otherwise have struggled to attract an audience. As well as the great musical performance of extremely wide ranging repertoire, it was nice to continue with members of the choir introducing the programme, something to which I think audiences respond well .

Unfortunately that was the last time we were able to sing together in person. However, I hugely appreciate the dedication shown by those who kept attending virtual rehearsals up until the summer and who took part in our socially distanced recording. These are certainly not any substitute for regular rehearsals and personally I wouldn't want people to feel any obligation to attend. However, it has been important to maintain a sense of community as a choir through this time and to keep our voices exercised. Hopefully this will not have to continue too long but previous years have shown the benefit of advance preparation of more challenging repertoire so I hope the time will have been productive even if it is not what any of us would like to be doing.

We have continued to have interest from people wanting to join the choir and even reached the point where we had a full complement of sopranos. This means it is particularly important for permanent members of the choir to be able to make firm commitments about attendance for each project or to say early on that they can't manage this in order to allow an extra to join us for that concert. We still have space in other sections for permanent members but we are now in a good position when recruiting as all our sections have a core of strong singers who attend most rehearsals.

Finally, a huge thanks to everyone who works so hard to run the choir and in particular the committee. This has not been an easy year with having to change all our plans and to make and then revise backup plans and contingencies. However, their continued positivity has made it possible for us to continue throughout that and I look forward to the point where we can meet again to sing together in person.

8. Publicity Secretary's report: Stéphanie Robin

The Mass for Double Choir held in November gathered a good-sized audience thanks to everyone's efforts put in publicity. We also enjoyed an enthusiastic and packed audience in March in St Giles for our Women Composers concert with minimal efforts in publicity: no flyers and very few posters were printed to maintain low costs for this no-income concert so we mainly relied on St Giles' publicity and on our social media channels.

Thanks again to all of you who shared flyers and talked about performances around you. A special thank you to Catrina for her amazing activity on our Facebook channel and to Jim, for promptly maintaining the website (and always being happy to make changes). This year we created some singers profiles, which I think give a more personal touch to our website and choir image. Our list of 'friend' or regular audience members is growing and our Twitter and Facebook channels get more and more followers and viewers. It was nice to post the Ceilidh video there in June and we received some nice comments. This year might be challenging but we shall keep our efforts up to maintain the link with our audience, digitally at least! Please keep talking about the choir and your experience around you as this may bring new singers and new audience eventually.

9. Election of Office Bearers for Season 2020/21

Chair: Pauline McClellan, Treasurer: Graham Drew, Membership Secretary: Milda Zinkus, Concert secretary: Neil Dawson, Publicity Secretary: Stéphanie Robin, Librarian: Valerie Holehouse, Honorary Secretary: Marcia McDougall.

These post holders were proposed by Jim and seconded by Sue.

Charity trustees Pauline, Milda, Graham, Stéphanie and Marcia

Guen has stepped down as concert secretary and this post is being taken by Neil Dawson until summer 2021. We therefore need to find a new concert secretary by then.

Thank you to Guen for her hard work over many years as concert secretary and committee member.

Next year Pauline and Milda will be leaving the committee.

Thanks were expressed by the choir for the leadership, enthusiasm and hard work provided by Pauline and the committee, and for Iain's excellent and inspirational musical direction.

Marcia McDougall, Secretary

1.10.20

Next Committee Meeting 26.10 20