

Annual General Meeting of Royston Choral Society 19th September 2018

20:45, St John's Parish Church, Royston

Chair: Huw Jenkins

Committee Members: Caroline Franks, Jenny Leitch, Carole Kaszak, Lewis Thompson (minutes), Tessa Rock, Olivia Tomkins, Andrew O'Brien

Part Reps: Sue Pegram, Anthony Pigg, Chris Lee, Suzie Harrison

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Huw opened the meeting and welcomed the choir to this year's AGM.

Apologies have been received from: Andrew O'Brien, Sue Collins, Richard Prince, Ian Palmer, Anne Hoptroff, Heather Howard and Tessa Phizacklea

2. Approval of minutes from 26th September 2017

The minutes were accepted as a true record and adoption was proposed by Cynthia Prince, seconded by Anthony Pigg

3. Matters arising from minutes from 26th September 2017

It was decided by the committee in January that name badges were to be introduced on a voluntary basis. Aside from this, no other matters arose from previous minutes

4. Chair's Report

See Appendix 1

Huw thanked the choir for the support given over his first year as chair and for electing him. It was a challenging year musically but a successful one. Huw mentioned good comments from each concert and thanked the choir for rising to the challenge. Huw gave particular thanks to Carole Kaszak, Caroline Franks, Jenny Leitch, Suzie Harrison and Heather Howard for the invaluable work that they have given the choir over the last year. Huw also have thanks to the committee and to the members of the choir who have helped provide refreshments during rehearsals.

The choir currently has two vacant positions, we are in need of a secretary, with the duties of secretary currently being divided amongst the committee and a Front of House Manager, who should ideally not be someone who sings with the choir.

Huw has set three aims for the next year:

- To sell more tickets for each performance
- To manage growth of the choir intelligently
- To review our current staging

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5. Treasurer's Report

See Appendix 2

Caroline reiterated the healthiness of the rehearsal accounts due to the size of the society. The concerts have not been as successful as only the June concert made profit (£120). The accounts would be in a much worse position were it not for the grants secured by Carole, which Caroline thanked her for. Next year the North Herts Arts Council ceases to exist, which currently offer the society a contribution towards the loss incurred at one concert per year.

Caroline gave thanks for Julie Clements for dealing with all aspects of the 100 Club, which is an important additional source of funding for the society. She also thanks Melanie Dawson-Dew, who manages the hiring out of our music library through Gerontius (which generated an additional £144). We are currently still members of Making Music.

Caroline reported that we have started the season in a sound position but that we have an ambitious programme for the year and that we currently continue to make losses on concerts.

Andrew Howard who previously examined our accounts has ceased to do so and Caroline thanked Ellie Kirby for doing so this year.

There were no questions regarding the accounts from the choir.

Caroline proposed adoption of the accounts, seconded by Lewis Thompson.

6. Musical Directors Report.

Andrew sends his apologies that there was no Musical Director's Report.

7. Nomination for the Committee

Stepping down:

None

Standing for election:

Current committee agreed to stand again

Current Part Reps agreed to stand again

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8. Election of Committee (with Michael Smith as temporary chair)

Huw Jenkins as Chair, proposed by Cynthia Prince, seconded by Caroline Franks

Caroline Franks as Treasurer, proposed by Huw Jenkins, seconded by Lewis Thompson

Jenny Leitch as Publicity Officer, proposed by Cynthia Prince, seconded by Sue Pegram

Heather Howard as Concert Manager, proposed by Richard Franks, seconded by Nick Keep

Carole Kaszak as Grant Officer, proposed by Huw Jenkins, seconded by Cynthia Prince

Olivia Tomkins as Member without Portfolio, proposed by Jessica Angus, seconded by Fay Skinner

Lewis Thompson as Member without Portfolio, proposed by Caroline Franks, seconded by Huw Jenkins

Tessa Rock as Member without Portfolio, proposed by Jenny Leitch, seconded by Val Hirst

Suzie Harrison, Sue Pegram, Chris Lee and Anthony Pigg have agreed to continue acting as Part Reps.

9. Other Business

Some questions were asked regarding the upcoming Britten Concert but none pertaining to the AGM.

Meeting Closed 21:10

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Appendix 1 – Chair's Report

Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

www.roystonchoralsoc.org.uk



AGM - 18th September 2018 Report from chair - Huw Jenkins

I would like to begin this report by saying how (relatively) easy you have all made my first year as the society's chair. You have supported the society well. It has also I feel, using any measure, been a very successful year.

Bach's Christmas Oratorio was a bold choice on Andrew's part. For some of us I know the German felt a struggle but it was well worth it and the results were outstanding. Possibly one of our best recruiting aids at the moment is the recording of the start of this concert. It's on the website - share it with potential singing or audience members. It always seems a short time from the Autumn concert to the Christmas one and this year was no exception. It is very easy for choral society Christmas concerts to become somewhat hackneyed. Andrew does do a great job of keeping these fresh and interesting and last year's concert also benefited again from J50's contribution.

In March we went to Standon and coupled the ever-popular Faure Requiem with motets by Durufle and Bruckner. These are taxing but again the choir rose to the challenge extremely well. Hugh Reid from Haileybury and our own Olivia Tomkins were the soloists in the Faure and performed beautifully. It was good to hear the ever-dependable Michael Smith as a soloist and not just a rock-solid accompanist. The contrasting moods of the 3 Orgelbuchlein Chorale preludes enhanced the concert considerably and contrasted well with the motets.

We ended the year at Barkway and performed to a very appreciative audience. Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music was the piece to test us at that concert, but again we gave a very credible performance of it. It was a perfect foil to the somewhat more straightforward Sprig of Thyme by Rutter. Alistair Watson (who some of us remembered from Andrew's first concert with us) was a wonderful accompanist as well contributing a virtuosic solo performance of a Bach Toccata. The concert ended on a suitably joyous and light-hearted note with a couple of Ken Burton Spiritual arrangements.

So musically a great year. I won't steal Caroline's thunder in talking about the financial situation other than to thank on behalf of all of us Carole Kaszak for her tenacity and success at the grant application process. Thank you very much Carole - it made all the difference.

So, to the nag that was threatened (promised?) in the 'welcome back' email. We are not selling enough tickets. We were just short of 200 for the Christmas Oratorio, but that dropped to 115 at Christmas and was around 120 in Standon and somewhat lower at Barkway. Those numbers don't really do justice to the amount of work we all put in week by week, and certainly don't reflect the standard and quality of the performances we put on. Please can we all make a concerted effort to sell at least 3 tickets for every concert in this coming season? It will make all the difference. Not only will we be looking out on more crowded venues (and that will lift the performance) but it will allow us to continue with our current level of ambitious programmes. We cannot rely on grant money to bail us out going forward.



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At the start, I thanked you all for the support over the year. I want to particularly reiterate my thanks to all the committee who have rallied round, accepted some changes and generally 'got stuff done'. What is even better they are all happy to continue doing it. At the risk of embarrassing them, I must particularly mention by name, Caroline, for all the work she does with the finances, music and general know-how; Jenny, for the excellent work on publicity the quality of the up-front work on which which was particularly useful given issues with the printers and designer; Suzi, for finding advertisers and the associated income; and Heather, for not only taking on the role of concert manager but also organising a couple of enjoyable social evenings over the year. The committee, though, has been without a secretary all year which has at times been challenging. Is there anyone out there that would be prepared to take that role on?

Not part of the committee, but Janet Backer and everyone that make teas week by week deserve the thanks of us all. The refreshment break is one of our chances to socialise and I think does help to bond us as a choir. I, of course, also extend this thanks to those who bake for the open rehearsal each term. This really helps to add to the welcome.

During the year David Heinzemann stepped down from the role of front of house manager for the concerts. He had done the role diligently for a number of years and was thanked by the committee at the time but it is good to record our thanks here as well. This is a role we must fill to ensure concerts run smoothly. It is best performed not by a singing member, so if any of you have friends or partners who might consider taking this on please do talk to me.

Finally on the subject of thanks, we are very lucky to have such capable deputies as Michael and Richard to stand in for Andrew when he is unavailable. Thank you both very much. It was perhaps a particularly onerous year for this with Andrew succumbing to psittacosis, although as an excuse to miss rehearsals that really does take some beating! We were of course all very pleased to see the speedy and full recovery once the correct diagnosis had been made!

It is with great sadness that I record the death of Peter Murray just after the end of the society's year. Peter had been a stalwart member of the society and its committee for decades. He did a lot in his own quiet unassuming way. We will miss him greatly and it was good that the society was well represented at his funeral.

Looking to the future I want to leave you with three thoughts:

- I have already mentioned the issue of ticket sales and 'bums on seats'.
- I also think it would be good to grow the choir just slightly - but primarily in the tenor and bass divisions. A slightly better balance here would help programming. However with choir numbers in general if we grow more than slightly over our current numbers we are going to have a problem finding suitable venues to perform in.
- Finally in time for the St John Passion concert I think we need to look again at our staging for the orchestra. Any help and ideas in this department would be welcome.



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Appendix 2 – Treasurer's Report

This has been another good year, artistically, and we have managed to pull off a small surplus financially too, though there is no room for complacency.

As I explained last year, due to a change in charity law, we now produce receipts and payments accounts, so our expenditure isn't exactly matched with the income to which it relates. For example, in the receipts and payments account on page 2, the gift aid tax shown as coming in relates to the claim based on our 2016/17 subscriptions, and the amount claimed on our 2017/18 subs won't show until next year, when it's received.

The figures in the left hand column of the receipts and payments account on page 2 tell us what has happened this year. Our rehearsal account (subs received less rehearsal costs) shows a healthy surplus, due to continuing high membership numbers. That enables us to undertake the programme we do, as our subscription income helps contribute to the costs of our concerts.

Our concert season has been less successful financially. The figures are laid out on page 4.

Carole K managed to get us substantial funding again for the Bach concert but she has warned us that the days of large grants are almost over, and finding large amounts like this is likely to be a thing of the past. We are enormously grateful to Carole for all her work in rooting out funding streams and filling in countless forms that would have me lose the will to live – and being successful! Without her efforts, we would be in a serious quandary this year, probably looking at reducing the programme we're able to take on.

Numbers attending our concerts were disappointing, and Hugh has talked about this in his report.

Over the season, the total deficit on our concerts was £578. Without the grants, it would have been almost £3,000.

Thanks go to Julie, who administers the Hundred Club. As you can see from note 2 on page 4, it generated £590 this year. There's a typo there – the comparative figure for 2017 should be £570, not £3902, and £222 for hire of music. My apologies.

We continue to offer most of our music library on Gerontius for other choirs to hire, and that generated £144 this year. Melanie Dawson Dew deals with enquiries, sending out and collecting back the music and organising the invoicing and payment collection. Our thanks go to her too.

We have also continued to buy music on behalf of our own members. We negotiate the best deals we can with suppliers, and ask members who want to buy their own copies to pay the normal retail price. RCS therefore makes a bit of margin through the discounts we obtain. Those amounted to

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£89 this year. However, we also subsidised the sale to our members of copies of the War Requiem we'll sing in November. Such is the demand for library copies in this centenary year that we were forced to buy a set, and, rather than tie up more than £1,500 in our own library, it was better to sell what we could, albeit at less than we paid for the copies. £99 of those discounts to members is shown in these accounts; there will be a little more next time. The result is that we have purchased a set of 50 for our own library, which will be available for hire on Gerontius in case any choir ever wants to sing it again!

We are members of Making Music, the national organisation that helps amateur music groups fulfil their legal obligations. Our insurance is arranged through MM, and we use their system to pay our performing rights fees for each concert. We also have access, through our membership, to their legal department (we hope we'll never need them, but it's reassuring to know it's there!) and many helpful resources.

We start the new season on a sound financial basis. We plan an ambitious programme again for this year, and we know that our attention can be on delivering artistically, rather than frantically fundraising in order to make ends meet. We are very fortunate to be in this position; many amateur choirs are not. We will, however, try to maintain that healthy position. Please keep selling tickets; sign up your relatives to the 100 club; recruit advertisers for our programmes; do whatever you can to keep the income rolling. (Although Haileybury College is taking the lead on organising the November concert, we will be contributing to some of the costs.)

Most of all, enjoy singing. That's what we're here for; the rest is only to support that.

Lastly, we must record our thanks to Ellie Kirby, who has examined these accounts for us. Alan Howard, after many years' service, has retired from this important role. We think we have identified someone who will take it on from next year, but Ellie kindly offered to fill the gap this time. We're very grateful.

Caroline Franks

18.09.18