

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus
Minutes of Meeting 2nd June 2009

Present

Julie Smethurst; Els Pearse; Pamela Leon; John Spence (joined later); Kate Reece; Angela Argenzio; Jenny Swann; Sue Pennington; Janet Bower; Richard Salt; Dan Spicer; Margaret Brugger; Frazer Jarvis; Darius Battiwalla (joined later.)

1. Apologies

Ruth Jones; Jim Monach; Helen Kirk; Sally Turnbull.

2. Minutes of 5th May meeting were signed.

3. Matters Arising

i) Hire Library. Els has made a start on tidying up the library by getting rid of various items as per suggestions from Darius - editions which have been superceded, etc. She will continue this work.

ii) Music Bags. To be reviewed in September - about 25 people have so far signed up.

iii) Bill's book. Julie will put Bill in touch with Stephen Knight so that he can find out how to access the archive to extract the information he requires. She will also suggest that he continues to use group e-mails to liaise with the committee as required over the summer.

4. Membership Matters

Sue Morton has written accepting Honorary Membership.

Agreed it should also be offered to Miriam Gilchrist and Sylvia Barber.

Barbara Greatorex has died. She was an ex-member and honorary member.

5. Financial Matters

No invoice has been received from the City Hall regarding the Elijah concert soloists. Payment has been made to Chris Wren and Rachel Copley.

Pamela brought copies of the draft accounts for the season. She will circulate these by e-mail once outstanding matters have been resolved. The accounts show that a loss will be incurred. There has been an anonymous donation of £1,000.

6. 2009/10 Concert Season

Darius is liaising with Ian MacMillan regarding items for this year's Christmas concert.

Julie will set up a meeting of the Sheffield Academy sub-group.

The Halle has now taken over concert planning. Copies of a letter received by Darius from Geoffrey Owen, Head of Artistic Planning, were circulated ahead of the meeting. It sets out proposals for future planning. A key proposal is that the chorus be

responsible for engaging and paying soloists in return for a box office percentage. There would be a minimum of 2 concerts per season plus the Christmas concert.

The suggested arrangements do not appear to be financially advantageous to the chorus. However, when Darius joined the meeting he explained that the details are negotiable. For example it may be possible to limit the profit and the loss. Also we could request that the Christmas concert be included in the deal as the profit from this would help to off-set the losses.

Agreed Darius should continue to lead on these discussions which should also include Julie, Pamela and (if she is willing,) Ruth.

There was a lengthy discussion about the wider implications of being involved more closely with Halle planning. It was agreed on balance that there could be real advantages in having closer links providing we could also continue to do other things independently.

The new arrangement with the Halle will inevitably have a financial cost for the chorus. It was recognised that subscriptions will have to be raised by a significant amount. No decision was taken on how much this should be. An additional £25 per member would be roughly the amount required to fund a season in the manner currently being suggested. It could be less this coming season as the first concert is already funded without our contribution. It was agreed that a presentation of some sort will be required to explain to the membership the reasons behind the rise in subscriptions.

7. Chorus Administrator.

Ruth was not able to be present but she had circulated a paper outlining her reasons for needing to step down from her role. She is prepared to continue through the summer and into September with the expectation that she can then begin to shed work. It will be very difficult to replace Ruth. There was a lengthy discussion about the possibility of trying to fund a paid position. Again this would equate to about £25 per member per year. No decision was taken. Ruth will announce her decision in the Summer Newsletter. She has asked that people maintain confidentiality about this till then, though she is happy for us to start approaching possible replacements.

8. Weddings and small concerts

Julie circulated notes of her meeting with Rachel Copley. Other concerts are always only done with Darius' approval and use a different name for the singers eg "members of SPC"

Agreed we should have a fee of £300 for a wedding. This should be used in the first instance for expenses then any surplus going to chorus funds. We should seek to recruit a pool of 20-30 members who would be prepared to sing at these events. Also create lists of volunteer organists and of conductors. When this is done then the weddings option could be given more prominence on the website with more details available.

9. 75th Anniversary

Lots of ideas for celebrating our anniversary in the 2010/11 season:-

Promoting one of our City Hall concerts as a "gala" evening;

Singing in the Botanical Gardens (summer 2010) as part of the musical festival;

Making a CD of Christmas music featuring in particular Darius' arrangement of "O Holy Night"

10. Chorus Accompanist

Andy is leaving to take up a post as Music Director of Croft House. He will still be available on some Tuesday evenings. Decided not to advertise for a replacement. Instead Darius will follow up various contacts. The committee felt it was important to build up a good working relationship with an accompanist attending regularly.

10. AOB

i) St Lukes have requested we take part again in their Christmas service in the Cathedral. Date 13th December. Rachel is available. We accepted.

ii) We have lost a potential Raymond Gubbay concert to Huddersfield Choral Society. Darius suggested we think about looking for an agent. Agreed we should do so.

iii) We considered briefly the idea of having a "friends" group to help fundraise. No time for a proper discussion.

iv) We would like to find an opportunity to involve Sam West in a concert.

11. Date of Next meeting

Tuesday 15th September 2009 9.15pm University Arms.

Note:- at Julie's discretion it may be necessary to call an additional meeting before then.