

Côr Dyfed Choir
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting – 6th October 2020

Meeting held by zoom at 7.00pm

1. **Apologies** were received from Roger and Pat Antell, Izzy Jones and David Childs.
2. **Minutes of the last AGM** had been sent out and their acceptance was proposed by Sue Russill, seconded by Andrea Burgoyne and were unanimously approved.
3. **Matters Arising** – none.
4. **Treasurer's report** – See Annex A. The accounts had been circulated in advance and acceptance of the Treasurer's Report was proposed by Dudley Williams, seconded by Marian Addison and unanimously approved.
5. **Review of Subscriptions**. Andrea proposed that due to the current situation caused by coronavirus and being unable to hold choir rehearsals in person, that there would not be any subscription fee for the Autumn term. The annual subscription fee for the coming year would therefore be £110. This can be paid either as one payment (paid now or in January) or 2 payments of £55 paid in January and March. This proposal was unanimously approved by the choir.
6. **Appointment of an External Examiner**. Joy Green has been appointed as our External Examiner.
7. **Chair's Report** – see Annex B.
8. **Music Director's Report** – See Annex C.
9. **Election of Officers**.
 - a) **Chair** – Kathy Sleigh was nominated by Russ Evans, seconded by Dudley Williams and assumed the chair.
 - b) **Ex-Chair** – Lesley was thanked for her work as chair over the past year and invited to remain on the committee for a third year as Ex-Chair.
 - c) **Vice Chair** – Sue Russill was nominated by Maggie Body and seconded by Cathy Arthur and approved.
 - d) **Soprano Rep** – Maggie Body was proposed by Lynn Jones and seconded by Cathy Arthur and approved.
 - e) **Alto Rep** – Anne Jones will continue as Alto rep for a second year.
 - f) **Tenor and Bass Rep** - Russ Evans will continue as Tenor and Bass rep for a second year.
 - g) **Treasurer, Secretary and Librarian** - Those filling these posts (Andrea B, Hannah J and Lynn J) were all willing to stand again and were unanimously approved.
10. **Any Other Business**. – The following dates were announced.
 - 13th October – Voice Workshop with Sam Howley.
 - 20th October – Zoom rehearsal held by Stuart
 - 27th October – No rehearsal, half term.
 - 3rd November – Zoom rehearsal held by Oli.

Annex A – Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Report 2019-20

All I can say is, wow, what a year. From an absolute high with a stunning profit made from our first concert, to the chaos of COVID and no concerts for the rest of the year. As Treasurer my job is to predict financial performance to help the committee plan the year and this year, all the plans went out the window.

The excellent news is that overall this year we have made a profit of £5,689, following the loss of £1,686 last year. So, how did we arrive at this profit?

Looking at the Concert sheet, we performed 1 concert and held 1 workshop.

For the workshop, we had an income of £295 and an expenditure of £494 leading to a loss of £199.
For the concert in St Davids, we had an income of £3815 and an expenditure of £2601 leading to a profit of £1213.
Even though we did not perform the 2nd and 3rd concerts of the year, there were costs that could not be recovered.
For the 3rd concert, we had an income of £60 from adverts that were changed into donations and an expenditure of £240 leading to a loss of £180.
For the final concert in St Davids, we had an expenditure of £637, mostly on the deposit for the orchestra.
Combined we therefore made a profit of £198 on our concert programme this year.

Looking at the expenditure sheet, we paid £4643 in Operating expenses, a decrease of approximately 25%. This is because of a reduction in costs due to changing rehearsals to Zoom.

Other running costs such as our website and insurance added up to £2017. The website fees in particular, were higher as we have paid for a completely new website as the old website was difficult to maintain. The choir officer travel allowances of £691 are balanced by the choir officers donating equivalent amounts, so there is no actual cost to the choir. Overall our running costs outside of concerts reduced by approximately £700 this year to £6860.

Turning to the Income sheet, we received similar levels of subscription money and Gift Aid this year.

We have received money from both Easyfundraising and Facebook. Thanks again to the choir members that have utilized these platforms to raise money for the choir.

Overall, from subscriptions and donations we received £11239.

Our fundraising activities managed to raise £423. Even in these times of COVID the choir still needs fundraising and donations, so keep thinking of fundraising activities and please participate.

What has gone particularly well this year is the income received from hiring music out to other choirs. Well done to Lynn for managing this.

Overall, with Bank Interest of £243, our income (outside of our concerts) was £12351.

Finally, looking at the Financial Reserves, we have £13540 in a 1 year bond

Our current account at the end of the financial year had £7891 and the Reserve Account had £2274.

Together they give us a reserve of £23704 which (when compared the reserve at the end of the last financial year of £18015) takes us back to our profit figure of £5,689 for the year.

Are there any questions or clarifications required?

Annex B - Chair's Report

Welcome, everyone to our strangest AGM in the Choir's history.

To paraphrase football commentators, this has been a year of two halves.

It started so well last October: a productive and enjoyable workshop with Peter Nardone (which also recruited us a new soprano – welcome, Helen). This was followed by a magical and highly successful Christmas concert in the candle-lit Cathedral: successful in all senses of the word - musically, the size of the audience and, amazingly, financially. Our first profit since 2016!

Things looked good as we carried on into the new year preparing for our first concert in Carmarthen for many years. The Carmarthen contingent of choristers all worked their socks off to secure advertising, publicity and everything that

promised to make our foray to St Peter's another success, when suddenly the sky fell on our heads. Coronavirus struck and the world closed down. Oh, to have had another couple of weeks and been able to deliver the concert. I felt this keenly as it makes me the only Chair to have cancelled two concerts. (I mention this so that you will be very wary of ever letting me be chair again.)

So began a sad time of cancelling (or postponing) the Carmarthen concert and the orchestral contract for the summer concert. We had no idea when anything would return to normal, but it was clear it would not be in time to prepare the Mozart Requiem for July in the Cathedral. Rose had her hands full negotiating all of this.

The major question became how could we carry on some semblance of music making for an unspecified length of time? Enter Zoom, until then completely unknown yet now, six months later, a major part of many of our lives. We have the Zoom rehearsal, the Zoom Committee meeting and AGM, the Zoom chat and even the Zoom birthday party. Not an entirely satisfactory solution, but better than nothing. And we do keep in touch. Well done and thanks to all of you who have persisted. We must now come up with ways of improving the experience – we await your ideas later this evening. For those who really cannot cope, I trust we will see you back whenever 'normal' returns.

The committee have used this period to initiate an overhaul of our online presence – the website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Clare's suggestion of a photographic gallery illustrating 'What I did during lockdown' highlighted the huge difficulties our aged website caused for Marian. So we decided to commission a new one and in record time it was up and running. Huge thanks go to Marian for all her sterling work with the website, both before and after the change. Hopefully now her task is easier. Thanks also to both Lynn Childs for their help with translations into Welsh. At the same time our Facebook (and Instagram and Twitter) accounts needed to be rationalized. Stuart took on this task and we owe him a big debt of gratitude.

There have been losses this year: Rona decided to retire after many years in the choir, but she remains a Friend. In November last year Roger Hill (at one time the Choir manager) died and then in January former bass Peter Stemp died. In February Marian sadly lost her husband, Jim. In April we were all stunned to learn that Gwyn Phillips, our much-loved bass, Choir Manager and longest serving chorister had died. It was especially difficult because we had no way of properly acknowledging his passing by attending his funeral. Lynn Child has written a moving and sensitive tribute which is on the website. It will be strange to return to Choir practices without Gwyn and, of course, he leaves a huge gap which needs to be filled – Choir Manager.

Now I come to the 'Oscars' section. I'm sure to miss someone out so please accept my apologies in advance. I'll start by thanking everyone for 'hanging in there' and being supportive in difficult times.

My main thanks must go to Oli and to Stuart who have gone above and beyond during this difficult period in order to keep the choir functioning. We are so grateful to both of you.

I'd also like to thank the committee en masse – you've all helped me tremendously and given a great deal extra.

Kathy for being a very positive and active vice chair, Hannah in her new role as secretary, Andrea efficient and unflappable treasurer who always has a complete grasp of the figures, Lynn efficient librarian, Rose concert secretary and quiet constant support, all the section reps having to do much more of a job of supporting their sections with lots of phone contact, emails and in Anne's case zoom meetings.

All the members of the subcommittees who work so hard to make things work. Marian has worked especially hard, during a very difficult personal time: for publicity, managing ticket sales technology as well as her prodigious work as website manager.

Clare is continuing to organize the Friends of the Choir and although she is stepping down as Soprano rep she is taking over a new role as deputy concert organizer to assist Rose.

Lynn Child for writing our programme notes, translations into Welsh and his tribute to Gwyn.

BetiLyn continues as Health and Safety Officer, Margaret Jones is our Data Protection Officer, Jennie Palmer organizes the 100 Club and Mary Gardner the Choral Scholarship Scheme.

Brian Body and his front of house team may have had less to do this year but still we thank them and also Martin Dawes who augmented their efforts at Christmas by selling tickets all afternoon in the Cathedral prior to the concert.

Sarah Jellicoe and her colleagues from Valero who organize the staging.

Joy Green our new External Examiner of the accounts.

Sam Howley for the kind gift of 2 new pieces of music. We had a different Zoom rehearsal with Sam and with Peter George whose poem 'Voices in the Wind' provides the words to Sam's piece. Stuart made us practice tapes for this.

Is that everyone?

So that's a round up of the strangest year in the Choir's long history. Apologies for any omissions.

I am handing over the Choir into Kathy Sleigh's capable hands. She has a hard job ahead to carry us through this period with no indication of when we can get back to doing what we all love – singing together, making a joyful noise, the whole reason we are in Cor Dyfed Choir. I ask you all to keep supporting her, Oli and the Choir just as you've supported me this year. Thank you.

Lesley Darwin
6th October 2020

Annex C – Music Director's report

It has once again been a privilege and pleasure to direct Côr Dyfed for the 2019/2020 season. Sadly, the period when the choir were singing together normally was much shorter than usual, beginning in September and ending suddenly in March, shortly before the coronavirus 'lockdown'.

But before I talk a little about how we continued to function as a choir in such strange circumstances, we mustn't forget the Autumn term as we prepared for our first concert of the year, our now well-established "Christmas Concert by Candlelight".

As part of our early preparations, we were delighted that the conductor and former Three Choirs Festival director, Dr Peter Nardone, was able to join us in October to conduct an open choral workshop in Haverfordwest on the Haydn mass and some of the other music in the programme. It was good to be joined for this by other keen singers from the area and, as we experienced with Peter's workshop once before, his great insight into vocal technique and style, delivered with great humour and charisma, was an inspiration for all.

As we returned after half term, we got back to learning all the music required for our Christmas project. The programme was a heady mix of Advent and Christmas music and carols sung by the choir, traditional carols led by choir with the audience joining in, and seasonal readings, all with the movements of Haydn's St Nicholas' Mass as the thread running through.

The programme included music spanning four centuries, including Hodie Christus Natus Est by Sweelinck, A babe is born by Mathias, The Lamb by John Tavener, together with traditional Welsh and English Carols and arrangements.

The concert took place in St Davids Cathedral, a spectacular and beautiful setting for any concert but particularly well suited for our celebration of Christmas. We were joined by a large audience which joined in lustily for the 'communal' carols. The choir once again rose magnificently to the occasion, ably accompanied by Simon Pearce at the organ.

Sadly, this turned out to be our one and only formal concert of the season! However we spent January, February and a little of March learning Durufle's stunning Requiem. We worked hard on this and were obviously disappointed not to have the opportunity to perform it, but I'm confident that all the hard work is not wasted and that we can look forward to resurrecting this project in the future.

So after we had to suspend normal rehearsals in March, the committee quickly began to think about how to keep the choir running and, like many other similar organisations, we embarked on virtual rehearsals via the now famous 'Zoom' platform. Despite the musical limitations of these rehearsals, they proved to be a real social life-line for all of us during the lonely and un-nerving months as the UK and the most of the world went into strict lockdown, with any meaningful contact outside one's own home becoming almost impossible.

So as the nation and the world now waits anxiously for a vaccine so that the long journey back to safety and normality can begin for everyone and for choirs like ours in particular, we continue to meet and sing via our computer screens. We intend to vary these weekly rehearsals with workshops by visiting musicians and other activities. I'm grateful to Lesley Darwin, Kathy Sleigh and Stuart Evans and everyone on the committee for their support and creativity as we strive to do our best to keep choir members interested and engaged until the times of live rehearsal and performance can return.

I would also like to thank and pay tribute to everyone in the choir for their continued commitment and dedication, even in this most challenging of circumstances.

It's been a pleasure to work with Lesley as this year's Committee Chair. She has steered the committee through extraordinary times with great tact, skill and dedication, and I know Kathy will continue to do the same as she takes over the Chair. I'd like to express special thanks to my great colleague Stuart Evans for his brilliant support as Choir Accompanist and Chorus Master, and to all those on the committee who are working as hard as ever to serve and support the activities of choir in many ways.

Oliver Waterer
5th October 2020