

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 11 May 1987

Members Present: There were 76 members present, including all eight members of the committee. The Chairman presided.

In Attendance: Neville Creed and Ron Medlow.

Apologies: Kathy Atkins

1. Chairman's Welcome: The Chairman welcomed Members and explained that the President had only just returned from abroad and was therefore unable to attend. He also wished to record the Chair's and the Committee's gratitude to Kathy Atkins (at present on holiday in Crete) for all her hard work, help and advice during the year. Sir Charles Groves had also asked that his very best wishes be conveyed to Members.

The Chairman explained that had Kathy Atkins been able to attend she was going to speak to Members about the music scheme in Guildford, but had agreed to attend a rehearsal sometime in the new season to talk about this.

The Chairman welcomed Ron Medlow, and thanked him in advance for his assistance in counting the votes this evening, and the new Chorus Master, Neville Creed, who was attending the Annual General Meeting not as a guest but as of right as the new Chorus Master.

2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting: The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19 May 1986 having been circulated were taken as read. The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Geoff Forster, seconded by Roger Penny, and approved by Members present. The Minutes were then signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report: The Chairman explained that this season had been somewhat more traditional than the previous one, although the highlight for some was unusual in that a visit to Paris was organised in conjunction with the University of Warwick Choir.

The Chairman commented on the concerts given by the choir during the season and the press reports on them. He also conveyed a message from Sir David Willcocks following the last concert expressing his gratitude to the choir for their splendid response; Sir David had wondered whether the combination of the Durufle Requiem and HolST's Hyme of Jesus might prove to be over-ambitious, but under Neville Creed's skillful and patient rehearsal the choir were able to excel. Sir David expressed his thanks to members of the Semi Chorus and sent his best wishes to the Choir which he hoped would continue to flourish under Neville's skill and guidance.

The Chairman stressed the continuing need for recruitment of new members. The target remains at 170 paid-up singing members so that for concerts we can be well supported - at present we can only assemble 100/110. It was to further this aim that during the year a working party had been formed to explore and report to the main committee on ways in which publicity and recruitment could be expanded. John Britten, assisted by Jeremy Turner, had got together a very enthusiastic set of people and their report would be given later.

The Chairman hoped that Neville Creed would be the Chorus Master for many years to come and asked that anyone who had any comments or complaints about the selection process should convey them to the Office, either by telephone or preferably in writing, so that they may be brought to the attention of the next committee and borne in mind by the committee of the day when the situation arose again.

The Chairman ended by saying that he had decided not to seek re-election to the Committee or the Chair and thanked all those who had worked on Committees with him during the previous four years. His observations as out-going chairman were that now is the time to look forwards, leaving behind any difficulties so that we would shortly return to being a unified and happy choir.

4. Voting: Voting then took place for Committee Members and Chairman for the year commencing 1 June 1987. The Chairman explained that there was only one candidate for the position of Vice Chairman - Mrs Jeni Young, and that there was therefore no need for an election for Vice Chairmen.
5. Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report having been circulated was taken as read. The Treasurer commented on two points (a) that the Choir's contribution to the Guildford Philharmonic Society had been agreed at £240, and (b) that a total of £61.50 had been raised for Chris Mabley's leaving present.

Adoption of the audited accounts for the year ended 31 July 1986 was proposed by Rosalind Plowright, seconded by Walter Chattaway and approved by the Members present.

6. Report by Chairman of the Working Party on Publicity and Recruitment: John Britten explained how he and Jeremy Turner had got together and outlined their ideas prior to asking for volunteers from the choir to help when needed and, more importantly five remarkable people who offered to join the working party. They had put in an amazing amount of hard work and had had six meetings - all of which were brisk, business-like and also good fun!

The main achievements had been to find out what sort of people are in the choir, their interests and assets. They had organised and printed car stickers and most people had these, and printed and distributed widely a leaflet/poster. They had also written to about 50 prospective members about 15 of whom had replied and some of whom would probably join. They were about to follow up those who had not replied.

They had written editorial copy for the Surrey Advertiser describing the choir and its new chorus master.

The Committee had agreed a programme of paid advertising for next season which would be aimed at late July and late August.

Mr Britten ended by hoping that all the Working Party's hard work would be rewarded by lots of new members and stressed the need for the Choir to welcome them to cement the work done by the Working Party, and anyone who had any ideas on recruitment or publicity was welcome to put them forward to any of the members of the Working Party.

7. Report by the Chorus Master

The Chorus Master began by thanking all the members of the Committee for the tremendous amount of work which goes into the running of the choir which he said was a reflection of a very healthy choir when people were willing to put in so much effort.

Having been in a position to conduct the choir in Simon's absence he had seen the strengths and weaknesses and felt that the choir needed to be built up again, as it had when Simon first took over. So often when a choir had a new chorus master it had a new injection of enthusiasm which waned after a couple of years, but he stressed that it was important to build on this enthusiasm and get numbers up to the target of 170, with the emphasis on male voices since it was very apparent that the ladies' sections were considerably larger. He felt that recruitment was all important, and the best method of introduction was through friends. Alternatively, if any teacher felt it would be helpful if he were to come and talk to their 6th formers, he would be happy to do this.

The Chorus Master said that generally attendance at rehearsals was good, and he intended to continue Simon's policy on this, with a minimum number of rehearsals required for each concert, with any rehearsal taken by the conductor and the rehearsal on the day of the concert all being compulsory.

He felt that it might be more convenient to start rehearsals at 7.30 pm and finish as soon as possible after 9.30 pm, up to 9.45 pm, if necessary.

Auditions would be started straight away and would entail (1) a piece of the person's own choice, (2) sight reading (3) tests to determine range and ear. Re-auditions would continue on the lines Simon had started, each member being auditioned at least every three years.

The Chorus master then outlined the concerts for the next season - November 14: Elgar's Music Makers under Charles Groves; March 12: Berlioz, Grande Messe des Morts under Brian Wright; April 23: Beethoven's 9th under Richard Armstrong. He would very much like to do a concert in the summer, in June preferably, as he felt it was ridiculous to finish in May and not begin again until September which was bad for the continuity of the choir.

Finally, he stressed that he was very much looking forward to working with the choir and hoped to build it up from a good choir to a very good strong choir.

8. Appointment of Auditor

The Rt Hon John Wakeham FCA JP MP had again indicated his willingness to act as auditor to the choir. His appointment was proposed by Michael Jeffery and seconded by Mary Ann Edgar

9. Any Other Business

Rosalind Plowright raised the point that Guildford was twinned with Freiburg and wondered whether a visit to/from a choir there could be arranged. Neville Creed was very keen to embark on some sort of tour and said he would pursue this.

Katharine Wedgbury wondered whether he had any ideas on the appointment of an accompanist. He replied that he would have to speak to Kathy Atkins about this, but he did have three ideas already.

John Britten said that the Paris trip had been rather expensive and felt that more members of the choir would be interested in shorter trips within the UK.

In answer to various queries, Neville Creed agreed that it was most important to make all new members feel welcome, and this would be particularly so at the start of the new season on 7 September. It was also confirmed that Rita Horton would host the usual Welcome to new Members at her house early in the new season, and there would be a Christmas Party and an end of season party. Various other social activities had been suggested but failed through lack of support. It was unfortunate that the Methodist Hall was not conducive to many members being able to move around during the interval and talk

The Chairman then announced that Rita Horton had been voted Chairman for the next year. He congratulated her on her appointment and said that he had been privileged to serve the choir over the last few years.

Max New then paid tribute to Robert Beers, the outgoing Chairman, and said that the whole choir owed him a great debt of gratitude for all he had done in the past four years as Chairman and the tremendous amount of work he had done. He had done a fantastic job during a difficult time for the choir.

Signed

Chairman