

Amersham Festival Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2018

Held on Monday 1st October at St Mary's Church, Old Amersham

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Mathieson, Mr and Mrs Bradley, Mrs Semon, Mr Wenman, Mr Heffernan, Mr and Mrs Hudgell, Mrs Murley, Mr Bolton, Mrs Potts, Mrs McInnes, Mrs Palfreman, Mr and Mrs Burgess, Mrs Vickers, Mrs Parker and Mrs Basnett.

2. Minutes of the 2017 AGM

The Friends read through the minutes from the 2017 AGM. The minutes were accepted as correct and signed as an accurate record. Mr Eldridge proposed that the minutes be adopted and this was seconded by Mr Bowler. The Friends voted unanimously to adopt the minutes.

3. Matters arising not on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Annual Report

- a. Jane welcomed the Friends to the AGM and has continued to enjoy her role as Chairman very much. It has been a pleasure to meet many of the Friends at concerts and receptions.
- b. We were treated to an excellent programme of first class music during the Festival. Nine events took place in six different venues. There was chamber music, wine tasting, jazz, choral music, youth and education events but the highlight was the opera Idomeneo. We were privileged to have Freddie de Tommaso singing the title role as he had recently been awarded the Placido Domingo tenor prize and is already in demand by international opera houses. Other wonderful young singers were joined by the South Bucks Choral Society in a truly memorable performance. However, the real star was Iain. His outstanding ability and intense passion for Mozart's music shone through and inspired singers, choir and orchestra to give extraordinary performances. Jane thanked Iain for planning, performing and directing the wonderful music and said that his exceptional musicality is always underpinned by his modest and selfless approach. His boundless energy is much admired.
- c. During the 2017-18 Winter Series our own Festival orchestra gave four wonderful concerts, directed by Iain. Our current Winter Series begins on 19th October. Last year Jane referred to the difficulty of maintaining ticket sales and the need for sponsorship. We are very grateful to all our loyal sponsors and to those who felt able to respond to our specific orchestra appeal. Many people were surprised to read about the costs involved in putting on each concert. She thanked the Friends who have added an extra donation to their annual subscription. Having our own orchestra is something that makes our festival unique. The need to attract new audience members and Friends remains. She encouraged the Friends to pass on brochures to others and tell them about us.
- d. Jane thanked the members of the committee. They perform many and varied roles: events management with Heather, financial management with Jonathan, programme planning with Tony, box office with Sue, publicity with Chris, catering with Gill Minikin and bursary awards with Steve. She then welcomed Gill Walley who has taken over as Friends' secretary. Many of our events include food. The catering team provides food for performers at all events. This year that has included feeding the opera cast and orchestra during rehearsals as well as the dinner at Chenies and the Friends' reception. She thanked Gill Minikin for leading the team of caterers. She went on to thank the other volunteers such as the car parkers and ushers who help to make the events run smoothly. A presentation was made to Sue

Huffelmann who has stepped down from managing the box office after 8 years. This vital role includes setting up the online booking service, dealing with postal bookings, labelling seats, fielding phone calls, manning the desk on concert nights and liaising with the Record Shop. Sue is always very business-like, efficient and essentially has a good sense of humour. Sue and Jane have worked closely together to introduce and manage the online booking system. Jane announced that she has found a replacement for Sue after advertising in the brochure mailing. In fact two ladies responded and they will gradually be introduced to Sue's role.

- e. We are very grateful to Patrick Huggell for updating and maintaining the website and taking all the photographs. The website has a gallery of photographs taken over the years and is a good starting place to obtain information such as concert venues and starting times.
- f. Jane then thanked Jon Wallis who is responsible for sending the Friends emails and reminders. He has had a particularly challenging year due to the new GDPR regulations. It has meant excessive sorting, checking and compiling all the data we hold and Jon has spent many hours on this task. We now have an up to date and fully compliant list and are very grateful to Jon for this.
- g. We are now busy planning the 2019 festival. To keep in line with government regulations we are working on producing a safeguarding policy.
- h. Jane invited the Friends to speak to any members of the committee after the meeting if they had any questions or views.

5. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts to June 30th 2018

- a. Jonathan Pegler explained that despite appearances on the financial highlights document it had been a relatively uneventful year in purely financial terms. Ultimately there had not been very much change from last year to this. This is due to the way our sponsorship money has come in over the years. This year we put on a production of Idomeneo which cost a lot of money but we had a very generous sponsor which eliminated the deficit that we would otherwise have had. However, that money came in 2 years ago and was accounted for as income 2 years ago. What looks like a deficit of £12,200 would have been a deficit of just £2,200 if you match the sponsorship with the year in which the money was spent. A similar thing happened last year. One of our Winter Series concerts had sponsorship of £5,000 which had been given in a previous year. The end result of this is that we should be comparing a deficit of £12,200 this year with a surplus of £6,000 last year. The difference is almost entirely due to the performance of our investments. 2017 was quite a volatile year and our investments did quite well but 2018 was much flatter in investment terms and we received a reasonable return, but nothing special. The difference in the results of the two years is pretty similar. We continue to put on the Winter Series concerts which on average cost us about £2,000 per concert more than the income we receive from them (before sponsorship) but we have very generous sponsors. We also have reserves from benefactors from previous years and in some cases from many years ago. These healthy reserves enable us to put on the Winter Series concerts. The April festival concerts more or less break even – Idomeneo being the exception. Idomeneo was very costly to put on but we had very generous sponsorship as well as a generous contribution from the South Bucks Choral Society for their participation in it. Ultimately Idomeneo, after the sponsorship did not actually cost the Festival anything.
- b. This time last year we undertook a review of our investment policy. As a result we completely changed our portfolio of investments and although our investments didn't do spectacularly well this year they did better than the previous portfolio would have done up to the end of the year. Recently we have undertaken another review of our investments. As a result we have decided, given the current state of the market and some of the uncertainties (in particular related to the bond funds) to take some money out of the investments and put them into some longer term deposits. There is a

mixture of fixed-term and notice deposits (as the rates available on deposit accounts are getting rather better) and we are a little concerned about having too much of our money tied up in investments that could lose value quite rapidly if the market goes the wrong way.

- c. We continue to have a very strong balance sheet. That money derives largely from the generosity of our benefactors and our sponsors but also the small army of volunteers who give of their time and therefore allow us not to have to incur cost in putting on the wonderful music.
- d. The full financial accounts are available if anyone wanted to look at them. He invited questions from the Friends but there were none.
- e. Jonathan thanked Richard Bolton our independent examiner for his hard work. He does not just sign off the accounts. He has discussions with Jonathan as to what should be included in the accounts and how things should be presented and puts in quite a lot of work. It is very much a team effort.
- f. Mrs Weiss proposed that the accounts be adopted and this was seconded by Mr Wallace. The Friends voted unanimously to adopt the accounts.
- g. Jane thanked Jonathan for his hard work in preparing the accounts.

6. Artistic Director's Report

- a. This occasion gives Iain a chance to thank his friends on the committee most warmly for the amazing amount of time and effort they put into to making the festival the enjoyable thing it is. He thanked Jane for her leadership and enthusiasm and Sue for all that she has done. He added his thanks to Jon Wallis and said that our online publicity has transformed what we do and is done in a most attractive and interesting way. He then thanked the Friends for their loyal support.
- b. Iain drew the Friends' attention to the concert on October 19th. It will be the biggest Winter Series concert we have put on since the millennium concert in 2000 at Eton College Hall when we performed Elgar's violin concerto. The forthcoming concert will include Beethoven's Eroica Symphony (which will have the biggest orchestra we have used since then) as well as Finzi's Dies Natalis. The rest of the Winter Series will feature the Coffee Cantata by Bach, Brandenburg Concerto number 5 and Suite number 2. The January concert will be the typical New Year concert and the February concert will be held in St James' Gerrards Cross. This will feature two Haydn symphonies and Jenny Stinton will play the Mozart D Major flute concerto and Iain will play a Mozart piano concerto.
- c. The April festival will be made up of nine events. The highlights include our orchestra playing Mendelssohn's Italian symphony and his violin concerto, and a harp recital at Chenies given by Suzie Willison (principal harpist with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic) who has occasionally played with our orchestra. The South Bucks Choral Society will perform the St Matthew Passion which we haven't performed for about 10 years. The lighter event will feature the Pasadena Roof Orchestra. Iain invited the Friends to speak to him afterwards if they had any suggestions or comments and thanked them again for all their support.

7. Friends' Activities

Gill Walley said that she has been the Friends' secretary for eight months and that Fiona Vickers had been extremely helpful in handing over her duties. Gill has been writing to and receiving replies from the Friends regarding GDPR and the subscription renewal, so is becoming familiar with people's names but doesn't yet know people in person. She is looking forward to meeting the Friends and hopes to see them at the first Winter Series concert on October 19th and at the reception afterwards.

8. Bursary Report

Steve Wilcock said that the Lascelles bursary was set up in 2014 to encourage the

development of young musicians. The annual amount which is handed out is about £3,000 and we have assisted about 30 young people to progress with their musical studies. He read out some letters from grateful recipients including two, who thanks to the help from their bursary, are able to take up a second instrument. We support around ten students per year and a typical amount given is £500 (tax free). We have distributed about £24,000 since the bursary started. He invited questions from the Friends.

Jane added that Barnett Waddingham had requested that their sponsorship be used for direct use in the community. Some of the Friends may have noticed young people sitting up near the orchestra at the Winter Series concerts. The sponsorship money has enabled us to provide seats for the parents of bursary holders whilst the children sit as near as possible to the orchestra. There has been a lot of positive feedback. We also try to have a youth concert each year and in 2019 we will be having the Bucks County Orchestra.

9. Election of Officers and Committee for 2017/2018

Jane reminded the Friends that we voted on a new constitution last year which was adopted. We no longer have to re-appoint the committee en bloc each time. The amendment states that a third of the trustees should be re-elected. We currently have six trustees so two people need to be re-elected. It begins with the longest serving who are Tony Burckhardt and Steve Wilcock. Mrs Secoy proposed that they be re-elected and this was seconded by Mr Bowler.

10. Discussion and questions from the floor

Mr Purssell asked whether the new box office manager needed to be elected. Jane explained that she had only very recently spoken to the two people concerned. We are able to co-opt committee members. The new people are going to feel their way with the new job and if they wish to become formal committee members or trustees we will elect them at the next AGM. Mrs Liddiard asked whether anyone was in charge of publicity. Jane answered that Ann Whaley used to fill that role but at the moment no-one has taken on publicity as a whole role. Chris Foote has been doing a lot in liaising with the roadside boards and banner and Steve distributes leaflets to local businesses in Amersham but several of them are unwilling to display them on the counter. We have researched the way people hear about our events which Jane has been monitoring. The prime way is through Friends of the festival, the next through our mailing list (email and printed brochure) and thirdly by word of mouth. All the others – leaflets in shops, libraries, cafés bring in a few but actually giving people brochures is effective. Jane said that the South Bucks Choral Society have been very successful in distributing brochures. Jon Wallis suggested that when the Friends received a publicity email that they forward it to their friends. This does not contravene data protection regulations.

11. Any other business

The meeting closed at 8.48 and was followed by a short song recital given by Frances Gregory and Iain Ledingham.