

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH ON WEDNESDAY 18 May 2016

1. **Apologies for absence:** 22 apologies received. Members Present: 21. This is not a quorum. Chris Mapleton advised that in view of the lack of a quorum, he would circulate all members with the minutes of this meeting inviting comment.

2. Minutes of the AGM of 20 April 2015

These had been circulated before the meeting; after a proposal by Bronia Snow, seconded by Tom Connor, they were approved and signed.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Review of the 2015/2016 season

After welcoming members, Chairman Chris Mapleton reported that the Society had had another excellent season which provided quality music within budget. Financial rescue had been achieved by the final two concerts which provided about 160 visitors, thus bringing the season into surplus. The second appearance by Sunwook Kim obviously hit the spot for local music aficionados, and although the original artist Chen Reis was unable to perform through ill health her replacement Ruby Hughes was also popular, numbers being augmented by the Claygate Festival. About 60 members and friends enjoyed the New Year Party.

This year OCMS benefited from the formation of a Publicity Sub-Committee – comprising Jane Muir and Michael and Judith Woods. They worked extremely hard to increase the audience for our last two concerts and we thank them. He invited any member with thoughts about publicity to pass these on to the Committee. Chris told members that next season the Society is hoping to set up an arrangement which will enable individual concert tickets to be purchased via the internet – OCMS is dragging itself into the 21st Century!

Membership for the past season was down by a sixth on the previous year. The Society cannot afford another decline like that and he urged members to encourage their friends and relations to join.

A full copy of the Chairman's report is filed with these Minutes.

5. Treasurer's Report on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2016

The Income and Expenditure Account for the year end March 2016 was tabled, and a copy is filed with these Minutes together with the Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer Robert Thomson said that these Accounts show another successful year with a surplus of £1,951, once again reflecting Suzanne's ability to create a series of attractive concerts of outstanding musicianship. He said that we have acted on the comments at last year's AGM and the note at the foot of the Annual Accounts puts the Society's Fund into context. One suggestion was that we should have a sinking fund, but these funds are usually created to provide for an asset; also they could have unintended consequences in years when the annual expenditure declined. However we should recognise that the trustees of grant-making charities are astute. We only received the grant of £1,000 from the Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust when we mentioned that the number of members who had signed up by the end of August had fallen from 150 the previous year to 116, a £2,400 reduction in our expected income. The reply accompanying their generous grant was: - "*The Trustees at their meeting on 24 September considered you were doing well and were financially prudent (one of the county's best performers). They noted your high reserves and wondered whether you needed support. They decided on an award of £1,000 for the 2015/16 season given your predicted fall in income and to look again at your reserves next year*" With our reserves some £2,000 greater by March this year, it would be unwise to ask them for a further grant this year.

It can be seen from the Accounts that the Society received a generous sponsorship from Halo Homecare of £750 towards the cost of the final concert in addition to the HRTCT grant. Without these the surplus would have been just £201.

The subscription income, £9,022, is 9% less than the previous year; the decline in membership numbers being partly offset by the small increase in the subscription rate. The Patrons' Donations and general donations increased by over 20%. He thanked members for their support, including bringing visitors to concerts. Visitors' tickets benefited from having two Celebrity concerts; one of these concluded the biennial Claygate Music Festival which always generates extra sales for us – this year, 58 tickets worth £1,160. With two Celebrity concerts, musicians' fees were higher. The hall hire charge reduced because the Claygate Music Festival pays a composite charge for all events during the Festival. We hired pianos for four concerts. Publicity spending was low in the previous year; with the new Publicity sub-committee there has been an increasing activity in that area. To illustrate how members benefit from the Society, the total cost of a concert must be considered. For example the Sunwook Kim concert cost over £3,000; less than half of this was paid for by subscriptions and visitor ticket sales contributed almost £1,400.

He said the distinguishing feature of OCMS was Suzanne's success in providing us with the opportunity to hear such talented musicians.

Treasurer Robert Thomson proposed the adoption of the Accounts which was seconded by Maria Luisa Mapleton and carried unanimously.

6. Subscriptions and Non-member Fees for the 2016/2017 Season

The Committee proposes that:

- i. The undiscounted Membership subscription is increased to £80; if paid by 1st September 2016 the subscription is increased to £75.
- ii. Visitor ticket prices for the four 'Rising Stars' concerts are increased to £20; for the New Year Party concert visitor tickets will be £18. Visitor ticket prices for celebrity concerts are increased to £22
- iii. The minimum donation for Patrons remains at £45 for a single individual and £75 for a husband and wife.

The Treasurer reminded members that but for the grant of £1,000 and the sponsorship from Halo Homecare, the surplus would have been only £201, and that the Claygate Music Festival organisers sold almost £1,200 of tickets for the Ruby Hughes concert as well as assuming responsibility for PRS royalties on that concert. The Festival is a biennial event, and there is likely to be inflation in piano hire, postage, insurance and so on.

Possible ways to fill the gap include increasing the number of subscribing members, reduce expenditure – the majority of which is musicians fees and costs – increase members' subscription, increase the Sponsors' donation level, and increase the cost of visitors' tickets.

He pointed out that in recent years membership numbers have declined. The Publicity sub-committee will be working to improve this situation; members' personal recommendations may be the most effective way to bring in new members. Suzanne has already used her ingenuity to reduce amounts contracted with the musicians. The Committee proposes to increase the 'undiscounted subscription from £72 to £80, about 11%, however, the rate for prompt payment, by 1st September, and which almost every one of you pays, will only increase from £70 to £75 which is 7%. At £12.50 per concert, that is still outstanding value for the very high quality of musicians which the Society provides, without your having to travel to London.

The Committee does not propose to alter the minimum donation to be a Patron. This means that a couple who donate £75 are each entitled to two free tickets for guests at the Patrons' concert, which is £80 worth of tickets – so hurry while this deal lasts!

It has become increasingly easy for people to opt out of membership and to 'pick and choose' as occasional visitors. He said that this took advantage of the members who provide the Society's income in advance and we propose to make greater increases in ticket prices which is also prompted by the prize-winning calibre of next season's musicians.

Pamela Normington expressed great concern at the continuing trend in increasing the subscription as the Reserves seemed so great. It was pointed out by several members that ticket prices compared favourably with similar events and venues. Michael Woods said that the term Reserves would be better described as Forward Budgeting. The Treasurer drew attention to the statement at the bottom of the Accounts which makes this clear. Ralph Meacock asked if the money in the Scottish Widows Bank, or part of it, should be invest instead, but this would be too risky! Tom Eddy pointed out that charitable organisations get lower rates of return from the Bank than personal customers.

On behalf of the Committee, Robert Thomson proposed that the subscriptions, visitor ticket prices and Patrons' donations for the 2016/2017 season be adopted; Jerry Symonds seconded the proposal and the proposal was approved.

7. Artists' Liaison Report and 2016/2017 Programme

Suzanne began by thanking everyone who had contributed in some way to the smooth running of the Society during the past musical year. From making meals, serving drinks, selling programmes and checking tickets, setting up and clearing the Church Hall, dealing with lighting and sound, to preparing programmes, brochures and the preconcert video display, all these activities contribute to the efficiency of our 'operation'. In particular this year we thank former Committee members Val and Ken Hibberd who are stepping down from their very useful duties of contacting the helpers for each concert, and in Val's case from organising the rota for, and almost invariably, preparing the Artists' meals. All our performers appreciate and thank the Society for the welcome and hospitality given to them, and this enables them, however long and difficult a journey they have had in reaching us, to give us a good concert. Each season something unexpected happens which makes the season stand out; this year it was not just one concert but two in which late cancellations occurred and we were forced to find suitable replacement artists. The first resulted in a brass ensemble from the Royal Academy- a group of outstanding final year students- who gave us a concert which she doubted could have been bettered by any professional ensemble. Then our much-heralded Soprano, Chen Reiss, who was flying in from Vienna, contracted an acute laryngeal pharyngeal infection and was banned from singing for ten days. It was impossible to get someone of similar status but we were lucky to find a BBC New Generation Artist, Ruby Hughes, to step in. Although this was not as exciting as the original concert would have been, the singing was good, and it was a relief that no-one asked for their money back! Our programme maker David Martland deserves special thanks as he had to scrap his original plans and wait to receive the new programme.

Suzanne said that it is most important for OCMS that young people attend our concerts and that they are able to enjoy music and music-making throughout their lives. Music should be available to all and from an early age. She has observed the decline in music education in schools over the decades. She told members that on July 4th the Government is holding a debate in Parliament about whether creative subjects should be included in the new EBacc examination as well as a core of academic subjects. This important debate is the result of well over 100,000 people having signed the petition, including some members of OCMS, requesting the inclusion of music, art and drama in the core studies. She strongly urged members to lobby their MPs about this vital matter.

Details on next season's concerts had already been circulated and Suzanne hoped that members would not miss the first concert on **October 15** given by the amazing *Dover String Quartet* from America. Three years ago they were selected to take part in the Canadian Banff International String Quartet Competition where they swept the board with their performances, pushing all other competitors out of the running for the entire first four prizes. Their programme will delight the audience with its popular and tuneful Dvorak '*American*' Quartet, Barber's 2nd Quartet and Smetana's '*From my Life*'. On **October 29** the concert will be performed by someone who is becoming well-known in Surrey, German-born cellist Leonard Elschenbroich. He was chosen for the prestigious BBC New Generation scheme in 2012 with his musical partner, Alexei Grynyuk, who opened our season two years ago with an amazing piano recital. He will play two of his interpretations of the five Beethoven cello sonatas plus Stravinsky's *Suite Italienne* and a new work commissioned by Leonard which he will introduce. She reminded members of the highly successful Candlelight concert held six years ago; she plans to repeat the idea on **November 19** when the concert will feature our second foreign ensemble. This is Trio Gaspard, a piano trio from Germany, which she heard at the Wigmore Hall last year, where the whole audience was overwhelmed by the sheer excellence, joie de vivre and musicality of the performance. For us in the candlelight they will play Haydn, Ravel and Beethoven's *Archduke Piano Trio*. Our thanks go to Maureen Sykes who is once again lending her magnificent Candelabra which helped to set the scene last time.

After Christmas we have combined music and food in two separate events which may be enjoyed separately or together! For the past four years we have invited the musicians to join us at the dinner following the concert giving members the opportunity to talk to them. On **January 14 2017** the Pelléas Ensemble, flute, viola and harp, outstanding amongst up and coming young musicians who, in the last twelve months, are winners of three important Competitions most recently the St Martin in the Fields Chamber Music Competition. Their programme ranges from Debussy, Britten and Prokofiev to a new Jazz composition by Mischa Mullova-Adabo – a very different programme! This year's pianist, Vitaly Pisarenko, on **February 25** is the winner of the Utrecht Liszt competition and a finalist and 3rd prize winner of the recent Leeds competition. He has played all over Europe, in Argentina, Japan, South Africa and China. His performance for us will include Beethoven, Prokofiev and Schumann. On **March 11**, our final concert will feature clarinet Celebrity 26 year-old Julian Bliss. He gave his first concert at just 5 years old and in the same year he appeared on ITV; then at 8, 10 and 13 years he was summoned to play at Buckingham Palace. This was followed by study at Indiana University where still only 13 years old he took the Advance Diploma Degree. He has designed a new clarinet which is on sale here and abroad. We will have an amazing evening of technical wizardry and superb musicianship.

During her report, Suzanne, with Tom's help, presented extracts showcasing the artists who will perform at concerts 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Ralph Meacock proposed a vote of thanks to Suzanne and to Tom for all they do for the Society and this was endorsed by all present.

8. Election of Officers, Committee Members and Independent Examiner

The re-election of the current Officers and Committee members was proposed by Ann Cairns, seconded by Joanna Rand and unanimously agreed. The election of new Committee member Michael Woods, proposed by Margaret Sale and seconded by Sara Fraser, was approved, and the re-election of Tom Eddy as Independent Examiner, proposed by Helen Pinkerton and seconded by Christine Pryer, was also approved.

The Chairman told the meeting that Membership Secretary, Glynis Kortright, will serve for only one more year, which means that this post must be passed to someone else; he pointed out that Glynis's husband David has been responsible for the OCMS website. He also told members that Fiona Martland has agreed to be co-opted to the Committee.

9. Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.26 pm. During the evening the Chairman invited members to join the Committee for a drink.