

## MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH ON WEDNESDAY 20 May 2015

1. **Apologies for absence:** 25 apologies received. Members Present: 38

2. **Minutes of the AGM of 30 April 2014**

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

3. **Matters arising**

Jerry Symonds said that there was no mention of the Society's Reserves in the Treasurer's Report; it was pointed out that they do appear in the Income and Expenditure Account.

4. **Chairman's Review of the 2014/2015 season**

After welcoming members, the Chairman reminded those present that for several years he had spoken about recruiting new Committee members in order to replenish the Committee with new blood. Members will learn that this has paid dividends!

This year we say goodbye to Ken Hibberd – who, with Val, has been has made a huge contribution to the Society over many years – including providing a sound system for the pre-concert speaker; allowing their Hinchley Wood property to be used for OCMS Barbecues; hosting Record Evenings; managing the New Year Party food; providing sustenance for performers and more recently welcoming attendees to concerts and arranging for members to staff the foyer pre-concert etc. He thanked Ken and Val and, as a small token of our thanks, presented them with a 'gift money cannot buy' - a pair of gold 'Reserved seats' for our concerts.

He said that members had enjoyed another excellent season, starting with the wonderful pianist Alexei Grynyuk and ending with concerts at the heavier end of Chamber Music with Donyhanyi's *Sextet* from the Fibonacci Sequence and Glière's *Octet* from Kammerphilharmonie Europa. We also had our first sponsorship for a piano at the Katherine Bryan concert, thanks to David and Nancy Candlin and Halo Homecare. The Cavaleri Quartet performed at the Patrons concert, and the Royal Academy of Music Sextet excelled as the New Year Party pipe opener – and subsequently joined 80 members and friends for the meal. The catering at this year's New Year Party was carried out by Heidi and John Vince who volunteered to provide the meal. Instead of the usual 10 separate cooks each providing a hot meal for 8 people, Heidi and John did it all themselves – and – have volunteered to do it again in 2016.

He thanked all the Committee – many of whom have served for over ten years - and all members for their support. He urged members to encourage friends and relations to 'taste our product' as the Society exists only if it has members.

As he handed over to the Treasurer, the Chairman pointed out an unusual situation regarding the Independent Examiner, Tom Eddy. Last year, Tom's wife Cherry was elected to the Committee, with the result that it might be construed that Tom is not totally independent! The Committee is satisfied that the potential impediment of Tom's status is sufficiently trivial to merely be noted at this meeting. There were no objections to this view from members present. 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 2015**

The Income and Expenditure Account for the year end March 2015 was tabled, and a copy is filed with these Minutes together with the Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer said that these Accounts show another successful year with a surplus of £4,127, reflecting Suzanne's ability to create a series of attractive concerts of outstanding musicianship. This means that the Accumulated Fund stands at £30,641 compared with last year's £26,514. Last year's Minutes refer to the two year cycle resulting from the biennial Claygate Music Festival which gives a large stimulus to ticket sales for the Celebrity concert every other March. This year there was no Festival which explains why our surplus is lower than the previous year when Benjamin Grosvenor was our celebrity performer. At last year's AGM, one of our members mentioned that we were providing high quality performances 'on the cheap'; our visitor tickets for this concert were £18 while another Surrey music society was charging £25 to hear him – nearly 40% more!

Turning to the Accounts, he pointed out that members' subscriptions were £9,900 with expenditure £14,009. Explaining how subscribing members get £1.40 for every £1 paid, he said that the main contributors accounting for the extra £4,000, in round numbers, were Patrons' donations (£1,100), Visitor ticket sales (£2,800), New Year Party surplus (£1,000). He expressed the Society's gratitude to the members who contribute these extra streams of income including bringing visitors to concerts.

In addition, OCMS had received three very welcome grants and the generous sponsorship by Halo Homecare of one of the hired pianos which had enabled us to add to the reserves. He told members that earlier in the season Suzanne had warned the Committee about the increasing need for musicians to receive adequate incomes. She had been underspending her budget but in January she said that she was having difficulty in completing the 2015/2016 contracts. As a result of the additions to the reserves, it was possible to raise the fees budget to £10,000 – an increase of £1,600.

Another aspect of how the Society operates is to consider the total cost of a concert. For example the *Fibonacci Sequence* concert cost £3,000 only half of which was met by subscriptions. Visitor tickets contributed almost £1,000 and an RS Sherriff grant a further £343.

The Treasurer concluded his report with thanking Suzanne for her continuing success in providing the Society with the opportunity to hear remarkably talented musicians – the most distinguishing feature of OCMS.

With the forthcoming changes to the Claygate Festival, members asked how this would affect the Society. The Chairman and Suzanne have met the new organisers and plans are going ahead for the Festival in two year's time. The Treasurer, asked about grants, said that a great deal of detail about the Society was required when submitting a request to the Humphrey Richardson Taylor Trust, and he also explained that a two year reserve was necessary as bookings are made two years in advance.

Treasurer Robert Thomson proposed the adoption of the Accounts which was seconded by Chris Robinson and carried unanimously.

6. **Subscriptions and Non-member Fees for the 2015/2016 Season**

The Committee proposes that:

- i) The Membership subscription is increased, by 6%, to £70 if paid by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015 and £72 if paid after that date.
- ii) Visitor ticket prices for ordinary concerts are increased to £17.
- iii) Visitor ticket prices for celebrity concerts are increased to £20.
- iv) The minimum donation for Patrons remains at £45 for a single individual and £75 for a husband and wife.

The Treasurer explained why an increase is required after a good year. He told members that the Society's largest expense is artists' fees and that £9,775 is already contractually committed for the coming season – 15% higher than the actual cost for this year. The programme requires

four pianos compared with three in the year which has ended. Allowing for some price inflation, the overall result is a 36% increase. There is also a small provision - £500 – for publicity spending. Even with the benefit of the proposed increases, the new budget shows a deficit of £1,200. The Subscription remains exceptional value, with subscribers receiving £1.50 of expenditure on providing concerts for every £1 they pay, with the added bonus of the very high quality of music enjoyed without the cost and effort of travelling to and from London! Visitor tickets have been increased to maintain their existing relationship with the subscriptions.

On behalf of the Committee, Robert Thomson proposed that the subscriptions, visitor ticket prices and Patrons' donations for the 2015/2016 season be adopted; Fiona Martland seconded the proposal and the proposal was approved.

## **7. Artists' Liaison Report and 2015/2016 Programme**

Suzanne began by thanking everyone who contributed to making last season such a success, from those who are the first point of contact with artists – giving a lift from the station, or, here at the Hall, a meal (such as they rarely receive elsewhere) – to those who provide teas at the interval, sell tickets, programmes, open doors for the artists, welcome the audience at the door and the others who are supportive of all the Committee with kind words and actions. We are grateful; we do need and really value your help especially when pressed by unexpected events. She has been encouraged by the numbers attending and the reception given to the speakers at our Pre-concert talks. The information imparted and the guidance given towards listening to the music are obviously appreciated. These talks cost an appreciable sum, and following a member's suggestion, she thought that a minimum contribution of £2 from those attending the talk would help to defray expenses. The charge at other venues varies between £4 and £6! Three talks are planned for next season – one before September's Violin recital which includes two superb modern works, one before October's String Quartet performance and the third will precede the Piano recital next February.

Having received many comments on the high quality of last season's concerts, she pointed out that there is much local competition for the musical money in members' pockets and low attendance at the last concert was worrying. She wondered whether it was ticket price or the timing of Easter. Understanding how Easter holidays affect attendance at concerts is a very important consideration in booking artists. She appealed to members to note the date of next season's Celebrity concert in March, part of the Claygate Festival, as this concert was not to be missed!

The new season begins on **September 19** with a young Russian Violinist, Alexander Sitkovetsky, a former Menuhin School student who has received rave reviews. He is described by the eminent String magazine, *the Strad*, as "The Star of the new Century" with his interpretation "both exciting and intuitive" The Danish String Quartet, *The Nightingale Quartet*, on **October 17** comprises four rather attractive girls, graduates of the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Winners of many competitions, their recorded work has received 5\* rating with the BBC Music Magazine, and the latest disc released was the editor's choice in December's edition of the Gramophone magazine. As this is the anniversary year of Carl Nielsen's birth, she has asked them to play his opus 13 String Quartet which will be introduced at the preconcert talk. The third concert on **November 21** features *Trio Con Brio Copenhagen* founded in 1999 by the Danish pianist and two Korean sisters; three years later the Trio won the prestigious German ARD International Music Competition. Since then they have entered and won other competitions and have performed at numerous music venues around the world. At their OCMS concert, members will hear two great instruments, probably an Amati and a Guarnerius, which were loaned as part of the 2005 *Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award*.

On **January 9**, the New Year Party will be preceded by students of the Royal Academy; because of final exams for the present year's studies, the programme has not been finalised, but will probably feature the Wind Quintet *The Notus Winds*. On **February 6**, pianist Sunwook Kim makes a return visit to the Society. As a Leeds Piano Competition winner, Suzanne had booked him for his first concert for OCMS in November 2009. At this concert, he will play a rarely heard Mozart early sonata K281, than Schubert's D894. It is especially exciting that as our concert precedes a concert in Paris three days later, when he will repeat his performance, first given to us, he will play Beethoven's great *Diabelli Variations*. It is such a huge undertaking that it is normally only heard in the greatest of venues She hopes to have a pre-concert talk to help members know what to listen for. **The Celebrity Concert on March 19** will feature the Israeli soprano Chen Reiss. She is a protégée of conductor Zubbin Mehta, and has sung with the Berlin, Munich and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, at La Scala Opera, Hamburg State Opera, and at many Festivals, performing with an impressive list of orchestras and conductors. Last December she was invited by the Pope to sing at the Vatican in the televised Christmas Mass, before an estimated world-wide audience of seven million, and is booked to sing at Covent Garden in July 2018. Her programme is called *Love around the Mediterranean* and includes Lieder, French song and wonderful operatic arias. Suzanne urged members to tell everyone they know that they have a chance to hear her ahead of the crowds, at a ticket price **far below** that at bigger venues. **This is a concert not to be missed.** Tom Snow said that the Society is greatly fortunate in having Suzanne's expertise in searching out such prestigious artists, which 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 Christine Pryer, seconded by Mike Lambert and unanimously agreed. The election of new Committee members, Jane Muir, Heidi Vince, John Vince and Judith Woods, proposed by Tom Eddy and seconded by Fiona Martland, was approved, and the re-election of Tom Eddy as Independent Examiner, proposed by David Martland and seconded by Jane Muir, was also approved.

## **9. Any Other Business**

As last year, Fiona Martland asked whether advertising the next season's programme should be brought forward to concerts at the end of the current season so that members and guests are encouraged to renew subscriptions and join the Society. Suzanne explained that the programme was still to be finalised.

Members discussed the timing of the AGM, whether before a concert or as a separate event where it is easier to raise points of interest, and whether summer concerts or maybe afternoon concerts would help keep audience numbers up. The Committee will consider these matters further. It was pointed out that in Festival years, the Claygate Festival determines the timing of the season.

Cherry Eddy, on behalf of those present, thanked the Chairman for all he does for the Society.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50 pm and the Chairman invited members to join the Committee for a glass of champagne.