

## Bicester Choral and Operatic Society Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2019.

**Present:** Kirsty Burnham, Mike Cowdy, Angie Crompton, Katie Drafan, Tania Duby, Rod Fine, Vivienne Frost, Jan Hartley, James Huddle, Mark Hudson, Laura Hudson, Tim Lane, Chloe Mason, Victoria Northridge, Andy Roberts, Olivia Thompson, Alan Twigg, Gabi Twigg, Marie Winkler, Mary Claire Hardie, Beverley Jenkin Jan Park, Jan Sandy, Amanda Anderson, Nic Hamblin, Roger Mackrell, Emily Mason, Ian Muddle, Meg Tapp, Mark Burden, Martin Quinn, Nikki Fine, Emily Brown.

**Apologies:** Liz Stiff, Andy Stiff, Philip Fine, Cathy Procopiou, Paul Baker, Janet Ray, Andrew Gibson, Irene Irvine, Ann Livings, Philip Livings, Caroline Graham, Carole Hoyland, Sue Mackrell.

The minutes of the previous AGM and the summary of accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting. There were no questions.

**Matters arising:** GDPR had been raised last year and a system has now been put into place. All existing members completed a detailed and exhaustive form which is also sent to new members. This will be repeated in May for all members as it needs to be done annually.

**Joint report:** rather than a lengthy repetition, as last year, a joint report from the Chairman, Treasurer and Musical Director had been compiled and was presented by the Chairman:

### AGM OFFICERS SUMMARY 2019 -in respect of 2018

Before we start, some thank-yous.

Thank you to *all* of the committee for supporting the ongoing activities of the group. Special thanks, again, go to Laura Hudson for her continued *over*-commitment, picking up too many jobs to list here including but not limited to tickets, Front of house organising, xmas tree decoration organising and so much more. We really would struggle to function without her (or Mark's van!)

We are not a profit-making organisation, neither should we disregard our finances and run at a loss. Sometimes it can seem that our focus is always on the finances but I can assure you that we walk a fine line of balancing finances against, musicality, reputation and audience appeal.

We make no apologies for talking finance with you for the next few minutes.

For the past three years, as result of careful management of costs and income, I am pleased to say that our shows have turned a profit.

One reason for our improved financial performance is down to the success of our orchestral sponsorship, which has generated £1300 for Carmen, £1200 for Pinafore and £500 for Chess (there were only 3 players for this). Assuming that 2019 repeats this pattern I believe we are at a point where we can *consider* increasing our performances from three to four. This has to be considered carefully as it comes with ~25% increase in band costs, a 15% increase in venue costs plus increases in Musical Director, Sound/Lighting fees as well as increased refreshment outlay (albeit this *should* be offset by increased refreshment income).

Based on Evita costs this would be an increase in costs of around £1400, requiring around 100 extra tickets (46% of a show capacity) to be sold to cover them. On the flip side we are planning on performing Mikado next year which will have reduced costs both from a Band perspective, as well as no royalties. This will be debated in full by committee over the coming months.

To counter our profitable outcome from the stage shows we must, once again, address our loss-making choral concerts. This year's very well received Haydn Seasons concert made a loss of almost £1200, against costs of almost £3000. In 2017 the loss was £330 against costs of £2000.

We are not in financial trouble, far from it - indeed we have finished 2018 with a small surplus to our bank balance, up £245 on the previous year (and this is after spending £1400+ on new assets, including lights (£400) and a new floor cloth (£600) ), but we *do* need to consider carefully the viability of these choral performances. Conscious of this, for 2019 Martin has selected a work that requires organ accompaniment only and no professional soloists. To ensure the financial stability and viability of the choir we need to be mindful that we effectively 'alternate' costlier choral performances with lower cost ones, balancing the books every couple of years, while presenting events that are appealing to our

audiences and challenging and appealing to us as singers too. Martin's forthcoming programme attempts to balance these challenges.

We have an obligation in our constitution to 'educate the public in the choral, orchestral, dramatic and operatic arts, and to further the development of public appreciation and taste in the said arts' this should include bringing/presenting quality performances and professional musicians to an audience that might otherwise not be able to reach such people. The reality of costs of orchestral choral works are that we are very unlikely to ever cover the costs of these performances from ticket sales. - 150 tickets generates just £1800 income ( before any sales cost deductions) - band players average £125 per head, a small 15 piece band wipes out that income before venue, promotional costs, MD or professional soloists. Which leads me to the topic of subscriptions. A few years ago we abolished the membership fee and performance fee structure as we were not coming anywhere near to covering our actual non-performance costs (weekly hire of hall, MD, repetiteur, website, insurances etc.). We have done very well for past couple of years in maintaining subs at the equivalent of approx. £4/£4.20 per week and ending the year with subs income versus non-performance costs being adrift by only a couple of hundred pounds as opposed to the thousands of previous years.

We are fortunate to have an MD who can and is willing and able to play and conduct for many of the rehearsals. This reduces our costs over the year.

We do however struggle to cover these fixed costs during the long, 20 week, show term. Subs of £80 (just £4 per week) left us short to the tune of £1000 last year and this year around £1300. This is offset by our income from tea/ coffee and also by our Give as You Live income - which combined gave us £900+ in 2018. If you don't already help us out with GAYL please sign up - it really has helped with over £400 for each of the past 3 years.

We *may* need to seriously consider increasing the 20 week term subscription to £5 per week.

It's **not** all doom and gloom!!!

2019 saw us almost sell out the stage production with **very** few seats left - our best result in many years. Amazing positive feedback for every aspect of the production from the stunning costume and set design to the quality of the advertising and promotional materials and programme to our "joined up thinking" having themed our front of house area and refreshments. Another year where we got feedback from people across the town saying - we know **Chess** is happening, we can't get away from the promotional material!

The summer concert of Sondheim music was loved by all, broke even, and won over a few anti-Sonheimers! The venue of the JPll works well for this style of event and the bar set up worked more effectively this year than our Bond event - thanks to Chris Hartley (and family!) for manning the bar! The Haydn was challenging and not the 'easy sing' we all thought it might be; the MD challenging our musical /singing skills. Another great performance and positive feedback from the audience. It was great to see so many members who'd not been able to make the rehearsals this term actually *in* the audience supporting us; something I've previously been critical of.

We've been fortunate yet again to see new members join us for every event this year, and as we start 2019 Evita is no exception. We hope we are seen as an open and welcoming society who communicate clearly and honestly with our members/prospective members and audiences alike.

2019 promises to be another exciting year with the much anticipated Evita, followed by the ever popular Faure Requiem and, for 2019, Christmas is back with us presenting our Christmas concert VERY close to the big day itself on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

We continue to work with and for the society as a whole and the committee thank you for your support.

Ian Muddle  
Chair

Caroline Graham  
Treasurer

Martin Quinn  
Musical Director

~~~~~  
**Election of Committee Members:** as all members of the committee were prepared to stand again and there were no new potential members, the committee was nominated *en bloc* by Tania Duby, seconded by Mark Hudson, and voted back in *nem. con.*

**Honorary Members:** the Chairman read out the list of last year's Honorary Members and explained why they had been nominated. There had been no additional nominations this year and the list remains largely unchanged. It has been suggested in committee that the recognition of contribution to the Society needed to be emphasised more, and therefore in future, rather than simply listing Honorary Members in our

programmes, they should also be presented with a certificate acknowledging their contribution, possibly with a photo and some press coverage, the title Community Champion given instead, and a free ticket for a BCOS event of the Champion's choice.

**Pilkington Cup:** this year the Pilkington Cup was awarded to Nikki Fine.

**Any Other Business:** tickets for Evita will be going on sale to members from early March, and as Laura is also organising Front of House, raffle prizes and participating in the show, we need someone else to volunteer to take over responsibility for the interval tea and coffee things.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.