

Minutes of Wagner Society Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2016

Present: Neil King (Treasurer), Jan Leigh, Geoffrey Griffiths, Cormac Cawley, Ray Godson, David Pope (Secretary).

Neil reported that he had met Richard Miles, who was looking well and might be able to attend the September meeting.

1. Minutes of Last Meeting held on 4 July

Events – the ROSL had quoted £25 per head for tea at the singing competition, not £20. The Farmers' Club had quoted £80 per head for the proposed dinner in March, not the ROSL.

With these amendments the minutes were agreed.

2. Matters Arising

Cormac reported that he had established that the Beethoven Society's website had a forum. We would need several moderators if we did the same, and we would need to recruit suitable new Committee members to undertake this task. As things stand it is not possible for the existing Committee members to act as moderators given the demands on their time in their existing roles.

3. Treasurer's Report

Neil had already circulated a written report. Our finances were reasonable and we were not making a loss. We had not yet been billed by St Botolph's for room hire for events staged there this year.

4. Membership Report

Neil had already circulated a written report. The Society was gaining members.

Jan suggested we invite Andrea Buchanan to the next committee meeting to talk about her work on the committee of the Richard Wagner Verband International. Agreed.

Neil reported that a number of members had joined online between August 2014 and May 2016 but had not received anything from the Society. Therefore he had extended their membership by a year.

5. Website

Cormac reported on the website and explained that the website now did several tasks, such as offering the ability to join the society and pay for event tickets.

Apart from these functional benefits, he had considered what “content” could and should be added to the site, given the time and resources available to the Committee. There is a huge amount of content about Wagner on the web and there was no point in us wasting time or energy replicating that. Cormac suggested that we focus our efforts on acquiring and adding content on (i) matters which had been brought to our attention by members and which they wished to bring to each other’s attention and (ii) other contributions of members or other experts which might be offered to us. This additional content would of course have to be subject to editorial control in the normal way.

Cormac explained how the round robins which he has been sending since he became Webmaster work. We use a service called Mailchimp. Each Mailchimp is called a “Campaign”. So that Mailchimp knows who to send each campaign to, we have to import the e-mail addresses of each member from the WS website database to Mailchimp using an Excel Spreadsheet. The list of members’ e-mail addresses cannot be updated more than once every week. This arises because we don’t pay for Mailchimp and as a result Mailchimp insists on monitoring each campaign and collecting data on responses to it over the 7 days following despatch of each Mailchimp campaign. That data is about who has opened the Mailchimp campaign and read it, and is helpful as it allows us to see how effective the Mailchimps are in reaching members. Mailchimp also limits the number of persons mailed each day to less than 2000. This means that it is normally not possible to send more than 2 or 3 campaigns each day. It also means that if someone joins during the 7-day period after the last Mailchimp campaign has been sent they will not receive the next Mailchimp until a new list of members’ email addresses has been imported into Mailchimp. It is also possible for members to unsubscribe from the list on Mailchimp by clicking on a link at the bottom. It is not possible to remove this link as Mailchimp insist on it. Some members have accidentally clicked on this link and they will not receive any further Mailchimp campaigns until a new list of members’ e-mail addresses has been imported into Mailchimp.

In order to make it easier to bring matters to the attention of members it was agreed that Cormac would design a “Members Notice Board” which would only be capable of access by members. This would in substance replace most of the “round robin” Mailchimp campaigns, although it would still be possible to use Mailchimp. Having a Notice Board would therefore allow information to be posted on to the website sooner rather than waiting for soon. It would also avoid the risk of new members not receiving information until a new mailing list had been generated for Mailchimp.

Members would also have to be canvassed about material or contributions they wished to make to the website, so that it becomes a *de facto* repository of members’ views and contributions which was unique and different to what was otherwise on offer on the internet.

It was agreed to adopt Cormac’s proposals.

It was agreed that Cormac would design a noticeboard and invite articles and offer surplus tickets for sale to members.

6. Events

It was noted that there had been discrepancies in timings for some events in adverts and on the website and it was agreed that in future Jan would have final sign off on all relevant copy relating to events.

The Stuart Skelton event was a great success with 55 tickets sold. The committee agreed a vote of thanks to Stuart, David Nice and Kelvin Lim for an excellent evening, and to all those members who braved the heat in what was an evening of exceptionally high temperatures.

Future events:

Jan reported as follows;

6th October, Paul Dawson Bowling – “Is wrong to hate the man Wagner?”, The Farmers’ Club

8th November, Humphrey Burton interview with Dame Gwyneth Jones, ROSL

Ticket sales for both events are slow to date but it is early days.

27th November, the Singing Competition

Jan reported that plans for this event were progressing well with applications at 15 so far. Auditions will take place on the 4 October and 8/9 singers would go through to the competition.

Kirstin Sharpin had been engaged to give a recital while the judges were deliberating.

7th December, Members’ Xmas party. This would be for members only and there would be no public advertisements. We could advertise it in Wagner News. It was suggested we invite Sir John Tomlinson and Dame Anne Evans.

23rd March, Dinner to mark Die Meistersinger at the ROH. Jan had a hold on two venues so far but was still investigating others.

Other matters

It was suggested we might have a price differential for members and non-members. A sub-committee of Jan, Neil and Cormac would consider this further for discussion at the next meeting

7. Wagner News

Ray was preparing the next edition. There were two issues – using the Arts Desk for stuff about the Opera North Ring; and he had asked Dame Gwyneth for an article about Alberto Remedios. The edition would run to 52 pages. Proof readers were needed. The Secretary would ask those featured in photographs to ask if they were content to be pictured.

8. Advertising

The ad for the Proms programme had now been sent. Jan said that the name of one of the judges for the singing competition was wrong, as David Syrus would not be coming. It was suggested that since the artwork for the advert was quite good, we could use this format elsewhere.

It was noted that we had previously supported Wagner Journal financially in exchange for reduced subscriptions for members. It was suggested that we could publicise the Journal on our website for a fee. Neil would speak to Barry Millington about these possibilities.

9. Library

The books were held in Yorkshire. It was agreed that contact would be made with the in order to ascertain the current status of the library stock.

10. Possible new committee members

Two names were suggested and it was agreed that Jan and Neil would contact them.

11. AOB

The next RWVI congress was in Budapest in June 2017. The committee had to decide who would represent the Society. Neil would speak to Andrea, who was on the committee.

Date of Next Meeting

7 September at 6.30pm. Further meetings were on 18 October, 22 November, 17 January 2017, 21 February, 21 March and 19 April.