

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2017 18.30 – 21:00

15 Gibson Square, London N1 0RD

ATTENDEES: Richard Miles (Chair) (“RM”)
Cormac Cawley (Secretary) (“CTC”)
Neil King (Treasurer) (“NGK”)
Ray Godson (“RG”)
Geoffrey Griffiths (“GG”)
Alan Ridgewell (“AR”)
Henry Kennedy (“HK”).

APOLOGIES None

IN ATTENDANCE Meli Hatzihrysidis (“MH”)

The meeting opened at 18:30 and was declared quorate, there being present at least one officer and other committee members constituting at least one third of the total committee membership.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed MH, who was interested in joining the Committee.

Item 1: Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

Item 2: Approval of minutes of meeting on 17 October 2017

The minutes of the meeting on 17.10.2017 were approved with some brief suggestions and clarifications. On the question of emails, RM agreed that he would no longer use his AOL address.

Item 3: Introduction of Meli Hatzihrysidis

NGK introduced MH.

MH explained that he was interested in helping us with marketing. He has lots of ideas about what we should be doing to better position ourselves vis-a-vis younger members. He thinks that we could increase our membership numbers by reaching out to more young people, who were interested in Wagner’s music but did not at present interact with the Society. MH mentioned that with ROH putting on four cycles of the Ring, there were an estimated 9024 tickets to be sold, from which we must be able to garner some new members. CTC mentioned that we had placed an advert in the Meistersinger programme for that very reason.

NGK mentioned at this point that we had had 60 new members this year so far.

MH posed the question of whether our members use social media and if so, were we are reaching out to them by that means. He thinks that it is important to build an e-mailing list of non-members, so that we can increase our reach.

RG observed that the two big things which we do were (i) Wagner News and (ii) the Bayreuth Ballot, should be of interest to non-members.

There was discussion about offering anyone who joined our mailing list a free digital copy of WN.

MH thinks it would be best to pay someone to work for us part-time in this area as it would pay dividends in the long run.

MH thinks we need more feedback from members to make sure we are putting on events which are of interest to them.

Finally, MH thinks that we should have a much closer connection with the music colleges and involve students more in the work of the Society by finding out the sort of events which would interest them or what event they be interested in curating.

RG stated that he was against selling our database and the meeting was in agreement on that point.

NGK then proposed, and RM seconded the co-option of MH, which was passed unanimously whereupon MH became a member of the committee of the Society.

Item 4: Chairman's Report

The chairman reported that the Singing Competition had been a very successful, indeed brilliant, event. He proposed a vote of thanks to Dame Gwyneth, Helen Beardsley, and everyone else who was involved in organising the event.

He requested that the 2018 Singing Competition be on the agenda for our meeting in January and RM agreed to produce a paper about it for that meeting.

RM had nothing further to report to the meeting.

Item 5: Treasurer's Report & Budget

NGK had circulated the financial papers in advance of the meeting.

He reported that the financial results were not great. On our current account we lost £4,500 and we were carrying forward a deficit of £2,500. However, if one treats investment gains on a current account basis, we now have a loss of £5,000 although the investment gains are not cash. This does not take into account any Gift Aid nor but includes the loss which we suffered on the Dame Gwyneth Masterclass. We did not suffer any significant loss on the dinner, but we did suffer a (anticipated) loss of £2,500 on the Singing Competition. Since Gift Aid is expected to be around £4,000pa this should be nettable against our deficit although has not been claimed in 2017. Some costs of the Singing Competition are still to come through.

Membership income accrues on a monthly basis and there is invariably more in the last few months of the year so the loss position should be reduced.

NGK is of the view that the final result this year will be better than last year. He was also happy for us to spend income but not the income from any endowments.

NGK referred the meeting to the sheet on event losses and made the point that events need to be organised well in advance in order to maximise on tickets sales.

NGK reminded the meeting that he needed to have some feedback from the committee on any areas of the budget for which they might be technically responsible. He has allowed a sum of £5,000 for initiatives involving young musicians in the Draft Budget.

After some discussion the Budget was approved in principle subject to NGK making some small variations, which he would circulate to the committee after the meeting.

RG proposed, and the meeting passed a vote of thanks to the Treasurer for his work in preparing the Draft Budget.

Item 6: Written Decision Bye-laws

CTC reported (and the meeting noted) the making of Written Resolutions 5 (Appointment of AR as editor of Wagner News) and 6 (Decision to apply for 4 Bayreuth Bursaries for 2018).

Item 7: Strategy Meeting

CTC agreed to do a new Doodle Poll for this meeting to take place in the New Year.

Item 8: Bayreuth Ballot for 2018

CTC explained that we were awaiting the allocation of tickets from (i) the GdF and (ii) RWVI and depending on when we receive those, we were planning to send the ballots out sometime in the New Year with a view to having a draw at the February committee meeting at the earliest.

Item 9: Grants Scheme

This item was not discussed.

Item 10: Society's Library

GG updated the meeting on the history of the library and the decision to keep the English and German books in one place which resulted in Peter (surname) agreeing to keep them at his home in Yorkshire. It was agreed that somebody from the committee needed to make contact with Peter in order to establish the current state of the library. It was felt that we should try to find a new home for the library either with academic institutions or by disposing of them to collectors. AR agreed to contact tutors at the colleges to identify whether or not they might be interested in taking some of the books.

GG also raised the question of putting the library catalogue on the website along with the Audio & DVD catalogues.

Consideration was also given to disposing of the Audio and DVD library by offering them to members at the following prices

£4 single £8 double £15 triple

It was also suggested that if items were not sold then they could be donated to Oxfam, but no final decision was reached about proceeding with the disposal of the Audio and DVD libraries.

Item 11: Bayreuth Bursary Awards (“BBAs”)

HK reported to the meeting on this item.

Samuel Sekker (the winner) and Michelle Alexander (runner-up) in the Singing Competition will be receiving BBAs.

Before the meeting the Committee had reviewed all 5 applications for BBAs from non-singers. HK recommended to the meeting that BBAs be awarded to Noa Naamat & Mark Austin. The meeting agreed to this proposal unanimously on the condition that Noa and Mark agree to do an event like the one which Samantha and Henry had done in October 2017 alongside the winner and runner-up of the Singing Competition.

Item 12: HK Events Officer’s Report

HK explained that he had been researching possible locations since St Botolph’s no longer has a piano. The Swedenborg has a Steinway piano and costs £240 for an evening. Lancaster Hall also has a piano, and this is a location which we must check out when attending the Joint Societies Dinner in January. The Royal Institute of Philosophy at Gordon Square is also interested in doing events with us. They charge £200 per evening with a 10% discount for a series of six. He had also visited the Dr Williams library.

The meeting then briefly considered what long-term solutions there might be to the need for a piano. RM suggested that we could buy a piano and rent it back to St Botolph’s, but no final decision was made on this.

HK reported that he had had an e-mail from somebody who is writing a book about Wesendonck and the author was wondering if we were interested in doing a book launch.

He is meeting with Renato Balsadonna to sort out an event for next year.

Apart from that the following were the items in the forthcoming events programme: -

January – HK is in discussion with DAE about rescheduling her evening with David Nice. Mention was also made of an event with Humphrey Burton - one possible venue for either of these events being the Frontline Club in Paddington as they have done some good AV facilities.

February - Dr Carnegie’s Talk “Re-inventing Wagner after Hitler”.

March - Anthony Negus’ talk about Hollander.

Goodall Dinner at the ROSL.

May – An event with a soloist who is doing some Piano Transcriptions of Wagner. It will be a recital and talk about how the transcriptions were done.

May - Dame Gwyneth's' Masterclass – possible but not yet arranged.

June - Event with Klaus Florian Vogt while he is in London for Lohengrin.

July – Talk about Falstaff and the link between Wagner & Verdi.

September – HK is speaking to Pappano about doing an event.

October – Bursary Recital and Talk with Winners.

ROH Ring in the Autumn.

There was a brief discussion about the composition of the Jury Panel for the 2018 Singing Competition, but it was decided to postpone full discussion until the January meeting.

NGK asked for anyone who could provide support/help for the Christmas Party to come around 5 pm. He also encouraged everyone to buy tickets as they were selling fast.

Item 13: Media, Advertising, Twitter & Facebook

Not discussed than when MH had spoken earlier.

Item 14: Membership Report

NGK reported that membership was buoyant.

Item 15: Website Report

In the absence of a Webmaster there was no report on this item. (CTC – I can't recall if MH agreed to take this on)

Item 16: Wagner News including cost of advertising

HK asked whether it is possible for members to opt to have either (i) the online version or (ii) the posted version. The meeting felt that since we do not have a way of creating two separate lists at the moment (without an enormous amount of effort and processing of requests from members) it was probably best to leave it as a postal distribution for the moment.

RM suggested that someone should do an article for WN about what it is that the Society does.

A colleague of Jeffrey Tate (Cameron Burns) is going to write an article/obituary about Jeffrey.

AR suggested that we have an item about the library in WN and invite members to offer to do book reviews. He also felt that we should invite members to do reviews of any newly released CDs which were sometimes sent to us.

AR then mentioned that John Mastrogiovanni was intending to be in London sometime in July 2018 and wanted to do an event with us about his book on Parsifal.

AR said that we needed to do an advert about the DAE and David Nice event.

AR also wanted to send a Mailchimp to younger members inviting them to make contributions towards WN. CTC would liaise with AR about this.

AR then reported to the meeting on the question of advertising in WN. At present we charge £175 for a full page & prorata for a half page, and £500 for 4 adverts in a row.

Item 17: Request for support/involvement on Pam Gem's "Winterlove" production

AR said that this request had come from Brett Brown, an actor who was probably looking for financial support for his production of "Winterlove" but no decision was made about this by the meeting.

Item 18: Baden Baden Parsifal with Rattle

There was a brief discussion about this. NGK and JL are going.

Item 19: AOB

1. HK mentioned a piano reduction of Valkyrie.
2. RM proposed that at some stage we should consider making Dame Janet Baker an Honorary Member of the Society alongside all judges from the recent Singing Competition.
3. Someone mentioned doing something with Sian Dicker the winner of the Llangollen International Voice of the Future.
4. AB & RWVI would like a short piece about the Singing Competition for posting on the RWVI website.
5. The meeting agreed with RG's suggestion that we needed more female members on the committee.

THE MEETING ENDED AT 21:33

NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 18 January

Wednesday 21 February

Wednesday 21 March

Wednesday 18 April

Monday 14 May

AGM 16 May 2018

