

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY

THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2018 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”)
 Alan Ridgewell (“AR”)
 Henry Kennedy (“HK”).

APOLOGIES **Geoffrey Griffiths (“GG”) & Meli Hatzihrysidis (“MH”)**

IN ATTENDANCE **Nick Kohn (“NNK”)**

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 NNK who was interested in joining the Committee.

Item 1: Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from GG and MH.

Item 2: Approval of minutes of meeting on 15 November 2017

The minutes of the meeting on 15.11.2017 were approved with some brief suggestions and clarifications, which had been sent to CTC by e-mail beforehand.

Item 3: Chairman’s Report

RM reported that he had had a meeting with Dame Anne Evans (“DAE”) to discuss cooperation with Mastersingers (“MS”). NGK and HK would be seeing DAE in a month’s time to further discuss the relationship with MS.

Item 4: Singing Competition 2018

The meeting agreed that RM would approach DAE to ascertain whether she would be interested in being the Chair of the Jury Panel for 2018. A number of other potential chairs/judges were mentioned, and it was agreed that these would be approached once we had spoken to DAE and discussed the matter with her.

AR raised the question of Dame Gwyneth’s Masterclass for the 2017 SC Winners. As AR is liaising with Dame Gwyneth about her article on Jeffrey Tate for the next Wagner News, it was agreed that he would take up with Dame Gwyneth the question of her masterclass and when and where she proposed holding it.

Item 5 - Treasurers Report, Budget & Annual Accounts

NGK reported that we had a large surplus of £4,500 from moving the costs of the 2018 annual dinner and the disbursements for the Bayreuth Bursaries out of the current 2017 income and expenditure statement and into 2018, which took us to just under £10,000 surplus for the year.

On the suggestion of RM, the meeting voted a note of thanks to NGK for preparing a very impressive set of accounts.

RG proposed that the draft accounts be adopted subject to some small amendments. The meeting then agreed to adopt the draft accounts.

The meeting also decided that there would be no increase in subscriptions for the current year. NGK pointed out that for the last 18 months students had been getting free subscriptions and that we needed to recruit more student members.

RG suggested that we needed to have a base capital of £100,000 compared to the £68,000 which we have at the moment.

NGK stressed that we need to decrease our running costs and that was one of the objects of his budget.

RG asked that the minutes record that we are about to claim all outstanding Gift Aid which ran to a 2-year backlog. NGK reported that he was intending to claim all that Gift Aid in this financial year and that it came to about £9,000.

It was agreed that the accounts will be published in the next edition of Wagner News and that CTC would also do a notice about the AGM for the same edition.

Item 6 - Membership Report

NGK reported that we had 80 new members this year most of which were non-paying and that we now had a total of 1002 members but reminded the meeting that we do need more younger members.

CTC raised the question of how many students' tickets should be made available when there are limited numbers of seats and the meeting agreed that approximately 5% of the overall target numbers was a reasonable figure but it was also pointed out that student members had the same rights as other members and that their ticket allocations should not be restricted. NGK agreed to monitor this and report back if necessary.

Item 7 – “Wagner 1900” Conference.

CTC reported that he had now heard from Miss Stoll Knecht and that he would be sending an e-mail to members notifying them of how they could book for the event, which has to be done by 28.02.2018.

Item 8 - Written Decisions Byelaws

CTC reported that no written decisions had been made since the last meeting.

It was agreed at this point that RG, NGK and CTC would meet to discuss possible amendments to the Society's Constitution.

Item 9 - Strategy Meeting

CTC agreed to send out a further Doodle Poll for this meeting. RG mentioned the possibility of everybody coming down to his home in Herefordshire to have the strategy meeting there.

Item 10 – Bayreuth Ballot for 2018

CTC reported that we had received 16 tickets in all from the GDF and we were still waiting to hear back from the RWVI with news of how we should apply for our allocation. CTC would use the feedback which had been used for applying for our GdF allocation, with the main interest being in Parsifal.

Item 11 – Grant Scheme

It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.

Item 12 – Society’s Libraries of Recordings and Books and donations to same

The meeting agreed that it would be best for us to approach the colleges to see if they are interested in taking on our libraries. AR offered to reach out to the colleges in this regard. It was felt that it would be better to explore the option of a single institution/college located in London first.

It was agreed that we would continue to accept donations. RG mentioned that he had 10 packing cases of books in his flat from the recent donations.

The meeting agreed that it was unfair to send these books up to Peter Curtis in Yorkshire.

The meeting agreed that if we could not get a college or institution to take the libraries an e-mail would be sent to members to ask if any of them are interested in taking them on.

Item 13 - Events Officer’s Report

HK reported as follows.

Catherine Dobson will do the catering for the Dr Carnegie event on 15.02.2018. It was agreed that CTC would send out a Mailchimp to members inviting them to join a catering committee to support Catherine. The committee would take Dr Carnegie to dinner after the event.

The Negus event - AR is meeting Simon who is singing the Dutchman at Longborough and it was agreed that he should be involved in the event with Anthony if at all possible. Henry would send out a Mailchimp about the Negus and Carnegie events.

HK mentioned that we have sold 4 more tickets since our advert appeared in the recent Opera magazine.

The meeting agreed that the winners of the Bayreuth Bursary Awards would be taken to dinner after the Negus event with the committee paying for themselves.

The Balsadonna event would take place on 04.04.2018 at the Swedenborg Hall.

The talk with DAE and David Nice will take place on 10.05.2018 at the Swedenborg. A projector had now been sorted for the event.

The Swedenborg would also be used for the AGM on 16.05.2018. The meeting noted that audio equipment was available at the Swedenborg for an extra £132 and that this was a justified expense as there had been complaints at preceding AGMs about members not being able to hear what was being said by speakers.

HK had not yet been able to finalise a date with John Mastrogiovanni for his talk.

HK is also speaking to Klaus Florian Vogt ("KFV") about him coming to speak to members.

There would be an event in July with Peter Conrad about his book on Verdi and Wagner. This coincided with a Falstaff at the ROH in July. The format would be a conversation piece with David Nice at the Swedenborg. If David Nice was not available, then either Humphrey Burton or Clemency Burton Hill would be approached. NGK reminded HK that the fee for speakers was £200.

In October we would have the Bayreuth Bursary Award event.

The meeting agreed to hold the 2018 Singing Competition on 25.11.2018. CTC agreed to prepare application forms for the competition.

There would be an event on 05.12.2018 about Wagner and conducting with the Christmas Party likely to follow some days later

HK also mentioned that there was a French lady who was writing a book about Wesendonck and AR and HK agreed to liaise about the possibility of this forming a future event.

AR also mentioned that Alex Ross was writing a book on Wagnerism and that it would be good to try and get him involved in an event.

The meeting also agreed to book Ben, the photographer, for the next 10 events.

Item 14: Bayreuth Bursary Awards ("BBAs")

CTC reported that Sam Sekker was unable to accept his BBA for this year due to singing commitments in Australia. The meeting agreed to give his award to Julien Van Mellaerts.

Item 15: introduction of Nick Kohn ("NNK")

HK formally introduced NNK to the meeting. NNK was interested in joining the Committee.

NNK suggested that a good way of getting young people involved was to offer them prizes - give them something a little bit valuable, for example a free copy of Wagner News, a T-shirt or some other kind of merchandising. In his experience people were not attracted to Twitter and Facebook postings unless there was something in it for them.

The meeting agreed to co-opt NNK as a member of the committee.

Item 16: Mailchimps, Media, Advertising, Twitter & Facebook

NGK mentioned that MH wanted to do a monthly digest and to build up a list of non-members. MH felt that we needed a house style for our "Mailchimps" and NGK felt that it might be best if MH coordinated them going forward.

Item 17: Website Report

In the absence of a Webmaster there was no report on this item.

NNK agreed to have a look at the website and report to the next meeting.

AR mentioned that the daughter of the head of his marketing company might be able to help us.

Item 18: Wagner News including cost of advertising

AR reported as follows: -

He requested that the WN item appear in the earlier part of the Agenda in future and the meeting agreed to that.

The deadline for the next edition of WN is 21.01.2018.

Roger Lee and PDB are doing reviews for the next edition of WN. AR is also expecting a review from Miriam Byrne. He also mentioned a play about King Ludwig which Stephen Fry was translating and AR agreed to try and get Stephen Fry to come and speak to us.

He needed some background information in relation to the announcement of the Goodall Award as well as some comments from committee members about their experience of Catherine Foster on stage at Bayreuth.

AR agreed that in future he would do a distilled version of the minutes of meetings for inclusion in the next edition of WN.

He also felt that we needed to include a list of dates of upcoming committee meetings and remind members of the 14-day deadline for requesting that items be discussed by the Committee.

AR would also like to have a single page in WN explaining who the members of the committee are and he would need a short bio piece from each of us for that purpose.

He was intending to have three or four pages to cover recent Society events. He also felt that we should put articles about our events on the websites to make them look more attractive.

He explained that Cameron (friend of Jeffrey Tate) may write a piece about Jeffrey for the next edition of WN and he mentioned in passing that Cameron had inherited JT's batons.

Nicholas Fogg was writing a very technical article for the next edition.

Item 19: Wagnerstimmen Competition

CTC raised this. The terms of entry of the competition required that entrants be nominated by the chairman of their local Wagner Society and that the Society should come to an arrangement about payment of the expenses of nominated singers. It was agreed that the Society would pay a sum of £250 in expenses for each applicant. CTC will write to the finalists of the Singing Competition inviting them to consider applying.

Item 20: Change of date of March meeting

It was agreed to move the date of the March meeting to 19 March as it was clashing with the Goodall dinner.

Item 21: Honorary Memberships & Alumni

It was agreed that all Goodall Winners and Judges at the Singing Competition would automatically be made Honorary Members of the Society.

It was agreed that all winners of BBAs would become Alumni of the Society.

Item 22: AOB

It was agreed to invite Geoffrey Griffiths to consider producing an archive catalogue in relation to the materials which was holding.

THE MEETING ENDED AT 21:27

NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 21 February

Wednesday 21 March

Wednesday 18 April

Monday 14 May

AGM 16 May 2018 (HK, NGK, CTC, AR & RG available so far)