

## **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY**

**TUESDAY 17 April 2018 18.30 – 21:00**

15 Gibson Square, London N1 0RD

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

**APOLOGIES**        None

**IN ATTENDANCE** Isabelle Pitman (“IP”)

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.

### **Item 1: Apologies for absence**

There was a full attendance.

### **Item 2: Approval of minutes of meeting on 20 March 2018**

The minutes of the meeting on 20.03.2018 were approved with some brief suggestions and clarifications, which had been sent to CTC by NGK by e-mail beforehand.

On matters arising RM, NGK, CTC, HK, AR, NNK and RG said they would be attending the strategy meeting at RG’s home.

### **Item 3: Bayreuth Ballot**

There were 69 ballot slips in all. They were each drawn out of a hat and the list of results were handed to RG who agreed to allocate tickets to the winners.

### **Item 4: Chairman’s Report**

The chairman reminded the meeting that Dame Gwyneth had proposed two items for discussion at the AGM, the first relating to her Masterclass and the second relating to the amended AGM byelaws. These would be dealt with in due course at the AGM.

The chairman did mention that he had been informed by Michael Bousfield of the Music Club of London ("MCL") that Dame Gwyneth had approached MCL about putting on her Masterclass. MCL were unable to agree to do so because they did not have the requisite financial resources.

At this point RG mentioned that he wished to update the meeting on discussions which he had had earlier that day at lunch with Paul Duffy ("PD"), a former secretary of the society who was concerned at the deterioration in relations between the committee and Dame Gwyneth. PD had received an e-mail from Dame Gwyneth in which she raised three big issues as follows: –

1. The defalcation issue - Dame Gwyneth still thinks that the committee has not sorted this out as she believes that there remain unresolved items. RG told PD that there was no evidence of this.
2. The Masterclass. RG told PD that it was all very unfortunate, but the committee had decided that it was not affordable. This did not mean the event had been cancelled as Dame Gwyneth could put it on somewhere else and had been seeking to do so with the Music Club of London. RG agreed to check with the committee at the next meeting what undertakings had been given to prize-winners. Certificates were not given to the winners although Dame Gwyneth had announced that she would be giving a masterclass. PD reported that when Dame Gwyneth was told that we would not do the Masterclass unless she underwrote any potential losses, she told PD that she would not dignify this with a response.
3. The changes to the AGM byelaws.

RG told the meeting that he had committed to getting a reply to PD after the meeting.

RG told the meeting that he wants his views recorded about these issues. He also told the meeting that PD had told him that if we reached agreement with Dame Gwyneth about the Masterclass, she would withdraw her Item about it from the Agenda of the AGM.

#### **Item 5: Treasurers Report, Budget & Annual Accounts**

NGK reported.

He had sent the last month's accounts to everyone by e-mail before the meeting. The finances look precarious because we have paid for all of our Bayreuth tickets, as a result of which we were showing a loss of £19,000, which will be recouped from the lucky winners. On events we are ahead of budget as well as being spot-on for subscriptions, but gift aid continues to be a hidden reserve and NGK has undertaken to bring this up to date during this financial year. The annual accounts had been sent to members and the only response had been one from Dame Gwyneth complaining about the wording of the trustees' report regarding the Singing Competition.

#### **Item 6: Media, Advertising, Twitter & Facebook ("MATF")**

This item was taken with Item 13 on the agenda (Website).

RG observed that the website was not very user-friendly.

AR reported that he was trying to get someone involved to is looking for experience working on websites to assist us.

Twitter and Facebook were going well. It was felt that we did not need an Instagram account at this stage.

MH reported that he had a or had had a conversation about carrying out a membership survey. This could help us with our strategy and should ideally be carried out before the strategy meeting in September. MH said that he would give a presentation about this at a later meeting. The obvious areas to cover were duration of membership, where they live, what they think of the services which we provide, what they would like, what they don't get at the moment, why they do or do not come to events, do they read Wagner News and if not, why not. MH said that he would come up with something for the next meeting in May.

#### **Item 7: Wagner News including cost of advertising**

AR reported.

The next deadline is the last weekend in April. We are aiming to get the next issue out by 2 June 2018 as AR and NGK are going to the USA, separately around 23 May.

AR reported that he had received a complaint from Michael Tanner.

AR had approached Barry Millington about the possibility of us each sharing articles in our respective periodicals. AR got the distinct impression that BM wishes to stay separate from us and would not want to do this.

The chairman said that he would write to the Spectator and ask them if we could share some of their articles.

AR mentioned the possibility of doing a Covent Garden Ring edition of Wagner News.

On the question of advertising in WN, NGK said that we could be flexible about our charges depending on the source of adverts.

### **Item 8: Written Decisions Byelaws**

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

### **Item 9: Membership Report**

NGK had sent around the UpToDate numbers by e-mail before the meeting. We now have 1028 members, 565 paying individuals and 176 joint members.

### **Item 10: Events Officer's Report**

HK reported as follows.

The Balsadonna Event - we could have sold more tickets - 38 people had paid. The lesson we learned this was not to do it during the Easter holiday.

The next event would be the Dame Anne Evans one on 10 May. 41 tickets had been sold for this so far.

The KF the event on 15.05.18 is selling well. The Swedenborg has now purchased a Blu-ray CD player. The price is higher, but we shall be doing more food. We are also having Christopher Cook.

At this point RG raised the question of where our audio-visual equipment was. RM mentioned that they may be in his flat - he had collected them from AB. NGK had written these off in the accounts.

So far 32 people had signed up for the AGM.

The Kristine Opolais event was selling well.

We have the introductory talk on Lohengrin on 06.06.18.

Peter Conrad would be doing the talk on Wagner and Verdi later in the year.

HK was speaking to Gary Kahn about getting Antonio Pappano to do a talk with Keith Warner and Stefan Vinke. It would be interesting to have Keith Warner discuss what it's like doing this production again.

In October we have the Bayreuth Bursary Event.

In December we have an event entitled "Battling the Beast of Bayreuth".

Then we have the Christmas party.

HK express the view that we should advertise in Gramophone since our arrangement with Opera has come to an end.

On catering issues, AR, NGK and HK were quite happy to put out cheese and drinks as there was not much work involved in this beyond ordering the food and getting it to the hall. RM said that he was always happy to help.

#### **Item 11: General Data Protection Regulation**

RG reported that he had reviewed the position with the GDPR and he produced a form of consent based on a precedent which you received from elsewhere, which he felt should be sent out to the members.

#### **Item 12: Society's Libraries of Recordings and Books and donations to same**

It was agreed that the book library would remain in Yorkshire for the moment.

The meeting also agreed to do a trial sale of the CDs which Jorge Rodrigues had donated with the aim that they would be collected (rather than posted out to buyers) at the Dame Anne Evans event on 10 May.

#### **Item 13: Catering Committee**

CTC reminded the meeting that we needed to reply to the recent e-mail from Catherine Dobson.

#### **Item 14: Archive Catalogue from GG**

The meeting expressed the view that it would be a good idea if Geoffrey Griffiths could produce an archive catalogue for our records. GG agreed to look into this and report back.

GG reported that the biggest item in the collection is old editions of Wagner News. Former committee members had given their papers to GG in four large boxes and they are full of papers lying back to the olden days. The Granville Pyne selection is in one box alone. There are also boxes of papers from Stuart Spencer. RG expressed the view that everything should be scanned.

#### **Item 15: AOB**

1. Isabelle Pitman ("Izzy") was introduced to the meeting. She is the chairperson of the National Student Opera Society. They have 200 members on a simple Facebook group and their aim is to guess a launch event organised. There are 800 on the Opera Society mailing list in total and IP would be more than happy bring the Wagner society to their attention. She reported that there is

already a lot of interest in our events. But obviously there are also looking for funding.

2. The meeting then voted unanimously to co-opt IP as a member of the Committee.
3. HK mentioned the possibility of getting Sarah Lenton to come and do a talk for us. She has been doing programme notes for Covent Garden for years.
4. HK reminded the meeting that the Singing Competition this year would take place on 25 November.
5. GG proposed HK for election to the committee at the AGM and CTC seconded the proposal.
6. It was agreed that committee meetings would take place on 21 June and 17 July.

### **THE MEETING ENDED AT 20:52**

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

Monday 14 May

### **AGM 16 May 2018**

Thursday 21 June [This could now revert to 20<sup>th</sup> June since the Opolais event for which it was moved has been cancelled.]

Tuesday 17 July