

THE WAGNER SOCIETY

MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 6:30PM ON 23RD OCTOBER 2019 AT 15 GIBSON SQUARE LONDON N1 0RD

Present: Alan Ridgewell, Chairman (“AR”)
Neil King, Treasurer (“NGK”)

Meli Hatzhrysidis (“MH”)
Henry Kennedy (“HK”)
Izzy Pitman (“IP”)

1. Quorum

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:30pm noting that a quorum (at least one-third of the committee membership and at least one officer) was present.

In the absence of the Secretary, NGK agreed to take the minutes.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Tom Brown (“TB”)
Richard Miles, Secretary (“RM”)

3. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting

The minutes had been circulated in advance and were approved subject to a number of matters arising and a small number of clarifications and amendments.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

Honorary members

This item was covered in both 3. Matters Arising and 18. AOB in the September 2019 minutes. It was felt that the minutes did not make it clear in either section that the list stated has been formally agreed. It was also noted that Le Gateau Chocolat was omitted from the list. A further short discussion ensued and concluded that it was right to invite leading figures on the Wagner world to become honorary members both as an end in itself but also if such figures were in a position to assist the Society in achieving its objectives. It was suggested that such appointments be announced at the Annual Dinner.

It was AGREED that honorary membership would be offered to the following individuals and that NGK be authorised to write to each person accordingly:

- i. Le Gateau Chocolat
- ii. Gwynne Howell
- iii. John Lundgren
- iv. Brindley Sherratt
- v. Stefan Vinke

5. Chairman's Report

New committee members

AR confirmed that the need for additional committee members was included in the current edition of *Wagner News* requesting applications for the vacant posts of a) Social Secretary, b) Webmaster, and c) Marketing and Social Media manager. No applications had yet been received.

AR also noted that it was incumbent on all committee members to encourage others to join and asked that all members attend the next meeting with some definite ideas for prospective committee members. Some possible names were then discussed.

It was also noted that the current committee membership is at its minimum as permitted under the constitution.

Update on Bayreuth Ballot and new ticket arrangements

AR had earlier circulated the letter from the RWVI President (copy attached to these minutes) explaining the RWVI position on the new arrangements, which appear to generally have been devised to make the Bayreuth box office more efficient but without any (or much) consultation with the RWVI or member societies. This Society wholeheartedly agrees with the RWVI view, particularly since it breaks the link between the members and each individual society regarding each society's allocation of tickets. It was noted that the RWVI would have a further meeting on the subject in November but that no changes could be made until at least the 2021 festival.

AR suggested that we should not only encourage the RWVI to make representations to Bayreuth but that we should also begin to improve our current relationship with the Gesellschaft der Freunde von Bayreuth ("GdF") with the possibility of making a larger donation to this organisation for 2020 onwards (subject to budget discussions). We anticipate a modest allocation of tickets via the GdF for the 2020 festival. NGK was asked to discuss a possible donation to GdF and suggest an appropriate amount.

It was further suggested that we also improve our relationship and raise our profile with Bayreuth generally to which end it was discussed inviting key Bayreuth figures to the Singing Competition in November. AR to progress this.

Bayreuth Bursary

AR proposed that we also increase our participation in the Bayreuth bursary programme in 2020 and there was a discussion on this with the main premise being that whilst singers are not always interested in the bursary programme, non-singers have been extremely keen to attend. Bursary attendance would still be a prize at the Singing Competition but we would expand our efforts to ensure more non-singers attended. It was also noted that the previous idea that we were limited to a maximum of seven attendees was not necessarily correct. Some involvement on former attendees from the Society was also discussed.

It was AGREED that the Society would send two singers and four non-singers to Bayreuth in 2020 and that IP would administer our involvement in bursary programme and that she would make a proposal on how to select non-singers at the November committee meeting.

6. Secretary's report

No report had been received from the Secretary.

7. Treasurer's report

2020 Budget

A second draft of the budget had been previously circulated and there was a short discussion on further changes to be made particularly with regard to the bursary budget and further donations to be made. It was agreed that the idea of sponsoring young singers in a 'bursary' scheme of our own needed further discussion and would not be included in the 2020 budget. NGK agreed to circulate a further version of the budget incorporating these changes.

PayPal

A number of committee members would find it useful to use PayPal to pay for online purchases and services; NGK to set-up those requiring access to our account.

Bank mandate and new investment fund.

Formal resolutions passed last month need to be certified and extracts produced from the September minutes to allow AR to be added to the bank mandate and to open the new investment fund. NGK to progress this.

8. Events report (HK)

Current and future events

All looking fine for now although Furtwangler not selling very quickly. A participant in the Kupfer Ring evening might have pulled out annoyingly. Planning for the Young Speakers event is urgently needed and AR stressed that this cannot be left until the last minute. Debate on whether prize as £250 or £500 – this will need to be advertised.

Members helping at events

Plenty of availability for the Furtwangler event; it was hoped everybody would attend the Singing Competition although with the staff of the Wigmore Hall also there it was not thought we'd have an excessive amount to do.

Speakers' fees and expenses, dinner invitations

This topic was discussed again and the position clarified. Generally it was felt that we had to treat all speakers similarly as regards offers of fees and invitations to post-event dinners. It was appreciated that some people would refuse one or other or both and we should not offer fees where this might cause offence (ie to professional singers). Expenses would be reimbursed if reasonable and receipts provided but substantial expenditure needs to be agreed in advance (ie hotels and air fares etc.).

It was AGREED that a) a fee of £200 be offered to all speakers (except where it might cause offence) and that this was open to negotiation in exceptional circumstances, b) a post-event dinner invitation would always be made to all speakers (appreciating that timing and distance home might make this impossible for some speakers), and c) reasonable expenses would be reimbursed

but any excessive expenditure needs to be approved in advance, and that HK be responsible for informing all speakers of these arrangements in future.

Ticket sales

Detailed numbers were not available but it looked as if the Furtwangler event on 5th November might have about 40 people, which is disappointing.

Sales of CDs and books at event

It was suggested that the available of items for sale be advertised along with the events themselves.

Advertising events

It remains the case that we are not generally in favour of formal adverts in magazines and programmes but that Facebook paid campaigns might be the way forwards and we are already experimenting with this for the Singing Competition, which looks to be modestly successful and could also be used to boost the Furtwangler event.

Website 'basket' functionality

AR reported that the person who might have been intending to help us with this seems uncontactable at the moment.

9. Annual dinner and Goodall Award

Annual dinner budget

The date of this event looks likely not to be 18th March 2019 and not the following day, which we provisionally agreed. This was due to hall availability. Ticket price needs to be c£115 to bridge some of the divide between income and costs before generosity of some member and guests is taken into account, which might also depress ticket sales. There was general concern that this event could cause a significant loss without the promised underwriting from Ray Godson (who we are not certain will attend). Furthermore, RM has said he cannot attend on the 18th March and thus won't be taking a table either and might not, therefore, cover the corkage costs as in previous years. Sponsorship for this and other items is urgently needed. In addition, the date has still not been agreed with Norman Bailey and so the hall booking has not yet been finalised. AR to get a response from NB so that we can move forwards and also begin to advertise the dinner and sell tickets. AR also to speak to Ray Godson to ascertain his current thinking.

Format

In the light of these issues, it was suggested that a smaller cheaper function such as a drinks party replace the dinner and award presentation this year. This was discussed at length and the continuity of always having a dinner was thought to be an important issue but that some members are priced out of the dinner and might like to see Norman Bailey while he is visiting also being a factor. A vote was taken.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Dinner would take place in the usual format and that no other smaller event would be organised for Norman Bailey.

It was also discussed that the Annual Dinner might also be made into a fundraising event or a campaign launch for further sponsorship of the Society. AR to make more definite proposals in future.

10. Membership report (NGK)

Current numbers

A report showing the number of members at the end of September was circulated and is attached to these minutes. A further gratifying increase has been recorded in advance of the planned membership drive.

Membership drive

The plans for this had been delayed due to the uncertainty over the Bayreuth ballot ticket allocation since this was a large feature of the campaign. It was agreed that MH should revise his campaign but that we should really not delay any longer if at all possible.

GDPR campaign

The final numbers for this exercise are not yet final and will be presented to a future meeting.

11. Archive and library

NGK reported that this project was beginning to move to a close with all “homemade” CDs/DVDs now disposed off and focus turning to books the remainder of which was inspected by the committee. The policy of giving suitable books to new members would continue and a final appeal to members by email will be done before the remaining books are discarded. NGK and AR to work on ways to offer these to members as painlessly as possible.

The books destined for Wahnfried and for the London Library and now selected and can be dispatched.

There was less urgency around the commercial CD and DVD stock, which would continue to be offered to members at meetings and by email.

The collection of Society publications (primarily Wagner News) and the actual archive of Society history will both be catalogued and stored securely by NGK.

12. Social media and marketing report

MH reported on this topic primarily covering the use of Facebook for marketing but also the need for coordination across all social media channels. Difficult to know if this work brings in additional members or more attendance at events but these are growing and so social media is probably contributing particularly amongst younger people.

13. Bayreuth issues

All matters concerning Bayreuth and the bursary, GdF etc were covered above under 4. Matters Arising and 5. Chairman’s Report.

14. Singing Competition

A meeting with Dame Anne Evans (“DAE”) and NGK/HK took place last Friday (18th October) and a report on this meeting formed the basis of this report. Basically all matters

are under control with DAE and HK covering all artistic matters, NGK covering administration and organisation as well as liaison with the Wigmore Hall and catering, and AR arranging the leaflets (a copy of which was produced at the meeting) and editing the programmes.

Full notes from the meeting, which includes a running order for the day, will be circulated to the committee by NGK once available.

Ticket sales are currently 162 (as at 21st October).

RM and NGK have agreed to award the first and second prizes (£2,500 and £1,500 respectively) and donors are now sought for the third prize (£500) and audience prize (£500). AR to approach Ray Godson and NGK to approach Jan Leigh.

15. Website development

No report was made beyond it already having been noted that it has been impossible to contact the person appointed to be doing this work recently.

16. Any Other Business

Joint Societies' Dinner

IP raised this topic which is this year being organised by her as it is the turn of the Wagner Society to take responsibility. Tickets are now on sale on the Wagner Society website and it is important that the other societies alert their own members to this so that ticket sales are maximised. We are aiming to sell 74 tickets with the remainder being taken up by the performers.

A number of committee members questioned if this was something we wished to be involved with in future years as it does not necessarily fit our strategy for higher quality events and more professional profile. No decision was taken.

17. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be at 6:30pm at 15, Gibson Square, London N1 0RD on 20th November 2019.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:30pm.

Attachments:

[file:///Users/neilking/Documents/1910 Bayreuth Ticket Allocation - Letter to the Chairs of Wagner Societies.pdf](file:///Users/neilking/Documents/1910%20Bayreuth%20Ticket%20Allocation%20-%20Letter%20to%20the%20Chairs%20of%20Wagner%20Societies.pdf)

Membership numbers:

<https://1drv.ms/x/s!Ak9eQ8SmdBVxgURhqngqY3V-Y7qG>

WAGNER SOCIETY - SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED MEETINGS

Event	Current or Proposed date	Notes
Allen - Furtwangler	5 th November 2019	
Committee	20 th November 2019	
Singing Competition	23 rd November 2019	
Christmas Party	12 th December 2019	
Committee	15 th January 2020	
Young Lecturers' Competition	21 st January 2020	
Joint Music Societies' Dinner	28 th January 2020	
Kupfer Ring	25 th February 2020	
Committee	26 th February 2020	
Goodall Film	10 th March 2020	
<i>Committee</i>	<i>17th March 2020</i>	<i>Provisional</i>
<i>Annual Dinner</i>	<i>18th March 2020 (TBC)</i>	<i>Provisional</i>
Negus Walkure	21 st April 2020	
Committee	22 nd April 2020	
Kennaway - Tristan	28 th April 2020	
Bruckner and Wagner	12 th May 2020	
Committee	13 th May 2020	
Annual General Meeting	20th May 2020	
Holden – Ring recordings	16 th June 2020	
Committee	17 th June 2020	
Committee	8 th July 2020	
Summer Party	TBC July 2020	