**THE WAGNER SOCIETY**

**MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 6:30PM ON 15TH JANUARY 2020 AT 15 GIBSON SQUARE LONDON N1 0RD**

**Present: Alan Ridgewell, Chairman (“AR”)**

**Neil King, Treasurer (“NGK”)**

**Tom Brown (“TB”)**

**Meli Hatzhrysidis (“MH”)**

**Henry Kennedy (“HK”)**

1. **Quorum**

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

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Richard Miles, Secretary (“RM”)

Izzy Pitman

1. **Approval of the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2019 having been circulated in advance were approved without dissent.

1. **Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting**

It was agreed that all matters arising from these minutes were on the current agenda and would be discussed within the relevant items on the agenda.

1. **Chairman’s report**

RWVI, Venice Congress

AR reported on the RWVI congress that he had attended at the end of November. A new committee had been elected, the members of which he considered was good news for the RWVI and us. Ursula Taylor, Secretary, will now be our main point of contact.

Additionally, AR reported that we are now the largest Wagner Society affiliated to the RWVI and would have been acknowledged as such had they not been using membership numbers that were two years out of date. NGK agreed to pay the 2020 subscription immediately so that the correct position is evidenced to the RWVI.

The congress will be held in Bonn in 2020 and it has been suggested that we host it in London in some future year; it was agreed that this would be appropriate but only once we had a full committee to undertake the inevitable increase in work that this would occasion.

Stipendienstiftung

AR also made contact with those people managing the bursary programme and some initial confusion and misunderstandings have now been cleared up.

Bayreuth Festival Tickets

AR confirmed that the ‘new’ arrangements for festival tickets for members have been abandoned following representations to Bayreuth from the RWVI and former system has been reinstated. AR has therefore applied for c112 tickets for the 2020 festival and we should know our allocation by end-February and launch the ballot (also including 22 tickets from the GdF) immediately after that. It was agreed in principle that student tickets would be made available again and that two tickets would be used as incentives in the membership drive.

1. **Secretary’s report**

The Secretary not being present, there was no Secretary’s report.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

2020 Budget

The final version of the budget incorporating all final suggestions and amendments was circulated by NGK; this is now uploaded to the accounting system and all results will be measured against this benchmark.

November and December 2020 results

The results for these two months were not yet available; NGK apologised for this and stated that they would be uploaded to the website asap. A surplus had been generated in each month.

Online payments

All online payments made since the last meeting were handed to AR for approval and countersignature.

PayPal

Not everybody who has been added to the PayPal account has yet logged in and competed their security set-up. NGK urged everybody to do this quickly; MH stated that his PayPal access was working well.

Bank mandate changes and debit cards

NGK stated that there had been no progress on these topics.

Annual Financial Statements

NGK stated that these are now being prepared although a substantial amount of work remains. He raised the possibility of a ‘glossy’ annual report being produced and distributed to members rather than the basic set being emailed; this could be treated as a report on the year for the society and so be used to highlight our activities and achievements etc. This was generally felt to be an appropriate idea but more information on costs was needed and the precise timings that would need to be achieved since the financial statements must be received by members 28 days before the AGM (by 22nd April).

Donation to GdF

This had been discussed previously as being a useful means to raise our profile at Bayreuth (programme credit) as well as cement our GdF relationship for festival tickets. NGK proposed that a donation for 2020 being made of €6,000 (as suggested by GdF) and a short discussion was followed by a vote.

It was **RESOLVED** that a donation in respect of 2020 in the amount of €6,000 be made to the Gesellschaft der Freunde von Bayreuth eV.

1. **Events Report**

2019 Financial results of events

NGK circulated a paper showing the financial results of all events in 2019 including numbers attending, costs and sponsorship/donations received. Overall, events have raised net income of c£6,500, which was a very commendable result and the committee thanked all those involved in achieving this position.

Future events

HK ran the meeting through all events planned for the remainder of this season, where there is still some work to do on the format of a few events such as the Kupfer Ring and Goodall film where a facilitator for discussions might be required. NGK distributed the current position on ticket sales for these events, which was adequate at this stage.

HK also ran the meeting through ideas for next season and it was agreed that these could be discussed outside the meeting as all were tentative at this stage. Ideas included Alex Ross for the Eva Turner Memorial Lecture, which might open the season in 2020. NGK suggested that we try to find a more prestigious/comfortable/modern venue for the larger events for which the Swedenborg Hall is not ideal any longer.

1. **Joint Music Societies’ Recital Dinner**

In the absence of IP, NGK updated the committee on the status of this event, which the Wagner Society is organising this year. The event is now sold out and that much work had been done to clarify the financial position of the event and the contributions of other societies. it is likely that the event will make a loss of c£200, which is acceptable.

IP is arranging rehearsals for the afternoon of the event that NGK will attend/oversee and then hand over to IP when she arrives c6pm (after work) for the event proper.

It was reiterated that his event is a great deal of uncongenial work for those involved with scant thanks and that the decision to terminate our involvement as a society was to be welcomed.

1. **Annual Dinner and Goodall Award**

Format of event

This is not yet agreed although it will not be a recital and thus no performer, accompanist or piano tuner have been engaged. Suggestions including an interview on stage with Norman Bailey (“NB”) (requiring the engagement of an interviewer) or a modest series of speeches from guests connected with NB outlining his achievements and culminated in the presentation of the award. One guest will be required to formally present the award and invite NB to respond. AR to discuss this issue with NB when they next speak.

Ticket sales and publicity

Ticket sales are building and there are several tickets reserved/required but not yet aid for. AR has prepared a flyer for the event, including a postal booking form, has been prepared and will be sent to all members who have attended previous dinners. NGK to invite all honorary members will also be invited.

NB travel and accommodation requirements

AR will discuss this with NB. We have previously offered assistance with the airline ticket costs, accommodation and travel in London but time is pressing if we are to make further arrangements.

Sponsorship and donations

NGK summarised the current position:

NGK to donate the wine and spirits

RM to pay the corkage (c£1,200)

Ray Godson donating £1,000

Mrs Daphne King donating the table flowers

Mrs Jan Leigh donating the trophy

1. **Wagner News**

AR updated the committee on the likely publication dates in 2020:

1. Beginning of year (held from 2019)
2. End-March 2020
3. End-June 220
4. End-September 2020 (Bayreuth)
5. Christmas number

The publication date for the current edition due was not yet know but will be as soon as possible. It remains a possibility each year that the Christmas number might slip into January of the following year.

Wagner Journal

In return for our advertising their magazine in Wagner News, Wagner journal have offered reciprocal advertising – copy for the next edition of the journal is now urgently needed and AR will circulate this asap.

1. **Membership report**

Current membership to end-December 2019

NGK circulated the membership numbers for the year end; it was noted that membership had increased to 1,250 members and that therefore the subscription to the RWVI would be €2,500. AR asked NGK to pay this at once and make sure we got due credit for the total number of members, which makes us the largest Wagner Society.

Membership Drive

MH confirmed that with the renewed likelihood of a substantial allocation of tickets for the Bayreuth Festival (one of our main attractions to many prospective members), we could commence the membership drive almost at once. This would run from end-January to end-April and all new members as well as those current members introducing new members, would be placed into a draw for which the prizes would be:

1st Pair of tickets for Bayreuth

2nd Free admission to WS events for a year

3rd Wagner CD boxed set

Other prizes to include CD sets, subscriptions to the Wagner Journal, other CDs, books and so on.

Success of the membership drive would be measured as all new paying members (individual or joint) that join in the three-month period.

MH agreed to launch the drive by the end of January with suitable social media postings, emails to members, and advertising, and to circulate the literature for comments and approval to the committee.

GDPR

NGK again apologised that the results of the recent circulation of all former members for GDPR purposes were still not available.

1. **Archive and library**

Wagner News

NGK stated that all editions of Wagner News, Wagner and preceding publications have been collated and it has been found that five editions are missing from our ‘complete’ set. It is therefore imperative that we obtain that second set currently held by Ray Godson since he has scanned some of the missing items and therefore, they must be in this set. The full archive of Wagner News needs to be in a single place and AR agreed to contact Ray in this regard.

Other archive material

This is securely stored pending cataloguing wither by a committee member with enough time or a student/intern taken on for this task.

Books

The only remaining books are the larger sets including Newman lives, Cosima diaries, prose works and so on. These will be advertised in Wagner News but will be disposed of thereafter if no members wish to take them.

CDs

We still retain a substantial stock of commercial recordings of Wagner and other composers’ works. These will continue to be offered at events and must be pushed to members as these represent a substantial asset on the balance sheet that could be converted thus into cash.

1. **Social media & marketing report**

MH raised several points on the society’s online and social media presence. Facebook ‘boosts’ were being using to push ticket sales for events, currently the Young Lecturers’ Competition. Whilst this meant that news of our events reached a far wider audience, this also seemed to encourage facetious or inappropriate responses. Deleting such responses was discussed but it was felt that all should remain in the interests of transparency.

MH also felt that there was still not co-ordination across the various social media platforms and offered to obtain passwords etc. and take this on himself. No postings on Twitter had been seen recently and this does reach a very wide audience.

1. **Bayreuth issues**

RWVI

All matters concerning the RWVI were covered in the Chairman’s Report.

RWVI Annual Report

NGK stated that this had hitherto always been requested by end-January each year. AR thought that the timetable had been relaxed and that the report can now be uploaded online rather than sent. AR agreed to find out what needed to be done on this issue and to report back to the committee.

GdF

All matters concerning the RWVI were covered in the Chairman’s Report.

Wahnfried

As stated above, all the remaining books required for Wahnfried have now been sent although formal acknowledgement has not yet been received. The idea of a further cash donation was discussed since it was felt that this was appropriate to assist with cataloguing the donation of books or to over bookbinding etc. AR agreed to wait for acknowledgement of the gift of books before enquiring what was needed and/or appropriate.

1. **Bayreuth Bursary**

Current issues surrounding the 2020 bursaries was discussed. We have now been invoiced for six bursaries for ourselves and for subsidies to be paid to allow other societies to send bursands to Bayreuth. The total amount is €5,200 which is due immediately.

These bursaries will be awarded as follows:

1. Two for Singing Competition finalists
2. One for the winner of the young lecturer competition
3. Three for non-singers to be awarded from amongst those applying for such.

It is anticipated that the winners of the three non-singer bursaries will be announced shortly.

1. **Singing Competition**

Whilst the financial result of the Singing Competition was inevitably disappointing (although budgeted), it was agreed by all that. It had been a very successful function and had garnered us a lot of publicity and many compliments from members. it was also agreed that such a competition was at the centre of our objectives as a society.

The timing of the next competition was then discussed and there was strong support for this becoming an annual event once more but, on consideration, there were also numerous objections to this conclusion: lack of committee members to help organise it, lack of outside expertise given the time-consuming nature of the event, need to have new participants applying and so on.

It was **RESOLVED** that there would be no Singing Competition in 2020 and that it would resume in November 2021.

1. **Website development**

The scope and nature of development of the website was again discussed given that some improvements to it (a ‘basket’ function) were urgent and that the whole ‘back-end’ was clunky and a possible security risk (although no members financial details are held).

Previous anecdotal evidence suggests that a minimum of c£10,000 might need to be spent and, whilst NK confirmed that we had such funds available, it would need to be demonstrably good value for money to justify such large sums.

It was **AGREED** that a sub-committee be formed to take this project forwards and scope the project and obtain competing quotes for the work.

1. **Constitutional review**

It was agreed to remove this item from the agenda at present since those most involved in it had not the time to move it forwards. The constitution does need review and simplification (particularly of the language) but it was felt that this was not a priority at present.

1. **Miscellaneous matters**

Grimeborn opera donation

Following the success of Das Rheingold, a production of Die Walküre is planned for the summer and a further financial contribution sought from the society. Everybody who attended the performances in 2019 was impressed and it was felt our donation last year of £500 should be increased but that we should also know what accrues to the society in terms of publicity, advertising, events and so on.

It was **AGREED** that a minimum donation to Grimeborn of £1,000 would be made but that further investigation of opportunities for the society would be made and which might result in our being able to increase this amount.

Negus birthday event

Anthony Negus, an honorary member, celebrates a significant birthday in June 2021 and a suggestion has been made that a fitting tribute might be an impromptu/surprise performance of the Siegfried Idyll at Longborough for which a small financial contribution was sought from us. A short discussion of this proposal followed with a generally negative response. It was agreed we would look at this again closer to the time but that our likely response would remain negative

LFO programme advertisement

Our advertisement in the 2019 Longborough programme had resulted in several new members and some donations.

It was **AGREED** that an advertisement would be placed in the 2020 programme.

Further advertising in programmes was also discussed, particularly the programme for the LPO Ring Cycle in January/February 2021 and it was agreed that this was something we should consider in due course.

Press releases

It was noted that opera magazine had noted the winners of the Singing Competition in their news section of the February 2020 edition. There was a discussion on whether a committee member should take on press relations as a responsibility to ensure wider publicity for society activities but it was generally felt that this could be an *ad hoc* responsibility given that – aside from the Goodall Award winner and the Singing Competition winners, there was little we did that warranted press coverage. However, it was agreed that the HK (Events Secretary) should take steps to ensure that listings websites and magazines should all carry details of our events since all were open to the general public and that this might increase numbers attending.

1. **Any Other Business**

Two additional items of business were raised:

Recording of events

Recording of events (either audio or video or both) was discussed and it was agreed that this was a service that the current photographer could provide. However, opinions were divided as to the merits of this additional work and expenditure and it was argued that whilst this might be a useful marketing tool and also be useful for members unable to attend events, it could also hit tickets sales from members choosing to listen to or watch events at home rather than attending them in person. No decision was taken.

Singing Competition winners’ concert

HK circulated a brief paper on the costs and format of a concert to be given in May at St John’s Smith Square and including performances by the winner and runner-up of the 2019 Singing Competition. As the paper needed more discussion and some committee members were previously unaware of the event, it was agreed to hold over the question of a financial contribution to this event until the next meeting.

1. **Date of next meeting and schedule for future meetings and events**

The next meeting will at 6:30pm on 26th February 2020 at 15, Gibson Square London N1 0RD.

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

**WAGNER SOCIETY - SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED MEETINGS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Event** | **Current or Proposed date** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |
| **Young Lecturers’ Competition** | **21st January 2020** | **IP, NGK, AR available** |
| **Joint Music Societies’ Dinner** | **28th January 2020** | **IP, TB, NGK attending** |
| Kupfer Ring | 25th February 2020 |  |
| Committee | 26th February 2020 |  |
| Goodall Film | 10th March 2020 |  |
| Committee | 17th March 2020 |  |
| Annual Dinner | 18th March 2020 |  |
| Negus Walküre | 21st April 2020 |  |
| Committee | 22nd April 2020 |  |
| Kennaway - Tristan | 28th April 2020 |  |
| Bruckner and Wagner | 12th May 2020 |  |
| Committee | 13th May 2020 |  |
| **Annual General Meeting** | **20th May 2020** |  |
| Holden – Ring recordings | 16th June 2020 |  |
| Committee | 17th June 2020 |  |
| Committee | 8th July 2020 |  |
| Summer Party | TBC July 2020 |  |
| Committee | 16th September 2020 |  |
| Committee | 21st October 2020 |  |
| Committee | 18th November 2020 |  |
| Christmas Party | 10th December 2020 |  |
| Committee | 20th January 2021 |  |
| Committee | 17th February 2021 |  |
| Committee | 17th March 2021 |  |
| *Annual Dinner* | *18th March 2021* | *Provisional* |
| Committee | 21st April 2020 |  |
| Committee | 17th May 2020 |  |
| **Annual General Meeting** | **19th May 2021** |  |
| Committee | 16th June 2021 |  |
| Committee | 14th July 2021 |  |
| Summer Party | TBC July 2021 |  |