**THE WAGNER SOCIETY**

**MINUTES OF A COMMITTEE MEETING**

**HELD AT 6:30PM ON 13TH MAY 2020 (ZOOM)**

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

**Richard Miles, Secretary (“RM”)**

**Neil King, Treasurer (“NGK”)**

**Tom Brown (“TB”)**

**Meli Hatzhrysidis (“MH”)**

**Henry Kennedy (“HK”)**

**Izzy Pitman (“IP”)**

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**

None

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2020 having been circulated in advance were approved without dissent.

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

Circumstances having changed significantly since the last meeting meant that many of the items then discussed were no longer relevant.

1. **Chairman**

Current position

The Chairman summarised the current position with coronavirus as it affected the Wagner Society. Generally, all our events must be cancelled, refunds given and activities cannot start again until permitted by the government, which might well not be until the autumn at the earliest. *Wagner News* can be produced but a lack of live performances to review and Society events to cover means that alternative sources of copy are required.

After omitting the last two committee meetings due to coronavirus, this meeting is important and the agenda has been compiled to cover our most urgent issues.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Wagner Society was to have been held on 20th May but has, of course, been cancelled. There was a discussion about how we cover this constitutional requirement in these exceptional circumstances and there appeared to be three main choices:

1. Ignore the requirement for an AGM in 2020, hold it in May 2021 and assume all Officers and Committee Members will then serve until that date;
2. Postpone the AGM until the autumn or later but still hold it in 2020 and conduct the business that would have been conducted in May; or
3. Hold the AGM online in accordance with the timings stipulated in the Constitution including notice periods etc.

A discussion on the merits of each of these options was held and it was clear that only the third option met our constitutional requirements despite it being felt that most members would accept that either of the other two options might be inevitable in the current circumstances. It was noted that Music Club of London is delaying their AGM until the autumn. Nevertheless, it was generally felt that the Officers’ and Committee’s duty was to follow the Constitution as closely as possible.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the AGM for 2020 would be held on 25th June 2020, which would therefore allow us to give the notice to members required by the Constitution and also to circulate the necessary papers.

*Wagner News*

The chairman outlined plans for further additions of Wagner news; it is likely that there will be less than four editions this year due to the lack of current copy as well as pressures on the editor’s time during the coronavirus crisis. An edition before the summer was expected.

1. **Bayreuth (AR)**

2020 Bayreuth tickets

All committee members were aware that the 2020 Bayreuth Festival had been cancelled. Therefore, our allocations of tickets from the Gesellschaft der Freunde as well as from RWVI were now void. The RWVI invoice was yet to be paid and had simply been cancelled whilst the GdF had given us the option of a refund, a donation, or to hold our payment over to 2021. As the society had already made a donation of €6,000 for 2020 to the GdF, it was agreed that we would not make a further donation nor seek a refund but instead allow the GdF to hold our 2020 ticket payment over to 2021.

2020 Bayreuth Bursary

The Chairman had heard from the organisers of the Bayreuth Bursary and in general terms our allocation of places and payment for the same will be held over to 2021 with no penalty to the society.

It was **AGREED** that all recipients of the 2020 bursary places would be offered the chance to take up their places is in 2021 but where this was not possible, further recipient(s) would be sought. No additional travel grants beyond what had already been agreed for 2020 would be paid.

RWVI 2020 Conference

The Chairman noted that the 2020 RWVI conference, due to have been held in November 2020 in Bonn, had now been postponed or cancelled and news of its replacement was awaited.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

March financial performance

The Treasurer briefly covered the current financial position of the society; the March management accounts had been circulated previously and the April accounts were imminent. These show a significant fall in the Society’s assets as a result of a fall of at least 25% in the value of our investments as well as inevitable lack of income from events and the need to make refunds to some members for the annual dinner and other events.

The bank balance remains adequate and it is hoped that members will continue to pay subscriptions during 2020 and that we can also maximise our cash resources as far as possible in other ways. The Treasurer did not consider that we were facing a financial crisis yet.

Balance sheet assets created

As a result of event cancellations, some organisations have requested (or insisted) that that instead of refunds, we leave our payments on deposit with those organisations against future expenditure. As previously noted, we have left a deposit with GDF at Bayreuth (c€5,200) and we have also held over the cost of our room bookings at Swedenborg Hall (c£1,500) until the autumn or later.

We had also paid a deposit of 50% of the estimated cost of the annual dinner to the ROSL. They continue to reserve their contractual position that we were not forced to cancel the dinner by government instruction and therefore are due no refund. That said, after we offered to cover any material actual losses (such as wasted food), they have agreed to hold the remaining portion of a deposit against a function to be arranged in the future. We continue to request a cash refund of c£3,500 and feel that without this, it might be necessary to impair this asset in the 2020 financial statements.

1. **Events Report (HK)**

Restarting events

Tentative plans were outlined by HK for the possible recommencement of events from October 2020 onwards, perhaps with speakers who would understand if we were subsequently required to postpone events. No concrete plans had been made.

Eva Turner Memorial Lecture 2020

The Eva Turner Memorial lecture is our main autumn event balancing the annual dinner in the spring, and a prestigious lecturer is normally invited. Whilst this event could be switched to an online meeting, it was generally felt that it should be postponed until it can be given before a live audience. It is still intended to invite Alex Ross to give the lecture and coordinate this event with the publication of his latest book the due date of which might also be delayed. HK agreed to follow up the timing of this event.

Zoom lectures and events

Given that we had agreed to hold the AGM by online conference, it was generally believed that if this event was successful, we should launch a program of short events from July onwards for members and the general public featuring well-known performers and lecturers: an ambitious, and increasingly extravagant (if not fanciful), list of potential performers was discussed.

It was **AGREED** that a sub-committee (HK, MH, IP) be formed to follow up this opportunity and arrange such events

Annual Dinner 2020 and 2021

NK summarised the current financial position resulting from the cancellation of the annual dinner. In addition to the ROSL deposit issue, the florist hired for the occasion also had to be paid (£820) although this cost was covered by the original donor honouring her offer despite the dinner’s cancellation. We had also covered the costs of Norman Bailey’s flights to the UK as well as contributions to the flights of his sons who were to accompany him. These amounts are irrecoverable. Finally, whilst many members donated their ticket cost to the Society, a significant number of refunds were also necessary.

It remains our intention to present Norman Bailey with his award privately at some point in the future when safe to do so.

Given the attitude of the ROSL regarding our refund (in which they were significantly out of step with most other venues in similar positions), as well as the high cost of using ROSL as a dinner venue anyway, it has been agreed to seek alternative venues in the future, possibly using City livery halls as an alternative. NK and HK to take this forward although it was noted that a Social Secretary is still required.

Goodall Award 2021

HK raised the issue of the 2021 recipient of the Goodall Award. As in previous years, it is important that we agree this choice as soon as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made for the winner (probably with a busy diary) to attend the annual dinner. There was a brief discussion and it was felt by some that are non-singer should win in 2021 but the Chairman requested that all ommittee members come to the next meeting armed with serious choices for potential winners.

Venues for future events

The Swedenborg Hall remains a popular choice of events due to its central location and friendly staff as well as suitable AV equipment. That said, it is generally felt that it does not project a modern and forward-looking image for the society and that a more modern venue should be sought with a modestly increased capacity for some events.

Suggestions for such venues, which could be at a higher cost, were requested although no definite choices were discussed.

1. **Communications (AR)**

It was agreed that an email from the Chairman to all members summarising many of the items discussed at this meeting as well as the general position of the Society and its events should be circulated as soon as reasonably practicable.

It was noted that the regular emails to members concerning Wagner performances being streamed online had been very popular with some members and should be continued. It also shows the society being proactive in these difficult times.

1. **Any Other Business**

None

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

The next meeting will at 6:30pm on 17th June 2020 via Zoom.

**There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:30pm.**

**WAGNER SOCIETY - SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED EVENTS AND MEETINGS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Event** | **Current or Proposed date** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |
| Committee | 17th June 2020 | Zoom |
| **Annual General Meeting** | **25th June 2020** | **Zoom** |
| 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 |  |