**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”) (For later part of meeting)**

**Meli Hatzhrysidis (“MH”)**

**Henry Kennedy (“HK”)**

**Izzy Pitman (“IP”) (For later part of meeting)**

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 13th May 2020 having been circulated in advance were approved without dissent.

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

All matters were covered in the relevant sections below.

1. **Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting will be held by Zoom conference call on 25th June 2020. The logistics for this meeting were discussed in detail and the technical abilities of the Zoom website in controlling admittance, speaking, questions and voting at the meeting.

Various other issues were covered:

1. The need for a practice session (agreed for 23rd June at 6:30 pm);
2. It was agreed that MH would control admittance to the meeting based on a list supplied by NGK of *bona fide* members;
3. AR confirmed it would be necessary to either circulate in advance or announce the rules governing the conduct of the meeting such as voting and members’ questions;
4. The login details for the conference would be circulated the day prior to the meeting and registration would cease on 23rd June 2020;
5. The likely format is that all members of the committee will be visible to all attendees but that no members attending will be seen on screen and that all will be muted except when they wish to speak or raise questions.

It was agreed that these topics would be covered at the rehearsal session.

1. **Chairman**

*Wagner News*

AR outlined plans for the next edition of *Wagner News,* which are well underway and which should be published before the summer. An offer of proof-reading at modest cost had been received and this was felt appropriate. Other members of the committee will also assist in proof-reading and despatching the magazine to members.

1. **RWVI & Bayreuth (AR)**

RWVI 2020 Conference

The Chairman noted that the 2020 RWVI conference, due to have been held in November 2020 in Bonn, had now been cancelled and is replaced by a Congress in Berlin in January or February, which coincides with various Wagner performances. He has no further information at this stage.

RWVI Conference in London in 2024/5

The possibility of the RWVI annual conference being held in London has been raised with the Chairman by Ursula Taylor, Secretary of the RWVI. This was generally welcomed by the committee and it was agreed that the Chairman should go back with a tentative agreement to this plan.

However, a number of concerns were raised including lack of manpower on the committee to organise such an event, the difficulty of securing tickets at Covent Garden and other venues for a large number of delegates, and the general financial and administrative arrangements for such a large conference.

Nevertheless, it was felt that the conference should be held in London, previously it had not been held in the UK, and that this would be an important opportunity to showcase our achievements and raise our profile with the RWVI. It was suggested that the singing competition could be moved to coincide with this event as well as other potential Society events.

1. **Membership (NGK)**

NGK had previously circulated the membership report for May 2020. This shows a stagnant membership position, which was considered the best we could hope for in the current circumstances. Membership is still ahead of 2019 but this will change if membership begins to decline.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

May financial performance

The Treasurer briefly covered the current financial position of the Society; the May management accounts had been circulated previously, which still show a significant loss on the income and expenditure statement, primarily due to a fall in the value of our investments as well as lack of event income. Subscription income appears to be holding up well.

There is currently about £23,000 in the bank account and this is considered adequate for the foreseeable future. The Treasurer stated that whilst the position was significantly behind budget, it is not yet a crisis and the society can continue to meet all its obligations.

In addition, a Gift Aid claim has been submitted covering all the donations that were made by members to the Society as a result of cancelled events and the cancelled Annual Dinner. This has not yet been received from HMRC but will further improve our finances.

ROSL

The ROSL has now conceded that they will refund the remaining portion of the deposit that we paid last October for the Annual Dinner that was to have been held in March 2020 and which had to be cancelled. This refund – which has not yet been received – is net of actual costs and losses to ROSL, primarily wasted food.

Swedenborg Society

The Swedenborg Society have verbally confirmed that the money paid for events to be held in Swedenborg Hall will be held over and honoured for future bookings; however, this has not yet been confirmed in writing and the Treasurer will continue to request this so that our auditors will allow this asset to remain on the balance sheet at the year-end if necessary.

1. **Events Report (HK)**

Zoom lectures and events

MH outlined the current progress with online events and is currently waiting to hear about availability from Eva-Maria Westbroek. It is currently intended to arrange at least one online event in July and another in August, pending the possible resumption of live events in the autumn. Some other names were also mentioned and possibly inviting Sarah Connolly to take part was warmly supported. The sub-committee will continue to work on these opportunities.

Restarting events

HK has compiled a list of potential events and dates for the autumn and spring seasons. It is, of course, difficult to be definite in booking events for the autumn and it was suggested that events be arranged that could be online or live events until we have more certainty from the government as to when live events may resume. It was noted that many opera houses have assumed no live events in this calendar year and some are not resuming live performances until March 2021, which makes the position very unclear for us. With that in mind an online autumn program is likely. HK to progress discussions with speakers and venues.

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 paying audience since it is usually cash generative. It is still intended to invite Alex Ross to give the lecture and hopefully coordinate this event with the publication of his latest book although this might not now be possible. HK agreed to follow up the timing of this event. Recording the event for the website was also discussed but no decision was taken.

Goodall Award 2020

With the lockdown situation is beginning to ease, the chairman suggested this was the time to retrieve the Goodall Award rose bowl from Jan Leigh and arrange to present it to Norman Bailey who is still in the United Kingdom. The Chairman will progress this accordingly.

Goodall Award 2021

Regarding the award of the Goodall award for 2021, the committee were requested at a previous committee meeting to consider possible names of winners for discussion at this meeting. It was generally felt that a non-singer would be appropriate in 2021 and a person currently in the public eye rather than a retired performer; however, this was not mandatory and not formal Society policy. The Chairman asked for nominations from all committee members and a short list was compiled as follows:

1. Mark Elder
2. Vladimir Jurowski
3. Nina Stemme
4. Christian Thielemann

After further discussion, a vote was taken and it was agreed that the winner of our 2021 award – if he is disposed to accept it – would be Christian Thielemann. The Chairman and HK will progress this with Christian Thielemann with a view to an award at our Annual Dinner currently proposed to be held in March 2021.

Venues for future events

It remains the case that a new venue projecting the modern image of the Society is required but currently there is little point in pursuing opportunities with most venues closed and also we still wish to utilise the credit we hold with Swedenborg Hall.

1. **Communications (AR)**

Chairman’s Communications

It was agreed that the Chairman’s email summarising the current situation facing the society had been well received but that there was no need for further general communications ahead of the messages relating to the AGM.

The emails regarding streamed performances of Wagner operas have continued to be popular with members and positive feedback had been received.

Social Media

The Facebook posts have continued to be many and varied and credit is due to MH and IP for our social media presence. IP agreed that further Instagram posts would be appropriate and it was also suggested that we find a way of identifying how many members vs. non-members access the Facebook page.

1. **Miscellaneous**

Discussions with Theatre in Riga

MH updated the meeting on the discussions he has been holding with the administrators of trust to renovate the theatre in Riga where Wagner had been music director from 1837-39, which had inspired his future ideas and designs.  The organisation has high-level national and international support including from the Wagner family, and discussions continue as to what links we might have with this organisation including the possibility of a Zoom event, potentially on 12th August.  MH will continue to update the committee.

Links with NSOS

It is generally considered appropriate, given the number of students and young members, that we have good contacts with NSOS. Many of their members are already Wagner Society members and we want to encourage this cross-over but concern was expressed that our existing members might not feel the link is of benefit to them given that NSOS is primarily a student networking organisation. IP will continue discussions.

1. **Any Other Business**

None

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

The next meeting will be at 6:30pm on 15th July 2020 via Zoom and with an AGM rehearsal at 6:30pm on Tuesday 23rd June 2020 also via Zoom.

**There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:00pm.**

**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 | 15th July 2020 | Provisional, moved from 8th July |
| ~~Summer Party~~ | ~~TBC July 2020~~ |  |
| *Committee* | *19th August 2020* | *Proposed only* |
| 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 |  |