



**MINUTES OF 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY
7pm Thursday 25th June 2019**

Zoom Online Conference

ATTENDEES:

The following, Officers and Committee Members were present:

Alan Ridgewell (AR) Chairman
Neil King (NGK) Treasurer
Richard Miles (RM) Secretary

Tom Brown (TB)
Meli Hatzihrysidis (MH)
Henry Kennedy (HK)
Izzy Pitman (IP)

The meeting opened at 19:10. AR took the chair and welcomed everyone.

1: Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Catherine Dobson, Barbara Eichman, Jan Leigh and Leila Marzagao.

2: Approval of Minutes of 2018 Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting (which had been held on 22nd May 2019) were put to the meeting and comments were invited from the floor. There were none.

Cormac Cawley proposed the approval of the Minutes, Philip Harrison seconded the proposal and the Minutes were duly approved without dissent.

3: Approval of the Chairman's Report

AR invited comments on his report containing in the 2019 Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Society. There were none.

Kevin Stephens proposed the approval of the Chairman's Report, Sue Vincent seconded the proposal and the Chairman's Report was duly approved without dissent.

4: Treasurers Report & Annual Accounts for 2018

The Chairman invited comments on Treasurer's Report and 2019 Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Society. There were none.

Paul Bennett proposed that the Treasurer's Report and 2019 Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Society be adopted, Charles Draper seconded the proposal and the Accounts were duly approved without dissent.

5: Election of the Officers of the Society to serve until the 2020 AGM

Anthony Spooner had proposed AR as Chairman and Richard France had seconded the proposal. Being the only nominee for the office of Chairman, Alan Ridgewell was elected as Chairman unopposed.

Dame Anne Evans had proposed NGK as Treasurer and Dr Helen Watson had seconded the proposal. Being the only nominee for the office of Treasurer, Neil King was elected unopposed.

Christopher Jack had proposed RM as Secretary and Mrs Stephanie Sfakianos had seconded the proposal. Being the only nominee for the office of Secretary, Anthony Spooner was elected unopposed.

6: Election of Committee Members to serve for a three-year term

The meeting then dealt with the election of the following members of the committee whose nominations had been proposed and seconded as follows: -

Meli Hatzihrysidis, proposed by Gordon Strang and seconded by Joseph Bedford

Henry Kennedy, proposed by Gary Kahn and seconded by Mrs Daphne King

Being the only nominees for less than the available vacancies on the Committee these members were elected as members of the Society's Committee unopposed.

7: Election of Cannon Moorcroft as the Society's Independent Examiner until the 2021 AGM

NGK proposed that Canon Moorcroft be appointed Auditors for the Society and the proposal was seconded by Richard Miles. Cannon Moorcroft were duly appointed as the Society's Examiners.

8: Any Other Business

- i. Ray Godson questioned the fact that no new members had stood for the Committee and AR replied that he was in discussions with two potential members to determine if they had the skills that the Society currently requires and he also pointed out that more committee members would be very welcome, particularly a Social Secretary.
- ii. Philip Harrison suggested that more Zoom meetings with a speaker - such as we have at normal 'live' Society meetings – would be ideal. AR replied that we are actively working on just such a proposal and hope to have news on this soon.
- iii. Ray Godson questioned the potential financial losses caused by the cancellation of the Annual Dinner and whether the Goodall Award would still be presented to Norman Bailey.
 - a. AR stated that it remained our intention to present the award in person to Norman Bailey, who was still in the country, when it was safe to do so.
 - b. NGK covered the financial aspects. Despite the venue/caterers suggesting that the entire deposit was forfeit due to cancelling the dinner at short notice and before compulsory lockdown, the position has now improved. We have borne the cost of wasted food and flowers but the remainder of the deposit, initially to be retained by the venue against contribution to future events, has now been agreed to be refunded to the Society although it is yet to be received. In addition, many members donated some or all the cost of their tickets to the society upon which Gift Aid has also been claimed. Agreed donations to cover the cost of flowers, corkage, and a contribution to the Bailey family travel costs from the USA, have all been honoured by the donors despite the dinner not taking place. Finally, the full cost of the airfares for Norman Bailey and contributions to the costs of his accompanying family members' airfares on both legs of his journey have been paid by the Society. With all these points taken together, NGK stated that he did not feel that a material loss would be borne by the Society and that the exact position would be covered in the 2020 financial statements.
 - c. AR reiterated the Society's grateful thanks to the specific donors whose generosity allowed the dinner to be financially viable, and also to the many members donating their ticket money once the event was cancelled.
- iv. Kathrin Peters asked about the impact of Covid-19 on the Society and the world of opera generally. AR stated that the impact of the virus on the operatic world was too wide a question to be covered succinctly at this meeting; he invited the

Treasurer to cover the financial aspects of the impact upon the society. NGK stated that the financial aspect arose in several different areas. Primarily the loss in value of the Society's investments has been significant, circa £24,000 and whilst it was expected that some of this loss would be recovered, it could not be guaranteed nor the timing of it known. Luckily the Society has no immediate requirement to liquidate any investments. Also, a modest income arises from events none of which are taking place currently and the running costs of the Society continue to be paid. On the positive side, it is likely that there will be fewer editions of *Wagner News* than have been budgeted for and running costs will be reduced whilst the society undertakes no new activities. The overall position, NGK stated, is that the Society will fall significantly short of its budget for 2020 but there is no underlying risk to the future of the Society at this stage.

- v. Sue Vincent, who is on the T E Lawrence Society's Committee, suggested the possibility of joint events with the T E Lawrence Society, perhaps with its Dorset branch where there was a large membership of that Society. T E Lawrence was a great Wagnerian and had recordings of Wagner's operas. She felt that it was likely that many T E Lawrence Society members would be interested in the Wagner Society and possibly additional memberships might be generated for the Wagner Society. AR agreed to take this interesting proposal forward, possibly with the help of Henry Kennedy, Events Secretary.
- vi. Rosemary Jeffreys raised the topic of online streamed opera performances, details of which the Society has been emailing to members, and she stated how grateful she and many other members have been for this information. AR thanked her for these comments and also thanked MH and IP who have been primarily responsible for this initiative.
- vii. Ray Godson raised a further question concerning the composition of the committee and whether we currently faced any quorum issues given the number of vacancies upon the committee. NGK took this question and stated: 1) that the quorum for a committee meeting is one officer and at least a third of the total committee membership being present, which was in no way a problem; and 2) perhaps the actual question should have been whether the committee remains constitutional or not. Currently the committee is that the lowest membership permitted by the Constitution and the resignation of any one member would mean that the committee was unable to operate within the Constitution. Therefore, whilst there was no immediate danger, it is definitely the case that more members joining the committee would be very useful to the Society generally.
- viii. Philip Harrison asked about the Singing Competition and whether there were any plans for an alternative format given the current crisis. AR replied that we had not intended to hold another Singing Competition until November 2021

anyway and so, hopefully, our plans will not be affected. Making the competition biennial was for a variety of reasons including the workload for those involved in organising it, the financial burden and also the aim to attract a new intake of singers for each competition.

- ix. Michael Ward also commented that more Zoom coverage of events would be of especial interest to those members living outside London.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting ended at 19:40 and thanked the members for attending.