



**MINUTES OF 2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE WAGNER SOCIETY**

**7pm, June 29th 2022 - held on-line via Zoom**

The meeting was managed by the Society's Chairman, Alan Ridgewell, and was attended on-line by more than 35 members. The Chairman thanked the members for attending, and moved on to the agenda, which had been circulated in advance.

**1 Apologies for absence**

None received.

**2 Approval of Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting**

The Minutes of the 2021 AGM had been circulated in advance and no comments or observations had subsequently been received.

Kirk Davis proposed the approval of the Minutes, Susan Vincent seconded the proposal and the Minutes were duly approved.

**3 Approval of the Chairman's Report**

The Chairman's report had been circulated in advance and no comments or observations had subsequently been received.

Kirk Davis proposed the approval of the Chairman's Report, Catherine Dobson seconded the proposal and the Chairman's Report was duly approved.

**4 Treasurers Report & Annual Accounts for 2021**

The Treasurer's Report and the Audited Annual Accounts for 2021 had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chairman thanked Neil King, the out-going Treasurer, for attending this on-line meeting in order to respond to any queries which might arise, and invited questions from the participants.

Kirk Davis asked, noting that the Society has an Inland Revenue number, if the Society had ever considered getting an IRS number for those members based in the United States. The Chairman responded that this has not been considered in the past but that he would investigate the possibility for the future.

*Action: Chairman to follow-up.*

The Chairman requested a Proposer and Seconder for the Report and Accounts: Susan Vincent was the proposer and Kirk Davis the seconder, and the Report and Accounts were duly approved.

## **5 Election of the Officers of the Society to serve until the 2023 AGM**

The Chairman explained that this process would be a little more complicated than usual, but that he would explain the position as he went along. The Officers of the Society (Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) were re-elected each year, and starting with the Chairmanship, he, Alan Ridgewell, had been proposed by Cormac Crawley and seconded by Richard France.

Moving on to the Treasurer role, the Chairman thanked Neil King again for his attendance at this on-line meeting and, particularly, for all his excellent work over the past few years, bringing the Society's accounts and finances into the excellent position they were in today. Following the email to members seeking volunteers for the vacant position, a new candidate Treasurer had put himself forward: Mr Stuart Poyner (who was attending the on-line meeting, from Leipzig). Stuart had subsequently been co-opted onto the committee and now needed to be formally proposed at the AGM. Meli Hatzihrysidis had proposed the appointment and Isabella Pitman had seconded the proposal. The Chairman confirmed that Stuart had been elected to the post.

Finally, a new Secretary had to be appointed. Richard Miles had occupied this role in the recent past, having previously been Chairman of the Society for some time. Richard had decided it was time for him to step aside, and enjoy his recent retirement. The current Chairman thanked Richard sincerely for *all* his efforts on behalf of the Society and its members over the past few years. Anthony Spooner, a previous Secretary of the Society, was happy to return to the committee and his appointment had been supported by the Chairman, Alan Ridgewell, and committee member Jo Cousins. Anthony was welcomed back to the committee in the Secretarial position.

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

The constitution of the Society requires that a third of all serving committee members (including Officers) step down each year.

Helen Beardsley, who members may remember from the Singing Competition held at the Overseas League some time ago, was happy to return to the committee and was co-opted back a few meetings ago; she would now be standing down and needed to be formally proposed. Meli Hatzihrysidis proposed the appointment, which was

seconded by the Chairman. Helen was formally elected and welcomed back to the committee.

The second committee member to stand down would be Henry Kennedy, who has been the Society's Events Manager over the past few years and has done a quite remarkable job during the difficult Covid times. Henry has recently graduated from the conducting class at the Academy and, we are delighted to report, is currently assisting Riccardo Muti in Chicago. Henry feels he should now concentrate upon his career and therefore will not put himself forward for re-election onto the committee at this time.

We are still looking to fill the role of Membership Secretary within the committee. We have one or two possibilities and we shall be pursuing them over the next few weeks.

## **7 Election of the Society's Independent Examiner until the 2023 AGM**

The Chairman put forward Seymour Taylor as Examiners for the Society's accounts. Members will recall that this is not the same name as the Examiner put forward last year; this is because of personnel movements within the accounting profession and our wish to stay with individuals we know and with whom we have good experience. This being the case, the Chairman sought confirmation from the members. Stuart Poyner proposed the appointment and Kirk Davis seconded.

## **8 Updates from the Chairman**

This being the first time that the Society's membership had been able to "get together" in a very long time, the Chairman wanted to present a number of updates.

This was the first time in a while that we had been able to undertake a Bayreuth Ballot and the Society received a large number of tickets which we could offer to the membership. The ballot has been held and all the tickets allocated - with the possibility, always, that some tickets might be returned and that members who had not been fortunate in the first ballot might, still, become eligible. We are, fortunately, also managing to send six of our bursary students to Bayreuth this year - and our thanks go to Izzy Pitman for managing this - we will be chaperoning these students towards the middle of August. The students will attend performances at the Festspielhaus, meet RWVI personnel and have special lectures laid on for them. They will also meet Katharina Wagner during their stay.

We had very much hoped that we would be able to hold our last Society event of the year, with Chris Walton, as a live event. Unfortunately, Chris had to cancel because of Covid. We endeavoured to reschedule with other speakers, for a live event, but, because of the current circumstances and on-going rail strikes, this had not proved possible and we had to hold our session on-line.

We are very keen, post-Bayreuth, to set up some live events, with on-line links also available. We been fortunate to have had excellent on-line sessions with speakers such as Paul Thomason and Stephen Brown, obviously not something we could easily geographically do in a "live" event, but we remain keen to restart live sessions as soon as we can.

We are conscious also that the Society's website is "not the best" and have plans afoot to improve and overhaul it. We recognise this is important to ensure that members can keep their membership up to date, be informed of upcoming events and access past event recordings successfully. Wagner News will be placed in pdf format up there, Minutes will be up to date and available and the Society's financial position will be accessible.

We fully recognise that members are keen to contact fellow members, from time to time, to discuss areas of mutual interest or to get together socially, and have recently put together an email address which is allowing members, currently enjoying the 3-week Wagner Festival in Leipzig, to contact each other. It is proposed that our updated website will, similarly, have a members' Forum within it, so that members can, again, get in touch with each other. We will be creating email addresses for members to use whilst in Bayreuth and at other events and festivals in the future.

Finally, every year the RWVI holds a conference, this year in Madrid. Part of the conference relates to committee business, and we have a delegation which attends, but part of it is also open to members of the Society at large. The conference this year will be in October and the Chairman would ensure that details are sent to members who may wish to sign up and attend.

*Action: Chairman to send details regarding the RWVI Madrid conference.*

## **9 AOB**

The Chairman opened the meeting to "Any Other Business" and invited on-line members to offer comments or questions.

Catherine Dobson asked if the July 29th event, scheduled with the Mahler Society and with the Opera House, was due to take place. The Chairman responded that the Mahler Society's organiser had, sadly, passed away and that the event would therefore be rescheduled. New details would be circulated in due course.

Susan Vincent enquired whether the joint dinner, which used to be held with the Mahler Society and the Richard Strauss Society, would be set up again for the future. The Chairman replied that, following the last event, the committee felt that, perhaps, this event would not be for us for the future. Catherine Dobson pointed out that the

Lancaster Hotel, where these events previously took place, had not yet fully reopened following the Covid crisis.

The Chairman took the opportunity to alert on-line members to comments he was receiving as "chat messages" during the meeting. Alexander Campbell had commented that a "bulletin board" would be a good addition to the website so that members could keep each other up to date on matters of interest; the Chairman agreed.

John Baidam was keen to swap his tickets for the upcoming Bayreuth third Ring cycle for tickets for the second cycle and invited members to contact him.

Kirk Davis was delighted that we could send six bursary students to Bayreuth this year, but enquired whether the students had any obligation to write-up their experiences, as he would be very interested to hear them since he could not attend himself this year. Susan Vincent agreed. The Chairman assured them that they were obliged to provide write-ups for Wagner News (he mentioned that they would be tied to a post, except for one hand, until they complied. He was probably joking).

Tom Empson, on-line, enquired if the latest version of Wagner News (which had been issued as a pdf) was also going to be printed and circulated as before. The Chairman confirmed that it *would* be going out as a printed copy (and would be going to the British Library and other, Wagner-related, libraries as well).

Anthony Arundell, via chat message, enquired when the Bayreuth tickets would be sent out. The Chairman responded that the physical tickets received from the Friends Office would be distributed very shortly and that the remaining tickets, received from the Festival Office itself, would be personalised and distributed on-line as soon as possible.

Kirk Davis came back on-line to thank Alan Ridgewell, the Chairman, for everything he had done and was doing for the Society, and Susan Vincent joined him in this. "I couldn't do it without everyone else" responded the Chairman.

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There being no further business, the meeting ended at 19:32.