

The Choir Association of St John's College, Cambridge

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 23 January 2021 at 3.30 p.m. By Zoom Video Conference

Present: Mr Tim Jones (Chairman), The Rev'd Canon Mark Oakley (Dean of Chapel) Miss Caroline Marks (Choir Administrator), Mr James Beddoe (Choir Marketing & Communications Officer), Mr James Anderson-Besant (Assistant Organist), Mr Peter Ball, Mr James Burton, Rev'd Anthony Bushell, Mr Christopher Carnaghan, Mrs Rachel Chegwin, Mr John Clapham, Mr Tom Cogan, Rev'd David Coulton, Mr Michael Garland, Mr David Garrett, Mr Ed Hossack, Mr Jeremy Huw Williams, Mr Selwyn Image, Ms Jill Graham, Mr Geoffrey Lewis, Mr James Little, Miss Jill MacMahon, Commander Mark Metcalf, Mr Martin Redfearn and Mr John Thompson.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Tim Jones welcomed those present at the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Andrew Nethsingha (Director of Music), Mr Miguel Fragoso, Dr Ron Hyam, Mr Dan Jordan, The Rev'd Victor Malan and Mr Geoffrey Silver.

3. Association President

Tim Jones reported that Mrs Heather Hancock, the new Master of the College, had been delighted to accept the invitation to become President of the Association.

4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 18 January 2020

The Minutes were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

5. Income and Expenditure for the financial year ended 30 June 2020

Caroline Marks presented a spreadsheet giving details about the Association's Income and Expenditure for the financial year ended 30 June 2020. Expenditure was lower than in previous years, owing mainly to the cancellation of social events during the pandemic. There had been a slight increase in the cost of design of the Newsletter, which had been a larger edition than on previous occasions. There were one off costs associated with the design/printing of the Fundraising Brochure, and gifts purchased for speakers and retiring Committee Members

Income was higher than in previous years. Membership income had increased and there had been two donations totalling £1,100 for the Bursary Fund. A very generous legacy had been received from the estate of the late Professor Dorothy Richardson. Jill MacMahon queried if the sum would be treated as capital? Caroline Marks confirmed that this was the case - the College's policy is to invest legacies received and the annual income would be available to be used by the Association. Ed Hossack queried whether Gift Aid claimed on donations received by the College for the Association is passed on to the Association. Caroline Marks confirmed that it does. She further confirmed that Association income is ring-fenced and shows as a line within the Choir Department's accounts.

6. Choir Association Social Activities 2020

The number of Association Members attending the Epiphany Service tea in 2020 had been slightly lower than previous years, but it was felt this was a result of the proximity of the date to the late Master's Memorial Services which took place the following weekend. Owing to the pandemic, the London Drinks event in May and the Garden Party/Evensong in June had both been cancelled.

7. Choir Association Administration

i) Staffing

Caroline Marks reported that, owing to the College's current moratorium on recruitment, it had not been possible to move ahead with an appointment.

ii) Communications

Owing to the need to focus on other urgent projects connected to the pandemic, it had not been possible to issue a Newsletter in 2020.

8. Choir Association Bursary Awards 2020

Tim Jones reported that three grants totalling £2,100 had been awarded in 2020. The recipients were Matthew Gibson (Choral Scholar 2016-19, Lay Clerk 2019-20) for support with fees to study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Tom Lilburn (Choral Scholar 2013-2016) for support with fees to study at the Royal College of Music and Alexander Robarts (Chorister 2004 to 2006) for support with fees to study at the Royal Northern College of Music.

9. Choir activities

James Anderson-Besant gave a report on the Choir's activities during the year, including the 2020 Epiphany Carol Services, the Memorial Services for the late Master and the joint services with Gonville & Caius and Clare Choirs that took place before the first Covid19 lockdown in March. Unfortunately the Choir was unable to sing in Chapel during the Easter Term. The new Choir, which included eight new men and a Probationer, assembled in October and sang services in Chapel until the end of term. During the first part of the term, services were sung with a congregation restricted to resident members of College only. Unfortunately from mid-November, no congregation was permitted. He also reported on the challenges of the Advent Carol Services. Fortunately it had proved possible for the Sunday Service to be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

Singing lessons had mainly taken place on-line. He gave a short demonstration on sharing copies of music electronically during on-line singing lessons with the Choristers.

James paid warm tribute to David Lowe, who had recently resigned his role as singing teacher to the Choristers and Probationers after nearly thirty years in the post. David had contributed a vast amount to countless generations of Choristers and Gents, and provided invaluable support to Christopher Robinson, David Hill and Andrew. Anita Morrison joined St John's at the beginning of this term. She has nearly three decades of teaching the boys of Westminster Cathedral Choir.

James also thanked Andrew Nethsingha for his leadership of the Choir over the last few months, which had been extremely challenging for everyone.

10. Choir Marketing & Communications Report

James Beddoe spoke about Virtual Chapel Services and the College's Summer Concert, which had been streamed during the Easter Term. They had been very well received by the College Community and external audiences too. The number of people listening to the Choir's recordings through streaming channels such as Apple Music and Spotify had spiked significantly over the Christmas period.

The Choir had released three albums during the year: Ash Wednesday Live, which was a live recording of both music and spoken word taken from the 2019 Service; Pious Anthems and Voluntaries was the result of a three year collaboration with Composer in Residence, Michael Finnissy; and Advent 2, which included a number of recent commissions for the Advent Services. These, and a release of music by William Matthias by St John's Voices, had all featured in the Specialist Classical Music Charts and been very positively reviewed by music critics. The next release would be Magnificat 2 on Friday 16 April 2021.

James showed a short excerpt from the series of Choral Scholar recruitment videos that had been produced over the summer months, and noted that a similar project was planned over the coming months for Chorister recruitment.

11. Election of Committee members

Tim Jones reported that there was one Member of the Committee standing for re-election for a further three years from January 2021 and nominations had been received as follows:

Miss Jill MacMahon	Supporting Member	
	Nominated by	David Garrett
	Seconded by	Mark Oakley

The nomination was approved unanimously by those present.

12. Any other business

None reported.

13. Vote of thanks

On behalf of the Association, Tim Jones thanked the following for the very positive response they had made to the life of the Chapel and Choir during the recent pandemic:

Mark Oakley, Andrew Hammond, Andrew Nethsingha and Graham Walker (Director of St John's Voices)
James Anderson-Besant and George Herbert
The Choral Scholars, Volunteers, Lay Clerks, Choristers and Probationer
St John's Voices
Chapel and Choir Department staff
Neil Chippington, Simon Kirk, Steven Glitherow and the staff at St John's College School

14. Date of next Annual General Meeting

Saturday 22 January 2022 at 3.30 p.m.

C.F.M.
25 January 2021