

Minutes of Trinity Singers AGM 30 March 2021, 8pm, via Zoom

Attendees

Bob Shapland, Suzie Leech, Georgina Yule, Roger Ellery, Roy Stickland, Sarah Pearson, Simon Medd, Valerie Pain, Andrew Tyrrell. Belinda May, Elizabeth Spiller, Sally Varley, Nick Varley. Margaret Avery, Margaret Leimdorfer, Martin West, Massimo Morelli. Pauline Kemp, Phil Willis, Stephen Bishop, Susannah Read

Apologies

Janet Rogers, Jill Preddy

Chairman's report

2020 started well for Trinity Singers, working towards our planned concert including Vivaldi's Gloria for a performance in late March in Clevedon. All the publicity was in place and the music was coming along well. But then – Covid struck and we had to “postpone” the concert and suspend rehearsals. Subsequently the postponement became a cancellation as we all came to terms with a whole new world without our weekly singing boost. Gradually we realised that it would not be possible to get together in the foreseeable future and this whole new world of “Zoom” opened up before us. It was not something to which everyone took immediately, and it is certainly no substitute for the buzz of live ensemble singing. But many of us persevered and I am pleased to say that we now regularly have 25 or so participants! We have enjoyed instructive talks from Peter Leech on Vivaldi, Belinda May on the Alexander Technique, and Naomi Hickman on Vocal Technique, as well as a Quiz from Margaret Avery, and some attempts at “Socialising”. I think, out of everything, it is the latter which many people find is the least satisfactory use of Zoom. Having a chat when there are more than 3 or 4 people just doesn't seem to work other than for a relatively short break in our rehearsals! It has been encouraging to see some members who initially had great reservations get into the swing of Zoom, to provide at least some means of having a sing. I thank Andrew specifically on this for putting together a varied, but accessible, selection of music particularly over the last 6 months, with help from your suggestions.

Early in the lockdown we launched our Trinity Singers Social Facebook page and there have been a good number of humorous posts and suggestions for things to watch or listen to. Please share things with other members if you can. Various plans have been made to resume rehearsals, but each time restrictions have put paid to the attempts either through legislation or our own concern about the efficacy of spacing and ventilation at various proposed venues.

I and other members of the Committee have attended many online sessions with our “Trade Organisation”, Making Music, to explore ways in which other choirs are coping with the situation, and to clarify the risk management of any plans we may have had and these have been very useful despite not being able to implement any of the methods!

I am very grateful to Roy Stickland for agreeing to offer a “Click and Collect” system for members to take advantage of his growing skills last Spring. From a personal standpoint, Moira was able to grow tomatoes, as well as other “salad stuff” and other plants for the first time in many years, as we were stuck at home rather than off on the high seas!

As you will probably know, the Committee has met many times on Zoom, both separately and after rehearsals, to try to double guess the way things are going and to enable whatever benefit we can from membership of Trinity Singers

Musical Director's report

If this were any other year, a 'normal' year, and we were at a 'normal' Trinity Singers' AGM, I'd be stood in front of you, reporting and commenting on what we've been getting up to over the previous twelve 'normal' months. I'd be reminiscing about the concerts we've given, the music we've sung, the musicians we've performed with. I'd be warmly congratulating you all on how well our tone is developing, how our reading is becoming more confident, how we're rhythmically so much more secure. (I'd also be telling you to watch more, of course!)

As it is, I've no idea how we've been progressing because ... I haven't heard a darn thing all year!

What we humans have achieved technologically, as a species, is astonishing: Stonehenge, the Spinning Jenny, people on the Moon and rovers on Mars, the internet, [insert your own favourite achievement here]. A year ago Zoom felt, to me at least, like a pretty amazing thing, albeit with a few wrinkles that would get ironed out pretty much straightaway. That was sure to happen, wasn't it, given that we – Trinity Singers, no less – were looking to it as our weekly rehearsal forum.

Zoom and similar platforms still seem pretty amazing to me (to whom two tin cans and a long piece of string have always been a thing of wonder), but it is a bit of a disappointment that, a year on, differing broadband speeds and variable computer/phone mic levels still have us hamstrung. (Maybe I'm just impatient — it surprises me that, as a species, we have yet to evolve beyond wiping our bottoms with the modern equivalent of a leaf ...)

Zoom sessions were never going to be better than a poor substitute for real singing together, but they were and still are the best, the only, thing we have right now. But they are, no-one could disagree, a very strange experience: singing on your own, your only company a backing track – maybe a spouse too, a cat if you're lucky – knowing your MD can't hear a thing you're singing. Because if we were all to unmute the psychological scarring would be immense and we'd never sing again. Some felt from the outset Zoom wasn't for them. Some gave it a go before deciding 'Er, perhaps not'. Many started and have stuck with it. Some others, having been unenthusiastic early on, came along later and have stayed — stayed for the shared pain and the chance to sing AT ALL!

If there's one thing that Zoom has reminded us about pretty forcefully, it's that singing on your own is very, very unnerving. We all hate hearing our own voice. Of course we do. A

Zoom session can feel like our own little Purgatory. And as for recording a vocal track for the online 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'... well, I know (because you told me) for some it felt closer to a private Hell. But the end-result was stunning. And that's the point isn't it: we are greater than the sum of our parts — we may not rate our own individual voice that highly, perhaps, but together we can, and do (when the world allows), achieve great things.

Over the past year we've all sung less than we would had things been 'normal'. Some of us will have sung barely at all. Our self-confidence, in our own voice and as a choir, will have

taken a battering. When we're able to resume live rehearsals it'll probably all feel very new and a bit scary, like we're Y7s/first-formers again. This is, in part, why our current planning has two short Sunday afternoon events as our return to public performance. We don't need the self-imposed pressure of a big Saturday evening do when, to some extent, it may feel like we'll all emerging, blinking, from under our individual stones.

A couple of relatively informal Sunday afternoon concerts is just fine. We won't know until further on whether they're able to happen when we want them to happen but I, for one, cannot wait!

Well done, everyone. Stick in there.

Andrew

2020 Accounts and 2021 Budget:

Accounts and Budget were shared with members ahead of the AGM (attached with minutes)

Accounts Year ending 2020 presented by Sarah Pearson. It was noted that accounts for 2018/2019/2020 require auditing, Covid situation has prevented this. In the absence of them being audited Bob confirmed that he has checked the bank statement and there is the expected amount of money in the account.

Accounts Proposed: Roy S

Accounts Seconded: Roger Ellery

All members attending the AGM approved the accounts

Budget: Difficult to budget with so many unknowns. Treasurer has budgeted for increased rehearsal costs due to cleaning etc. It was also noted that income from subscriptions may be less next year if the number of members decreases.

Proposed: Georgina

Seconded: Elizabeth

All members attending the AGM approved the budget

Election of the Committee

Existing committee members elected on block:

Bob Shapland (Chair), Suzie Leech (Secretary), Sarah Pearson (Treasurer) Elizabeth Spiller, Sally Varley, Nick Varley, Susannah Read (committee members)

Nominated by Susannah and Suzie

Seconded by Sally and Elizabeth

AOB

Roy raised getting back to singing and how members' voices might be feeling rusty. Could we consider focussing on techniques, warm-ups?

Margaret supported Roy's point and asked that we don't do anything to technically difficult or vocally challenging when we first return. Margaret also thanked Bob and Andrew for all they have done to keep the choir together over this past year.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm