

CSO Annual General Meeting 2023
14th November 2023 – 7.30pm
Richard Taunton's College, Southampton
MINUTES

Present:

Jos Creese – JC - (Chair), Judith Houghton – JH - (Orchestra Manager), Trevor Grant – TG - (Treasurer), Louise Coggins (Secretary), Debbie Hickson, Sandra Littler, Gordon Thick, Sophie Blundell, Michael Brockman, Chris Anthony, Hannah Martin, Lucy Orme, Ilfra Carlick, Kinga Kowalczyk, Brian Hodgson, Gina Briant, Bernard Postlethwaite, David Kendall, Penny Burnett, Alison Wathey, Samantha Cleverley, Christa Porter, Anton Crout, Caroline London, Mary Bell, Ingrid Isaac, Kevin Turner, Jonathan Bunt, Wayne Landen, Peter Hackston, Judith Beton, Kathy Smalley, Bree Enemark, Rob Shepherd, Sue Edmonds, Clare Prest, Vanessa Jaruis, Paul Watson, Rachel Barlow, Philip Brazier

1. Welcome

Jos Creese welcomed all to the meeting.

- Thanks to the Social Team for refreshments – Rachel Barlow and Kathy Smalley

2. Apologies for absence

Anastasia Radford, Carole Dowding, Sue Dancer, Sarah Smith, Pam Crawford, Philippa Headley, Leah Packer, Ian Partridge, Annie Taylor, Katie Greener, Sue Osmond, Juliette Whatmore, Andrew Salmon, Jen Bleleck, Debra Lain, Graham Dudding, Caeli Quilter, Jane Andrews, Penny Jackman, Emma Moules

3. Approval of AGM minutes of Tuesday 22nd November 2022

- Minor changes of accuracies/typo's raised by Anton Crout

AP: Secretary to make noted changes to 2022 minutes.

- Minutes approved by Philip Brazier and Wayne Landen.

4. Matters arising from the 2022 AGM minutes

Jos Creese covered the following points outstanding:

- Treasurers Report – item 6 from minutes** – AP Trevor Grant looking at schedule for Richard Taunton's College and provide figures going forward:
JH – point actioned, with no change in prices from venue in last 10 years. Orchestra Manager has prices for '24 / '25 but expecting rise imminently.
- Treasurers Report – item 6 from minutes** – AP Concern regarding the reserve levels which were around £50k 5years ago and now around £31k. Are there any contingency plans for 2-3 years ahead? Chair will review at 2023 AGM.
JC – this point will be addressed in the 2023 Treasurers Report at this meeting.
- AOB – item 10a – Workshops** – Philippa Headley raised request for scheduling workshops for individual sections. AP – Chair to take to Committee to discuss.
JC – This possibly could still happen in the future. It still needs more help to be possible.
- AOB – item 10c – Programming** – Philippa Headley raised request to schedule separate wind/brass/string concerts in future. AP Chair to take to Programming Committee.
JC - Programming Committee considering and would be picked up later in these minutes.
- AOB – item 10d – Orchestra Etiquette** – AP – Orchestra Manager to circulate etiquette to all members. Action done.

5. Chair's report (*see separate Reports Document 2023*)

Jos Creese summarised the Chair's report, highlighting key points: -

- **Thanks** to Orchestra, Conductors and Committee for a successful year.
- **Money** – to be covered by Treasurers report in detail.
- **Marketing** - Acknowledgement of Wayne Landen who is now overseeing.

Members Website:

- Thanks to Debbie Hickson who is managing the Members Website which is launched today (14th November 2023).
- A secure area for Members is set up covering essential information, one place for useful internal information, especially for new members. It will continue to develop, so if members find areas errors/missing, please to advise.
- Archive information will be linked in the Members Website in due course.
- JH – Recording of the Turner Sims concert will be added when space available.

AP: All to review the web pages and ensure these are used by new members to help understand our practices, etiquette, and contacts. Any errors or omissions please let DH know.

Social Media:

- Lucy Orme and Penny Burnett are managing social media for the Orchestra but active member outreach on Social Media has a better return, and more still needs to be done.
- All members need to be more active in using social media to promote the orchestra when marketing materials shared.
- Specific organisation of outreach to raise the profile would be helpful – e.g. approaching schools to bring groups to family concert. LO highlighted that the orchestra were writing to schools, however the right individual is not guaranteed to **be targeted**.

AP: ALL to help the marketing team (LO/PB/WL) to maximise social media reach.

Friends:

- Chair acknowledged that committee have not prioritised new promotion of the Friends scheme this year. Now is the time to reinvigorate.
- Information re Friends is on the Website - anyone interested in becoming a Friend of the Orchestra to speak to Jos Creese.
- Chris Anthony asked what more can be done for Friends, including attending rehearsals.

AP: Cathy Smalley and Sandra Littler will look into this, and approach Friends to see if they would like to attend a specific rehearsal.

Southampton – City of Culture bid (unsuccessful):

- CSO are maintaining strong links with City of Southampton via the Mayor and 'Music in the City' (MITC). Philip Brazier will be attending the Music in the City meeting on 15th November 2023.
- The Mayor supported our last concert.
- Chair expressed that he would still like CSO to get involved with working with a Charity, possibly in partnership with Southampton City Council.

Newsletter:

- Thanks to Brian Hodgson for producing the newsletter. Request for more feedback, articles, and ideas

AP: All to contact BH with ideas for the newsletter.

Committee and Other Roles:

- **Librarian:** Sue Edmonds has given 1 year's notice after holding this role for a long time. She is happy to work with an 'apprentice' during the coming year.
- **External Funding:** Louise Coggins will be taking this role on, looking at ways to secure external sponsorship, grants, legacies, and other new funds.
- **Chair:** Jos Creese has given 1 year's notice. Happy to speak with interested individuals and assures that the role is not onerous, with managed handover.
- It is essential these key roles are filled for the future of the CSO:

AP: ALL members to consider who they would like as Chair and consider if they would be prepared to put themselves forward. JC to advise and assist.

AP: ALL members to consider if they would be prepared to take on the librarian role. Chat to Sue to find out more.

Programming Committee

- Thanks to Penny Burnett and the committee for the work done to ensure that the programmes are well balanced, have audience appeal and good thematic content. It has been a tricky period to reassess programmes in tighter financial times, and the patience and extra work of the Committee is appreciated by all.
- TG noted the importance of and affordability of concert programmes. JC – acknowledged that the Orchestra's aim is to be playing content we want to play without financial constraint, *but* that cost remains important (balance of income from tickets/other income and cost). This is why we need to review how we can reach bigger audiences.
- JC noted that not every concert has to make a surplus, but over the year this is important. The Programming Committee has now been given a budget to work within.

Social Activities

- We have had some social events now since Covid but would like to do more (with and without playing included). Any ideas for both playing and non-playing activities are welcome and thanks to Rachel Barlow for organisation.

AP: ALL to consider preferences and ideas and let RB know to help with planning.

Archives

- CSO has a lot of archive material going back over 50 years, including the history of the CSO produced by Bernard Postlethwaite. Material is being archived by Philip Brazier. Digitalising will take time.
- PBr – not all archive material will be on the website, it will be stored in Cloud storage, accessible from the Website.
- Chris Anthony mentioned that he has also a link to archive material on his personal website. Chair noted that the CSO is grateful for the work CA has done over the years in protecting and preserving our heritage and history, but it is important not to have competing websites for CSO members, now our webpages are launched. CA agreed to make all his archive material available to PBr.

AP: PBr will liaise with Chris Anthony to investigate how to best integrate and migrate material and resources. Into the CSO archives.

6. Treasurer's report with accounts (see separate Reports Document and Accounts Document 2022 / 2023)

Trevor Grant highlighted key areas in Treasurers report, reporting separately on 'Concert' and 'non-Concert' finances: -

Concert Finances:

- Each concert needs 250-300 in the audience to break even, with most of these as non-concessionary tickets. Eg CSO last concert (11th November 2023) was musically successful and only had a small financial loss (c£250), with 220 attending and 188 paying full price. Would have broken even with just 18 more people in the audience. Programming was ideal financially, and members were responsible for good attendance.
- Increasingly seeing tickets bought on the door and venue costs have increased.
- Biggest concert loss last year was March in Thornden Hall.
- Overall, we are actively now managing the cost base, with optimism for the year ahead. financially, if we can keep audience number up and concert costs under control.
- Noted that the Romsey Choral Society concert incurred a big joint loss (£766 was CSO covered). Noted that the Committee will be careful who to collaborate with in future to minimise losses.

Non-Concert Finances:

- 'Non concert' costs are under control and predictable and include Conductors' fees, room hire, insurance, MemberMojo, website, social costs, advertising, music hire and similar.
- Membership has increased to £175, and subs covered all but £630 last year of non-concert costs. Following feedback at the 'open evening' members widely supported the need for the increase as reasonable, good value and in line with other orchestras. They will be kept in line with inflation in future.
- Subscriptions can be paid in instalments through BACS and should never be a barrier to playing (anyone who has challenges to pay should speak to the Treasurer or Chair). There is also a 50% reduction for students in full time education to be introduced.
- Gift Aid counts for a considerable amount of additional income so all members are encouraged to pay via MemberMojo and agree to Gift Aid if possible.
- Reserves: Currently £30,000 is sitting in reserve. This will be topped up by profitable concerts and paid for concerts. A reasonable reserve still, assuming it does not dip further. TG is committed to not having losses year to year as it is not sustainable.
- TG is feeling generally positive that all actions have now been taken to minimise costs going forward and halting the 'nibbling away' at reserves.
- JC: CSO has had major challenges financially of both Covid 19 pandemic and the Orchestra's 50th Anniversary. Finances are now stabilised. Acknowledged that TG has worked incredibly hard to get the finances under control and the committee has control of factors that will keep the costs to the minimum. There is a cautious but hopeful outlook that the finances will be balanced in the coming year.

AP: TG to introduce the student fee reduction in subscriptions for the coming year.

AP: ALL to consider, if not paying Gift Aid, whether they can do so.

Questions from Membership:

Q: Lucy Cox: Why are T-Shirts counted as a fixed asset?

A: TG: The Orchestra owns the T-Shirts; therefore, they are a fixed asset.

Q: Jonathan Bunt: Are player expenses solely percussion?

A: JH: CSO used to pay percussion £75 each. Last year this was negotiated down. Other player costs include Contra Bassoon, Harp, and the occasional dep. We now have a 'percussion fixer', and ideally would like to have a permanent percussion member.

AP: JH to speak with Judith Beaton (Membership Secretary) to ensure that all player vacancies are highlighted on the Website

Q: Jonathan Bunt: Central Hall concert broke even last year. Would it have made a profit had the hall been completely filled?

A: JC/JH: Central hall can take 600 – sometimes there are difficulties with clashes with football matches in Southampton, and January is a popular time for family concerts by other Orchestras in the area, this is hard to plan for. TG – the family concert is a community event, and we are asking members to push for wide publicity before Christmas. Two concerts more profitable than one, and filling both would be a surplus.

Q: Alison Wathey: Miscellaneous expenditure was £1,022 – can Treasurer detail this?

A: TG: £766 was sharing losses for Romsey concert; £256 miscellaneous – non-concert expenditure including coffee, tea etc

AP: TG to clarify the £256 miscellaneous expenditure in detail and share with AW.

Treasurers report and Accounts were proposed by Jonathan Bunt and Kathy Smalley and approved by Members.

7. Principal Conductor's report (see separate Reports Document 2023)

Jos Creese read the Principal Conductors Report from John Traill including overview of the last year, acknowledgement of the standard of playing and progress since the pandemic hiatus and looking forward to the 2023/2024 Season.

AP: JT report to be circulated electronically with the minutes.

8. Orchestra Manager's report (see separate Reports Document 2023)

Judith Houghton highlighted areas in the Orchestra Manager's report with key areas of responsibility including co-ordinating the arrangements for weekly rehearsals: booking venues, soloists, guest conductors, narrators, dancers etc. Working with the section leaders to ensure that extra players are engaged as and when needed.

Number of Concerts per season:

- Discussed at the Members' evening the possibility of reducing the number of concerts per year from 5 to 4 (which was not generally popular). It was noted that only 4 concerts are booked for 2024-2025 season which is not intended to be the new norm). The first opportunity to review this would be for 2026.

Venues:

- Romsey Abbey is a popular venue, and we are now having more success in securing dates, possibly looking at playing twice in one season at this venue. Having followed up other possible venues, Romsey Abbey is the most consistently profitable venue although others are still being explored.

Front of House Team:

- JH has built up a good front of house team, however, will still need more. JC noted that they are very helpful and make a huge difference to our audiences.
- Chris Anthony proposed a vote of thanks to Judith Houghton for all the hard work she does on behalf of the Orchestra.

9. Election of officers and committee members for 2023-2024 season:

Proposal and acceptance of renewal of positions: -

- 1 **Treasurer: Trevor Grant.** Show of hands from Membership to accept renewal. No objections or abstentions noted.
- 2 **Membership Secretary: Judith Beton.** Show of hands from Membership to accept renewal. No objections or abstentions noted.
- 3 **Secretary: Louise Coggins** will be standing down from this role. Leah Packer has been proposed to take on the Secretary's position, proposed by Jos Creese and Seconded by Louise Coggins. Supported by a show of hands. No objections or abstentions noted.
- 4 **Sponsorship / Grants: Louise Coggins** has agreed to take on of this role and will be following grants and sponsorship opportunities on behalf of CSO. She will write separately to CSO members for their help and reviewing the CSO sponsorship packs. Ideas to LC.

AP: LC to develop the role, and to involve members for their input and support.

- **Stand-in's and Deputies**

JH highlighted the ongoing need to have deputy's and 'stand in's' for the key roles in the Committee. Two roles are key at present: replacement Chair for 2024 and a new Librarian. Both are critical and we must have someone new in each role.

JH noted that 'deputy chair' she was not the automatic replacement to take JC's place, and felt she could be more useful to the orchestra as OM.

10 Any Other Business:

10a Dave Kendall – Request for Update on Southampton Overture parts

JH: Minor corrections were made by John Traill, and all parts have been registered with the dedication included. Currently they are with the Printers in Germany. The Orchestra have an electronic copy.

AP: JH obtaining costings for printing and to confirm all details finalised. To be played soon.

10b Philippa Headley – Asking for progress report on last year’s request for Workshops, Scheduling of Afternoon Concerts and Programming in Orchestral sections.

JC: Workshops and Programming have been covered in Matters Arising earlier in the meeting, but MITC is the format for this.

JC: The possibility of an afternoon concert was raised at the Members open meeting in the Summer however was not generally in favour of. Several members raised the point that Afternoon concerts are successful for other orchestras.

AP: JC to re-look at afternoon concert idea with the Committee – maybe for a ‘light ‘programme. It will depend on enough players want to play.

AP: JC to communicate discussion to Philippa.

10c Chris Anthony – Etiquette - Could the committee re-consider the ruling that string players cannot address the conductor directly for clarification.

JC: Did discuss at Committee and agreed that the current guidance should stand (it is also now published on the member webpages and has been discussed in recent editions of TakeNote). Conductors do need to ensure the back of the orchestra can hear, and section leaders (Strings) need to pass instruction back through desks.

AP: JC to speak with Conductor regarding raising their voice for instructions.

AP: JH: Guidance for passing changes back desk by desk to be added to the guidance and time for this to happen is allowed by conductors.

10d Philip Brazier – Music in the City programming

PBr was to speak to section leaders to get suggestions for programmes for Music in the City. Christa Porter raised that it was agreed that Ian Partridge would have sole decision making for the String part of the concert.

AP: PBr will coordinate, working with IP.

10e Debbie Hickson - Membership Website Password

AP: DH will email members with password for the secure area.

11. Vote of thanks was raised for the Committee by Kathy Smalley

The meeting was concluded at 21:15, with drinks and nibbles.