

VIVACE CHORUS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Zoom video conference on Monday 6 July 2020

Present

71 choir members, James Garrow (Chairman), 11 committee members, Jeremy Backhouse and Francis Pott.

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** Gillian Rix
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting:** Minutes of the last meeting, held on 8 July 2019, were approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 3. Matters arising:** none
- 4. Treasurer's Report:** Sel Adamu addressed the meeting.

Income and Expenditure

In last year's report, I called the result a pleasant and unusual one but I'm happy to say that for the financial year ending 30 April 2020, the choir made another slightly smaller overall surplus of £998 (compared with £1,363 last year). Unlike last year, we had no legacies and only the annual Gift Aid instead of two years. The result is actually due to a much lower overall concert deficit of £8,012 compared with £17,223 last year. This is thanks to careful programming by Jeremy Backhouse and the Committee, with much lower costs due to using smaller ensembles for both Mass in Blue and African Sanctus, as well as higher ticket income. I'm pleased to note that the addition of the summer concert had very little impact on the finances, despite the venue mix-up so fewer tickets.

Our subscription income was £452 more than our rehearsal costs, in part due to having no venue costs for April but also because the United Reformed Church is cheaper than Guildford Baptist Church.

The patrons scheme still brought in a reasonable sum of £3,303 in line with last year.

Balance Sheet

At year end, Vivace Chorus had Net Assets of £97,061, of which £37,092 relates to legacies left to the choir.

The choir's prepaid expenses and advance income are more than last year as this mostly relates to tour income and expenditure for the now postponed Spain tour. No tour refunds were issued before year end.

The accrued income relates to the African Sanctus venue ticket income that was not received until May due to the temporary closure of GLive, and the year's Gift Aid which was also received after year end.

Subscriptions

Given the current uncertainty around future rehearsals, I am not proposing an increase to subscriptions this year. However, when we return to Guildford Baptist Church the costs will be more than we have incurred during this financial year which will have a bearing on the subscription rate review at the next AGM.

Following another surplus result, I am confident that Jeremy and the Committee are mindful of the costs of putting on concert programmes and we are working towards a balance between exciting programming and financial prudence. We're grateful to all members for not only participating in the concerts but also selling tickets, as we have seen from the increased ticket income.

Finally, I'll like to thank Chris Newbery our Subscriptions Manager, Marjory Stewart who continues to handle the banking, and Jeremy Johnson our Independent Examiner, all of whom make my job as Treasurer much easier.

5. Music Director's Report: Jeremy Backhouse addressed the meeting.

This year's music-making has been quite unlike anything within our combined experiences. We set out on a new academic year full of optimism for a great year of singing ahead of us. However, like everyone else, our plans were derailed by the Covid virus which locked us down at the end of March and frustratingly still continues to prevent us from singing together. So, there is less to talk about compared with other years. But we have had two brilliant concerts which we can really celebrate and look back on with pride and excitement.

In G Live on **Saturday 9 November**, we gave a performance of Will Todd's *Mass in Blue*, with Will's Trio and the Santiago Quartet, all local musicians. You will remember that we also sang the Tango Mass by Martin Palmeri in the first half, complete with tango dancers (who almost stole the show!). We enjoyed the wonderful sounds of Julian Rowlands' bandoneon playing which helped add so much to the Latin American feel. Hilary Cronin was the soprano soloist in both works. It was quite an unusual programme, a spectacle as well as a concert – a memorable event. I thought we contributed really well, especially in the *Mass in Blue* where we sang with brilliant style and jazzy *joie de vivre*. A really exotic and exuberant evening!

The following day, a small group of us once again turned up at the Castle Grounds to sing at the Borough's Remembrance Day service, joining forces with the choir of Holy Trinity Church and the Friary Band.

On the **15 December** we again sang at the Mayor of Guildford's annual Carol Concert in Holy Trinity. As ever, this was a mix of familiar festive pieces and perhaps some less well-known items ... and, as ever, a real joy.

Our first event of this year was our ever-popular annual 'Come and Sing', on **Saturday 25 January 2020**. This year was the turn of the Rachmaninov *Vespers*. We worked hard with both language and music, and I think we all gained a lot from the day, perhaps acquainting ourselves with beautiful pieces of Rachmaninov that we never knew existed, or possibly revisiting old favourites. Francis once again did a brilliant job at the piano and the catering and logistics went as smoothly as ever.

Some of us travelled up to St Martin in the Fields for a Fauré *Requiem* with the Brandenburg Sinfonia on **4 February** – always a fun thing to do.

Then, on **Saturday 14 March**, we staged David Fanshawe's *African Sanctus* in G Live. By then of course, the virus concerns were very great indeed and I think we were lucky to sneak in under the wire before everything closed down. But WHAT a vibrant and thrilling way to bring our performances temporarily to a close! The show started with a set by Backbeat, the brilliant percussion group – their rhythmic drive and precision was so infectious. Then came a set by the Mighty Zulu Nation Theatre group, who bowled

us over with the energy of their singing and dancing. In the second half it was us and the *African Sanctus*. It has been a little unusual to rehearse, but I hope you felt that it was worthwhile once it was all put together on the day. Despite the teething problems with the sound balances, it all worked really well, all the various elements, including the fabulous soprano Emma Griffiths, coming together in a glorious whole. Jane Fanshawe was inspirational and tireless in helping us get things right. Despite the ever-increasing threat from the virus, we had a very good audience and I am so pleased we managed to bring this off with such brilliant, committed singing and put on such a vibrant performance of a truly extraordinary work. What a wonderful, memorable occasion!

And that was it. No Broadway show, no tour to Spain and no *Gerontius* in November. But we DID have two fantastic concerts, full of colour, spectacle and vibrancy, showing the choir's brilliance, its diversity and flexibility in performance and hopefully attracting new audiences along the way.

And so, what about the future?

Of course, this depends on how the situation pans out nationally and internationally. Arguably more importantly, it is dependent more on how and when individuals feel comfortable about returning to rehearsals. And I include myself in that. We are monitoring the situation and will try to remain flexible, so we can return to singing together safely, at the earliest possible opportunity.

If we can, we will find a way of meeting in the Autumn, perhaps in smaller groups, socially distanced, to prepare for a smaller-scale concert, perhaps the Duruflé *Requiem* in Holy Trinity. This could be pre-recorded and live-streamed on YouTube or Facebook Live.

Similarly, we can explore the possibility of putting something together for the Mayor's carol concert ... perhaps an hour-long package of carols which we can record in smaller groups on a Monday evening with different people, adding in carols from our CD, asking celebs to pre-record Christmas readings, a pre-recorded appeal from the Mayor ... all of which can again be live-streamed on the concert date.

If we get back together for singing in the New Year, which I really hope we are able to, I suggest we change the 'Come & Sing' repertoire from *Elijah* (which was down to coincide with our performance later in the year) to a joyous and much-loved *Messiah*, just to have a jolly good sing together.

Our March 2021 concert may well need to be socially distanced still, at least as far as any orchestra is concerned, so I suggest we again change the repertoire for this concert and look at something Baroque which requires only very few players who can sit apart, something like Handel's *Dixit Dominus* (just a few strings) or even the *Messiah* (though that does require more players).

By May 2021, we are hoping that things will be back to normal and that we will be able to stage our 'Best of Broadway' programme with the Friary Band.

We will have our rescheduled tour of Spain to look forward to and then next November, we will hopefully perform *Gerontius*, postponed from this year.

These are our immediate plans. We will of course keep you up to date with any changes as the situation develops.

In the immediate future there is still the recording of 'You'll never walk alone' to be finished. The Band should have finished their recording of the parts this weekend and the audio will be edited together this week, so we should be getting the backing track later this week. In the meantime, please do keep practising with the computer-generated version so you are on top of your game when the real backing track comes through! It would be amazing if everyone could do this so we have a fantastic sound and a fantastic show!

Thanks to all of you who have taken part in the Zoom calls over the last weeks. I think they have been an invaluable way of feeling we still belong. It is not like a rehearsal; it never could be, but I hope it has in some way maintained an important connection, and that it has been fun!

My thanks as ever go to Francis for his unswervingly brilliant playing; to James and the whole committee for all their administrative and personal support of me.

As I said at the start of this report, it has been a year of unprecedented disruption and worry, but I believe we are getting through this together, as a choir. We WILL be back together, and I hope that happens as soon as we all feel comfortable with doing so. Thank you for your fabulous singing that we DID manage over this year and thank you for the spirit of Vivace that appears as strong as ever and seeing us walking through the storm to the golden sky!

6. Chairman's Report: James Garrow addressed the meeting.

Jeremy, perhaps we shouldn't be recording 'You'll never walk alone', but rather singing, 'We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when...'

This is the weirdest report I have ever had to write. Cancelled concerts, re-scheduled rehearsals, working in the dark. I don't need to tell you what a quite extraordinary world we are living in at the moment. The pandemic certainly makes it extremely hard to plan our future with any great certainty. How sad it is that we can't celebrate the musical and financial successes of this last year properly amongst each other and with a party. It's going to be a busy summer for the committee, assessing whether it is safe for us to meet together again and to decide whether we can perform in GLive or anywhere else. Will we be allowed to meet together as a choir at all? We're in the Government's hands.

We will monitor developments very carefully and let you know our plans as soon as we can, but clearly the longer we leave a final decision, the better. We won't rush any decisions and of course, the final decision as to whether to return to rehearsals will be up to each individual.

So far, as you well know, Coronavirus has caused us to end rehearsals, delayed our *Best of Broadway* concert and messed up our plans to go to northern Spain. On the other hand, the 'Very Vivace' page on Facebook, the WhatsApp group and Zoom sessions have all contributed to a sense of camaraderie and caused a lot of merriment, and I hope Notice board has kept you up to date.

As Sel has reported the 2019-20 season was a really successful one financially. Over the past few years we have promoted some very expensive concerts and in doing so, have incurred some planned, but pretty hefty losses. We decided that this couldn't go on and to change tack for a season to see how we could pull back on some of these losses. I particularly want to pay tribute to Jeremy who in response to the ever-increasing losses we were suffering, put forward some radical and original solutions by way of concerts aimed at cutting our seemingly inexorable losses – the *Mass in Blue* and *African Sanctus* concerts in particular being the outcome. Some of you may originally have had doubts about singing in these concerts, but I hope I speak for the vast majority of you when I say that at the end of the day, both proved to be enormous fun and entertaining evenings for singers and audience alike. I sincerely hope that you will feel the same about next Spring's 'Best of Broadway' concert with the Friary Brass Band. Hopefully we will have attracted some new audience to our concerts which will help us to grow.

The next 18 months will not be easy as we re-build our audience base; we would love to enlarge it to include more of those who would normally go up to London for their cultural fix. What have they got to lose? Cheaper tickets, less travel hassle and a superlative performance are just three of the benefits of staying in Guildford or Dorking.

I feel honoured to be chairman of such an energetic, creative and professional choir as Vivace. Our concert programmes, advertising, enthusiasm and friendship, your willingness to go out of your way to help the choir, are all truly astonishing.

You have a top-rate, helpful, hard-working and knowledgeable committee running your choir. They have been a huge help in so many ways. They are great to work with and our meetings, while informal, are business-like and effective in looking after your best interests in terms of making the hobby you have chosen well-organised and a lot of fun.

As we're not sitting in our normal row (like ducks in a fairground shooting game), I would like to pay a quick tribute to each one of them. They deserve to be recognised for their hard work on your behalf.

June, our Choir Secretary is brilliant at keeping me on the straight and narrow and producing quite excellent minutes.

Sel is our multi-talented Morris dancing Treasurer-par excellence. She will be engineering all our recordings of 'You'll never walk alone'.

Mary Moon runs the choir's Patronage side.

Sonja Nagle brings a very useful and professional musician's slant to discussions.

Peter Norman has a business-like approach, giving our deliberations a professional touch.

Phil Stanford, in charge technically today, is brilliant on researching important aspects of running a choir and, apart from anything else, producing questionnaires for audience and choir members alike.

Hilary Trigg is the most professional marketing expert on the planet. Her marketing material puts every other musical organisation's publicity material in the shade.

Simon Dillon is a great Concert Manager and will be heading up our 75th birthday celebrations for 2022

Maggie, another professional musician, works her socks off behind the scenes organising events such as C&S

As you may have read on Notice board, **Anne Whitley** is standing down after four years; she has never been afraid of giving an opinion and will be missed – as will her delicious homemade cakes. I cannot thank her enough for her contributions.

Last but by no means least is our wonderful Membership Secretary, **Jane**, who is stepping down from this role after more years than she cares to remember. We couldn't have asked for a more efficient, hard-working, organised, dedicated, friendly person to take on this complex, multi-faceted role. She has been a great contributor to our meetings, not afraid to stand up against a majority if she feels things are not right for the choir.

We will miss Jane enormously in committee, but I am very happy to say that she is not stepping completely out of the limelight but is taking over the job of 2nd alto Voice Rep.

Can we raise a glass to all of our wonderful committee.

This is an amazingly busy, friendly choir and without your help would achieve only a tiny proportion of what we manage to do. A choir of this size promoting at least six concerts each year plus running the fundraising and social events – such as Come & Sing, summer parties, Quiz Nights, running foreign tours, publishing cook books and so on, requires a lot of work and commitment by a lot of people. It is a staggering statistic and a reflection of what a great choir this is, that no fewer than 53 out of 146 members give their time and hard work to help run this choir. Thank you for your devotion and sense of fun.

Not on the committee, but a fantastically hard-working and organised choir member stepping down from her role is Catherine Middleton one of our librarians. I can't thank her enough for looking after us all so well and efficiently. It's a tough job involving careful record keeping and finance and has been run in military fashion under her guidance. I am really pleased that she will be succeeded by Rosie Jeffery, and the team of Sarah Smithies, Mary Clayton, Richard Broughton soldiers on. Many, many thanks Catherine.

We are led by two of the very best professionals in the country, Jeremy and Francis, who not only provide us with top-class programmes to sing and outstanding accompanying in rehearsals, but do it in such a wonderfully approachable, friendly manner.

Francis is the most talented accompanist any choir could ask for. A brilliant player (not to mention composer) and so self-effacing with it. As you know, he has been awarded a nomination for Grammy award by Naxos in the 'Best Modern Composition' category and I do encourage you to download or buy his new CD out on 12th. Details were on that email I sent out last week. Any problems, get in touch with me.

Jeremy has the great ability to stand up in front of us week after week making our rehearsals so enjoyable. Without too much bullying he squeezes the very best out of us; the end result being concerts of quality. His choice of concert programmes is second to none; it is really a fine talent. We are lucky to have him as our leader.

Thank you both so much for your continued excellence and help in making Vivace the choir it is today.

As we have done this term, we will continue to pay both of their rehearsal fees whether we meet or not next term. We treasure them as a vital part of the Vivace Family, and is the least we can do to try to help them during these torrid times.

What does the future hold for Vivace once this vile pandemic has been beaten? Keeping control of our costs is going to be crucial if theatres are only going to be allowed to be half full; as I have already said, orchestras form a huge chunk of our costs and we will have to be very creative in our thinking as to how we can overcome this. My thanks to you for your ticket sales which have been great this past season. We need to ensure we maintain this level of commitment and to think where else we can find concert-goers.

We remain determined to keep our place as one of the best choirs in the south of England with concerts that challenge and appeal to audiences. We will continue to aim high as exemplified by our attempts in the past few months to engage Bryn Terfel and to promoting a third concert at the Albert Hall.

As you know our tour to northern Spain has been put on hold until next summer. In spite of this, it's going to be the most fantastic trip and I do urge anybody who has not yet signed up, to do so. There are still places.

If we are allowed to meet again for Monday rehearsals in September, I am pleased to say that it looks as though Millmead will have finished its major structural work and be open for business.

I must stress though, that we will follow all official guidance and take the strictest precautions. Your committee will be meeting a couple of times during the summer and we will let you know the situation just as soon as we can.

I cannot thank you enough for your continuing to pay subscriptions, even though we haven't been rehearsing. In these uncertain financial times, it is so reassuring as we continue to support Jeremy and Francis.

I have total confidence that Vivace will come out of this hiatus stronger and even more determined to be one of the best choirs around. I would like to raise a glass to you all to thank you for your dedication and friendship. They mean a lot to me.

7. Election of Officers: under the Constitution all Committee members are obliged to resign at each AGM and, if they so wish, offer themselves for re-election. The following were unanimously appointed:

James Garrow, Chairman
Becky Kerby, Hon. Membership Secretary
Sel Adamu, Hon. Treasurer
June Windle, Hon. Secretary

Proposed by
Jon Long
Mary Broughton
Becky Kerby
Jeremy Johnson

Seconded by
Christine Wilkes
Amelia Atkinson
Michelle Mumford
Maggie Woolcock

8. Election of Additional Committee Members: the following were unanimously appointed:

	Proposed by	Seconded by
Suzanne Cahalane	Hilary Trigg	Mary Broughton
Simon Dillon	Stephen Linton	Sarah Smithies
Jo Glover	Val Garrow	Jon Long
Mary Moon	Maggie Woolcock	Marjory Stewart
Sonja Nagle	June Windle	Pippa Curtis
Peter Norman	Jon Scott	Owen Gibbons
Phil Stanford	David Ross	Malcolm Munt
Maggie Woolcock	Mary Moon	June Windle

Hilary Trigg

Co-opted – Publicity and Marketing

9. Appointment of Music Director: the meeting expressed warm appreciation for the work done by Jeremy Backhouse and he was duly appointed as Musical Director for the coming year.

10. Appointment of Accompanist: the meeting expressed warm appreciation for the work done by Francis Pott and he was duly appointed as Accompanist for the coming year.

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner: Jeremy Johnson, proposed by Peter Norman and seconded by Jo Glover, was unanimously appointed to continue in this role.

12. Any Other Business: none

The meeting closed at 20.00

JW

Vivace Chorus Balance Sheet
As at 30 April 2020
As at 30 April 2019

Stock of Goods	1,442	905
Debtors	-	2,517
Accrued Income	11,177	390
Prepaid expenses	32,745	11,174
Shawbrook Deposit Account	60,000	60,000
CAF Gold Account	41,167	18,134
CAF Current Account	2,316	9,372
Metro General Account	930	3,774
Metro Subscriptions Account	786	1,462
Petty Cash and floats	202	202
Current Assets	150,763	107,930
Accrued Expenses	-	2,135
Advance Income	53,703	9,733
Current Liabilities	53,703	11,868
Net Current Assets	97,060	96,062
Represented by:		
Opening Other Reserves	58,790	62,066
Result for the Year	1,179	(3,276)
Closing Other Reserves	59,969	58,790
Opening Legacy balance	37,273	32,634
Interest income	294	161
M Taylor Legacy	-	5,000
Legacy Expenditure	(475)	(522)
Closing Legacy balance	37,092	37,273
CLOSING RESERVES	97,061	96,063

Vivace Chorus Income and Expenditure accounts

Income

Unrestricted fund

Concert deficits:

May - Mozart	(6,723)	(14,318)
July - Summer	(57)	-
November - Mass in Blue	(1,591)	7,406
March - African Sanctus	359	(10,311)
Sub-total, concert deficits	(8,012)	(17,223)
Rehearsal costs	(22,600)	(23,026)
Net concert deficit (per Concert Income and Expenditure report)	(30,612)	(40,249)

Income from charitable activities:

Subscriptions	23,052	22,297
Patrons	3,303	3,347
Gift Aid	3,981	8,077
Come and Sing surplus	1,676	1,522
Fundraising	1,507	1,742
Other	3,142	2,144
Total income from charitable activities	36,660	39,129
Interest received	440	254
Total income	6,488	(866)
Expenditure		
Insurance	368	368
Other	4,940	2,042
Total expenditure	5,308	2,410
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, unrestricted fund	1,179	(3,276)

Legacy fund

Income

Michael Taylor legacy	-	5,000
Interest received	294	161
Total income	294	5,161

Expenditure

Deborah Miles Johnson	300	200
Choir photographer	175	322
Total expenditure	475	522

Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, Legacy fund

Total net surplus/(deficit) for the year

(181)	4,639
998	1,363

