

VIVACE CHORUS

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Zoom video conference on Monday 5 July 2021

Present

72 choir members, Jeremy Backhouse and Francis Pott.

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** Bob Cowell, Andrea Dombrowe, Sheena Ewen, Val Garrow, Christine Lavender, Jon Long, Sonja Nagle, Linda Ross, Marjory Stewart, Christine Wilks.
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting:** Minutes of the last meeting, held on 6 July 2020, were approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 3. Matters arising:** none
- 4. Treasurer's Report:** Sel Adamu addressed the meeting.

With no concerts during the financial year, aside from some publicity costs of £619 already incurred before the pandemic hit, there are no concert results to give.

From the outset of the pandemic, Vivace Chorus took the decision to continue paying our two professionals throughout the time we were unable to have live rehearsals. We did not have any live rehearsals during the year so did not incur any hall hire fees. Total rehearsal costs were £17,975

The Committee did offer a payment holiday to our members, which accounts for the £5,346 reduction subscription income and the corresponding reduction in gift aid, but with subs, gift aid and the support from our patrons and fundraising, (in total £24,200) we have been able to more than cover the expenditure for the year and the surplus of £4,756 puts us in a good financial position for when our live rehearsals and concerts resume (hopefully in the Autumn.)

Advance Income of £38,455 and prepaid expenditure £23,000 relates to the postponed Spain tour. The remaining £1,803 prepaid expenditure relates to venue deposits.

The adoption of these management accounts was proposed by Brian John, seconded by Mary Moon and passed unanimously.

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

My report this year will probably be the shortest in living memory! At the end of my last AGM Report, I was cautiously optimistic that we might be able to get together again in the new season in some small, socially-distanced form to sing live once again. As we all know, that was not to be.

This time last year we had recorded and Sel was working on the film of *You'll never walk alone*. It turned out brilliantly and really put us on the online map ahead of other choirs who were making zoom films.

So when we reconvened again in September last year, it was back to zoom singing and quizzes! We welcomed Nina Bennet who gave us some much-needed vocal technique sessions, to help keep the voice in trim. We were later also joined by Emily Owen and Greg Link. We worked at and sang through the Brahms *German Requiem* and some sections of Alexander L'Estrange's *Freedom!*. And we gave our own online performance to ourselves of the Brahms on 2 November. From 9 November onwards we worked on recording music for the Christmas film – carols by Will Todd, John Gardiner and THAT arrangement by Goff Richards! And we also recorded ourselves singing three audience carols for the film. Sel then took all this material, including two beautiful readings, and, with contributions from the Rector of Holy Trinity and the Deputy Mayor, put together a wonderfully atmospheric Christmas concert which we released and broadcast instead of our live concert on 13 December. A great achievement

and a perfect way to continue to raise money for the Mayor of Guildford's charitable causes – on this occasion COVID related, naturally.

The New Year was then upon us and we still had to stick to zooming, not live rehearsals. Now we turned to the Mozart *Requiem* to work through and then again gave ourselves a private online performance; we also sang through Handel's *Messiah* over a few weeks and then the Verdi *Requiem*. We enjoyed a Burns Night and a St David's Day Welsh-themed evening. I also introduced the Blind Spot segment which I think went down well, a fascinating innovation. Since 11 January we have done 18 of them and the 2 Darwin Awards for Composers as well. We are indebted to Francis for sharing his deep erudition and taking the time and trouble to put together such engaging talks, week by week. THANK YOU, FRANCIS for all the support, knowledge and entertainment you have shared with us this year.

And of course we have had our Spanish evenings, re-learning the repertoire for the film and then recording it. Again, now Sel has all the material, has worked her magic on it. I hope we can see the whole film at the end of this meeting. THANK YOU SEL, for all your time and creative energy in making these terrific films for us.

As 2021 progressed, the vaccination programme rolled out and infection rates lowered, we had high hopes that under the government's Roadmap – which I prefer to call The Road to Damascus - we would get back together for live rehearsals this side of the summer. That is what we were led to believe by written government pronouncements. And we did, for one glorious evening on 17 May, return to the Baptist Church for some live singing. It showed us what we had been missing and was the brightest and most uplifting of evenings. However, the DCMS, in its infinite wisdom, some might say otherwise, changed the rules the day after the Step change and declared even more draconian restrictions than we had had during the previous autumn when infection levels were dramatically higher and we were not vaccinated. Despite all the pressure that has been brought to bear on the relevant people, the coordinated social media campaign of which Vivace Chorus was at the forefront, this is where we still find ourselves today. Insult was added to injury when we saw football fans, darts events and many other sporting occasions where full-blooded singing was being enjoyed, indoors, no social distancing, no masks. I don't begrudge them that at all, but a huge sense of injustice still remains amongst the choral community. Maybe everything will change on 19 July, but I am not holding my breath.

On a more cheerful note, let's look forward to September in the hopes that we really can return fully to live singing, without any serious restrictions. We will then be preparing for our concert on **Saturday 20 November** of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, delayed from last year. We will be welcoming three fabulous young singers as soloists that evening, one of whom was on the point of abandoning a career in professional singing because income had completely dried up and it had become impossible to make ends meet. Another soloist will be travelling from his home in Sweden just for our concert, such is the need for work amongst professional singers.

We expect too to be able to return to Holy Trinity for the Mayor of Guildford's Carol Concert on **Sunday 12 December**.

We have a 'Come and Sing' planned for **Saturday 29 January 2022** and then we hope finally to perform our 'Best of Broadway' show in G Live on **Saturday 26 March** with the Friary Band – should be brilliant.

The final concert of our season will be on **Saturday 28 May** when we return to G Live for a programme entitled 'Majesty' to help the Borough start celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. On the programme will be Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, which includes Land of Hope and Glory, lots of lovely Parry, the choral section from Beethoven 9 and loads more besides. This is not a flag-waving, last-night-of-the-proms-style concert, but I hope it will mark appropriately a very special moment in the nation's history.

Finally, some of us will travel to north Spain at the end of June for our twice delayed tour – at last!

So thank you to everyone who has come on the zoom calls this last year. And to those for whom zooming is not their thing, we very much look forward to seeing you again live in September. As I said last year about zoom, they have been an invaluable way of feeling we still belong; not a proper rehearsal and a big compromise but better than nothing – a sense of camaraderie and a way of maintaining an important connection. I really hope you have found them useful and fun!

My personal, sincere thanks, as ever but this year particularly so, go to James and the committee for their generous moral and financial support over the last year. It is very much appreciated.

Special thanks of course go this year to James as he hands over the reins after 13 extraordinary years as Chairman. James, you have overseen some of the most magnificent, unforgettable triumphs in the choir's history and worked tirelessly on our behalf, always finding new and exciting ventures to stage, always seeking to raise the profile and standing of the choir. Bold, adventurous, daring and seemingly indefatigable! Never giving up and taking "no" for an answer. We are all in your debt, but I personally also would like sincerely to thank you for some of the highlights of my own musical career: the two RAH concerts and one in the RFH. Without your driving spirit I would never have had the opportunity of conducting the RPO in Mahler 8 and the Verdi Requiem, or the Philharmonia in Pott and Brahms in such prestigious venues. We have worked together pretty well I think over those years and I will very much miss our collaboration, and especially our annual summer review and planning meetings at The Flower Pot in Cheriton! I am very grateful, as are we all, for all your support and unswerving dedication to the choir. THANK YOU, JAMES.

We have been through a year of unprecedented difficulty and uncertainty, but we have kept going against all the odds and stuck together - therein lies the strength of the choir. We are now ready to return to some sense of normality. Let's hope we are allowed finally to do that. Thanks for sticking with it and I look forward very much to seeing you all in September. THANK YOU!

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

Thank you so much for coming. I don't need to tell you what a weird time it's been; such a worrying year for us all, and an existential time for Vivace. I know someone who wished they'd retired a year ago! It's a reflection on the strength of Vivace - particularly your contributions and support - that we have survived everything that Covid has thrown at us and come out on what I hope and pray is the other side, relatively unscathed.

To run a highly successful choir like ours, you need three vital ingredients which we have in bucket loads:

Firstly top-flight professionals - and in Jeremy and Francis we have a combo that any choir in the world would give their right hand for.

It has been a real privilege and joy to work alongside Jeremy over the years as we have planned each stage of our journey. As you know, Jeremy's concert programmes are second to none; always highly original, attractive and well-balanced, his rehearsals relaxed and enjoyable. Variety is the spice of life and it is our willingness to perform a wide repertoire with Jeremy's eclectic choice of music, not set in a classical rut, that makes Vivace stand out from the crowd, interweaving performances of Brahms, Mozart, Beethoven, Prokofiev with '*Nights at the Opera*', '*Mass in Blue*', '*African Sanctus*' and '*The Best of Broadway*' and so on, each designed to appeal to as wide a public as possible.

I can't thank him enough, not just for the endless enthusiasm he has shown in keeping the Zoom sessions going, but also his friendship over so many years. He is the power that drives the Vivace machine forward and has created a choir with a high reputation way beyond the Surrey borders. Francis is a huge talent; self-effacing and sensitive and a great rehearsal accompanist who offers us so much more in terms of friendship and skill as an accompanist. A pianist and composer of renown, Francis is in a league of his own. Those of you who attended his fascinating and erudite Monday 'Blind Spot' lectures will attest to his musical skill and knowledge. I feel certain that a good number of Vivace members will be signing up for his university courses next term to learn more from him. In 2017, it was a privilege to sing our commission of his '*Cantus Maris*' composition at the Festival Hall. I am so pleased that his hip operation seems to have been a success; I hope you all saw and responded to his organ video.

These talented musicians epitomise all that Vivace stands for: friendliness, approachable and setting very high standards in all that they do. We are the luckiest choir in the world. Thank you both so much for your friendship and everything you do for Vivace.

Secondly you need a good team to run the show. You can be very proud of your management committee, a team that have been a wonderful support to me, ceaselessly hard-working in the pursuit of excellence in all we do. June, Sel, Becky, Hilary, Suzanne, Mary, Sonja, Maggie, Peter, Phil and Simon, thank you all so much your support and work over so many years in running the choir in such a business-like way. There are so many individuals with so many talents that have been brought to the table that it would take too long to list them all here. Suffice to say team, you are amazing.

Maggie and Sonja are both stepping down after years of helpful and professional contributions to our meetings and events and I thank you both most sincerely for all that you have done. A very small token of thanks from the choir was delivered to their doors earlier on.

As I'm sure you're aware we took our responsibilities towards the pandemic extremely seriously, making sure that if we were able to return to rehearsals you would be kept as safe as it was possible to be. We have two to thank for this highly professional, thorough approach to the complex Covid conundrum. Jo Glover who left the committee halfway through the year having established her credentials as a quite incredibly knowledgeable scientist, led our research and sub-committee responsible for our coping with Covid with tremendous skill and professionalism and we were so lucky to have her input, intellect and expertise.

In Phil, we are lucky enough to have somebody with a scientific mind and analytical brain prepared to read reams of documents to dig out the relevant information. He has been a magnificent back-up to Jo. I was 100% confident that Vivace would be as well prepared for anything that the pandemic would throw at us as any organisation in the land. Thank you both.

To have had the support and hard work of the committee behind me with their confidence in what I was planning – whether tours or London concerts, their tireless organisation and in taking on some of the things we have done over the past few years has been incredible. We are lucky indeed to have such a terrific committee running the show. It's been a great team effort. I was incredibly honoured to have been made a Life Patron at my final committee meeting and thank each of you most sincerely.

And last, but by no means least, there are you, the members. So many here this evening, and at times more than 70 coming along to our Zoom sessions, showing the important part that Vivace plays in our lives.

Your friendship, sense of fun, standard of singing and energy have brought this choir to where we are today. It is mighty impressive what a large pool of talent we have amongst our members. There are so many of you helping to run the show behind the scenes. I counted no fewer than 31 of you prepared to give of your time and to help in so many different, vital ways to keep the show on the road: promoting concerts, issuing music, running the box office, baking cakes for rehearsal, administering the website, paying in money, acting as voice reps and the million-and-one other vital little jobs. Without you we wouldn't be able to function. Thank you all so much.

While I'm on the subject of our membership, I can't tell you how grateful we are that so many of you have continued to support the choir financially, both with your subscriptions and as patrons while we have been unable to run rehearsals or promote concerts. As you know, we continued to pay our two professionals their rehearsal fees throughout and maintaining your financial support has enabled us to keep our strong financial base to fund future concerts. Hopefully the rehearsals can start again in September and the subscription holiday facility will come to an end.

As I approach the final stages of my 13 years as chairman, I have been really touched by so many of you who have written such nice letters and emails. It has helped me to realise that all the hard work has been worth it! As to my successor, I am seriously happy that, given that he has your vote later this evening, Peter will be a highly effective Chairman and lead us all on to the next exciting chapter in the Vivace saga.

At this stage of a Monday night, we usually have a quiz, and I have just two quick questions for you:

- 1 Have you any idea how many rehearsal venues we have used in the past 13 years?
- 2 Give or take 1 or 2, how many different venues do you think we have sung in since I became Chairman?

A1: 5

A2: I have counted 28 including 15 abroad – 5 in Guildford alone, and everywhere from Vienna Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, RFH, Gloucester Cathedral to Riga and 19 others. Amazing!

The last 13 years has been an incredible journey for me and I really hope you have enjoyed the ride. If I can ask you to indulge me for just a few moments, I'd like to look back on just one or two of our adventures:

The most worrying moment: After a huge amount of organisation and something of a financial gamble putting on the Verdi *Requiem* in the Royal Albert Hall, employing the LPO and singing alongside Twickenham and Wimbledon Choral Societies, we discovered that Sir Antonio Pappano was conducting exactly the same work on exactly the same day just down the road at the Festival Hall. Needless to say, being *Vivace*, we decided to take on the challenge; our confidence was rewarded when the Albert Hall was packed to the rafters!

Scariest Moment: When on tour in Venice, I was responsible for guiding 92 choir members and their partners from the Basilica del Frari back to the landing stage to catch the ferry back to the coach park. To add to the sense of urgency (panic?), the boat's captain had threatened to leave earlier than arranged. I had no idea where I was going – no Google map or anything. A serious nightmare up and over canals, down the narrowest alleyways. Anyway somehow we made it by the skin of our teeth just as the captain was drawing up the gangplank.

The bumpiest moment: Being a part of the Singing Cyclists team pedalling from Paris to London to raise money for a charity and to highlight our Verdi Albert Hall concert in 2017, we were riding out of Paris in the Friday evening rush hour, in the rain, over wet, slippery cobblestones was a journey I will never forget.

Emotional highs: There are so many to choose from each concert we promote leaves one on an emotional high. However singing in Notre Dame Cathedral on our first foreign tour to France and looking up to see the beautiful West Window brought a real tear to my eye and I actually had to stop singing!

Almost the same feeling came when the lights went up at our first concert at the Royal Albert Hall for our Mahler '*Symphony of 1,000*', and was blown away by seeing a totally full house.

The moment I most appreciated: On the 3rd day of the Singing Cyclists' ride, we arrived at Tunsgate in the middle of Guildford to the most wonderful welcome home by so many choir members, the Mayor, the local MP and bemused shoppers plus to top it all, an amazing brass band provided, I think, by Becky. It was the most wonderful pick-me-up!

A memory of a little piece of magic: On our Italian tour, going to the opera in the open-air arena in Verona, and watching thousands of the audience light candles – a Verona tradition - before *Carmen* started.

There are many many other highlights I'll never forget: Singing in front of the Titian altarpiece in Venice, our concert in the cathedral where Mozart got married, performing Francis' choral work in RFH, the exciting *African Sanctus* concert with the amazing African dancers
.....and above all your friendship.

It's been the most wonderful journey and you have been so supportive and appreciative of all the things we have done.

I will, of course, carry on singing in the choir and have been asked, for now at least, to continue organising the choir tours. Next year's 3-concert tour to northern Spain is going to be a huge lot of fun. We are showing a taster of what to expect in a short video that Sel put together combining our singing with some of the highlights will see. If you haven't yet signed up, do think about it seriously over the summer months. You won't regret it.

As you know, it's our 75th birthday next year and plans are afoot for some super events to commemorate this anniversary. Apart from these throughout the year, you will be able to buy our very own Choir history due out this autumn. Started by Michael Jeffery and taken on by Mary Clayton (with some help from Chris Wilks), it's headed for the best seller list. The answer to all your Christmas present problems!

As you will have seen in the last edition of Notice board, we have been working on plans for a recruitment drive to begin in September. We need your help to bring the membership back up to 150 from the current just under 140; it would be so helpful if you could respond to Becky as to how you felt when you first joined the choir; tell us the good things as well as the bad. This will all help make our welcoming of new members even better. If, during the summer months you can think of anybody you could introduce to the choir next term, please bear this in mind and bring them along. We will make them welcome.

As to the future, there's so much to look forward to: the end of lockdown, a long and happy summer, a great set of concerts – as varied as ever, featuring Elgar, Bernstein, Walton, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Vaughan-Williams, plus our much-delayed tour to Northern Spain next year.

Peter Norman has, as you know, put himself forward to take over from me and deserves your fullest support. He will be a great leader: highly efficient and full of good ideas for the future.

There's one important member of the choir who has supported me for so long in this role and been a huge source of strength and inspiration over the years, my wife Val (who can't be here tonight as she's visiting her dad in Manchester after a fall). She has been such a tremendous sounding board and source of encouragement; I can't thank her enough.

It's time for a new chapter in the Vivace Story, and with the jokes in 'Jokers Corner' getting feebler by the minute, it's time for me to go.

Thank you all.

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. Jon Scott, who has proposed Peter Norman as Chairman, introduced him and gave some background in support. The following were unanimously appointed:

	Proposed by	Seconded by
Peter Norman, Chairman	Jon Scott	Peter Butterworth
Becky Kerby, Hon. Membership Secretary	Michelle Mumford	Mary Broughton
Sel Adamu, Hon. Treasurer	Michelle Mumford	Marjory Stewart
June Windle, Hon. Secretary	Jo Glover	Val Garrow

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

	Proposed by	Seconded by
Suzanne Cahalane	Alison Palmer	Paula Sutton
Simon Dillon	Stephen Linton	Sarah Smithies
Mary Moon	Marjory Stewart	Maggie Woolcock
Gill Perkins	Jon Scott	Michelle Mumford
Kate Peters	Peter Norman	June Windle
Phil Stanford	David Ross	Malcolm Munt
Hilary Trigg	Gill Perkins	Bob Cowell

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: the meeting expressed warm appreciation for the work done Jeremy Johnson and he was unanimously appointed to continue in this role.

12. Any Other Business: Peter Norman thanked James for his 13 years as Chairman and noted we would all have some standout memories of the experiences we've had under his stewardship. The committee has unanimously agreed to make him an Honorary Life Patron, and presented him with an engraved plaque. As he will continue to organise the choir tours, he was also presented with a Tour Captain cap.

Peter also introduced a possible concert opportunity at Holy Trinity on 4 September.

The meeting closed at 20.15

Jeremy then played the Spanish Tour video.

JW

Vivace Chorus Balance Sheet

As at 30 April 2021

As at 30 April 2020

	£	£
Stock of Goods	1,442	1,442
Debtors	-	-
Accrued Income	3,238	11,177
Prepaid expenses	24,803	32,745
Shawbrook Deposit Account	60,000	60,000
CAF Gold Account	48,884	41,167
CAF Current Account	1,388	2,316
Metro General Account	230	930
Metro Subscriptions Account	300	786
Petty Cash and floats	31	202
Current Assets	140,317	150,763
Accrued Expenses	45	-
Advance Income	38,455	53,703
Current Liabilities	38,500	53,703
Net Current Assets	101,817	97,060
Represented by:		
Opening Other Reserves	59,968	58,789
Result for the Year	4,731	1,179
Closing Other Reserves	64,699	59,968
Opening Legacy balance	37,092	37,273
Interest income	25	294
Legacies	-	-
Legacy Expenditure	-	(475)
Closing Legacy balance	37,117	37,092
CLOSING RESERVES	101,817	97,060

Vivace Chorus Income and Expenditure accounts

	2020/21		2019/20	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Unrestricted fund				
Concert deficits:				
May	(337)		(6,723)	
July	-		(57)	
November	(282)		(1,591)	
March	-		359	
Sub-total, concert deficits	(619)		(8,012)	
Rehearsal costs	(17,975)		(22,600)	
Net concert deficit (per Concert Income and Expenditure report)		(18,594)		(30,612)
Income from charitable activities:				
Subscriptions	17,706		23,052	
Patrons	2,804		3,303	
Gift Aid	3,060		3,981	
Come and Sing surplus	-		1,676	
Fundraising	630		1,507	
Other	-		3,142	
Total income from charitable activities		24,200		36,660
Interest received		73		440
Total income		5,678		6,488
Expenditure				
Insurance		-		368
Other		947		4,940
Total expenditure		947		5,308
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, unrestricted fund		4,731		1,179
Legacy fund				
Income				
Legacies		-		-
Interest received		25		294
Total income		25		294
Expenditure				
Deborah Miles Johnson		-		300
Choir photographer		-		175
Total expenditure		-		475
Net surplus/(deficit) for the year, Legacy fund		25		(181)
Total net surplus/(deficit) for the year		4,756		998