

# New Tyneside Orchestra

## Minutes of AGM of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### On-line Zoom Meeting

Meeting began 8.00pm

- 1. Election of chair:** Dawn Allen proposed as chair by Annette Nicolle, seconded by Caroline Day. Dawn accepted the role.
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Katie Lodge, Fiona Malcolm, Jytte Nielsen, Heather Ferris
- 3. Minutes of Previous AGM:** No corrections received

*Acceptance of the minutes from AGM October 2019: Proposed by Kirsty McDowell      Seconded by Rachael Leisk*

#### 4. Reports

##### 4.1 Committee's Report: Annette Nicolle on behalf of the committee

It has been a very unusual and challenging year. The Autumn term was very successful. We had our last two concerts with Monica at the helm. The November concert in the Cathedral was very well received by our audience. It included the Saint Saens organ symphony with soloist Ian Roberts. The orchestra returned to the Cathedral in December for the Christmas concert, along with the cathedral choir. The orchestra premiered Prelude in F by Fanny Mendelssohn arranged by Monica. This was one of the last concerts in the cathedral before it closed for its refurbishment. The orchestra would like to thank Monica and wish her well for her new life in Australia.

In January, we started rehearsals with Mark; an exciting programme of "A Shropshire Lad" by Butterworth, the Walton Viola Concerto and Dvorak 6. Rehearsals were going well, so it was devastating to have to cancel the concert at short notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The orchestra has been unable to have face to face rehearsals since that date.

Our Chairman, Simon, was appointed to a new post in London, and left the Orchestra in April. The orchestra is really grateful to Simon for all the time and effort he put into NTO. The committee decided to run with an acting chair for the remainder of the year, as the circumstances were so unusual. We were delighted to be able to co-opt Victoria Mattison and Caroline Day as non-voting members of the committee, and are thankful for the contribution they have already made to running NTO.

During the summer term, the committee has been running a number of projects to try to fill the gap left on a Monday night and to keep in touch with members. The virtual string piece was a new challenge for all involved. There was a lot of work to put it together and the committee would like to thank Mark for his skills and time mixing the musical tracks and Kirsty for putting together the video. The string piece is available to view on Youtube and featured in a Making Music virtual concert on 29<sup>th</sup> September. A wind piece along similar lines is currently in progress.

In addition to this, the committee has been running virtual coffee breaks, a desert island discs programme, on-line cello sectionals led by Kirsty M and tutorials for the upper strings from Dawn. Members with ideas for other projects please get in touch with the committee.

The committee had been hoping that we would get back to some face to face rehearsals this term, but it is not currently safe to restart rehearsals. We are planning ahead so that rehearsals can start as soon as restrictions are lifted. Chillingham Road school, our usual rehearsal venue, is not accepting external group bookings at the moment, so the committee has been looking for alternatives and has found two potential places. The committee is also doing a formal risk assessment for rehearsals so that everything necessary is in place as soon as we can rehearse once more.

The committee has reviewed the annual subscription. The Orchestra has some standing costs which it has to pay, whether or not we are rehearsing, which will be covered in the treasurer's report. The Orchestra does have some financial reserves which it can draw on, however there is uncertainty over how long this situation will continue and we need to ensure the

orchestra remains financially viable. The Committee have decided to reduce subs for this year to £60, payable either as an annual contribution or £20 on a termly basis. Any members who wish to make a donation to the orchestra by leaving their standing order at last year's fee of £90 are very welcome to do so. Any member who is in financial difficulties and unable to find the money for subs should speak to Kirsty P the treasurer in confidence. The Committee do not want anyone to be unable to be a member due to financial hardship.

Individual members of the committee have had specific areas they have been working on and they should be recognised for their contributions:

- Kirsty Pearson books the rehearsal venues and concert venues and liaises with the soloists and cathedral
- Annette looks after the orchestra admin, website and communication with members
- Sarah is the orchestra librarian
- Kirsty M runs the social media and electronic ticket booking as well as booking the percussionists
- Brian ensures we are following GDPR regulations and has updated the orchestra documents
- Dawn is co-ordinating the chair sponsorship scheme
- Andrew and Sarah, with Mark and Tony King are the musical programme subcommittee
- Rachael and Dawn did the MD interviews in the summer with Chris Clinch
- Rachel arranges the chamber music programme

The committee would like to thank Mark. It was really sad to have to cancel his first concert with us and we look forward to a time when we can perform under his direction. Also a big thank you to Dawn for leading the orchestra and to all the people who helped in the first part of the year moving instruments, setting up for concerts and at rehearsals. Thanks to Nick for storing the orchestra library which took up a considerable amount of space until we down-sized it recently; to Dennis, Mary and Ruth for organising the supplies for the coffee break; to Katie for helping Sarah with parts and to Bob Taylor for his help producing practice parts. We are very grateful to Chris Clinch for his time on the MD interview panel and to Tony King for his work on the programme subcommittee. Thank you to Steve Halsey and everyone involved putting the wind pieces together. A special thank you goes to Rachael who is stepping down from the committee after her second term.

Finally thank you to all the NTO members and, as Nick used to say, to the "owners and trainers". This is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the NTO and we had expected to have plans for a big concert and social events to celebrate, but sadly that was not to be. The committee has been discussing how to mark the occasion and we hope to be able to stage a celebratory concert in the future even if it is delayed. We are looking forward to being able to have some rehearsals together, even though it looks like that may be delayed to the New Year.

Brian Tanner added a thanks to Annette Nicolle for acting as chair of the committee since Simon left.

#### 4.2 **Treasurer's Report:** Kirsty Pearson

A reminder that all our concert expenses are paid from NTO Concerts Ltd and all our income goes into NTO. The concert summaries are for information purposes.

Our first concert in November 2019 at the cathedral was very well attended, we sold 236 tickets. This is reflected in the income and we made a profit of £322.

The Christmas concert will break even once we are reimbursed by the Cathedral.

This extraordinary year has obviously effected NTO's concerts in the second half of the season.

Our second concert in March was due to go ahead at St George's Church but was cancelled at the last minute due to Covid 19. We had already paid out some expenses, had others payable after the concert and with no ticket income stood to make quite a loss. However, the music hirers very generously waived their hire fees as we were not able to put on the concert. The church also waived their fees for the rehearsal and the concert so our losses were much less than they might have been. We also received a donation towards our costs and so the overall loss was £206.

For our third concert in June we were due to go to Jesmond United Reformed Church. As it turned out this concert too was cancelled. We had already booked one of the pieces prior to lockdown and so decided to go ahead with the hire on the basis

that it would be useful to have something to play if we were able to rehearse again. Sadly this wasn't to be but the cost wasn't excessive.

Despite not having completed three concerts we are able to claim Orchestra Tax Relief on the first two concerts, despite the second not going ahead, and this should be £1097.

The position about subs has already been covered by the committee report. For those who pay by standing order, if you wish to reduce the amount you pay for the moment, this needs to be amended before the beginning of November. If you wish to leave the amount the same that is absolutely fine and if you normally pay by cheque or cash, payment at the moment would need to be online. Given the current situation, termly payment is acceptable. If anyone wants to discuss subs confidentially I [Kirsty P] am more than happy to do so.

Although we are in a healthy financial position, we do have ongoing overheads. Additionally, once we are able to rehearse again, we may need to rehearse in smaller groups and therefore have two rehearsals running concurrently which would mean having additional venue and conducting expenses.

The knock-on effect of not being able to put on concerts this season will be that there will be no OTR to claim which has certainly boosted our finances recently. The reduced subs will also mean reduced gift aid.

I would, as usual, like to acknowledge Nigel's assistance in facilitating our OTR claim and to thank Malcom Stronach for independently examining the accounts.

*Acceptance of Treasurer's Report - Proposed: Andrew Martin Secoded: Sarah Walters*

#### 4.3 Musical Director's Report: Mark Edwards

Mark spoke about the first term of rehearsals and said he had been particularly looking forward to playing the Butterworth and the Walton in the concert. The first term of rehearsals was very much about getting to know each other and how he and the orchestra fitted together. He mentioned that he had attended the concert in November. He felt that the cathedral acoustics can be difficult. He thought the orchestra had coped well and Monica had done a great job. He particularly enjoyed the Tallis.

Looking forwards, he felt it has been difficult to plan ahead because the covid situation has changed rapidly. We were hoping to get back to rehearsing face to face in October but that has had to be delayed. He has been doing on-line rehearsals with a choir since March and at the weekend led his first orchestra rehearsal with Young Sinfonia. He will discuss the experience with orchestra members after the AGM tonight. He commented that this is a dangerous point for all arts organisations and that a choir in the region has just folded. It is important to keep supporting the orchestra.

He expressed his thanks to the committee. He commented that Simon did a great job as chairman and that he is looking forward to working with the committee in future.

## 5. Elections of Officers and Committee Members

Post	Nominee	Proposed by	Secoded By
Chairman	Brian Tanner	Annette Nicolle	Kirsty Pearson
Treasurer	Kirsty Pearson	Richard Poyer	Ian Murdoch
Secretary	Annette Nicolle	Fiona Beyer	Andrea Barnes
Member	Kirsty McDowell	Nick Pears	Malcolm Toft
Member	Victoria Mattinson	Kate Cook	Annette Nicolle
Member	Caroline Day	Annette Nicolle	Brian Tanner
Member	Sarah Walters	Amanda Callendar	Kirsty McDowell
Member	Andrew Martin	Marian Mather	Ellen Arkless
Member			

No other nominations were received.

The officers and members were duly elected.

## **6. Any Other Business**

Tony King and Richard Bergman put forward questions about the orchestra returning to face to face rehearsals. Although the orchestra would be allowed to rehearse under the current guidelines provided the social distancing rules were adhered to, the committee felt that, with the rapid increase in cases in the area, this was not a safe prospect for the moment. The committee is in the process of finalising its risk assessment for face to face rehearsals and will publish it on the website and circulate a copy to members once it is completed. There is a major risk of covid being carried by asymptomatic people and, given the prevalence in the local population at the moment, the risk of exposure is too high to justify rehearsing. The committee is monitoring the situation and has plans in place to restart rehearsals as soon as it is safe to do so.

The committee thanked Dawn for chairing the meeting tonight.

**Meeting closed: 8:42 pm**