

**Present:** Officers - Chris Walker (Chairman), Liz Buxton (Secretary), Anne Adams (Social Secretary), Sarah Hogan (Joint Librarian) and Michael Buxton (Box Office Manager). Also in attendance were Philip Collin (Conductor) and approximately 35 members of the Society.

- 1. Welcome** – the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He referred members to the Officer’s reports and final accounts which had again been circulated with the agenda. This was a deliberate strategy to enable members to read reports in advance of the meeting and to limit the time taken out of rehearsal time by the AGM to those essentially required elements.
- 2. Apologies for absence** were received from R Downs, J Gaunt, C Denby-Hollis, A Heath, L Heller, J Hollingsworth, N Kisdon, A Mcfarlane and J Bryce (Independent Examiner)
- 3. Minutes of the previous AGM**– Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and previously circulated with the agenda, were approved (proposed S Hogan, seconded J Nortcliffe) and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.
- 4. Matters arising**  
There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.
- 5. Secretary’s report for 2023-24** (*previously circulated and attached*)  
The report from the Secretary was received and no questions were raised.  
The secretary was thanked for her report.
- 6. Treasurer’s report for 2023-24 and annual accounts** (*previously circulated and attached*)  
The report from the Treasurer was received. In presenting the annual accounts for the season 2023-24 for approval in Item 7, the treasurer drew members attention to rising costs of soloists, orchestral players and venue hire. She much appreciated the sponsorship which had supported concerts from time to time and for members efforts in fund-raising. KR would welcome any additional ideas on ways to increase the Society’s income. Ticket sales were critical to our continued ability to work with professional soloists and orchestras. To illustrate the above points, KR advised members of the stark contrast in ticket sales for our two concerts so far in the 2024-5 season – the first concert attracting an audience of 60 in comparison to Messiah which attracted an audience of 420. The cost of staging the two concerts was similar - around £5.5K but the loss on the first concert was significant. Similar losses would be unsustainable over time. We had also welcomed a number of new members to the choir over the last year and the secretary reported 5 potential members joining us this term. LB asked members to look out for new faces and show our customary warm welcome as membership subscriptions were a key element of our income.  
The Treasurer was thanked for her report.
- 7. Independent Examiner’s report for 2023-24**  
The Chairman drew members attention to the declaration made on the accounts by Jon Brice (Independent Examiner) who had scrutinised the accounts in advance of the meeting. JB was entirely satisfied that these were fully in order and had been presented in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Charity Commission. Jon was thanked by the Chairman on behalf of the membership for his work on behalf of the Society. The final accounts for the 2023-24 season were then approved by the members (proposed J Nortcliffe, seconded L Paice)
- 8. Election of Officers**  
The Chairman reported that one nomination had been received for the Officer vacancy as indicated in the invitation to the AGM. This was now proposed and seconded by members of the Society. Kitty Ross was duly elected to serve a further term of two years as Treasurer and thanked for her willingness to continue in this role.
- 9. Membership subscriptions**  
As included in the notice of the meeting, and in light of the treasurer’s earlier comments, the Chair presented the Committee’s proposal to increase the membership subscription from £150 to £200 with effect from the start of the 2025-26 season. In accordance with the Constitution, this change required approval of the membership. The Chairman asked for any comments/queries from members. It was confirmed that ‘registered students’ would not be charged a membership fee as agreed at the previous AGM, payments could be made in instalments and arrangements could be put in place for any member experiencing financial hardship. The meeting unanimously approved the Committee’s proposal.

#### 10. Election of Honorary Independent Examiner

Jonathan Brice was re-elected to the position of Independent Examiner. The Chairman thanked him for his work on behalf of the Society and willingness to continue in this role.

#### 11. Honorary Conductor's report for 2023-24

The report (*previously circulated and attached*) from Philip Collin our conductor from the start of the 2023-24 season was received and no questions raised. The Conductor was thanked for his report.

#### 12. Chairman's report for 2023-24

The report (*previously circulated and attached*) from the Chairman was received and no questions raised. The Chairman thanked members for their continued support during the 2023-24 season.

#### 13. Any other business

The Committee had already been made aware, but the Secretary informed the membership that the Buxtons would be leaving Sheffield at some point during the remainder of this season. The meeting was informed therefore that this created two vacancies – her own as Secretary and Michael Buxton's Box Office/Front of House Manager role. The Chairman and Committee were therefore keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in taking on all or parts of these roles. LB and MB would do all they could to ease the transfer of responsibility. Both had enjoyed being a part of the Society's organisation - LB as a Committee member and then for the last 11 years as Secretary, MB as Front of House Manager for almost 40 years!

Tony Cowling, observing that this would be the Buxton's last AGM, proposed a vote of thanks, which LB and MB much appreciated.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.25 pm

### OFFICERS reports circulated with the AGM agenda and included as part of the minutes of the meeting

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The season of 2023-2024 was the first under our new conductor Phillip Colin. I am delighted to report how successful this was, how happy people are working with him and that he has settled in so well. I am also really pleased that the choir has grown in number and welcome our new members and hope for more!

The season started with Elijah, which at times seemed to lift the roof off St Mark's. A fine performance of Messiah followed, in the Victoria Hall due to unavailability of the Cathedral (but we will be back there in 2024). St. John Passion in St Marks was then a great success and well received by another appreciative audience. The final concert of the season was Brahms's Requiem and Shicksalslied. This was a joint concert with Sheffield Oratorio Chorus and future collaborations to tackle the larger works are being considered.

We had a Come Sing Messiah which showcased young soloists from St Johns Ranmoor, who we will be welcoming, along with Steel City Choristers to join us for St Matthew Passion in 2024-25. We also hosted a workshop before the Elijah concert and it is planned that further workshops will take place as part of our seasons. Social events added enormously to the music making and the choir is one of the friendliest I know. The season was enjoyably ended with a Bring and Share Supper organised by our Social Secretary – Anne Adams.

I feel really optimistic about the strength and the potential for the choir to move forward, continue to grow and form new connections, making us a big player on the Sheffield music scene.

It would be remiss not to thank the committee and all of those who contribute to the running of the choir and those who feel able to offer financial support. Without these efforts the choir could not exist in these more challenging times for the arts. We have so much to offer and look forward to an exciting future.

Chris Walker

Chairman

[chairman@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk](mailto:chairman@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk)

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Unfortunately, as in recent years since the Pandemic, we continue to run a deficit over the 2023-2024 season. The good news is that the choir has adequate reserves for now and our income is up substantially since last year, with a growing membership bringing in more subscriptions, increased ticket sales and fund raising, plus some generous sponsorship from the late (and much missed) Laurence Coates. However, many of our costs are also rising, most notably professional fees and hall hire (including heating). The most expensive concert from last season was Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in November, which was a great occasion but cost £7700 for soloists, orchestra and hall hire so the choir is not in a position to put on such large works very often (other than with substantial sponsorship).

Our main sources of income are choir subscriptions and ticket sales - so attracting new members and selling more tickets are the best ways to help us financially. Membership subscription rates have remained at £150 this season and can be paid in instalments, but we will have to increase the annual rate to £200 next season to help cover costs. We are always very grateful for additional donations and sponsorship from any members who feel able to contribute further.

Please do support our fundraising efforts, including the weekly little raffle and monthly stalls, plus carol singing in December. If anyone has any innovative fundraising ideas please to let the committee know!

We are also hoping that more members will join the monthly draw (£4 per month) and to sign up to online gift schemes such as Give as You Live and Easy Fundraising. Please contact me if you would like more information on any of these.

Kitty Ross

Treasurer

[treasurer@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk)

## CONDUCTOR'S REPORT

It has been a huge pleasure to be your conductor this year. I have been made to feel very welcome and I have very much appreciated your enthusiasm and your committed singing.

*Elijah* is one of my favourite oratorios and it was great to be able to start with that. A strong quartet of soloists, an augmented chorus and an orchestra on top form. I was grateful to Elizabeth Roberts for standing in at the last minute for Chrissie Birchall-Samson and to Cath Backhouse for standing in for Ailsa Mainwaring. Tenor Nicolas Watts made a very strong impression and William Burn was an imposing and dramatic presence as *Elijah*. I received very many favourable comments about the choir's performance – clear text, an exciting sound and a strong sense of drama.

*Messiah* at Victoria Hall was also very memorable. Jane Burnell, who has sung for the society before, Beth Mackay, the returning Nicolas Watts (standing in for an indisposed Peter Wilman) and Sheffield's own Francis Wells were the quartet and the National Festival Orchestra once again accompanying brilliantly, including our accompanist Ruth Nicholson playing harpsichord and organ. The Victoria Hall was an excellent stand in venue but we look forward to returning to the Cathedral in the 24/25 season.

In the Spring was St John Passion. Again, we needed to replace indisposed soloists, this time Evangelist Stephen Lilley, replaced by Ben Thapa, who tragically died later in the year. Chrissie Birchall-Samson, Hannah Mason (again, previously known to the society) and Dean Robinson sang the arias and local baritone Peter Taylor sang Christ. It was a very moving performance, again accompanied by the National Festival Orchestra with Ruth Nicholson playing continuo.

For our final concert in the season, we teamed up with the Oratorio Chorus to perform *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and *Shicksalslied*, both by Brahms in Victoria Hall. It was great fun to rehearse and perform with larger forces and it would be great to collaborate again on a large work in the near future.

I am most grateful to the committee for all their hard work.

Philip Collin

Conductor

[philipajcollin@gmail.com](mailto:philipajcollin@gmail.com)

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

I can confirm that the Committee has continued to work on behalf of members, to meet the 'object' of our Society as outlined in the Constitution, meeting formally three times during the last season and engaging in several additional discussions in person and via email as issues arose. Meetings continued to focus primarily on detailed planning for each forthcoming season and outline planning for future seasons. We have been very pleased that Philip Collin can now contribute to the forward planning which has included introducing the choir to new works.

The Committee undertook a detailed review of the last season before the summer break, considering 'What went well ...' and 'What could be even better if ...'. The overwhelming view was that our first season with our new conductor had been a real success. Enjoyable rehearsals had included a good balance of singing, training and musical input from Philip. It went without saying that we still needed to recruit more tenors, but it had been very encouraging that over the season we had welcomed more new members in one year than in the last five years! Attendance at rehearsals has been impacted by illness and holidays and sometimes rather concerning. The Committee haven't yet, however, needed to enforce our stated expectation of '75% attendance at rehearsals to sing in the concert', but attendance at rehearsals will be kept under careful review, especially as we add new and less familiar works to our repertoire.

Invitations were accepted by Jane Ginsborg and Barbara Hawley to become Life-Friends of the Society in recognition of their many years of singing with us.

Since the last AGM, we heard of the death of a number of people who had a long association with the Society. Dr Alan Brown, a quiet and unassuming man but truly brilliant musician who accompanied choir rehearsals for many years and served as our Vice-President; Laurence Coates, a former member of the choir who generously sponsored the joint Brahms concert in memory of his late wife Liz, only sadly not to live to attend the concert himself; and more recently we heard of the death of Hazel Elliot-Kemp who continued to support the choir in the audience for many concerts after she stopped singing.

Thank you to everyone for your contribution to the success of the society over the last year as we look forward to another exciting season under the direction of Philip Collin.

*Liz Buxton*

Secretary

[secretary@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk](mailto:secretary@sheffieldbachchoir.co.uk)

Minutes signed: ..... (Chairman - Mr C Walker)      Date: .....