

# BATH BACH CHOIR

## AGM MINUTES

7.00 pm on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
King Edward's School Bath - Gymnasium

### 1. Apologies for Absence

**Choir members:** Hannah Rees, Liz Gray, Mary George, Elizabeth Bates, Coby Mills

### 2. Minutes of the last AGM held on 22nd January 2024 - Doris Ward

No comments or corrections received, therefore signed on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 as an accurate account.

### 3. Matters Arising

N/a

### 4. Musical Director's Report - Benedict Collins-Rice

Good evening, folks.

So the mad thing about this is that this is my only second sort of proper MD's report, which is simultaneously really not not very many at all. I don't feel like I'm new anymore, which I think I'm just gonna take in a good frame, if that's OK.

I think MD's reports on these things are always a little weird, but I think my big first take away is I think we are getting better and honestly if I can't call that job success, I don't know what is. I have had a couple of bits of feedback recently that says that it's the best they've heard the choir sing and these most recent carols, which is really nice. These things are obviously very subjective, but it is an indication of the good things that we're doing.

A lot of the focus since I first came here has been developing our acapella singing as a Trojan horse for all sorts of other things about colour, about tuning, about ensemble, all of these sorts of things. After the most recent carols, I felt really like we're finally cashing in on some long scale work that we've done on this. Looking back over the last year, it's been a year of lots of acapella singing in different styles and different ways. That is perhaps not the principal draw of a choir like this, so I think it will only form a very small part of the choir's repertoire going forward. I really feel good about that decision and where it's going.

My next focus going forward is probably going to be on the balance of our upper voices, which is something that I am playing with in my head at the moment. I think I'm not getting the best out of you all and I'm thinking about ways to make us all purr a bit better for all of our benefit and for the choir's best musical interests at heart. So maybe when that has settled in my brain, I will be able to communicate it more clearly.

Collaborations are also a big thing that I feel are important. The things that we have been doing with the other musicians that come and join us at the carols have been really good and I'm hoping to see if we can expand that going forwards. The developing links with the Oxford Bach soloists will be a slow burn, but I think when I retire from this job, whether that

be next week or in 50 years, I hope, will be a real legacy that I will leave. The collaboration with Bach Symphony Orchestra that we're literally preparing for at the moment, I think in some ways is the most important gig I will shepherd us through. A real area of growth for us as a name is about being able to have a reputation for doing stuff like this well.

I'm deeply thankful to all of those people that spent many, many hours trying to get our tour off the ground. But deep down, if the Rotterdam Symphony had just phoned us up and said can you come and do Beethoven 9, they'd have all done that sort of stuff for us. And so again, that is sort of where I'm hoping that we can start positioning ourselves there. So yeah, I think this is a really big and important one.

And my final thing is a thank you. As I said, I don't feel new anymore. So that must mean that I owe you all a big thank you for making me feel so at home and so welcome here. So big thank you for that and a big thanks to the rest of the musical staff here.

### **5. Chairman's Report - Simon Ingram Hill**

David Hill our President, wrote in a recent interview with Bath Magazine. "I think strong leadership and innovative programming are essential for choirs to thrive in a competitive environment". So let me start my report there.

This has been Benedict's second year with us. The Annual review, in which many of you participated through your Voice Reps provided very positive feedback on Benedict's tenure thus far. To rehearsals which are always well-planned and where he shows an acute ear and an impressive attention to details, he brings freshness and enthusiasm. He is lively, friendly, engaging and not too grand to do some note bashing, using lots of "clever" devices to get the best out of us. He is not a believer in idle chit-chat but keeps us on our toes, quite rightly setting the bar high, demanding high standards. A couple of quotes to round up: from one "He has introduced us to relatively unknown choral music and I've enjoyed the challenges" from another "I always enjoy Monday evenings and as someone who views choir as essential to my work/life balance and wellbeing, this is by far the most important factor to me."

And the proof of the pudding? Our audiences regularly point to our high performance standard and one of our patrons has just written "I don't think the choir has ever sung better than now".

What about our repertoire? David Hill refers to the importance of "innovative programming". So does conductor Sir Simon Rattle. On Saturday, interviewed by Radio 3 for his 70th Birthday he was asked what makes a really excellent concert. He used a food analogy referring to the all important citrus fruit. What is wanted, he said, is "a fantastic burst of chilli and lime, not only the juice but (also) the zest."

But it is not always easy to get the recipe and therefore our offer is just right. We want to attract but once at the concert maybe also to educate and stretch our audiences. It is often a balance. And this last year the size of a couple of our concert audiences and your own feedback has given us some learning points.

Programmes were without doubt thoughtfully structured. On the plus side singers and audiences alike loved the Carols by Candlelight programme, which appealed to family members of all ages, and introduced new twists to old classics – take David Hill's descant to "O come all ye faithful" for example. It was all great fun.

The summer concert's insertion of Bach's Magnificat into a Martines programme worked well and the never-before-recorded Laudate Pueri Dominum now on youtube, showcased the first class sound recording, a top-rated performance and a demonstration of Benedict's excellent technique and control.

The Bach cantata cycle was an innovation last year, and is already now heading to be an established feature of our annual workshop calendar.

On the other hand we live, as David Hill reminds us, in a competitive environment. We need to sell tickets. Your feedback and the numbers suggest that while the spring and winter programmes were interesting from a singing perspective, concentrating on one composer or a less familiar repertoire may not attract large audiences. In this day and age, though there is definitely a place for experimentation, we need to think commercially, without necessarily taking the easy Messiah-type options.

We hope the programmes we have chosen for 2025 and 2026, have got the right balance: big popular works to bring in the audiences, framed by pieces which provide plenty of zest, challenging but also appealing. And by the way, we haven't forgotten Bach; we do not want to leave him behind for any more than one season!

Collaborations are important for us. We tried very hard to set up a tour, which would have been a first for us, to Bath's twin city Alkmaar this May. Negotiations broke down when it became clear that there were financing difficulties at the Alkmaar end, but we are hopeful that such a collaborative venture will take place in the future.

Already in train are next month's collaboration with Bath Symphony Orchestra on Beethoven's 9th; next year's concerts with Bury Bach Choir, and ever closer links with Oxford Bach Soloists through our annual Bach workshop cycle.

We have suffered two sad losses in the last 12 months. Brian Woodford died in January, Nigel Perrin in June. Both were with us for many decades and gave a huge amount to the choir. They won't be forgotten and we'll be reminded in a tangible way, Brian through the donation of his sheet music library, Nigel through the establishment of the Nigel Perrin Memorial Fund.

The Committee is always looking for ways to recruit more singers; through the annual Bach workshops, by inviting singers from other choirs to perform with us, maybe by providing bursaries to students from university music departments. This year we have recruited 9 new singers, and are in the process of auditioning another 6, more under the age of 30 than before, a target age group for us.

Will will give his report on our finances. So all I will say now is that I recognise we have a responsibility to you to make our pounds stretch as far as we can, and also to make the best use of our assets. Fundraising and reaching sponsorship targets on the one hand offering

bursaries and judicious support to individuals on the other. This is work in progress and an area I wish to focus more on in my final year as chair, with your help.

I would like to close by giving my unconditional thanks to the many within and outside the committee, who make the wheels turn smoothly. Your contributions are voluntary – we all live in a busy world, but vital to what we deliver. I am a great believer in naming names where appropriate, So with no apology let me say thank you to a number of individuals in the choir.

Starting with Voice Reps, our thanks are due to Jo Addison, Hilary Oliver, Sue Cook, Caroline Gumbley, Andrew Clark and John Bandy with Helen Roberts playing an important coordination role. On the Public relations, communications and programme-writing side, thank you Steve Machell, Ursula Steinhoff, Priscilla Bishop, Victoria Westwood, Sara Foster, Katie Taylor, Richard Hunt, Tony Thornburn, Kate Perrin, Helen Roberts, Janet Read and most recently James Davis. At concert, workshop and rehearsal time, involving our Concert secretary, concert and workshop managers, raffle commissars, venue managers, librarian, refreshment monitors, thank you Paul Edwards, Sara Foster, Helen Roberts, Will Acton, Peter Woodward, Peter Edwards, Di Shelley, Mark Brierley, Pam Brierley and Jane Paton. Thank you Paul Forte and Steve Machell, for all you did to help set up the Alkmaar tour. On Finance, thank you Harriet Feilding our Auditor and Will Acton our Treasurer. Victoria Westwood a special thanks for your work on ticket sales, you officially stepped down from the committee after 6 years of service this time last year but we managed to co-opt you for a further year thereby making the transition to Steve Machell so much easier. Finally many thanks to my two fellow officers: Will Acton, and Doris Ward, the Honorary Secretary.

This may seem a long list and I am happy that some 30% of the choir play an active part in squeezing the zest from our limes. But we can always do with more support, more volunteering.

As to the music side, which is what we are all about, my final thanks to Marcus Sealy on piano, organ and rehearsal taker, able to step in when the railway system has failed the natural order of things and to Benedict Collins Rice on baton duty.

At which point my thanks for your attention as I now hand over to Will our Treasurer for his report.

**6. Treasurer's Report** and presentation of accounts for year ending 31 July 2024  
[See separate accounts]

## **7. Subscriptions**

Vote to keep Subs at £180

- Proposed: Frances Best
- Seconded: Janet Read
- Unanimous

Vote to accept the accounts

- Proposed: Pam Brierley
- Seconded: Helen Roberts
- Unanimous

## **8. Appointment of the Independent Examiner for the accounts**

Harriet Feilding to be independent.

- Proposed: Richard Young
- Seconded: Victoria Westwood
- Unanimous

## **9. Friends and Patrons - Janet Reed**

We had 12 gold, 7 ordinary, and 2 life patrons at the end of the year.

For their £50 patrons get regular newsletters from me and they get priority booking on tickets. So before anyone else in the choir gets access to tickets, they get first shot. They have very weird choices. Some are more front row, some are like, say, 4th row back centre. Occasionally they're invited to social events, and when I say occasionally it's because you only occasionally have them.

So for the extra £150 to become a gold patron that entitles you to 1 free ticket for each concert. Not all patrons take this up at all or for every concert, but they have the benefit of that. It's actually £1200 for a life patron and they get all of the above.

About £3000 of these subscriptions goes to support one of the concerts each year.

Also there's friends and they pay £15 or £20 and they get the newsletter, they get booking information, but they have to do their own thing.

And just to say in my role as Patron Secretary, I also write to David Hill and the Vice President with the same newsletter.

## **10. Election of Officers and Committee**

John Bandy - non-portfolio

- Proposed: Jamie Hay
- Seconded: Jo Hay
- Unanimous

Committee members:

Simon Ingram-Hill: Chair; Will Acton: Treasurer; Doris Ward: Secretary; Abi McGillivray: Artist liaison manager; Helen Roberts: Membership secretary; Paul Edwards: Concert secretary; Steve Machell: Tickets secretary; James Davis: Public Relations; John Bandy & Richard Hunt: Without portfolio.

## **11. AOB**

*There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 19:40 by Simon Ingram-Hill.*

## How your Subscriptions are spent

### Expenses

Hall Hire	£2,800
Musical Director	£7,200
Accompanist	£3,600
Choir Promotional Budget	£3,000
Choir's Managed Music Library	£1,200
Insurances & Memberships	£750
	<b>£18,550</b>

### Income

Subscriptions	£15,300
Tax Rebate (Gift Aid)	£3,450
	<b>£18,750</b>

## Online Banking

Please only use the following references unless told otherwise.

You DO NOT need to add you name as that is done automatically by your bank

<u>Description</u>	<u>Reference</u>
Subscriptions	SUBS
Tickets	TICKETS (used for all concerts except Carols)
Carols Tickets	CAROLS
Workshop	WORKSHOP
Music Hire	MUSIC
Coach Travel	COACH

## Bath Bach Choir

### Balance sheets

	Notes	31-Jul-24	31-Jul-23
<b>Assets</b>			
Bank Balance		5,875	1,023
CCLA Investments	1	38,031	37,789
Friends' bank balance	2	2,591	3,033
Total cash and investments		46,497	41,845
Accrued income	3	10,896	7,275
Total assets		57,393	49,120
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Accounts payable			450
Accrued expenditure		1,669	
Net Assets		55,724	48,670
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Friends' account	2	2,591	3,033
Retained surpluses	4	53,133	45,637
		55,724	48,670

*I hereby certify that the accounts are in accordance with the financial records of the Bath Bach Choir, and that I obtained all the information and explanations required by me as an independent examiner in accordance with the general directions*

Harriet Feilding

5 January 2025



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