



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Royal Philharmonic Society, held on Thursday 11 April 2019, at 6.00pm at Bechstein Room, Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP

Present:

John Gilhooly (Chairman), Edward Blakeman, Peter Bull, Rhiannon Hughes, Kingsley Manning, Gillian Moore, Chi-chi Nwanoku, Leanne Langley, David Long, David Lowe, Yvonne Lowe, James Murphy, Victoria Robey, Robin Sheffield, Janis Susskind, YeYe Xu

- 0.1 John Gilhooly welcomed members and introduced new Chief Executive James Murphy and colleagues. General Manager Robin Sheffield read the list of apologies received:

Louise Mitchell (Honorary Secretary), Anthony Newhouse (Honorary Treasurer), Lincoln Abbotts, Francis Bergin, Anthony Bolton, Jerome Booth, Iain Burnside, Lalita Carlton-Jones, Stephen Cleobury, Vernon Ellis, Rosemary Gent, Sian Griffiths, Sally Groves, Rosemary Johnson, Johnny Langridge, Colin Lawson, Jane Manning, Anthony Payne, Penny Steer, Margaret Steinitz, Atholl Swainston-Harrison, Laurie Watt

1 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 7 March 2018

- 1.1 There were no amendments to the minutes. Kingsley Manning proposed their acceptance and this was approved unanimously. John Gilhooly signed the Minutes.

2 Adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 August 2018

- 2.1 The Annual Report and Accounts had been made available online for a month prior to the meeting and paper copies were available for those present. Wilkins Kennedy has acted as independent examiners and Chris Bush as the Society's accountant during the year.

2.2 James Murphy summarised:

- The Annual Report and Accounts represented the last year of former Executive Director Rosemary Johnson's tenure in which the Society had continued to do valued work for a wide range of beneficiaries
- Of particular note, the RPS Awards balanced eminent artists (such as Vladimir Jurowski, Igor Levit and The Sixteen) with vibrant community projects nationally (such as Classically Yours and Calderland Opera in Yorkshire)
- The financial examination had been smooth and the examiner had raised no concerns
- While revenue was similar to last year, and there was a modest upswing in unrestricted income, it remained a testing year financially with unrestricted reserves down from £635k to £498k
- The New Music restricted fund – central to our work supporting composers – was wholly depleted by year end; the RPS has launched a new appeal to rebuild this, and welcomes support from Members
- The organisation is now set on turning around its financial position, and work is well underway on a Strategic Plan to 'stabilise' the charity, reducing over two years the amount we draw from unrestricted reserves, aiming to run a 'break even' budget in 2020-21. Central to this will be a new approach to Membership, accounted later in the meeting. The organisation is also reviewing costs, particularly around the RPS Awards with a new model where its direct costs are balanced by its income, set for November 2019.

John Gilhooly noted that these plans had the involvement and full support of the Board.

2.4 There were no questions. Victoria Robey proposed acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 August 2018. This was agreed unanimously. John Gilhooly signed the Report.

3 Special Resolution to update the Articles of Association

3.1 John Gilhooly explained that the Board had reviewed the charity's Articles of Association to ensure they are in good order, that the organisation is fully adhering to them, and that they comply with the Charity Governance Code. Though the Articles were largely coherent, there had been some syntax errors and minor inconsistencies where different parts had been adapted over the years. Anthony Newhouse had taken the lead in resolving these so the Articles are now wholly coherent, and was thanked for his attentive work on this with James Murphy.

3.2 There were no questions arising. A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands to approve the Articles of Association.

4 Ordinary Resolution to approve re-election of Trustees as presented in the Notice of the AGM

4.1 John Gilhooly explained that the Charity Commission expects a healthy turnover to governing bodies, and the Articles of Association prescribe this for our advisory Council as well as our Board of Trustees. In seeking the support of colleagues across the profession for the Society's new plans, it is particularly important that we are open and transparent in who governs the charity and on what basis. For accountability to colleagues at large, the charity should draw aboard new and ranging views, and particular expertise when needed, both to the Board and Council. Dates of rotation and retirement as presented in the Notice to the AGM are closely based on terms served so far, by Board and Council: all had been notified of these and agreed to them.

4.2 There were no questions arising. A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands to approve the re-election of Trustees as presented in the Notice of the AGM.

5 Ordinary Resolution to approve re-election of members of the Council as presented in the Notice of the AGM

5.1 John Gilhooly took the moment to record the extraordinary service of David Long and Laurie Watt who have played roles in both the Board and Council of the RPS for over 30 years apiece, and who step down from the Council this year. Both remain Life Members, and the Society will always value their insights, advice and great enthusiasm for all the RPS proceeds to do. John paid equal respects to Arthur Searle who has served a similar period in the role of Honorary Librarian.

5.2 The Board will form an appointments committee to consider new candidates for Council and a General Meeting will be called to propose them for Members' approval later this year.

5.3 There were no questions arising. A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands to approve the re-election of members of the Council as presented in the Notice of the AGM.

6 Ordinary Resolution to approve rates of Membership from 1 June 2019 as presented in the Notice of the AGM

6.1 James Murphy summarised:

- The RPS plans to revitalise and grow its Membership, for its financial sustainability, and also so the organisation fulfils a more prominent and connective role in Britain's musical landscape.
- The Society currently has fewer than 400 regularly-giving Members (compared with the Royal Horticultural Society which has well over half a million); the RPS deserves similar national status, celebrating Britain's love of music.
- New terms of Membership will be presented in late June. Currently this brings no benefits, but the Society will revive its dormant tradition of talks, lecture and events (also made available digitally) to inspire curiosity and pride in classical music, and for Members to feel an active connection.
- It is good practice to have tiers of membership, to develop loyalty and encourage those with closer associations to give more when they can.
- Current Members will individually receive all details at the time of public launch, and the Society dearly values their help in spreading the word to prospective Members where possible.

- 6.3 There were no questions arising. A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands to approve rates of Membership from 1 June 2019 as presented in the Notice of the AGM

7 **Approval of the Board and Council's recommendation to award the Gold Medal.**

- 7.1 John Gilhooly invited Edward Blakeman to account decisions made by the Board and Council regarding the Gold Medal.

- 7.2 Edward Blakeman first accounted that, following a good discussion, the Board and Council had chosen to grant Honorary Membership in the year ahead to three individuals for their outstanding services to music:

Stephen Sondheim – composer and lyricist; Pulitzer Prize and Academy Award-winner; multiple Tony and Grammy Award-winner for his fourteen musicals including *West Side Story*, *Gypsy* (lyrics), *Sweeney Todd*, *Follies*, *Company*, *A Little Night Music* and *Into The Woods* (music and lyrics); performed by professionals and amateurs worldwide

David Pountney CBE – acclaimed international opera director; Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Welsh National Opera since 2011; former Director of Productions at English National Opera and Scottish Opera; presented the RPS lecture on 'The Future of Opera' in 1999

Jordi Savall – internationally-renowned viol player and conductor who has done extensive, essential work performing and promoting Renaissance, Baroque and Medieval music; prolific recording artist; founder of the ensemble Hespèrion XX / XXI; Unesco Artist for Peace 2008

The Society had taken the opportunity of a serendipitous trip by Stephen Sondheim to London in March to present Honorary Membership to him in a private event kindly hosted by the National Theatre on the Olivier stage. A film of this has been posted on the RPS website. Plans are underway for presentations to David Pountney and Jordi Savall and news of these Honorary Memberships remains confidential till then.

- 7.3 After detailed consideration of a number of nominees, Edward Blakeman said that the Board and Council unanimously agreed to propose the Gold Medal be presented to composer Sofia Gubaidulina. She is one of Russia's foremost 20th century composers, championed by Shostakovich, and a contemporary of Schnittke and Denisov. Much of her work is infused with her Russian-Orthodox faith and lifelong interests in spiritualism, improvisation and folk music. Edward noted that this would be the first time in the history of the Royal Philharmonic Society that the Gold Medal was presented to a female composer. Edward quoted Gubaidulina as follows: 'I am a religious person and I understand *religion* in the literal meaning of the word as *religio*, that is to say the restoration of connections, the re-tying of a bond, the restoration of the *legato* in life. Life divides humanity into many pieces. There is no weightier occupation than the re-composition of spiritual integrity through the composition of music.'
- 7.4 A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands to approve awarding the Gold Medal to Sofia Gubaidulina.

A presentation will be organised for later this year and the news remains strictly confidential for now. John Gilhooly thanked all Members for respecting this.

8 **Any other business**

- 8.1 There were no matters arising. John Gilhooly thanked everyone for attending. A number of those present then stayed at the Wigmore Hall to attend a recital presented by soprano Sally Matthews and pianist Simon Lepper.