MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the Royal Philharmonic Society
6.00pm Wednesday 4 May 2022
Bechstein Room, Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP

Present: John Gilhooly (Chairman), Angela Dixon (Honorary Secretary), Camilla Carden, David Lowe, James Murphy, Kingsley Manning, Laurie Watt, Rikesh Shah (Honorary Treasurer), Sally Groves, Victoria Robey, Yvonne Lowe


1 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 4 May 2021

There were no amendments to the Minutes, which were approved by a show of hands from those present and from proxy votes cast.

2 Adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 August 2021

The Trustees’ Annual Report and Accounts, signed by the Chairman and the independent examiner TC Group, had been circulated to Members two weeks prior to the AGM.

Chief Executive James Murphy summarised that the Annual Report accounted much to be proud of, in a year of great challenge that included two periods of lockdown. Regarding each charitable object in turn, achievements included:

Promoting understanding of music
- the RPS’s first live-streamed conversation, with Stephen Fry and Alex Ross on Wagner, garnering more than 8,000 views
- the live-streamed RPS Conversation in which music-makers shared with music-lovers their candid impressions of an extraordinary year
- a new film prompting fresh conversation on The Lark Ascending with a range of voices
- initial forays meeting amateur choirs and orchestras, bringing them closer to the profession, starting with a Zoom encounter for Tonbridge Philharmonic Society with baritone Roderick Williams
Encouraging creativity in music
- the RPS Enterprise Fund, made possible with support from Harriet’s Trust, giving over £200,000 in grants to musicians who had found ways to keep connected with audiences through the pandemic. This was much valued by the sector, and a potent illustration of what an empowered RPS can do, given the means.
- alongside this, all the RPS’s usual grants and commissions were maintained despite the financial difficulties of the pandemic, representing a further £44,000 distributed to performers, and £57,000 to composers
- the launch of the new RPS Young Classical Writers Prize with over 90 entries
- the largest phase yet of the RPS Women Conductors programme, launched in new partnership with Sage Gateshead and the Royal Northern Sinfonia

Recognising excellence in music
- the RPS Awards presented digitally from Wigmore Hall to over 10,000 viewers online: 20 times more than could attend the event in person previously
- the new Inspiration Award voted for by the public, generating over 2,700 nominations, and media coverage nationwide for the RPS
- the RPS Gold Medal presented to composer John Williams, who featured in the RPS Awards broadcast, with a specially-filmed tribute from director Steven Spielberg, generating much further media coverage

Significant progress was also made financially in reducing the charity’s longstanding annual deficit. For the first time in years, the RPS broke even on unrestricted reserves – notably before an upswing on unrealised investment gain and before two legacy gifts were gratefully received. This casts a strong message about the RPS’s current direction of travel, made possible with the ongoing support and good faith of RPS Members. The current year remains financially testing, but the charity is on course to break even for a second year. Charitable activities are progressing well, despite reduced staffing while the management team is in transition. James paid tribute to Robin Sheffield who recently left the RPS on excellent terms after seven devoted years on the staff.

James invited questions from those present. David Lowe asked if Members were responding positively to content newly created for them. James confirmed that a stream of good feedback had been received, and that he and colleagues are so pleased to hear from Members and get a greater sense of their musical interests and views. Laurie Watt asked about future plans for the RPS Awards, and James confirmed that the next event will take place on 1 March 2023 at London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall, set to welcome a larger audience of music-lovers.

3 Ordinary Resolution to approve appointments on the Board of Trustees
John Gilhooly expressed gratitude to outgoing Trustee Jonathan Langridge for all he had done for the charity whilst on the Board.

The re-appointment of Angela Dixon as Honorary Secretary and Rikesh Shah as Honorary Treasurer was approved by a show of hands from those present and from proxy votes cast.

4 Ordinary Resolution to approve election of members of the Council
John Gilhooly expressed thanks to outgoing Council member Chi-chi Nwanoku for over a decade of valued service to the RPS.

The re-appointment of Janis Susskind, Leanne Langley as Honorary Librarian, and Sally Groves to the Council was approved by a show of hands from those present and from proxy votes cast.

5 Ordinary Resolution to approve the Board and Council’s nomination for the Gold Medal
John Gilhooly accounted the Board and Council’s nomination of the celebrated violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, one of the world’s most-loved artists, respected for her interpretation of countless violin masterpieces, and for
significantly expanding the violin repertory. John noted that, among the many new works she has performed are notable pieces by RPS Gold Medal recipients Sofia Gubaidulina, John Williams, Henri Dutilleux and Witold Lutoslawski, and she is a noted humanitarian, witnessed through the benefit concerts she has given so far in 2022 for the victims of the war in the Ukraine.

A vote was passed unanimously by a show of hands from those present and from proxy votes cast to approve awarding the Gold Medal to Anne-Sophie Mutter. A presentation will be organised for later this year and the news remains strictly confidential for now. John thanked all Members for respecting this.

6 Any other business

No further business was proposed, so John Gilhooly concluded the formalities of this year’s AGM. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, he thanked James Murphy and the management team for their work, and expressed sincere gratitude to Members for their ongoing support and belief in the Royal Philharmonic Society and all it does for the good of music.