

## **Minutes of the St Mary's Music Association (SMMA) Annual General Meeting**

**held at 12.00 on Sunday 12 March 2023 in the Parish Rooms**

### **In attendance (21):**

Officers: Rev Jeremy Trew (President), Hannah Razzell (Chairman), Oli King (Director of Music), Jim Butler (Publicity Secretary), Otilie Lefever (Secretary)

Other SMMA Committee Members: Jeremy Allen, Ellie Beare, Peter de Vile, Bron Ferland, Alison Lawrence (now elected Officer as Social Secretary for the Junior Choir), Noel Starr

Others: Kate Beare, Rosie Kennedy Cadell, Caroline Goulder, Lesley Green, Paula Griffiths, Kathleen Huey, Jenny Kircaldy, Patrick Li, Roger Mance, Anna Martin

The President opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He thanked the SMMA for its contribution to worship at St Mary's, and in particular for its support for young singers.

### **1 Confirmation that the AGM had been properly advertised**

The Chairman confirmed that the meeting had been properly advertised

### **2 Apologies for absence**

Lizzie Bennett, Gill Gibson, Nell Hardingham, Diana and David Hoy, Martin Hugall, Margaret Jacobs, Mo Pullen, Sue and Rowan Sylvester-Bradley

### **3 Adoption of the Minutes of the previous AGM, held on 20 March 2022**

The Minutes were adopted for signature by the Chairman.

### **4 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising

### **5 Correspondence**

None reported

### **6 Chairman's report**

#### **Chairman's Report 2023**

Hannah Razzell told the meeting that this was the first report she thought she had had to write since my University dissertation, and asked everyone to bear with her if this was not up to previous standards.

She said: Taking on the role of Chair, a role so wonderfully carried out by Bron for so many years, was a somewhat daunting task, but whilst this year has been quite a steep learning curve for me, the one thing which has stood out is people's willingness to help and advise and so I am grateful to you all for that – committee and friends of the committee alike. Thank you for your help and commitment and for your part in ensuring that the SMMA continues to thrive.

The provision of music here at St Mary's is one of the things which drew my family to worship here and indeed it attracts many; it is wonderful to see that this glorious tradition continues; my thanks go to Jeremy and to Gill Caswell especially for all they do to support music in our worship together.

This year was an important year for the SMMA in that it saw the return of our Lunchtime Concert series – the first since pre-Covid times. Our audiences seemed to grow as the series went on, which was incredibly pleasing. We welcomed several performers who had been due to perform in 2020 when the world stopped for a bit! There were a number of stand-out concerts for me – it was particularly special to welcome Elliot Randall – former Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar – back to perform a recital for us – how far he has continued to come on! We also enjoyed outstanding performances from various students from Saffron Walden County High School – these students were so tremendously grateful to be given the opportunity to perform after missing these opportunities throughout Covid, and so delighted to perform in our beautiful church. As ever, music proves itself to be such a perfect catalyst for bringing communities together, and in the case of St Mary's, for bringing them into our church. Of course we also enjoyed a fabulous performance given by our very own Diana Hoy – a stunning way to end a successful series! We were then treated to a fabulous Organ Plus recital given by Oli and Guy and Kate Llewellyn on French Horn and Trumpet – this recital was a brilliant success with just under 80 people in the audience and over £500 raised. Thank you Oli! One thing which struck me was how at each of these concerts we had a mix of new faces and regular faces, and how perfect it was that we reach out to all. A number of people told me how delighted they were that our concerts were back and how they really are the highlight of each week during the summer months, so it seems our efforts are more than worthwhile – for the financial implications to the SMMA and for our outreach work in our roles as disciples of Christ.

This year inevitably saw movement from within our Choral Scholar ranks; we lost George (who has gone on to Durham University, having been awarded a Vice Chancellor's music scholarship), Helena who has gone on to study Drama in Birmingham, and we also said goodbye to Eleanor who has gone on to Israel to join in the Church's Ministry among Jewish People. We feel quite sure they will pop back whenever they can!

Of course I cannot continue without mentioning our Pirate and Mermaid themed Social event, beautifully arranged by Nell and which Noel and Judith were kind enough to host! We sang and enjoyed delicious refreshments of course! It was a joy all to be together to celebrate a fun-packed musical year. We also had the annual Choral Scholars' concert – there were performances from choral scholars both past and present, and I think all were struck at the wealth of talent from within the ranks; we were treated to solos, duets and ensembles – what a joyous occasion.

Covid having been responsible for us not awarding our SMMA Bursary for a couple of years, we decided this year to offer the bursary once again. This is a bursary of £250 which can be used to purchase music, instrumental lessons or be used to help purchase an instrument. We had two most deserving applications and felt that since we had not given the award for a couple of years, both applicants should be recipients, We were delighted to offer the full bursary to both Eden Faith and Isaac Game – we felt their tireless commitment to the musical life of the church deserved reward.

This year saw the start of some transformation in the Muniments Room – this is where much of the Church Music is kept. Unfortunately, we have been running out of space owing to lack of shelving and difficulty of access. We applied for Funding from Stansted Airport and were successful in our application, so we have been able to purchase much needed shelving units to help get things organised! With great help from Chris Bishop, one Saturday morning, Oli, Chris and I built the units which are now waiting to be filled with more music.

As we near the end of our Organ Scholar Yechan's time with us, our thoughts will soon turn to the advertising for the next Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar. It remains a wonderful thing that we

can encourage young organists to come and train alongside Oli and Jeremy. Both the scholars we have had to date have proven themselves to be a great asset to the church.

And we have finished the year on a high! Our first Coffee Concert – a new venture – took place this week and was well-received! I am hopeful that this mini-series of concerts can help to boost our accounts and continue to enable us to support the musical life of the church. Please do come along in support of these concerts if you are able to. I personally would love them to be a great success.

My thanks go to all who make the music at St Mary's possible: Oli for your vision, your drive, your talent and all your hard work – thank you. Also thank you to Jeremy Allen, Yechan, our choirs, Lizzie Bennett for running Joyful Noise and Phil Dudfield for co-ordinating our brass. And thank YOU all for your support; we make a winning team!

Well, that dissertation I mentioned earlier? – funnily enough it was on Plato and Aristotle's view of music - how they felt music provided us with a moral law. Here at St Mary's, when music and worship combine, which they do so often, we find ourselves in a deeper spiritual place – long may this continue, and long may we continue to live out Psalm 21:13:

Rise up, O Lord, In all your power. With music and singing We will celebrate your mighty acts.

## **7 Treasurer's report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022**

There were no questions on the accounts, which were received and approved.

## **8 Director of Music's report**

Oli King reported that it has been another busy year and the choirs continue to recover well from 'the covid experience'. At the time of writing this report, both Junior and Senior choir numbers remain strong, though there is always work to be done to ensure that this continues to be the case. There is no room for complacency. It has been pleasing to see that the choirs have largely responded well to some fairly significant changes to the music provision within our services. It is important to keep in mind that we are all on a journey when singing and playing in church.

The Junior Choir has recently gone from strength to strength and are developing into a close-knit group which works hard and produces a beautiful sound. Numbers are strong, though not quite what they were pre-pandemic and retention of children is noticeably more of a concern in 2023 than it was in 2020. The Juniors held a successful recruitment evening in the summertime which attracted a lot of local attention. They also had a stall at the Christmas fair and sang for a large number of services over the year. Patricia our former head chorister has now become a choral scholar and it has been a pleasure to promote Alex to the position of head chorister – she is carrying out her role with diligence and enthusiasm. The Juniors recently ran a cake stall in the town centre with the aim of raising funds for a trip to Ely cathedral to hear the girls' choir. Alison Lawrence has helped tirelessly over the year and my thanks go to her for her stupendous ongoing efforts.

Lizzie, our wonderful Joyful Noise leader writes "After starting up again in Autumn 2021, Joyful Noise has met regularly throughout term time. At the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year we sent four youngsters to join the ranks of the Junior Choir and they all seem to be thoroughly enjoying the experience! We currently have five singers, having unfortunately lost a couple to changes in family situations. Since January 2023, we have also been joined by one of the more senior choristers from the Junior ranks who is volunteering as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. We could do with having more new members. Currently three singers are from St Mary's School (on Castle Street), one is from KSS and the fifth is a former St Mary's pupil who now attends a school in Much

Hadham. It would be lovely to have a wider range of schools represented!" Many thanks to Lizzie for her tremendous efforts with this important group.

It is good to see that the adult choir is mostly full on paper, and singing well too, though for various understandable reasons, attendance over the year has proved to be slightly concerning. My hope is that this will improve in the near future. The choirs sang for a number of large services and events over the year. There is insufficient space to itemise everything here, though some highlights include: Mozart Requiem (sung in partnership with the East Anglia Chamber Orchestra), a number of simply stunning choral evensongs, two civic services, and a whole raft of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany services. My grateful thanks to our wonderful librarians Margaret Jacobs, Siong Siong and Jim Butler for their tireless support and hard work over the year.

The Brass Group has continued to play for a number of services including, Easter Day Eucharist, the Civic Service for Queen's Jubilee and Christmas carol service. The associated quintet has also performed a concert and performed at the Christmas fair. We look forward to welcoming them for the Easter day service in a few weeks along with some further events and services later this year – watch this space! Thanks go to Phil Dudfield for his help with running this group.

Yechan, our organ scholar, has gone from strength to strength, and I now find it difficult at times, knowing who is actually 'on the keys' up in the organ loft. I am pleased that Yechan decided, at our invitation, to stay at St Mary's for a second year. Yechan is hoping to continue his organ playing beyond here as he looks to move to university in September. We wish him the very best with his ongoing musical and academic journey and look forward to hearing more from his endeavours in the future.

The organ continues to provide the lion's share of support for our musical activities at church, though the condition of the instrument continues to deteriorate on a yearly basis. In the Autumn, the PCC agreed to the formation of a subcommittee with the aim of drawing up a statement of needs and recommendations for subsequent 'next steps' to be taken. It is still very early days though I hope to report back in the future about our progress with this project. My thanks go to Peter De Vile for continuing to manage to keep this large instrument in roughly working order – I am aware that this is an ever increasing uphill struggle for him and am tremendously grateful for his ongoing efforts.

Looking forward into 2024, we are tremendously excited to be in the early planning stages for a potential large schools outreach performance of Noyes' Fludde by Benjamin Britten. This would likely take place in the first half of 2024 and involve a considerable number of children and young people from the town community. I hope to report more back on this in the very near future.

My grateful thanks go to the SMMA committee, to Otilie for her work as secretary, and to everyone who helps with our musical life at St Mary's. To Gill Gibson our wardrobe mistress, to Patrick Li for his help with virtually everything, to our musicians in the family service band, Taizé group and other instrumentalists, to Bron Ferland for her continued help as music administrator, and to Jim Butler for his help with our publicity.

I would like to thank Jeremy Allen for his help with playing the organ, acting as key role model for the organ scholar, for his conducting and deputising, and most of all, for his friendship, advice and wisdom.

Hannah Razzell has simply been a tour de force so far and it has been a real pleasure working with her over the year. Hannah is extremely focussed and efficient, but also completely awesome and

one of the easiest people to work with who I have met. Hannah is a very able musician and plays in the brass group, and on occasion, will be heard and seen singing in our various choirs – but she also does everything else as well!

Lastly, I would like to thank Jeremy Trew for his continued support and ongoing encouragement of our choirs and music. His friendly support and approachable wisdom and leadership are much appreciated by all.

**9 Amendments to the Constitution**

The proposed amendments were agreed, namely:

- The possible number of Ordinary Members of the SMMA Committee was increased from 5 to 6 (paragraph 4 of the Constitution)
- The role of Social Coordinator of the Junior Choir became that of an Officer elected for 4 years rather than of an Ordinary Member elected for 3 (paragraph 5 of the Constitution)

**10 Elections**

The positions to be elected were Social Coordinator of the Junior Choir (now an Officer role with a 4 year term); 3 ordinary Committee Members (3 year terms).

Alison Lawrence was elected to the Office of Social Coordinator of the Junior Choir (having previously performed this role as an Ordinary Member), proposed by Otilie Lefever, seconded by Peter De Vile.

Rosie Kennedy Cadell was elected as an Ordinary Member, proposed by Hannah Razzell, seconded by Patrick Li.

Bron Ferland was elected as an Ordinary Member, proposed by Hannah Razzell, seconded by Otilie Lefever.

Noel Starr was elected as an Ordinary Member, having formerly been a co-opted Member, proposed by Hannah Razzell, seconded by Jim Butler.

**10 Any other business**

Caroline Goulder asked about continuing funding for the Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholarship. Oli King advised that this is still partly (around 20%) funded from the original amount provided in memory of Michael Swindlehurst. The remainder is provided by regular allocations from St Mary’s and Wendens Ambo churches. The situation will need to be reviewed in a few years time.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.30pm

Signed as a true record of the SMMA AGM of 12 March 2023

..... (SMMA Chairman)

Hannah Razzell