

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD AT MALBANK SCHOOL

ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15 th., 1994, AT 7.0.p.m.

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Present: Dr. John Howard, Chairman, Mr. Stephen Buckman, Conductor,
and approximately 70 members.

Introduction

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming. He said that as Mr. Wally Kaye had resigned as Secretary, the minutes would be taken by Mrs. Sue Munks. He explained that the meeting's purpose was to discuss the future image and marketing of the Society.

The Conductor then described the way in which the Society had grown over its 21 years, to the point now where it was the leading choral group for some distance, and had an ever-growing audience of genuine music lovers and the eager participation of professional soloists and instrumentalists. However the current financial shortfall meant there had to be a radical change in the Society's funding, as internal funding and sponsorship and grants were not sufficient. A sub-committee had been investigating possibilities, and apart from possible changes to the subscription, marketing was found to be the only method not yet tried to develop the Society's fund-raising potential.

The Chairman then outlined the Committee's plan.

There had been meetings with the Senior Marketing Manager of the Manchester group Business in Arts. The services of this group are used by many societies in the area, e.g. Camerata, to ensure a regular base of customers and to market the society to increase its income and audience.

Under the scheme, names and addresses of patrons of the Society would be collected and put on a mailing list. The Society's image would be redesigned and promotional literature would be developed, e.g. 2-colour brochure, and sent to those on the mailing list, together with offers of e.g. discounts on bulk purchase of tickets. The Society's posters and programmes would tie in with the new image and it would have to be made easier to book tickets, e.g. with a phone sale line.

The cost would be around £1000 each year, starting with £300 this autumn for the first mailshot. A 20 mile radius might be decided on, and a 4% return was likely.

Questions and discussion then followed which included the following points:

1. Idea of a season ticket - this was already being developed.
2. Each society's mailing list is kept confidential.
3. Around 100 more tickets sold per concert would cover the average deficit of around £600.
4. There would be no guarantee that the scheme would bring a 4% increase in audiences.
5. Venues Venues for rehearsals and concerts were discussed.
 - Concerts Oakley Centre and Civic Hall accoustics are very bad, both costly and probably not large enough.
 - Rehearsals Malbank costs us £1400 p.a.
Elim would be around £600p.a.
Central Methodist Church has had seating alterations.
The Conductor will look into this.
6. Concert Repertoire There was much discussion as to whether savings should be made by performing more 'popular' works or having cheaper instrumentalists or soloists. The Chairman said this has been fully considered before but the fact is that a professional standard of music is part of the Society's success and if we reduce costs, standards would drop. This was strongly endorsed by the Conductor.
7. Buying own music, as many societies do - next season's music, e.g., would cost £25 per person. This was not seen as feasible, and hire cost of £400 p.a. was not large item in Choir's budget.
8. Members' Subscriptions could not be discussed at this meeting, but it was felt they must be looked at at the A.G.M. £45 was not thought to be a high cost in the circumstances. Covenanting increases value of subscriptions.
9. Possible change of name. It was felt this would be a mistake as the Society had gained its reputation under this name, and, to quote, "the name tells people where we are and what we do"!
10. Plan for audience names and addresses to be obtained at Saturday's Rossini concert - this would be by means of a draw with prize of free tickets for Messiah concert. The purpose would be explained to audience.

Other suggestions were made and various doubts raised. Several members however voiced the views that the Society must go forwards, not back, and that the plans should be tried.

Mrs. Cynthia Gorton proposed that the Committee be empowered to develop the plan of mailshots of information to our regular audience and new members on a database.

Mrs. Joyce Clegg seconded this.

Members voted. There were several against, and some abstained, but there was a clear majority in favour of the proposal.

The meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.