

STRINGS ATTACHED

Draft Minutes of the 9th Annual General Meeting held on 13 February 2020 at 1200 at 9 Powis Square, Brighton

Present: David Botibol, Sandie Botibol, John McKean, Mary McKean (Chair)
Christine Moon, Paul Moore, Andrew Polmear, Margaret Polmear, Euan Reid, Guy Richardson, Helen Simpson

Apologies: Chris Darwin, David Harrison

1 Chair's welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 To receive the minutes of the eighth Annual General Meeting held on 28 February 2019

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

*Proposed: Helen Simpson
Seconded: Guy Richardson*

It was noted that comments on the 2018/19 season had been sought as usual through the Strings Attached newsletter but that none had been received. The Chair suggested that this be taken as a sign of general satisfaction.

As suggested at the meeting, Strings Attached newsletters are now available on the Strings Attached website.

David Botibol was warmly thanked for ensuring that printing AGM papers from the website had this year, unlike last, been straightforward.

3 To receive the Annual Report of the Committee of Strings Attached

The report was received.

The Chair drew attention to the delay in coffee concerts' returning to the Corn Exchange as a result of the change in contractor responsible for the refurbishment. Although work is understood to be back on track, it was thought the Corn Exchange would not be available for use until at least the beginning of 2021. When the coffee concerts do return

there, it is hoped, she said, to organise a special event to mark the occasion which was discussed further under item 9 below.

The Chair also drew attention to and thanked those who undertake work for Strings Attached outside the committee as follows:

- *Chris Darwin* for his outstanding programme notes and also for managing various aspects of the Strings Attached website including the calendar of events.
- *David Botibol* for his overall management of the Strings Attached website.
- *Andrew Polmear* for the regular newsletters and his concert reviews.

The Chair was asked on behalf of Seaford Music Society whether membership of the Cavatina scheme, whereby those aged 8-25 are eligible for free coffee concert tickets, was thought to be cost effective. It was agreed that it is, not least as a means of encouraging the development of the next generation of concert-goers. It was pointed out, however, that some significant effort is made to attract a younger audience through the production of a specific flyer about the scheme and the concerts which is widely distributed to, for example, churches in Brighton, Hove and Lewes, language schools, the universities, Brighton Youth Orchestra, instrumental teachers and local music societies and festivals. It was thought that take up of the free tickets was related in part both to the ensemble playing and the music being performed.

The Secretary was asked to pass on the information we have about the number of free tickets issued at specific concerts to the Seaford Music Society.

4 To receive the audited financial accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019

The audited financial accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 were received.

It was noted that Strings Attached enjoys a very healthy bank balance and has two sponsors each willing to donate £2,000 once we are in a position to offer extra concerts to the usual six per season, in addition to the possibility of a legacy. It was pointed out in this context that the constitution of Strings Attached is designed for organisations with an income of £5,000 or less and that, whilst the Charity Commission is willing to allow an organisation to exceed this level on occasion, we might need to change our constitution should our annual income regularly exceed £5,000.

It was explained that the £2,000 concert sponsorship given to Brighton Dome in the last financial year was to offset the additional cost of holding coffee concerts at the Attenborough Centre rather than the Corn Exchange.

5 To agree the annual subscription rate for 2020/21

It was proposed and agreed that the annual subscription for the year 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 should remain unchanged at £10 (£5 for students).

Proposed: Christine Moon

Seconded: Andrew Polmear

6 General Data Protection Regulation: data protection policy and register of systems

The Chair explained that Strings Attached is required to present its data protection policy and register of systems for examination at each Annual General Meeting, the documents having been reviewed by the committee at its meeting prior to the AGM. The committee, she said, felt no changes were necessary. It was, however, suggested that specific reference be made to the sharing of a member's bank details with the bank used by Strings Attached when a member's subscription is paid by cheque.

The Treasurer agreed to consider this matter which will be discussed at a future committee meeting.

7 To appoint members to the committee

The Chair indicated that Euan Reid had expressed an interest in joining the committee and that existing members were looking forward to working with him. He was duly appointed.

Proposed: Mary McKean

Seconded: Andrew Polmear

It was reported that all members of the outgoing committee were willing to serve for a further year and they too were duly appointed.

Proposed: John McKean

Seconded: Andrew Polmear

8 To receive views on the 2019/20 season

As noted under item 2 above, no views on the 2018/19 season were received. It was nevertheless agreed that views on the current 2019/20 season should be sought through the newsletter.

Those present at the meeting were generally of the view that the 2019/20 repertoire was excessively conservative. Although it was recognised that, when hiring an ensemble, the ensemble will almost certainly wish to play pieces with which it is familiar or working on, it was felt that it might be possible to negotiate with at least some ensembles to offer more less-familiar pieces that they might need to work up.

The Chair reported that the Strings Attached committee had already embarked on an analysis of the range of music and ensembles offered at coffee concerts from October 2011 to March 2020 which it intended when complete to discuss with Andrew Comben, Chief Executive of Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival, and would share with the membership. In this context, the question of whether audience figures can be linked to a particular type of ensemble, for example string quartet or wind group, or repertoire offered was raised. The Secretary undertook to try to obtain audience figures from Brighton Dome colleagues so that an analysis can be made.

It was thought that the way in which concerts were advertised might also affect audience numbers. It was noted, for example, that there had been an especially large audience for the recent Heath Quartet concert which had featured in *Viva Brighton*. It was felt that the question of advertising coffee concerts in more unusual places, such as *Viva Brighton*, should also be discussed with Andrew Comben. Advertising concerts on Radio 3 on Sunday morning as had recently been suggested was not thought to be feasible as on the whole amateur groups are featured.

9 Sponsorship and a possible chamber music weekend

The Chair reported that, thanks to the significant sponsorship already received and reflected in the Strings Attached bank balance plus further sponsorship already promised as noted under item 4 above, initial positive discussions have taken place with Andrew Comben, Chief Executive of Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival, about the possibility of organising a chamber music weekend sponsored by Strings Attached to launch the return of the coffee concerts to the Corn Exchange and which might run from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Such an event, it was hoped, would include some non-performance moments such as open rehearsals and talks. The possibility of the pianist Tom Poster putting together such a weekend with a group of musicians able to play in various combinations was warmly received. The idea of such a weekend having a thematic thread, such as a specific composer or composers associated with Brighton, was suggested.

It was recognised that organising such an event would take a great deal of thought and work to achieve.

The matter will be discussed further by the committee and taken forward with colleagues at Brighton Dome once it is known when the Corn Exchange will again be available.

10 Any further issues for consideration

There were no further issues for consideration.

11 Closing remarks

The Chair again thanked everyone for attending the meeting and invited them to stay for the refreshments provided.

Andrew and Margaret Polmear were thanked for hosting the meeting and organising the lunch.

Thanks were also extended to Andrew Comben and his colleagues at Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival for the continued high standard of the coffee concerts and their support and co-operation throughout the year and to the staff at the Attenborough Centre for their help at the concerts.

Andrew Polmear thanked the committee for its work throughout the year.

MP/13.03.20