

## **16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

### **PEOPLE OF NOTE INTERNATIONAL TOURING ASSOCIATION (PONITA)**

**Registered Charity No 1113893**

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 from 2pm to 4pm at St Paul's Church in Southville,  
Bristol**

#### **MINUTES**

##### **Present: PONITA members in attendance:**

Alison Roberts, Christine Golesworthy, Clare More, Dorothy Greaves, Emma Dangerfield, Eric Booth, Fenella Butler, Fred Caswell, Helen Gamsa, Jane Morgan, John Gulson, Julia Townsend, Leela Grant, Maggie Flannagan, Mary Crowder, Natalie Skidmore, Nigel Siddall, Pauline Emmett, Rhiannon Prys-Owen, Rina Vergano, Robin McDowell, Shena McCulloch, Stuart Grant, Sue Taylor

##### **1 - Welcome and Appointment of Meeting Chair:**

Robin welcomed the members with a special welcome to Rosie Sleightholme who was invited as leader designate of People of Note. Rhiannon was appointed Meeting Chair.

##### **2 – Apologies were received by:**

Angela Tanner, Bob Endsor, Eric Lewis, Gil Barrow, Hannah Blackshaw, Jean Barrow, Jeanie Copland, Mary French, Mary Nicholls, Paula Williams, Philip Barker, Sue Fenton, Wendy Hawthorn

##### **3 – Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Rhiannon reflected that the AGM in 2021 was held via a Zoom meeting. There were difficult times that we all experienced during Covid restrictions and various lockdowns where the choir could not meet at all. It was uncertain whether the charity or indeed the choir would continue to exist. It was agreed that the way forward was to create a working party as a major faction to look for a possible new leader to see if the charity could be viable regarding the structure required for financial assistance towards venue hire, leader payments and overheads. She remarked how great it was to all be here. The minutes were unanimously accepted, proposed by Stuart Grant and seconded by Julia Townend.

##### **4 – Chair's Annual Report – for year 2021 to date**

Nigel Siddall was asked to deliver a report as Working Party Chair and his review is attached as **Appendix 1** and can also be found on the PONITA website.

Rhiannon accepted the report, proposed by Shena McCulloch and seconded by Rina Vergano.

##### **5 – Treasurer's Annual Report**

Robin explained about the income and expenditure account for 2021 and the update since the autumn 2021 workshops.

He mentioned that the Sharpham weekend event to celebrate twenty years of Nickomo and Rasullah's leadership was cancelled by the venue due to covid restrictions. All payments were refunded to members. The alternative celebration event at St Paul's was funded by the charity. The workshops and choir sessions that the working party organised to December

2021 has led to a surplus of £1394.56, despite some events making a loss through lack of member interest. Robin thanked Eric Lewis and Philip Barker for number crunching to determine the viability of ticket prices with unknown attendance numbers.

The meeting agreed to accept the statement, proposed by Stuart Grant and seconded by Fred Caswell.

Ceema McDowell has usually completed a financial audit for PONITA. Her appointment was agreed and proposed by Eric Booth and seconded by Rina Vergano.

Eric Booth pointed out that many smaller charities do not need to be audited every year. Nigel said that as we have an interim agreement to keep things as they are until the summer term, we could agree these things with PONITA then. Rhiannon proposed to delay confirmation of auditor, proposed by Shena McCulloch and seconded by Eric Booth.

The formal report with notes is attached as **Appendix 2** and can also be found on the PONITA website.

## **6 – Appointment of the Executive Committee and Charity Trustees**

Nominations for trustees were required for Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and a minimum of five trustees are required by the constitution.

Rhiannon Prys-Owen, Dorothy Greaves and Jeanie Copland have stepped down as trustees. Sue Morse has moved away and is no longer a trustee.

The following positions were filled:

Chair and Trustee – Christine Golesworthy, proposed by Dorothy Greaves and seconded by Nigel Siddall

Treasurer and Trustee – Robin McDowell, proposed by Eric Booth and seconded by Fred Caswell

Trustee – Eric Booth, proposed by Rhiannon Prys-Owen and seconded by Rina Vergano

Robin said there should be five Trustees, however, as we are in transition, we can always co-opt members to help. Rhiannon asked for agreement, and it was proposed by Alison Roberts and seconded by Stuart Grant.

## **7 – Ratification of new People of Note Choir Leader**

Nigel explained that we had come across a remarkable and extraordinary candidate that the working party has proposed as our new leader. Ratification of her was now due and a show of hands in favour of Rosie Sleightholme becoming our leader was unanimous. A loud round of applause ensued. Nigel acknowledged the hard work done by the working party and the tremendous support shown by PON members and of course, the enthusiasm given by Rosie. He was confident that this will give us the basis of a remarkable choir later.

Rhiannon asked Rosie to come forward to make her presentation.

## **8 – Presentation by Rosie Sleightholme, leader of People of Note**

Rosie started with a delightful song, her song “Spring Interlude”, thanked everyone and declared that she felt very emotional and honoured to be our new leader. Rosie was very grateful to Nigel and Christine for working together with her and having several meetings at Windmill City Farm.

**Background** - Rosie runs two daytime choirs in South Bristol. She comes from a musical background and had a classical foundation, playing the cello and piano from when she was young. She studied Archaeology & Anthropology at Oxford University, and while there she began writing and performing her own songs. She also enjoyed playing and singing different kinds of music, including jazz, folk and improvisation.

After university, she did lots of gigging as a solo artist in London and then travelled round the world, playing music and busking in different countries. After this she continued gigging in London before moving to mid Wales where she discovered a love for community singing, especially in the local folk session scene. She joined her friend's Natural Voice choir and was inspired that she would like to lead her own choir one day.

After Wales, Rosie moved to Bristol. When she was pregnant, she did a choir leadership course with Susie Ro Prater, which gave her the confidence to begin work as a choir leader. She started a choir for pregnant women and then, when her baby was nearly a year old, a parent and baby choir. She then set up a regular daytime community choir, all in South Bristol.

Then covid hit and Rosie kept people singing through meeting outdoors in Victoria Park in the woods. Some PON members trickled in, namely John and Jennifer Smith and Rina Vergano. Jennifer asked Rosie if she would like to be put forward as our leader and she said yes, she would.

Christine and Rhiannon met her in the woods to sing, and here we are...

Rosie is part of the Natural Voice Network, just like Nickomo. She feels that having no barriers to singing is important and to be joyful singing in harmony together. Her first session with us in the autumn last year gave her goose bumps and it was clear to her how what we have is so special, and how welcoming we are to new people.

Rosie spoke of her vision for the future and said that she will have the same approach as Nickomo, in terms of running things herself, as she already does with her existing choirs.

**Repertoire** – Rosie wants to always teach a variety of songs, including intro songs, chanting songs, easily satisfying songs and longer, more challenging ones. This includes songs from all over the world, in different languages. She feels it is important to give a broad range with variety, and we have inspired her to write her own songs now, and she has several new songs coming on at the moment. Nickomo gave her a list of songs he had taught us over the years. Bob Endsor had asked if we could revisit some of Nickomo's arrangements which are 'old favourites' of the choir. Rosie is quite open to that. She is aware that we have been running a long time, however she invited us to email her some of our favourites, including classical or pop songs.

**Finances** - Rosie discussed payments and recognised that the Jon Conway Events site is very useful for now, however eventually she would like all payments to go to her business account directly. She feels we should keep it as it is for now, and then payments to start going straight to Rosie from the summer or September 2022.

She will offer free taster sessions. She would like to operate largely to school terms, either ten or twelve week terms.

**Community** - Rosie is up for community gigs with us and/or with other choirs and would like to aim for a concert at least once a year, ticketed, either summer or Christmas, maybe see what works. It is good to aim towards a performance outside rehearsals.

She is enthusiastic about trips too, however not quite yet as they are a lot of work. Perhaps the UK first then maybe twin with other countries.

**Venues** - Rosie discussed venues and she is very aware that there are many needs and opinions about them. When she starts full time leadership in September, she feels she cannot manage any more than once a week and so it will be Southville based. She is not totally wedded to St Paul's as it is cold, parking is difficult, but it is great for size and acoustics. She is currently contacting other venues.

She is not saying she cannot ever commit to another venue in north Bristol, just not right now. For now, she wants to focus on one place and get new people into the choir. A survey could be possible so that if numbers allow, she could commit to another venue at some point in the future.

There will be a short summer term this year and the dates will be:

10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May at St Paul's, 24<sup>th</sup> May and 7<sup>th</sup> June at Tyndale, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June at St Paul's.

Rosie may try out different South Bristol venues if circumstances permit.

There was a Q&A session where various items were discussed:

Clean air zone and car sharing, pricing, advertising for new members, temperature at St Paul's (Christine to ask for more heat), important to start sessions on time or miss the warmup.

Rhiannon thanked Rosie for her presentation.

Robin then thanked Rhiannon for her services to PONITA and PON as she has been secretary to PONITA since 2016. She is moving to Plymouth in April. She has been an absolute star and we are sorry to see her go. He wished her every success and presented her with a gift of champagne, two cut glass champagne flutes and a 2008 PON concert DVD.

Rhiannon thanked Robin and declared that it has been a privilege and the best thing she has done. She recalled that when she tried to join a choir in a North Somerset village, when hearing that Rhiannon could not read music, was told "you're no good to me then!" Rhiannon has since felt the real joy of singing together with PON and sent her thanks and best wishes to Robin and PON choir.

Stuart Grant gave a special vote of thanks to the Working Party for working so hard to bring us to this point with a round of applause from members.

## **9 – AOB**

There was no other business and Rhiannon declared the meeting over at 4pm.

### **Attachments:**

**Appendix 1 - Chair's Annual Report**

**Appendix 2 - Treasurer's Annual Report**