



# The South West Early Music Forum

## Minutes of virtual Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 22 August from 2pm via Zoom

**1. Present** Clare Griffel (Chair), Jonathan Tribe (Honorary Treasurer), Althea Hamlyn (Secretary), Sara Scorey (Web Editor), Rick Fitzsimmons (Diary Editor), Peter Crispin (Cornwall rep), Elizabeth Gowers (Dorset rep) and 17 other members.

Clare welcomed everyone and asked if there were any objections to the proceedings being recorded. There were none.

**2. Apologies** were received from Mr & Mrs B Tutcher, Jean Quinn

### **3. Chairman's report**

"None of us could have imagined, when we held our last AGM, the circumstances under which we would be meeting this year – and it's hard to recall that before everything shut down in late March, we had already had more than half a year of successful activity. So let's remember the excellent meetings we enjoyed pre-Covid-19, including Gawain Glenton's Praetorius day in the great new venue in Cheltenham, the usual very popular chamber music and Renaissance Winds Band days, and the very enjoyable workshop-cum-social event on West Country Carols with Eddie Upton, in yet another good new venue. (This was organised by Alison Suter. Had anyone heard if she had been to or returned from New Zealand?)

We are grateful to everyone who helped in any way with workshop organisation.

Of course it has been an enormous disappointment to have to cancel – or at least, we hope, postpone – a number of planned events, particularly the Baroque Orchestra day which had been a long time in the planning, and for which we had just agreed Culmstock Village Hall as the venue.

At this time it is not clear when we might be able to resume face-to-face meetings.

Some of you may have seen reports in the press of a research study on the spreading of the virus via aerosols generated in singing and playing wind and brass instruments, a pre-print of which was issued this week. I've had access to this via the Association of Teachers of Singing website, and having waded through the science, I'm afraid the findings are not as clear-cut as many musicians had hoped. It does seem that the volume, both of singing and speaking, has a crucial effect on the emission of particles – so we will have to sing very quietly. There is also evidence on the Making Music website, which we're keeping an eye on. *Venetia Caine said there was an interview with Barbara Eifler, CEO of Making Music, on Facebook which she can send.*

One of our problems may be finding venues which are willing to host events like ours, given all the requirements on deep-cleaning etc.

*Lindsey Shaw-Miller commented that, having visited some churches in Devon, such buildings could be ideal in terms of space and ventilation.*

"So no simple answers. As for the government advice, there is still a good deal of confusion.

*It was also noted that numbers involved are crucial; 30 might be a maximum. Would members be prepared to attend?*

Clare continued: "So I think we need to resign ourselves to at least several months longer with no "live" activity, though we'll keep the situation under frequent review. Of course, people are enormously inventive in devising online activities to keep everyone busy, and we are hugely indebted to Sara, our web editor, for the extensive lists of links which she is circulating every week and posting on the website.



We are also very conscious of the difficulties faced by many of our tutors, most of whom are self-employed, and so with the dual aim of helping them and providing some activity for our members, your committee agreed that we would commission tutors to produce some content specifically for the SWEMF website. You will have seen the brilliant session which Ali Kinder created for us, and we are expecting a contribution from David Allinson soon.

*Jenny Tribe said she had enjoyed events via Zoom set up by (eg) MEMF. Clare replied that we would look into this possibility.*

“Jonathan will have more to say about setting aside a budget for this kind of activity when he presents the accounts, but meanwhile I hope you agree it’s a good thing to be doing. And if you have any further ideas for things you’d like us to do during this period, please let us know – all suggestions are welcome.

I am very pleased to welcome Rick Fitzsimmons who had been our Diary editor from the start of the year. The Diary is necessarily rather slender at the moment, since there are no reports of workshops, but if you have any ideas for contributions, do get in touch with Rick. We took the decision to send out hard copy Diaries in June only to those members for whom we do not have email addresses, as it would not have been possible to hold our usual “envelope stuffing party”, and a mailing to all members would be a great deal of work for one person.

Finally, I would like to offer my very warm thanks to everyone who is working to support SWEMF at this difficult time. All our committee members invariably respond quickly and constructively in any discussion, and I’m glad that they have all expressed a willingness to continue in post for a further year. We are still in need of representatives for Devon and Wiltshire, so if you live in either of these counties and think you might be able to help, do get in touch.

*Heather Minnion suggested that a plea could be made via the Wiltshire Music Centre but anyone offering would have to be, or become, a member of SWEMF.*

*Althea said she would send Rick a Role description for inclusion in the Diary. Lindsey S-M said some role details were in a Diary 1-2 years ago.*

“Fenella looks after membership with great efficiency, Althea as Secretary ensures that we operate smoothly and in line with the requirements of the Charity Commission, while Jonathan maintains our finances in immaculate order. But this year in particular I think the biggest vote of thanks has to go to Sara for keeping us all in touch and up-to-date at a time when the website and emails are our lifeline.

Stay safe and keep well everyone, and let’s look forward to the time, hopefully not too distant, when we can meet once more to engage in the music-making which we all love so much.”

#### **4. Treasurer’s report**

Jonathan reported that SWEMF continues to do well financially. Events even out, some making a profit, others a loss and although membership, and so subscriptions, are about 10% down, Diary costs are less. He emphasised that costs should not deter organisation of any workshop, and that cash can be spent on sustaining tutors at this difficult time. He suggested that the basic “pot” of £7500-8000 could be reduced by about £2000 each year, this amount being spent on such good-will projects as already done for Alison Kinder and David Allinson.

He also suggested that we could afford smaller events like 2-to-a-part Madrigals with (eg) 12 members and a tutor. These could be repeated at different venues.

Members were very much in favour of this idea.

Acceptance of the accounts, as shown with AGM details on the website, was proposed by Angela Le Grice, seconded by Elizabeth Gowers and agreed *nem con*.



**5. Previous events** were covered in Clare’s report:

|              |  |                    |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| 28 Sept 2019 | Baroque playing day .....  | Cheddar            |
| 28 Sept 2019 | Workshop for singers: Singing History: cancelled - lack of support ..... | Bridport           |
| 5 Oct 2019   | Workshop for singers and instrumentalists: Praetorius .....              | Cheltenham         |
| 25 Jan 2020  | West Country Carols + Social Event .....                                 | Leigh, near Yeovil |
| 28 Feb 2020  | Renaissance Wind Band.....   | Gloucester         |

The following were cancelled because of Covid 19:

|               |   |             |
|---------------|---|-------------|
| 21 Mar 2020   | Workshop for Voices and Instruments ..... | Sherborne   |
| 18 April 2020 | Workshop with Peter Syrus .....           | Glastonbury |
| 1-3 May 2020  | Bristol Early Music festival .....        | Bristol     |
| 9 May 2020    | Baroque Orchestra Workshop .....          | undecided   |
| 27 June 2020  | Workshop and AGM.....                     | Thornbury   |

**6. Forthcoming events**

Currently there were none planned.  
The committee will need to meet (via Zoom?)

**7. Election of Officers**

Currently, these are as below. All were willing to stand

|                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Clare Griffel    | Chairman                       |
| Jonathan Tribe   | Honorary Treasurer             |
| Althea Hamlyn    | Secretary                      |
| Fenella Spiers   | Membership Secretary           |
| Rick Fitzsimmons | Diary Editor                   |
| Sara Scorey      | Web Editor                     |
| Heather Gibbard  | Somerset representative        |
| Elizabeth Gowers | Dorset representative          |
| Peter Crispin    | Cornwall representative        |
| Sonia Jackson    | Gloucestershire representative |
| Vacant:          | Devon representative           |
| Vacant:          | Wiltshire representative       |

It was proposed by Venetia Caine and seconded by Susan Young that these existing members of the committee continue to serve. This was agreed by all.

**8. AOB**

None had been notified to the secretary previously and none was raised at the meeting.

**9. Date of next meeting**

TBA

Clare thanked everyone for attending and was thanked in her turn for arranging Zoom.

The meeting closed at 2.45pm

