



# Phoenixsingers

## Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022

7pm at Sir Robert Hitcham CEVAP School, Framlingham

Present: William Glasse (Chairman), Peter Moorhouse (Vice Chairman), Geoff Lavery (Music Director), Keith Barton (Treasurer) and approximately 35 Members.

The Chairman welcomed Members to the Annual General Meeting of The Society. The papers had been circulated by email in advance and had been posted on the website.

Apologies for Absence were received from Caroline Foster (Secretary), Marian Lanyon, Patricia Findley, Anne Wright, Amanda Egan, Jo Rogers, Mike Turton, Frances Barker and Ann Pratt.

Owing to family circumstances, Caroline Foster will be taking a break. GC had offered to act as Secretary until she is ready to return. GC minuted this meeting.

The Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting, held on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 had been published on the website after the meeting and circulated with the papers.

They were accepted *nem con* as an accurate record of the meeting.

### Election of Officers and Committee

Several members of the committee were due for re-election and were willing to stand. Apart from Keith Barton, all had served on the committee for 10 years. For WG and KB, if re-elected, this would be the final term that they would serve, according to the Constitution.

WG left the room and Peter Moorhouse took over as chair. He recommended re-appointment of WG. He pointed out in particular the need to identify a new Chairman, who would lead the Society in the future. WG returned to the room and resumed chairmanship, after the results of his vote. The following table details the outcome of the voting.

### **Phoenix Singers Committee members due for re-election in 2022**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
William Glasse	Chairman	Marion Kirton	Barbara Howard	Unanimously agreed
Peter Moorhouse	Vice-Chairman	Linda Sherman	Barbara Howard	Unanimously agreed
Keith Barton	Treasurer	John Francis	Sarah Galley	Unanimously agreed
Gill Clare	n/a	Liz Barton	Miranda Barclay	General agreement and no objections
Giles Pebody	n/a	(as above)	(as above)	



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A round of applause greeted the re-appointment of each of the officers, particularly for the chairman. All committee members were appointed for a further 3 year term, concluding at the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Claire Heard had been nominated to join the committee by WG, who proposed her. Sara Woolstencroft seconded her appointment. CH was appointed to the Committee for three years, concluding at the 2025 Annual General Meeting. She was warmly welcomed with a round of applause.

Marie Smith had volunteered to work on PS social media to promote the Society. She had started to work on Facebook, linking us with other local organisations. WG thanked her for taking on this valuable work.

Over time, WG has taken on a wider role than Chairman. There is an opportunity for members to take on some WG's tasks. This would reduce the workload of his successor.

Members who were willing to take on tasks could be co-opted onto the committee in the coming year if they would like to be more closely involved with the running of the Society.

The message was re-enforced that the Committee would welcome new members with a view to succession planning. This would mean that the Society would be well governed into the future.

### Chairman's Report – William Glasse

See Appendix A, pages 4 - 5.

### Music Director's Report –Geoff Lavery

See Appendix B, pages 6-8. WG thanked GL for all his work with members on a personal level as well as his enthusiasm and commitment to his role as MD. Geoff was given a round of applause.

### Friends Report – Peter Moorhouse

See Appendix C, pages 9-11. PM re-iterated the gratitude expressed by the School for the money to support the Firebirds and outlined plans for the future for all children to appreciate music. He expressed appreciation for the money given through Friends programme and Invited members of Phoenix Singers to become Friends.



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### Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts – Keith Barton

See Appendix D, pages 12-13. KB had written notes to support the accounts.

A deficit had been recorded in 2020-2021; there discussion about the reasons for this and the plans for the future. KB answered questions about the amount of Gift Aid that would be commuted to the current financial year and our policy on reserves. We have built up sufficient reserves to cover shortfalls, but would not plan to continue this trend indefinitely.

John Francis proposed and Ray Fenning seconded the adoption of the accounts. This was supported unanimously.

The Treasurer was thanked for his hard work throughout the year on behalf of the Society.

### Additional Business

None. The meeting closed at 7.30pm

**Signed.....(Chairman)**

**Date.....**



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### APPENDIX A: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2021-22

The 2021-22 Season began amidst great uncertainty about the way the pandemic would develop and how it might affect Phoenix Singers during the season. In the event, three concerts were presented as planned. The first was decimated by a wave of COVID infections reducing the choir and audience in similar proportions. The Spring and Summer concerts were less eventful but COVID certainly left its mark on them both.

The other circumstance to add to the concerns of us all was the increasingly obvious pain suffered by our Music Director, Geoff Lavery early in 2022 and his sudden disappearance when urgent surgery became vital. We welcomed Tom Appleton to stand in for Geoff and were grateful indeed for his enthusiasm and willingness to do all he could for us.

The Music Director's Report comments fully on the three concerts and I commend those comments to you. It is pointless to repeat them. However, I must record my thanks on behalf of the Society to Geoff Lavery, Tom Appleton, Dominic Nunn and Carolyn Macer for their musical leadership and for working together such that we never cancelled a rehearsal due to being unable to find musical leadership for it.

The coming Season will present us with more challenges. We know already that COVID has not 'gone away' and in any case, respiratory ailments are always a problem for singers; we will cope with what comes, as before. We also foresee financial hurdles to clear as our costs rise and all of us face more expensive lives generally. We will make adjustments as we are able to control losses and protect Phoenix for the longer term, but in all probability, any alterations are more likely to be manifest in 2023-24 and thereafter.

I am able to share optimism about our resilience for two very good reasons. First, your Committee has always understood to the necessity for financial reserves to protect the Society from lean times; their foresight means that now we are not forced into 'knee-jerk' reactions but have space to be measured and sensible. Please be generous spirited in your gratitude to the Committee Members and particularly our past and present Treasurers, Gill Clare and Keith Barton who are the architects of our stability as a Society.

Secondly, you, the Members of Phoenix Singers are generous too. While noting that it

has been very difficult to sell tickets for concerts in the aftermath of the pandemic's worst effects, you have risen to two challenges. Some of you have shown clear commitment to the future by overpaying your subscriptions this year and many more have not claimed the 'early-bird' discount we offer. A very heartening response that has not gone unnoticed by the Committee. Some of you were most generous to the Friends Programme last Season showing even more clearly that Phoenix Singers is investing in a future generation of singers



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by its support of the Sir Robert Hitcham's Firebirds.

Phoenix Singers is about the people who comprise it. It is good to have been able to welcome new Singers in the last year and for this Season. Some faithful people have decided to retire and we thank them sincerely for friendship and commitment, in some cases, over many years almost since the Society was founded.

On a personal note, thank you for your support for my efforts on your behalf. It is greatly appreciated. Aside from the people mentioned already, thank you to everyone who makes Phoenix Singers work and be the welcoming, happy family that it is.

**William Glasse**

**Chairman**

**September 2022**



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### APPENDIX B: Conductor's report (2021-22 season)

Well, what a season this has just been! We returned to rehearsals in September 2021 after an absence of almost 18 months, we only just managed to perform a concert in December as the next Covid wave struck; you were rehearsed with an alternative conductor for almost the entire Snape concert rehearsal schedule and then, as Covid was hovering around, we performed our final concert of the season. As the season started, it would have been hard to imagine all that was in front of us.

Fears for singing again after such a long absence were addressed by Eric Tebbett who came and ran an evening of "Getting our Voices back"...and how wonderful it was to be singing again together. An evening of fun but also hard work, revitalising those parts of the body and voice that had lain dormant all those months. The rest of the September rehearsal time was spent singing Brahms' "Requiem" for the sheer pleasure of doing so... and this is firmly on my list for the future, by the way!! I was amazed that not only had almost all the pre-Covid choir returned but we welcomed new members too. Something that none of us had predicted and what a joy!

Work then began on our December programme that included the Christmas portion of Messiah: and yes, we were back! I was particularly pleased to note that there were quite a few people who had not sung "Messiah" before. It is easy to take for granted that we ALL know certain stock repertoire pieces, so to introduce well loved works afresh is always a wonderful thing. Rehearsals went well and then Covid escalated with a new and particularly virulent variant that meant only half the choir were able to perform on the evening of the concert. In addition, the original soloist "team" was altered three times in the week before the concert. We ended up with our third soprano soloist and a replacement tenor. A stressful evening but the sheer pleasure of singing and performing again overcame all the difficulties. It was a successful concert musically and good to work with Kingfisher once more, but there was not a large audience to hear us – disappointing but inevitable really, under the circumstances.

Work began in January on the difficult Elgar "Music Makers" in preparation for the joint concert at Snape in April 22 with Beccles Choral Society and Lambeth Orchestra. However, it became obvious after only a few weeks that I could not continue because of a back problem. Tom Appleton, an admirable musician and choir trainer, came to replace me. PS was very lucky that he happened to be free every Wednesday evening and so able to take all the rehearsals up to April, when I returned.

There were two joint rehearsals before the day of the concert, and the two choirs came together well. Tom Appleton took the bulk of the first joint all-day rehearsal at the beginning of March.

Diana Moore was the soloist in Elgar's "Sea Pictures" and "Music Makers" and we were fortunate that an artist of her international acclaim came to sing for and with us. Lambeth Orchestra, enthusiastic to play at the Maltings as always, were on good form, starting the all-Elgar programme with "Cockaigne". The concert itself was a great success but audience numbers have not yet increased to pre-pandemic numbers and this causes financial concern.

It is amazing that we have this internationally renowned concert hall so close to us and that Phoenix are able to perform there (our second appearance there with me) and thoughts



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have already turned to a possible return soon.

With no time to waste, work began on Haydn's "Creation" for the concert at the start of July. Once again, a well-known choral repertoire work that some Singers met for the first time. A much larger Kingfisher orchestra joined us together with three soloists, who were all wonderful. I was particularly grateful to Richard Edgar Wilson, who stepped into the Tenor solo part the week before the performance. The audience seemed to be delighted with the evening, you sang your hearts out, and for me personally, it was such a marvellous occasion as I adore "Creation". It comes up fresh every time and you did all that I asked of you. Thank you for making it a special evening.

So ends a tumultuous season. Three successful concerts of very different pieces of music, all sung with enthusiasm and musicianship. We are a bigger society than we have been for many years and rehearsals continue to be hard-working but fun (I hope). We are learning all the time and facing the challenges of some difficult music. Next season will be no exception!

There are several things that we need to address, that require each and everyone to play their part in making it all happen. We are not unique in the issues we face. Choral Societies up and down the country are facing the same challenges into the post-Covid future. In no particular order:

- **continue to recruit new members** – especially addressing the usual cry of “we need more men”(!), but there again, it is always good to have more singers overall too, enabling us to have a richer and broader sound.

The new singers that have joined us this season are just SO welcome. New members bring fresh ideas and lend an objectivity that is not criticism of what we have and what we are, but an essential, useful and welcome part of our continued successful development. As well as their vocal skills, they bring ideas and experiences from other organisations, of which they have been members in the past.

- **everyone needs to advertise our presence more** – inviting people to our weekly rehearsals, but also advertising our concerts far and wide. Bluntly, without larger audience numbers, things will become increasingly more difficult financially. We are fortunate that we are able to perform with an orchestra so often, but each concert that uses orchestral forces is VERY expensive.
- **we need to increase the number of people attending our concerts by selling tickets.** At the moment, we have not sold anything like the number of tickets we did pre-Covid, but with concerts costing in excess of £4k.... well, you do the maths!

*[the PS committee, as well as other such committees up and down the country, are battling with this issue. Post-Covid, audience numbers have declined and various reasons have been put forward: people are still apprehensive of gathering in larger numbers; financial issues are beginnings to be felt; cost of transport; BUT – and most worryingly – people have simply got out of the habit of attending live music. During the Lockdowns, concerts became readily available on-line, in the comfort of one's own home, either by subscription or on YouTube, and people have forgotten what an amazing experience live music really is. We have to re-acquaint them with this experience and remind them that what they see and hear sitting in the midst of a live performance is NOT, and can never be, replicated on a TV or computer screen]*

I am so looking forward to next season. The December concert will be a lovely start to the Christmas season, with two Masses, written when the composers were young. Schubert was



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18 and Puccini was 22....oh to be that young again!. We are also reviving a short evening concert in St Michael's church of Christmas carols, with audience participation and the Firebirds. They were to perform with us last December and were prevented from doing so because of Covid. So this year will be the first opportunity we have to perform with them again since December 2019.

Easter sees us returning to unfinished business(!), with our postponed performance of Bach's "St John Passion" Then our usual summer concert at the beginning of July but I hope that rehearsal attendance will be more consistent this time. There were several evenings this last summer when I was in despair at the lack of numbers at rehearsal. It is dispiriting for those who do attend regularly and also incredibly frustrating to have to keep going over instructions that have already been given in previous weeks.

Finally, my thanks to the hard working and supportive committee and especially, thank you all of you. Your friendship and care for me (and my wife, I might add), when times have been very difficult this year, have been very much appreciated. I missed you all when I was away, but on returning you were so supportive and even still laughed at my awful jokes. Thank you. Oh, and particular thanks (almost needs not to be said because I almost take it for granted) for your singing. Your enthusiasm, commitment, determination, musicianship – they are all there in abundance and make Phoenix Singers the wonderful choir that it is. Congratulations, thank you so much, and here's to 2022-2023!

**Geoff Lavery**

*(July 2022)*





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### APPENDIX C: Phoenix Singers' Friends – summary for 2022 AGM

As most will already be aware, we have been deploying the donations to the Phoenix Singers' Friends programme to fund group choral singing lessons for the junior Firebirds choir at Sir Robert Hitcham's Primary School in Framlingham for several years now – to great effect and for many young people! Whilst the pandemic put all of this on hold, choral singing lessons have now recommenced this academic year, led by the excellent singer and vocal coach, Megan Peel. William and I met with Helen Picton (headteacher) and Kate Mawson (head of music) at the primary school last week. The Firebirds junior choir has started well for this academic year, albeit with singer numbers down somewhat as the young students re-engage with a full curriculum and a fully reopened school after all the disruption. In addition to the ongoing choral singing lessons, we also discussed helping to fund in-school music workshops by external singing and instrumental groups as well as visits to professional rehearsals and/or concerts at Snape Maltings to inspire the youngsters, many of whom have not yet experienced the excitement and emotions of live classical music. The national curriculum will soon require schools to provide increased opportunities to experience live music and we hope that we can help to support and fund this for children locally. Kate and Helen will be coming to thank us for our support at our rehearsal on 2<sup>nd</sup> November – when we will also hear more about their plans for the young singers, including singing with us in our shared Community Carol evening at St Michaels in Framlingham on Wednesday, 14 December.

For those who may have missed it, here is Kate's lovely report on the Firebirds activities and successes over the last academic year, all generously funded by the Friends programme donations – with so much troubling news and uncertainty around, it's worth reading – again!

*"This academic year we have had nearly 40 members of the choir ranging from Yr3 to Yr6 (7 year olds to 11 year olds). It has been interesting to see how they have dealt with being choir members - working together as part of a team - following on from the impact of 2 lock downs on these pupils' social, emotional and personal development. We are finding that our pupils are displaying behaviour expected of children perhaps a year or even 2 years behind what we would normally expect. Therefore, Megan is working with some children with "interesting" behaviours and a number of neuro divergent pupils. She is doing a brilliant job! Our trip to the Snape Maltings Celebration of Schools was an excellent opportunity for our pupils to gain a different perspective on life - a bigger perspective on which has inevitably become Framlingham centric and ego centric. The opportunity to sing with others in a world-famous concert hall has filled our children with a sense of awe and wonder which we have so missed. Missing out on performing the Christmas concert with the Phoenix Singers was sad but the children did become confident (performance standard) with a large repertoire of songs which covered a range or genres and emotions - allowing our children to use music as a fantastic mode of expression and a means of letting their emotions out. To work with such an experienced professional as Megan is a privilege for our pupils. She is building up a good relationship with them and extending their musical knowledge through all she does in rehearsals. The development of their singing technique is exciting to see too - they are making a very good sound now. It has been very beneficial to have the extra time with Megan this year - enabling us to consolidate and build upon skills in a consistent and*



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constructive manner weekly.

*It has been a shame that we have not been able to work with Rob Gildon this year - it was hoped he would be able to deliver some workshops with us but we have only recently invited non-essential visitors into school and this has had an impact on these planned workshops sadly. It would be really lovely to explore this possibility next year as singing is proving to have hugely beneficial effects on our pupils wellbeing and it would be great to offer this opportunity to work with Rob Gildon to all of our pupils not just those who are able to attend Firebirds rehearsals after school.*

Here are some quotes from the Firebirds:

*"Most exciting experience ever!"*

*"Quite nervous as I had to do a solo but as soon as I walked onto the stage my nerves disappeared" - this child dissolved into tears the first time she sang her solo in a rehearsal and through sheer determination and some nurture work, she felt so incredibly proud of her incredible achievement. This child has always had anxiety issues, so what an achievement!*

*"It felt really good fun!"*

*"I really enjoy singing in The Firebirds - it makes me feel good"*

*"I love singing with my friends"*

*"I really enjoy learning new music"*

*"It was entertaining and fun. One of my favourite days EVER!"*

*This term we are finding we are competing with after school sports clubs but still have a strong contingency of keen and enthusiastic singers. We are hoping to make a music video (!!!!clever Megan!!!) and sing at a little concert once our music pod is up and running.*

*I would also like to say how much I enjoy working with Megan, she is a super addition to life at SRH. I feel incredibly lucky to have the opportunity each week to share and make music with such an inspirational expert teacher and coach with an exceptional sense of humour and huge heart - the children's best interests are always central to all she does.*

*Thank you to The Friends of The Phoenix Singers for their continued support with singing at Sir Robert Hitchams'. We do all really appreciate it!"*

*This is a great way of us all giving young people their first taste of choral singing - with a great teacher - and help to keep alive the love of singing together - which is why we all meet on Wednesday evenings!*

*On behalf of the school and the young singers, we hope that you will continue to support or wish to join this programme where possible – as a guide, we suggest a minimum of £30 per individual, £50 per couple for a year's support please – a number of Friends have given generously in excess of this – and we are very keen to add to the existing choral training with workshops and exciting live music experiences at Snape Maltings concert hall.*

*If you would like more information on the Friends' programme, please speak to Peter Moorhouse or call him on 07767 320153. If you are a new supporter, please jump straight in and make payment on-line to Phoenix Singers at 40-25-31, account number 52495880, and*



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please add Phoenix Friends/your surname to identify your payment. Alternatively, please let Peter or Keith have a cheque made payable to Phoenix Singers.

On behalf of tomorrow's young singers and music lovers, very many thanks for your support!

Peter Moorhouse, September 2022



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### APPENDIX D: Notes on 2021/22 Accounts

Phoenix Singers 2021/22 season was the first season since the Covid pandemic in which we have been able to present a full programme of concerts. Overall the choirs finances have seen a small decline for the reasons set out below. I consider that our financial position is sustainable for the forthcoming season but I remain vigilant for changes that may impact us.

1. The choir promoted three concerts all of which attracted smaller audiences than anticipated and ran at a greater deficit than budgeted. It remains to be seen whether this is a post-Covid phenomenon and whether any action needs to be taken.
2. I submitted our Gift Aid claim according to the normal timetable but HMRC needed to check the choirs' new HSBC account and as a consequence the re-imburement was not received until the new financial year.
3. Subscriptions for the year exceeded expectations and the choir welcomed several new members. I am grateful that members are increasing paying their subscriptions by internet banking which reduces administration and gives a stronger audit trail.
4. The choir is a member of Making Music which provides insurance facilities, performing rights transactions and other resources. During the pandemic fees were reduced but in 2021/22 returned to their normal level.
5. Friends donations reached the budgeted levels but the activities of the Firebirds which this income supports were still adjusting to the post-pandemic situation. It is anticipated that the Firebirds will return to their normal number of meetings and we look forward to them joining us at Christmas for our Community Carols celebration.

Keith Barton

Treasurer

23 September, 2022

**Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2022**

		<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2020/2021</b>
<b>Income</b>	Subscriptions	£9,210.00	£0.00
	Gift aid	£0.00	£3,448.15
	Friends	£2,265.00	£100.00
	Bank interest	£33.88	£61.71
	Donations	£20.00	£1,285.00
	Advertising income	£0.00	£0.00
	Music sales	£324.50	£0.00
	Raffles and Bar	£0.00	£0.00
	Fundraising	£0.00	£0.00
	Miscellaneous	£0.00	£0.00
	Concert income		
	Total concert income	£17,941.17	£0.00
		<b>£29,794.55</b>	<b>£4,894.86</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	Conductor	£3,078.40	£0.00
	Accompanist	£1,885.00	£0.00
	Rehearsal venue hire	£1,170.00	£0.00
	Insurance & Making Music	£520.00	£344.00
	Firebirds/Larks	£1,215.00	£0.00
	Secretarial & Admin	£118.50	£42.00
	Bank Charges	£41.00	£49.00
	Performing rights fees	£0.00	£89.87
	Music Purchase	£319.14	£6.50
	Miscellaneous	£180.21	£1,400.00
	Other Activities	£0.00	£195.00
	Capital expenditure	£0.00	£0.00
	Concert expenses		
	Total concert expenses	£25,103.15	£0.00
		<b>£33,630.40</b>	<b>£2,126.37</b>
Surplus for the year		<b>-£3,835.85</b>	<b>£2,768.49</b>
Add balance at start of year		<b>£30,542.09</b>	<b>£27,773.60</b>
<b>Balance at end of year</b>		<b><u>£26,706.24</u></b>	<b><u>£30,542.09</u></b>
The balance is made up of	Cash in hand	£299.50	£0.00
	Shawbrook Bank	£0.00	£20,538.58
	HSBC	<u>£26,406.74</u>	<u>£10,003.51</u>
		<b><u>£26,706.24</u></b>	<b><u>£30,542.09</u></b>

Keith Barton  
Treasurer



Irene Bews  
Independent Examiner



21 September 2022