

Notes from Extraordinary General Meeting Skye and Lochalsh Orchestra

14 Sept 2014, Broadford Hall

Present:

Duncan Bullivant; Judith Bullivant; Chris Crichton; Brian Dodds; Alan Donald; Susan Galloway; Maryon Gardiner; Laura Grisi; John Hockett; Kate MacArthur; Chris Manvell; Maggie Manvell; Bar Purser; Elizabeth Watt.

Apologies:

Nic Bullivant; Jo Cumine; James Merryweather; Sam Nicolson; Dougie Strachan; Janice Taylor; Duncan Watt; Kirsty Watt.

Main reason for this EGM: The future of the orchestra -

- a) in the absence of a conductor;
- b) with an unsatisfactory balance of instruments (very few strings)
- c) virtually no committee due to resignations. (Mike and Margaret, Jo, James, Janice and Sam had all resigned from the committee over the last three months.) Only Judith and Chris remain on the committee. Margaret has agreed to continue as treasurer until a replacement is appointed, and Sam has agreed to continue to manage the library.

Initially consultations were based on a letter, which had been received from an orchestra member, suggesting possible ways forward.

The recent interchange between the orchestra committee and the conductor:

A committee member had consulted with Rick, on behalf of the committee, because of concerns raised at the last committee meeting, including:

- a) the conductor needs to have a good knowledge of the pieces being played
- b) the conductor needs to be involved, to some degree, in committee consultations.

These issues had been brought up previously with Rick, but with no improvement.

It was made clear to the EGM that the intention of the meeting with Rick was not to ask him to stand down, but was rather an attempt to resolve these issues.

The outcome of the meeting was that Rick would no longer be conductor. It was noted that he, in his turn, felt that some members of the orchestra were not prepared to go along with his direction.

Q: Why was the rest of the orchestra not informed of these things at the time?

A:

- a) It was felt that e-mails containing perceived criticisms of individuals should not be generally circulated.
- b) In voicing concerns about Rick's conducting, members of the committee felt that they were representing the wider views of the membership gleaned

through conversations with individuals. With the benefit of hindsight, this was clearly not the case.

Q: Why was there such a long period between the meeting with Rick and the information being given to the orchestra? This resulted in people hearing about it 'second-hand' before being informed by the committee. Some members of the orchestra were shocked and upset when they first heard about it.

A: The delay was too long. This was acknowledged.

Comment: Shouldn't the whole orchestra, not just the committee, be involved in making such a major decision?

(Note: the 'major decision' was not 'sacking' but an attempt at consultation.)

Comment: It is very difficult to decide which issues should be aired with the whole orchestra.

Comment: Some members were very disappointed to lose Rick; they felt he had been doing a good job, and liked his approach.

Comment: Orchestra members had experienced difficulties communicating with the committee, and had not received responses to queries and suggestions.

Comment: The decision the committee had made – to speak with Rick about these issues – had not been a unanimous decision.

Gratitude to Sam who has done a great deal of work, behind the scenes, sorting out the library.

Moving forward:

There will be a lot of absences this session for various unavoidable personal reasons; there are very few violins and violas, and presently we have no conductor.

Choices seem to include:

- a) Continuing to meet on the pre-arranged dates, playing what we can with those present.
- b) Dispersing for this session and forming small chamber groups. This idea caused concern to be voiced: if the group dispersed for a term then any remaining momentum may be lost and it could be more difficult to get going again.
- c) Finding a new conductor
 - i) Bar will approach someone she knows of who may be able and willing to conduct
 - ii) Becky has said she's too busy to take it on again.
 - iii) Might Rick come back? - a show of hands indicated that, among those present, the majority would like him to return.

It was felt that this meeting could not make these decisions, as not enough orchestra members were present. Decision-making was deferred until the next meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that all present wish to be in an orchestra!

Suggestions:

- 1) **A big publicity drive** to pick up any new players in the area:
 - a) SLO Facebook page – to publicise; to enable everyone to keep in touch; to encourage the formation of small chamber groups; to give news of venues, dates etc.
 - b) Press release and large ad in WHFP and P&J.
 - c) Posters all round the area encouraging people to join.

- 2) **More communication** between the committee and the orchestra, notifying everyone about decisions / performance requests etc.

Agreed outcomes from this meeting:

- a) As a compromise: To continue meeting at the pre-arranged times this session, but without the pressure of achieving for a winter concert. This will prevent dispersal and give the best opportunity for regrouping and continuing properly next session.
- b) A decision as to whether to have a winter concert to be held off until the last meeting in October, by which time it will have become evident what instruments are represented, and what the conducting situation is.
- c) In the meantime – a recruitment drive,
- d) Search for a conductor.
- e) Each member of the orchestra to be individually e-mailed with notes from this meeting, and encouraged to attend at the sessions.

Thanks were expressed to Chris for taking things in hand during this crisis.