Minutes of AGM held on November 22nd 2026 at Royal Russell School (Conference Room within the Performing Arts building) at 16:00

1) **Welcome on St. Cecilia's Day – Patron Saint of Musicians**

Arun Chatterjee (Vice Chair), Chris Hutchinson (Minutes), Richard Deering (Chair and Minutes) Rachele Howes (Minutes), Barry Nicholson, Trixie Muirhead, Ophelia Gordon (Online), Judith Dunworth, Swetha Ettineni, Davinia Davis-Maxwell

2) Apologies

Apologies received from Joyce Goodman, Debjani Datta, Lucy Rodgers, Laura McHale

3) Minutes of 2025 AGM

Barry proposed the minutes of the 2025 AGM, seconded by Chris

4) Matters arising

Chair got in touch with Chrissy Kinsella in regards to rekindling the concerto competition, but nothing as of yet has come of this connection. Judith and Richard agreed to talk further about it. Christopher Braime has taken over CSO (Croydon Symphony Orchestra) but nothing come of it. Ophelia also has had no luck. Believes he has no wish to join us.

5) Chair Report

All agreed that the Chair Report is very good summary and covers all basis. It was proposed by Trixie , seconded by Chris.

6) Financial Statement

a) Matters arising: Barry asked about the drop in entry fee income (circa £1700 - £4000) and the drop in box office income (circa £400 - £8000) . Chair explained the difference is due to the biannual western dance, who charge box office fees. We have chosen, in the past, not to charge box office fees at the January/February festival as it has been the general consensus that it supports our welcome and friendly atmosphere we endeavour to create. Barry agreed with this, and Davinia too, but she mentioned that we are the only festival that is not charging box office, from her knowledge. Barry's question reminded us that we run at a loss, which is not a problem in the short term. The idea for sponsorship was bought up, and Arun wished to talk more about it later in the meeting.
Barry proposed the financial statement, and it was seconded by Trixie

b) Banking going forward: Treasurer and new Bank

Chair shared he has been personally funding the festival, largely due to the appalling customer service from NatWest. When we got to the end of the festival, sometime in May, we needed to draw from the 95 day account. Chair made attempts online and on the phone, upon the second attempt on the phone we were able to add two new signatories. Once it was finally approved, Chair had to personally fund the festival (charging interest with Trustee approval) until the money was liberated. The money was liberated mid November. All agreed we must open another account with a different bank. Arun has spoken to Metro bank, also mentioned by Ophelia. He shared that the advantages include over night banking, two signatories are accepted, and they could provide sponsorship too. It was deiced that we will move our current account to Metro Bank and leave the NatWest 95 day account. Chris suggested we can open the Metro bank, run everything through Nat West until after the 2027 January/February festival. Arun will open the account at the first possibility, add four signatories and apply for the debit card. The four signatories were agreed to be Rachele, Arun, Barry and Chris (with a caveat that he will be moving in 6 months).
Ophelia wished to emphasise that the Chair has been looking at solve this banking issue for sometime, but the Trustees were not responsive in solving the issue despite communications from Richard on Email and WhatsApp. She shared her concern that, going forward, it is important that communication needs to be better to support the Chair, and it is imperative that they will not be in this position again where weeks go by with no response from the Trustees. Ophelia apologised for her involvement in this, and encouraged all Trustees to apologise too. Ophelia shared her observation that a lot of positive decisions are made during meetings, yet nothing happens without Richard taking on the responsibility.
Ophelia spoke about her concern about the Treasurer role being fulfilled by Chair. It was discussed that it has been restructured in the past by Richard and Chris so that the role passes a lot of the work to the auditors and it can be a remote a job. It is an administrative task, which requires a reliable person to update a spreadsheet, which is then provided for the auditors. Barry explained he has looked for someone to take on the role but has been unsuccessful.

Ophelia leaves due to family obligations 17:08.

7) Auditors

Matthews Hanton was approved by all to continue their auditing of account. Proposed Chris, seconded by Barry

8) Trustees

A. **Richard** - end of third and final term of office

In principle, Chair wished to step down in this AGM, and hoped that there would have been a discussion about the position for Chair and Treasurer from the other Trustees. Chair feels that his role needs new eyes and ears. He mentions last year's minutes and that there has been no change since item 7b. He has taken on many roles over the years, and is wondering how to go forward. Arun shared, and all agreed, it shouldn't have been the case. Chair should be the face of the festival and work must be divided. Due to the lack of any suggestions as to who will take on Chair, it is not decided by the end of the meeting whether Richard continues as a Trustee or Chair.

Swetha shares that perhaps people are afraid to take on the responsibility.

B. **Vamshi**– end of first term of office

Vamshi had explained to Chair that he is happy to continue contributing to the festival but is unable to help on a Trustee basis.

C. Other Trustee news

Ophelia didn't feel she had the skills to fulfil her Trustee role but will continue to support the festival.
It was discussed that Laura and Lucy, have not attended an AGM since the 2024 AGM. It is agreed that it must be discussed to whether they are allowed reelection after 12 months due to the requirement of Trustees attending meetings.

D. Result of Trustees deliberations concerning a new Chair

A lengthy discussion was had about how to fill the role of Chair. It was decided that the following must happen: 1) the working committee needs to be developed and implicated as soon as possible. Rachele agrees that she will work on this for the 2027 festival, and going forward. 2) The chair does not have to be from the current pool of Trustees, and can be sourced from elsewhere. Chris suggested using New Role to help recruit someone. It is agreed by all that we must find someone to take on the roll. 3) Clarity in what the roles involve.

9) Stewards

It is confirmed that it is the same group of people we can call upon to help steward the festival, with a few new interested volunteers that have shown an interest since last year.

10) 2027 Festival

A. January/February events

The dates for the festival are published and we are currently receiving entries. We hope that in the final week we will receive more entries.

B. Modified sections and new sections

We have modified the speech section to align with the music section. Swetha shared that she is happy to see the new workshop style format in the speech section, and feels that placings are not necessary but is happy to hear that we intend on giving participation medals. We have added Sri Lanken classical dance, rock and pop music to the syllabus too. As of yet, no entries have received to the Rock and Pop. Davinia agreed to reach out to her contact at the Yamaha school.

C. May Dance events

The western dance event is going forward in May 31st - June 4th Royal Russell and June 5th Ashcroft theatre, Fairfield Halls. Chair shared his concern about the last minute

organisation that occurred in 2025. It was mentioned that we can attach the new bank account, once opened, to Stripe.

11) Initial Thoughts for potential 2028 festival

A) Venue

Chris was apologetic on behalf the of the school in regards to the delay in getting the Royal Russell venue booked for the 2027 festival. He shared that the issue is due to the academic calendar. The school should be able to confirm by May/June, which all agreed is too late for booking adjudicators. It was decided that we must provisionally book the dates with Royal Russell. Chris suggested finding a new school contact to be Trustee due to Chris moving away in 6 months.

B) Booking of Adjudicators

Chair explained the contractual obligation with adjudicators. It was decided that once the dates are provisionally booked with Royal Russell, we provisionally propose the dates to the adjudicator, that we then can confirm 9 months before.

C) Concerto competition

See section 4.

12) President and Vice-Presidents

Everyone agreed the Presidents can continue. Proposed by Chris and seconded by Barry.

13) AOB

a) Arun proposed that we should have official partners to support and grow the festival. So far, Arun and Rachele have been working on approaching Yamaha. He also suggested a hospitality partner, Chris suggest Leonardo which is local to the Royal Russell, has tram stop access and also comparable prices to Premiere Inn which is our current choice of hotel. It was also suggested by Arun that Metro bank could be a partner.

b) Chair mentioned how it is sad not to have the Gala Concert in the 2027 and all agreed. It was suggested that we could hold it in March, for example. If we are are able to fund the event, it was agreed that the 2026 Gala Concert was spectacular, and would be great to hold one every year.

c) Davinia suggest a QR code for replacement of programmes.

d) Arun suggested we buy the CPAF.org domain. He quoted circa £2-3000 to find a new website which would modernise the CPAF branding, replace Run my Festival and Festival connect, and many other benefits. Just the domain/email update would be circa £500 to start. It was agreed that Arun can buy the new email domain, so that we can approach sponsors, and then we would be able to update the website.

e) The working committee was discussed. Swetha shared she wanted to be part of this to learn and thinks that more parents will be happy to take on the help. She shared her how the the feedback is so valuable for her children.

Meeting ended at 18:37 with thanks to Chris and his Royal Russell colleagues for their hospitality