

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS
held at 3 Soho Square, London, W.1, at 3 p.m. on
Tuesday, January 31st, 1956.

PRESENT:

Directors:	Mr. J. H. Lawrie (in the Chair)
	Mr. Isador Caplan
	Mr. Anthony Gishford
	Mr. Erwin Stein
Artistic Directors:	Mr. Michael Northen
	Miss Anne Wood
Assessor to the Arts Council:	Mr. John Denison
In attendance:	Mr. Basil Douglas
	Mr. Leslie Periton
	Mr. Harold Wallis

1. APOLOGIES were received from Lord Horder, Sir Arthur Jarratt, Mr. Denis Rickett, and Mr. John Piper.
2. THE MINUTES of the meeting held on October 19th, 1955, were approved and signed.
3. RESIGNATION OF DIRECTOR

The Chairman reported the resignation of Mr. Nicholas Sekers from the Board, owing to pressure of other work. His resignation was accepted with regret.

4. EXPENSES RE COPYRIGHT: "THE TURN OF THE SCREW"

The Secretary referred to a letter dated January 17th, 1956, from Boosey & Hawkes Ltd. to Mrs. Piper. This letter informed Mrs. Piper that the \$1,000 paid to Mr. Archibald had been debited to her royalty account, and went on to say that there were three items of expenses still outstanding. These were:-

(i) Fees (and expenses) to American lawyers paid by the English Opera Group	\$250 = £89 0 0
(ii) Fees (and expenses) to American lawyers paid by Boosey & Hawkes	\$543 = £194 0 0
(iii) Fees due to Forsyte Kerman & Phillips, at present charged to composer and librettist	£237 6 0

Boosey & Hawkes proposed to Mrs. Piper that these items of expenses totalling some £520 should be split equally between Mrs. Piper, Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes, Mr. Britten, and the English Opera Group.

The Chairman expressed the view that the English Opera Group, in paying \$250 lawyers' fees, had done as much as seemed right to him, but it was agreed that Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes' proposal was in principle acceptable to the English Opera Group; final settlement, however, would obviously have to wait for a decision after Mr. Britten's return to the country; Mr. Caplan said that his firm would be willing to waive the Group's proportion of their fees.

5. PROGRAMME FOR 1956

A report by the General Manager was laid on the table, showing the Artistic Directors' recommendations for 1956

and the financial aspects thereof. After allowing for the known sources of income there was a probable deficit of £10,850. Towards this deficit Mr. Denison said that the Group could count on a grant from the Arts Council of not less than £4,000 for the year 1956/7, and he said further that if the Group decided to abandon the provincial tour (thus saving another £2,000), rather than cancel a new production, this decision would not be disapproved by his Council.

By making sundry economies, and with the help of a television performance of "The Little Sweep", it was hoped that the deficit could be reduced to £3,000.

The Board reiterated their uneasiness at the prospect of the Double Bill ("Venus and Adonis" and "Ruth"), and until this sum of £3,000 could be raised they decided that they could not give the General Manager authority to proceed with this programme beyond the productions and re-productions of "Venus and Adonis", "The Turn of the Screw", "Let's Make an Opera!", and "Savitri".

Although this authority was given, the Board invited the Artistic Directors to consider amongst themselves and with the Aldeburgh Festival the possibility of an alternative programme for Aldeburgh.

A decision about the remainder of the season was postponed until after Mr. Britten's return to England.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was fixed for March 22nd, 1956, at 6 p.m.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS held at 3 Soho Square, London, W.1, at 11.0 a.m. on Thursday, March 22nd, 1956.

PRESENT:

President: Lord Harewood (part time)

Directors: Mr. J. H. Lawrie (in the Chair)
Mr. Anthony Gishford
Lord Horder
Mr. Denis Rickett
Mr. Erwin Stein
Mr. Derek Young

Artistic Director: Mr. Benjamin Britten

Assessor to the Arts Council: Mr. John Denison

In attendance: Mr. Basil Douglas
Mr. Leslie Periton
Mr. Harold Wallis

1. APOLOGIES were received from Mr. Isador Caplan, Sir Arthur Jarratt, and Miss Anne Wood.
2. THE MINUTES of the meeting held on January 31st, 1956, were approved and signed.
3. EXPENSES RE COPYRIGHT: "THE TURN OF THE SCREW"

After further discussion it was agreed to leave it to the parties directly concerned to arrange such a settlement of the matter as would also be agreeable to the Board. Mr. Gishford said that Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes were prepared to consider any alternative proposal to the one which they themselves had already submitted.

4. THE DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

These were approved, subject to audit and to the recommendation that the fixed assets should be written down by a sum not exceeding £750.

5. THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The General Manager was instructed to arrange a date convenient to the Auditors and to the Board.

6. THE ARTS COUNCIL

Mr. Denison reported that a letter was on its way to the Group, offering a grant of £4,000 for the year ending March 31st, 1957. The General Manager was instructed to accept this offer.

7. PROGRAMME FOR 1956

Mr. Britten referred to the "recurring pattern" of invitations from abroad, notably from Scandinavia, Germany, and Switzerland, which had to be refused, usually for want of the necessary funds for transport. He had been impressed, during his long foreign tour, by the subsidies (often very large)

which other countries were prepared to pay as part of their policy, in order that their stage companies, orchestras, etc. might be seen and heard abroad. At home the opinion was still prevalent in official circles that artistic ventures should pay for themselves, and the result in the case of the Group was that this year we had one engagement in Paris, one in Aldeburgh, and the possibility of a fortnight in London in the autumn provided that an additional sum of £2,500 could be found.

It was probably not possible at this stage to raise so large a sum, but it would be a very great pity if the Group could not show itself in London this year, and before the meeting he had been discussing with the General Manager a proposal to reduce the proposed fortnight to a week, and abandon the production of "Albert Herring". The new Berkeley opera could be given during this week, with "Venus and Adonis"; also "The Turn of the Screw" and perhaps a performance or two of "Let's Make an Opera!" The loss in box-office takings would be more than off-set by the saving in salaries and production costs.

There followed a full discussion of the artistic and financial aspects of Mr. Britten's proposal, and it was agreed that the General Manager be instructed to proceed with a single week at the Scala Theatre, without committing himself more than absolutely necessary until the requisite funds could be raised.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS held at 3 Soho Square, London, W.1, at 11.5 a.m. on Wednesday, July 4th, 1956.

PRESENT

President: Lord Harewood

Directors: Mr. J. H. Lawrie (in the Chair)
Mr. Isador Caplan
Mr. Anthony Gishford
Lord Horder
Mr. Erwin Stein

Artistic Director: Mr. Benjamin Britten

Assessor to the Arts Council: Mr. John Denison

In attendance: Mr. Basil Douglas
Mr. Leslie Periton
Mr. Harold Wallis

1. THE MINUTES of the meeting held on March 22nd, 1956, were approved and signed, subject to the addition of the following to Minute 4: "The Directors' Report to Members was also approved."

2. AUTUMN SEASON AT THE SCALA THEATRE

A proposal of the General Manager, outlining the artistic and financial aspects of this season, had been circulated, and after considerable discussion was approved. The General Manager was instructed to apply immediately to the Arts Council for a guarantee against loss up to £1,000.

3. WINTER SERIES OF CONCERTS AT THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE

The General Manager's proposal for these concerts had been circulated to the Board and was approved in principle, though not in detail. He was authorised to proceed with a revised scheme in consultation with Lord Horder, and was recommended to approach the management of Peter Jones and other firms in the vicinity with the object of securing their interest and financial assistance.

4. COLLABORATION WITH THE BALLET RAMBERT

A proposal by the General Manager had been circulated to the Board, and was warmly approved in principle. The General Manager was encouraged to proceed with his investigations, while making it clear that the English Opera Group could not commit itself to any financial responsibility, nor could it undertake to raise the necessary funds.

5. PERFORMANCES IN PARIS, MAY 22ND AND 23RD, 1956

The General Manager had circulated a report of this visit, and was asked to convey the Board's congratulations to all concerned.

6. CUSTOMS BOND

The affixing of the Company's seal to the Customs Bond in connection with the recent visit to Paris was authorised by the Board, in accordance with Minute 4 of June 9th, 1954.

7. SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

To celebrate the Group's tenth season, the General Manager was authorised to proceed with the preparation of a souvenir programme, at an estimated cost to the Group of £75.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held during the fortnight after the end of the season at the Scala Theatre.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

MINUTES of the SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at 3 Soho Square, London, W.1, on Wednesday, July 4th, 1956, at 11.0 a.m.

PRESENT

President: The Earl of Harewood

Members: Mr. J. H. Lawrie (Chairman)
Mr. Isador Caplan (Secretary)
Mr. Anthony Gishford
Lord Horder
Mr. Erwin Stein
Mr. Basil Douglas (General Manager)

In attendance: Mr. Benjamin Britten
Mr. John Denison (Arts Council)
Mr. Leslie Periton
Mr. Harold Wallis

1. The Minutes of the Sixth Annual General Meeting, held on July 26th, 1955, were approved and signed.
2. On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Isador Caplan, the Directors' Report, Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1955, and Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31st December 1955, which had been duly circulated to the members of the Company, were adopted unanimously.
3. The following Directors, who retired by rotation, were severally re-elected:-

Mr. Isador Caplan
(Proposed: Mr. Lawrie; Seconded: Mr. Stein)

Mr. Anthony Gishford
(Proposed: Mr. Lawrie; Seconded: Lord Horder)

Lord Horder
(Proposed: Mr. Lawrie; Seconded: Mr. Caplan)
4. The continuance in office of the Auditors, Messrs. A. T. Chenhalls & Co., and the payment of their fees were confirmed. The Chairman expressed the members' gratitude to Mr. Leslie Periton for his generous assistance and advice.

THE ENGLISH OPERA GROUP LIMITED

MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS
held at 3 Soho Square, London, W.1, at 11.0 a.m.
on Tuesday, November 13th, 1956.

PRESENT

President: Lord Harewood

Directors: Mr. J. H. Lawrie (in the Chair)
Mr. Isador Caplan
Mr. Anthony Gishford
Lord Horder
Mr. Erwin Stein
Mr. Derek Young

Artistic Directors: Mr. Benjamin Britten
Mr. John Piper
Miss Anne Wood

In attendance: Mr. Basil Douglas
Mr. Leslie Periton
Mr. Harold Wallis
Miss Maureen Garnham
Mr. Clifford Pugh (at the invitation
of the Chairman)

1. THE MINUTES of the meeting held on July 4th, 1956, were approved and signed.
2. SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

Arising from the Minutes, the book issued in connection with the tenth anniversary of the Group was praised, although it was regretted that the poor sales so far had resulted in such a large cost to the Group. It was hoped, however, that these sales would continue.

3. SEASON AT THE SCALA THEATRE

A report by the General Manager on the season at the Scala Theatre, London, from September 26th to October 6th, 1956, had been circulated to the Board. It showed that although the expenditure was approximately £200 less than estimated, the income was below the estimated figure by £1,160, so that after allowing for the Arts Council guarantee of £500, there was a loss of £1,096.

4. CONCERTS AT THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE

The General Manager had circulated a progress report on these concerts, showing that the public's response was smaller than had been hoped. The six Sunday concerts were estimated to show a profit of £10, but the ten lunch-time concerts (October 11th-December 13th) were estimated to show a loss of £370, or £37 a concert. If the remainder of these concerts were cancelled, there would be a saving of approximately £17 a concert. In view of this small sum, the Board agreed that the series should continue, particularly in view of the value of these concerts to the Chelsea community and to the young artists who were being given such substantial encouragement.

With regard to further lunch-time concerts after Christmas, it was agreed that further concerts should if possible be given, as concerts of this type had considerable value, but this could only be done if the Group could be guaranteed against loss by individual people sponsoring particular concerts. Famous artists might also be invited to give their services.

5. COLLABORATION WITH BALLET RAMBERT

The General Manager had circulated a draft of a letter to be sent to Mr. John Denison, of the Arts Council, concerning the proposed collaboration with the Ballet

Rambert in a season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, starting in November 1957. This draft gave rise to a lengthy discussion, and with certain emendations the General Manager was authorised to send it.

If the Arts Council responded to the request for a meeting with representatives of the Ballet Rambert and the Group, it was decided that the Group's deputation should consist of a Director, the General Manager, and one or two Artistic Directors.

6. PROGRAMME FOR 1957

A report was laid before the Directors on the engagements at present under discussion. In addition to the concerts, a B.B.C. engagement, and a recording of the Group's production of "Savitri", these plans included visits to Paris, Bordeaux, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Stratford (Ontario), the U.S.A., and Berlin. Most of these engagements depended on the raising of the necessary funds for a new production of "Albert Herring".

With regard to the American tour, the Stratford (Ontario) Festival had made an offer of £5,500, for which they asked for eight performances of one opera ("The Turn of the Screw"), or preferably of two operas ("The Turn of the Screw" and "Albert Herring"). As the further engagements in the U.S.A. were still uncertain, the General Manager was instructed to inform the Stratford (Ontario) Festival that the Group might not be able to provide more than seven performances of "The Turn of the Screw" for this fee, and that a further decision concerning an eighth performance or a second opera must be postponed until the position regarding the U.S.A. tour had been clarified.

It was considered that if an engagement to present "The Turn of the Screw" and "Albert Herring" at the Jamestown Festival materialised, then the British Council might consider favourably a request to grant the cost of the fares; in this case, should the grant be sufficient, it might be possible to take "Albert Herring" to Stratford (Ontario) as well. It was also considered that the British Council would be further encouraged to make this grant if the proposed television engagement in New York materialised.

The Directors considered that the Group should only take on an American tour if it would result in a substantial profit, and the Chairman undertook to put this point of view clearly to the Director-General of the British Council.

If there should be a short season in New York, it was agreed that every effort should be made to place it after the television engagement, in order to make the maximum use of the publicity which it would provide.

7. APPOINTMENT OF MUSIC DIRECTOR

The Board agreed that Mr. Charles Mackerras be invited to accept the honorary appointment of Music Director to the Group.

8. FINANCIAL POSITION

The Chairman reported that the Group was in a very serious financial position. A statement of estimated assets and liabilities as at November 6th, 1956, had been circulated, showing that the sundry creditors exceeded liquid assets by £3,315. A lengthy discussion followed as to the means of dealing with this unfortunate situation, and it was agreed that the Chairman should:-

- (1) ask Lord Chandos if he were willing to invite certain guarantors to pay to the Group forthwith the amount of their guarantees, in the hope that £2,000 could be raised in this way;
- (2) report the situation to the Arts Council with an appeal for immediate financial aid;

and that the General Manager should renew the request to the Arts Council to pay over to the Group at once the remaining £1,000 of the 1956/57 grant.

Without assistance from these sources, the Group might have to cease its activities and go into liquidation.

In addition, Mr. Benjamin Britten offered to take part in a series of Opera Concerts with Lord Harewood and the principal artists of the Group, in order to raise funds and increase the membership of the English Opera Group Association.

The Chairman made it clear that it was by no means certain that these steps would be enough to avoid liquidation and keep the company in being for the projected Canadian and American tour. If, therefore, any Director or Artistic Director could think of any person or body who would be willing to give or lend money to the Group, it was most important that immediate action be taken. Liquidation of the Group at the end of its brilliant first decade and with all the interest being shown in its future performances was something which every possible step should be taken to avoid.