



# THE SOCIETY OF RECORDER PLAYERS

President: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies CBE

Registered Charity No. 282751

## SRP Chairmanship

As I have decided not to seek re-election as Chairman of the SRP in 2007, I have been asked to describe the role for the information of candidates and nominators.

The duties of the Chairman prescribed in the Rules are:

- to preside at all Committee meetings and at the Annual Conference of the Society (4.2, 7.4);
- to use a casting vote if needed at such a meeting (4.12, 7.6);
- to have discretion to allow a branch resolution to be moved at Conference when four weeks' notice has not been given (7.5).

The Chairman therefore has to have the necessary skills to handle meetings, including a large meeting such as the Annual Conference, where issues are sometimes contentious. Beforehand the Secretary and Chairman will agree the Agenda. Afterwards, in consultation with the Secretary, the Chairman will check, revise, correct or amplify the draft Minutes. Often it is a wise precaution to send draft paragraphs to other officers about their own areas of business. It is very important that the published Minutes are accurate and clear; otherwise members may interpret them in a way we do not intend.

Beyond that, the Chairman can be regarded as the administrative head of the Society and its representative at public occasions. Nearly all administration is handled routinely by other officers with specialised roles. All of them contact the Chairman regularly to discuss particular issues. Essentially the Chairman is a sounding-board for them, so that they know that what they do is supported. Usually discussion with the Chairman is sufficient; on occasion when a committee decision is required before the next meeting, agreement can be reached by sending an email to the whole committee. The most frequent contacts are with the Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, sometimes in a four-way email exchange.

Perhaps the most important role is recruitment of other officers when a vacancy occurs. Formally all officers are subject to annual re-election at Conference. In practice incumbent officers are re-elected routinely until they wish to step down. To my memory there has always been a contested election to fill a vacant Chairmanship and there has always been an unopposed election to all other vacant posts. Given the natural reluctance of members to take on administrative tasks, this is perhaps not surprising. It does mean that in each case an able member has to find who is willing to accept nomination and take on the role. A wide knowledge of national members is useful of course, as is advice from other officers, both retiring and continuing, and from other committee members. A good starting-point is to look at members who have been willing to stand for election to the Committee (whether elected or not), as they have shown an interest in participating in the management of the Society.

The Society's charitable registration is a financial benefit through tax relief on bank interest and now also Gift Aid relief on central subscriptions. More important in my view is the public status that enables us to ask credibly for help from individuals, other organisations and grant-givers. Over recent years the regulatory and reporting requirements of the Charity Commission for England and Wales have become more detailed and prescriptive; there will be more changes following the Charities Act 2006 and a similar 2005 law establishing a regulator for Scotland. The Scottish regulator is taking time to establish procedures for "cross-border" charities; the new Chairman may wish me to keep hold of this until it settles down. Financial reports are prepared by the Treasurer and Auditor, but other aspects, including narrative reports and details of the Charity Trustees (who are the members of the SRP central committee) have been prepared by me as Chairman. All Trustees are responsible for the good management of the charity, but the Chairman has to take the lead, keep closely in touch with the requirements and ensure that they are met. More can be read in a recent Committee paper at [www.srp.org.uk/documents/reports/charitylaw221006.pdf](http://www.srp.org.uk/documents/reports/charitylaw221006.pdf). The writing of policy papers such as this

for the Committee and Conference is naturally a responsibility of the Chairman. Another example was a recent paper for Conference on the payment of fees to conductors.

Sometimes things go wrong and it falls to the Chairman to sort them out with the Committee's agreement. Most serious are failures to meet the requirements or deadlines of the charity regulators. The financial returns have to consolidate accounts from all branches and from areas such as NYRO, the Walter Bergmann and Arthur Ingram funds and the SRP/Moeck competition. If any of these are missing or late, the Treasurer will enlist the Chairman's help in chasing them up and, in extreme cases, of corresponding with the regulators if there is a danger of default. Issues such as this highlight that almost all SRP work is undertaken voluntarily and it is important to maintain good relationships as there are almost no sanctions available if things do not go smoothly.

The Rules of the Society and subsidiary documents such as the Festival guidelines need to be kept up to date and should be revised annually, in the light of comments from those who have operated them. We have sometimes found that they do not correspond to the requirements of charity regulators or are unsatisfactory in other ways. Sometimes members interpret guidelines in ways that we do not intend. The procedures for financial reporting by branches are currently a thorny issue and need to be revised and clarified.

While most Committee correspondence is dealt with by the Secretary, some items fall to the Chairman. Examples include invitations to honorary positions (President, Vice-President or Honorary Member), thanks to anyone demitting office, congratulations for honours or achievements, condolences for deceased members, anything of a personal or delicate nature and anything else where the Secretary considers that the Chairman should write. Personal issues can be relevant to applications to the Arthur Ingram fund, because as a charity we can only make awards in cases of genuine need and these have to be investigated. My approach has been to get the committee to consider the principle of an award; if this is agreed, I write and ask for evidence of need. I then ask two other committee members to check a reply containing personal details and agree a decision with them.

For each issue of The Recorder Magazine, the SRP News Editor invites the Chairman to contribute. I write a brief report of each Committee meeting and the Annual Conference and occasionally highlight an issue for members. I think this is useful because formal communications to branch secretaries are an uncertain way to reach the membership. The Web Editor regularly sends an email to check whether he should include an item on the SRP web pages, or for help with queries he cannot answer immediately. I probably always have agreed with his view, but like other officers it is useful for him to have a second opinion.

I have always enjoyed representing the SRP at public occasions, including the SRP/Moeck Solo Recorder Competition, the winner's recital, the National Youth Recorder Orchestra concert and occasional other events like the David Munrow memorial concert in 2006. For the competition and winner's recital there is a formal role in presenting prizes and certificates; additionally the Competition Administrator has always enlisted my help on the day as there are many things to be organised. For NYRO there is not a public role for the Chairman. A future Chairman may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to claim travel expenses for such events, or alternatively that the Chairman's role, if any, is an add-on to the pleasure of attending as a member of the audience.

Finally I thank all those willing to stand for election as Chairman and I wish my successor well. I shall of course be happy to assist with the transition. I am willing myself to continue as Chairman of the NYRO Sub-Committee and as such would continue to be a member of the SRP Committee.

Andrew Short  
9 February 2007