

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus
Minutes of Meeting 29th March 2012

Present

Julie Smethurst; Janet Bower; John Spence; Angela Argenzio; Els Pearse; Sally Turnbull; Kate Reece; Helen Kirk; Paul Duffield; Elizabeth Charlesworth; Peter Quarrell; Daphne Sydney; Paul Madox.

Angela was thanked for her kind hospitality in hosting the meeting.

1. Apologies

Sue Pennington; Rachel Mallaband; Jo Payne; Richard Salt; Kate Arrowsmith; Howard Dore.

2. Armed Man - publicity & arrangements

Rachel M and Peter M working on the programme – some advertising had been received. 1,000 flyers to be available at rehearsal on 3 April, though a general question was raised as to just how many extra ticket sales result from such publicity since it is costly. Posters on trams and buses had been investigated and would cost between £1,000 and £2,000 in either case for even quite limited display – eg on twenty buses.

2 different press releases planned, hopefully for week commencing 9 April: one emphasizing the “community” aspects – eg link with Mosque; the other aimed at our usual audience via Bernard Lee. An email to be prepared for Chorus members to use (adapted by them as they wished), to send to networks. Both composers have been invited and since the meeting Philip Wilby has accepted including Trisha Cooper’s In Conversation.

Various ideas for ticket price reductions were eventually rejected as slowness of sales was seen as being to do with lack of publicity and the size of the hall rather than the price being too high.

Various suggestions were received for using our 100 complimentary tickets as a marketing tool as well as for guests

3. 2012 Voices/ Torch Relay celebrations/picnic

Julie outlined the issues:

Not very clear relationship between City Council and LOCOG about who is organizing what and where!

We may receive funding almost too late to organize the project, and/or we may be able to find the resources but struggle re a venue.

City Council’s main celebration is due to be in Hillsborough Park, and they say Barkers Pool and immediate environs are under LOCOG’S

control.Meeting re City Council’s activities is on 18 April: Rachel M and Julie, plus hopefully Timothy Allen, will attend.

Kate R has made a link directly with LOCOG which we could use if the City Council meeting doesn’t yield up any more definite plans.

Janet, Kate R, Rachel M, Julie, Helen, Paul M and Sarah Hyde all agreed to help deliver the project if we get the funding, including a Chorus picnic, which we could have anyway.

It was agreed that a recording of Olympic Triptych and Everyone Sang was a good project to pursue even if 2012 Voices doesn't happen in full. The funding applications included this so it was likely that funds already applied for could be committed to this.

4. Draft Outreach & Education Strategy (previously circulated)

Paul introduced the report and invited comments, which are summarised as follows:

Excellent report giving some very clear ideas – Paul was thanked for his hard work;

We need to focus our limited human resources to achieve the maximum return on our efforts;

Care needed in targeting the most likely organizations for recruitment, particularly with regard to basses and tenors;

The West of Sheffield already has a lot of choirs – need to think about new geographical areas so as not to be competing for the same limited number of singers;

SPC's unique selling point is working at a "professional" level: need to interest singers who already aspire to this – little point in investing resources in singers who don't want to perform major classical pieces at "professional" standard, or who don't want to learn to read music, for example.

"Improve your singing" type workshops a good idea – maybe something like Elizabeth's "Vocalise" – involve Maggie, target singers from the surrounding area.

Consider performances/events in Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley.

Very important to link in with the Music Hub if we want to be seen as "The Sheffield choir" – following Alight we are in a strong position to do this and should seize the opportunity.

Involve young singers/players in our events if we can – Neil Robertson of Sheffield Youth Orchestra had made contact with Julie following its involvement in Alight and other possibilities were being investigated via Ian Naylor, Deputy Manager of the Sheffield Music Service, whose Intermediate Orchestra accompanied the performances of Everyone Sang and the hallelujah Chorus at Alight, and already have links with the Hallé.

Try to find someone specifically to champion "Recruitment";

Try to use choirs such as the Girls' High School, and others, if/when we have opportunities – Christmas Concerts?

Recruiting Tenors:

Darius willing to consider female tenors so long as the sound of the section doesn't change.

He will also consider asking some first basses to sing tenor.

The principle of buying in professional tenors was accepted – it was noted that this was a strong reason for keeping down costs in other areas if possible.

Question about why we couldn't invite tenors from other high standard choirs to help us – e.g. Huddersfield, Leeds, Nottingham, Hallé.
Ideas around reduced subs for tenors were felt not to be a good idea.

Angela pointed out she had not heard from the Bliss Society about the funding they have offered for tenors for The Beatitudes – Darius to be asked if he can shed any light on this.

5. Next Season:

i) Beatitudes Saturday 22 September, Coventry, with additional rehearsals Saturday 17 September (to include afternoon Piano Rehearsal), and Thursday 20 September (Orchestral Rehearsal)

ii) Saturday 13 October Alexander Nevsky and Polovtsian Dances, with Leicester Philharmonic Choir, Leicester Demontfort Hall, with additional rehearsal Saturday 6 October – need to be signing up for this in the next few weeks – Action Janet.

iii) Christmas Concerts, Saturday 8 December, with Black Dyke, and Peter White confirmed (since the meeting) as compere:

Confirmed that there will be two, with a definite “family flavour” and appropriate ticket pricing. Following discussion in previous years, Julie had asked about including a junior choir – Julie to remind Darius and Hallé about this.

iv) Messiah, Saturday 15 December:

Darius had fixed soloists, working to a budget of £4,000; one had cost more, so final cost is £4,200. Manchester Camerata will engage and pay, we will reimburse them, meaning we will not incur VAT as they can apparently claim this back, which will be a good saving. Darius wanted to use a chamber organ for this concert at a cost of £200, and this was agreed. In return, SPC would receive 20% of “net box office”, though this had not yet been confirmed in writing. “Net box office” means after Performing Right (4.8%) and VAT have been deducted. Julie and Angela have tried unsuccessfully to challenge this with SIV.

v) Unfortunately we cannot take part in the City Hall's 80th Birthday event as it clashes with The Beatitudes – Darius subsequently suggested Messiah could be most appropriately regarded as SPC's contribution to these celebrations.

vi) Self promoted concert

Repertoire (as discussed between Darius & Julie so far) Bruckner Mass in E minor, possibly Brahms songs for female voices again; possible involvement of some Sheffield Music Service musicians – Darius happy to work with Ian Naylor on this. Use Hallam Brass again.

Venue: Darius would check out St Marie's Cathedral as former Chorus member Silviu Cobinou is arranging a concert series there and has approached him about SPC doing one of them.

Date: March 2013 to fit with the rest of the season. The Committee was happy for all these to be pursued.

vii) Sunday 2 June 2013: A Sea Symphony; Hallé, Nottingham Harmonic Chorus, conductor Christian Mandeal.

viii) Wakefield Music Library: during the move to Huddersfield the music holding may not be very easy to access – Els hoped this would not pose too many problems for next season.

ix) War Requiem: Darius was working on this for autumn 2013 and would keep Steve Terry informed of progress.

6. Rehearsal Venue

Even without offering any particular package such as a Student Membership/bursary scheme, Jenny Crook had spoken with senior management at the University and had negotiated some possibilities for discounts/reductions to advertised hire prices for LTs 4 and 5. Angela asked that, if we accept these, we check whether they include VAT. We would try out LT4 on 15, 22 and 29 May. Darius to book piano tuning. Further discussion to be postponed to the June meeting after the try-out.

7. Friends Update

Following John Hyde's email update and comments received, agreed that leaflets would be placed in all programmes for 28 April – Rachel M to seek volunteers for this. Julie to reiterate to Chorus the need to "find Friends" and the reasons for the scheme. The Committee felt that 2 Friends for Life, 9 Friends and 3 Supporters was a fair start and we needed to press on. It was hoped that John Hyde would be willing to continue the excellent work he has done for us, by chairing the Steering Committee, in getting the scheme up and running – formal thanks to him were expressed.

8 Any Other Business

i) Elizabeth Charlesworth organizing workshop, "Vocalise", on 16 June; free; 10am, Village Hall, Hoylandswaine.

ii) Helen suggested after-concert drinks/nibbles on 28 April in the City Hall Bar, for Chorus members and guests; Agreed she should go ahead and arrange this.

iii) Rachel M; Reiterated need for someone to start taking over from her as M & P Officer, as soon as possible; Julie to take this back to the Chorus.

iv) Bid writing: Likely to become an essential part of Chorus fundraising in future – Angela interested and also Sarah Hyde.

v) A Chorus “skills audit” would be useful – it’s several years since one was done; Julie to think through with others prior to taking to Chorus.

vi) Alight: Twilight had broken even which was appropriate to its status as a non-profit event.

Els to organize an appropriate gift for Yaron Hollander as a specific Chorus thank-you for Everyone Sang

9 Dates of next meetings

Tuesday 1 May 9.15 pm

Wednesday 13 June 7.30 pm