

SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 12TH July 2023, 19.00 to 21.45

Present: Anne Adams, Alan Anderson, Rosemary Anderson, Jo Briddock (Chair), Patrick Callaghan, Paul Duffield, Marianne Grayson, Georgina Hulse, Jim Monach, Christine Pennington, Jenny Swan, Kathy Towers (minutes), Sally Turnbull.

1. **Apologies: Helen Kirk and Jane Parkin**

2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest.**

There were none.

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of meeting held on 17th May were approved.

3.2 Matters arising - outstanding actions were checked and updated (see action list). Assisted hearing technology was discussed and unfortunately it would not provide the range of support that would be needed in a choral singing environment. The committee will consider any other reasonable adjustment suggestions as they arise.

4. Governance

4.1.1 Finance. Jane Parkin's finance reports and summary were reviewed. It was agreed that the Verdi concert produced a good outcome in financial terms with a good settlement figure of £3175.60.

SPC's current bank balances (on 1st July 2023) are Co-op Bank account £28,433.88 and savings account £71,000.00, making a total of £99,433.88.

The finance reports were approved.

4.1.2 Budgets. JP's outline budgets were discussed.

2022/23 Budget was approved.

2023/24 Budget. JP's projected budget was approved.

2022/25 Budget was discussed, including the question of subscription fees (see below). It was agreed that concerts are losing too much money and that in principle subscriptions should be set at a level that covers the Chorus's fixed costs.

4.1.3 MD, Accompanist and Voice Coach fees. An increase of 8.7% for these fees was approved.

4.1.4 2023-24 Subscription fees. An increase of 4% was approved as the committee was mindful of the cost of living crisis. It was agreed that the reasons for this below-inflation increase should be communicated to members and that it should be made clear the Chorus would not be able to sustain this approach beyond the coming financial year.

The Young Conductor initiative was discussed and it was reported that the MD is in favour. This will ideally take place in alternate years to complement the Stella Jockel Young Composer competition. The details are to be finalised but it was thought that two term's mentorship for the selected young conductor (eg from Jan – June) might be a successful formula.

The French trip in 2024 was also discussed. JB said that costs and details need to be clarified with Matthew Morgan. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for the Chorus to subsidise this trip as not all members will be taking part.

ACTION: JB to seek clarity and further details about the French trip from Matthew Morgan.

4.2 Recruitment Retention and Diversity

4.2.1 Recruitment of Tenors

JM reported on the MD's response to the outline proposals. The MD has agreed with most of the proposals put forward by the committee via JM but has not commented on the bursary scheme. He is not in favour of any A2s being designated as tenors, although he agreed a small number of B1s might be feasible. This would be approached on a singer-by-singer basis and undertaken by the MD.

The MD thought payment to invited tenors for specific concerts was workable. This might include members of local chamber choirs or music students.

ACTION: JM to set up a meeting with the MD to fine-tune the strategy.

4.2.2. Assisted hearing technologies covered in Matters Arising above.

4.3 SPC Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan and four strategic aims were discussed. It was felt that a Chorus descriptor along the lines of "South Yorkshire's foremost symphonic chorus" would be effective. It was agreed that the vision statement and aims are close to being complete and ready to be shared with Chorus members at the AGM.

ACTION: JB to update the vision statement and recirculate to the Committee. Committee members to respond by sending any final thoughts to JB.

4.4 Policies: Contracts

It has been agreed that from 2023-24 onwards, SPC will use contracts for MD, Accompanist, Voice Coach and Marketing and Publicity Officer, and to cover workshop sessions.

Contract with Georgina Hulse is ready to be signed.

Contracts for Rachel and Maggie are in draft form. These are to be checked by the MD before being sent to Rachel and Maggie for approval and signing.

4.5 Governance Action Plan

AA has created a very useful spreadsheet containing details of all policies with frequency at which each needs to be revisited/updated.

5. Operations

5.1. Conductor rehearsal duration. PC queried whether 2 hours was sufficient time for a conductor piano rehearsal. It was agreed that the duration will need to vary according to the piece being performed and that it was best for this to be agreed between the MD and the guest conductor, with scope for some flexibility.

5.2 Voice Exchange. Nigel Wright's paper was discussed and it was reported that the MD is in favour of pursuing this initiative. It was agreed that there is considerable scope for the VE to benefit the Chorus and enhance its performances. The Committee thanked Nigel for his valuable work on this initiative.

ACTION: JB to convey the Committee's thanks to Nigel.

ACTION: GH volunteered to take the VE forward and was thanked for doing so by the Committee.

6. 2022/23 Season

ACTION: The new Event Planning Group (EPG) is taking forward arrangements for forthcoming concerts listed below.

The Committee was told of the latest development with regard to the CBSO / Monaco Mahler concert for which only a small number of singers are now required. At the time of the meeting, more singers were interested in taking part than would be able to do so, and the Committee noted that there will be considerable disappointment for some.

MG said she had spoken with the MD about the possibility of a rehearsal in Birmingham. The MD is speaking to Simon Halsey to clarify whether this will be a requirement.

2023/24 Season

Verbal updates were provided on the following upcoming concerts which are being planned by the EPG.

6.1 . Mahler 2 in Monaco. See above.

6.2 Durufle Requiem at St Mark's Concert 28 October (self-funded.) The soloists have been booked. It was noted that this concert is likely to go slightly over budget.

6.3 Carol recording with BDB, Birkdale School (?) Monday 20 November

There is still a question mark over the availability of Birkdale.

ACTION: JS is researching alternative venues in case the school cannot be used.

6.4 Christmas Concert City Hall 16 December 2.30pm. EPG is progressing.

6.5 Vic Hall 16 March 2024 Britten St Nicholas (self-funded). It was reported that the two pianos at the Hall are inadequate so it may be necessary to find an alternative venue. The MD is currently considering options. GH reported that if the concert goes ahead as planned, Philip has expressed enthusiasm about the St. John's choristers taking part.

6.6 Come, Sing Haydn Creation late April or early May 2024. The non-traditional venue is still to be identified. The Hall in Stocksbridge was suggested and the EPG will investigate this possibility further.

6.7 Mozart Requiem 21 – 23 June in London, Sheffield (SICS) and Edinburgh. The EPG is taking this forward.

6.8 Trip to France (self-funded). As above, details to be clarified with M. Morgan.

6.9 Young Conductor sponsorship (see above).

7. Future Projects

7.1 Mahler 8 in June 2025 at Chester Cathedral to be progressed by the EPG.

7.2 Classical Sheffield Finale Concert 23 March 2025. The Chorus input is to be confirmed. AA is currently liaising with Jo Towler to discuss the possible programme.

Ideas were invited and *The Armed Man* and *Elijah* were mentioned.

7.3 Stella Jockel Young Composer competition to take place in 2025 (funded by legacy).

7.4 Other projects including Bochum trip and Yorkshire Carol Book to be taken forward in due course.

8. Marketing and Publicity Officer.

AA shared Alex Burn's activity report with the Committee. A healthy increase in social media followers etc. was noted. AB is not working for the Chorus in July and will resume activities on August 1 with a marketing plan for the year ahead. The Committee thanked AB for her efforts and was pleased with the outcomes so far.

ACTION: AA to communicate these thanks to AB.

9. Committee Officer reports.

9.1 Membership Update. MG reported that the number of active Chorus members has fallen slightly from 156 to 153. Total membership currently stands at 160. However, attendance is generally improving and three tenors who have been on leave of absence are returning in September. MG reported three resignations including Nigel Wright who is retiring after 35 years and is to be offered Hon. Membership. John Spence is also leaving and is similarly to be offered Hon. Membership. The Committee wished to thank John for his valuable contribution to the Chorus over the years.

ACTION: JB to write to Nigel and John to offer Hon. Membership and to convey the Committee's appreciation.

ACTION: MG to convey the positive membership/attendance statistics in her AGM report.

9.2 Issues raised by other officers. JM queried whether there was potential for the EPG's responsibilities to clash with those of individual officers but AA said that the Group had been formed following a request by the MD several years ago. The aim of the Group is to ensure that events always run smoothly and professionally and that the workload is shared between several people.

There was discussion about an August 'Social Sing' and the upstairs room at the Fat Cat was mooted as a possible venue. This to be investigated further and reported to Helen.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Dress code for tenors and basses

It was agreed that the dress code for future concerts will be all black (ie black shirt, no tie, no velvet) with a jacket when the occasion requires.

ACTION: PC to draft copy that can be included in the Weekly Update in September.

For women, tights can be either black or flesh-coloured. This also to be communicated via the Update.

10.2 Rehearsal Notes. PC offered to write rehearsal notes after each rehearsal, saying he had noticed that some Chorus members don't take down instructions provided by the MD. It was agreed that these Notes will appear as a link in the Update so click-throughs can be monitored. PC was thanked by the Committee for taking this on.

<p>Next Meetings: 13 September, 18 October (approval of AGM papers), 10 January 2024, 13 March, 15 May. July date TBC to avoid clashing with French trip.</p>
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ACTION LIST

From 14.09.22

- **ALL** to check that they have uploaded to SharePoint their SPC documents which might be valuable to successors or in emergency **IN PROGRESS**
- **Anne A/Jane P** to produce a set of Financial Procedures to include how SPC deals with payments to trustees. **IN PROGRESS**
- **Georgina H** to consider initial costs and practical details for setting up a youth choir and come back to the Committee with further suggestions. **NOT BEING TAKEN FORWARD**

From 18.01.23

From 08.03.23

- **GH, JS** plus Sue Pennington and Helen Eyre to meet to develop a feasibility study re the proposed Yorkshire carol book

From 17 May 2023

- **JB** to feed back to JM that all the proposals in the paper, apart from Bring a Tenor, were approved and so can be taken forward to DB. **DONE**
- **JB** to set up a working group to take the Assisted Hearing Technologies proposals forward, inviting anyone with an interest to join. **NOT TO BE TAKEN FORWARD.**
- **Committee members** to send their suggestions for a mission statement to JB.
- **JB** to finalise the Strategic Planning document and the four aims in preparation for sharing it with members at the next AGM (taking account of comments on p7). **DONE**
- **JS** to research alternative venues for the recording on 20 Nov 2023 and report back to the committee in due course. **IN PROGRESS**
- **GH** to approach Philip Collin with the invitation for St John's choristers to sing the St Nicholas (after checking with Darius) **DONE**
- **Event Planning Group** to investigate possible non-traditional venues for the Come Sing *Creation* in April 2024.
- **Event Planning Group** to take arrangements for the French trip forward.
- **HK** to send details of a summer sing in August to AA for inclusion in the Weekly Update.

From 12 July 2023

JM to set up a meeting with the MD to fine-tune the strategy concerning tenor numbers.

JB to update the vision statement and recirculate to the Committee. Committee members to respond by sending any final/further thoughts to JB.

JS to research alternative venues in case Birkdale cannot be used.

JB to seek clarity and further details about the French trip from Matthew Morgan.

JB to convey the Committee's thanks to Nigel.

GH to take forward the Voice Exchange initiative.

AA to communicate the Committee's thanks to Alex Burn.

PC to draft copy about male attire that can be included in the Weekly Update in September.

JB to write to John Spence and Nigel Wright (re. his work on the Voice Exchange) with the Committee's thanks and to offer both Hon. Membership.

MG to convey the positive membership/attendance statistics in her AGM report.

August Social Sing – venue to be investigated and outcome reported to Helen.