

SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday May 17th, 2023, 19.00 to 10.00

Present: Anne Adams, Alan Anderson, Jo Briddock (Chair), Patrick Callaghan, Marianne Grayson, Georgina Hulse, Helen Kirk, Christine Pennington, Kathy Towers (minutes), Sally Turnbull.

1. **Apologies: Jim Monach, Jane Parkin, Paul Duffield.**
2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest.**

There were none.

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of meeting held on 8 March were approved.

3.2 Matters arising - outstanding actions were checked and updated (see action list).

4. Governance

4.1.1 Finance. Jane Parkin's finance reports and summary were reviewed.

SPC's current bank balances (on May 23) are Co-op Bank account £37,485.61 and savings account £71,000. The finance reports were approved.

JP's summary reported that (thanks to AA), SPC's share of ticket sales from last season's Sheffield City Hall concerts has finally been received: from the Faure in January 22 we received £397.50 and for Belshazzar in June 22, £389.25. AA was thanked for her efforts and for obtaining reassurance that SPC will receive its share of ticket sales more promptly in future.

Draft accounts from Classical Sheffield indicate that the Mahler concert made a profit.

JP's report also states that all invoices have been paid for the Young Composer competition which cost £5,561.80 in total; considerably less than the allocated budget of £10,000.

4.1.2 Budgets. JP's outline budgets were discussed.

2022/23 Budget. JP's report anticipates a small loss for this current season.

2023/24 Budget. JP's projected budget for the 2023/24 season anticipates a busy (and expensive) year with a potential loss of around £7000.

2022/25 Budget. This (approximate) three-year planner assumes an increase in subs by around 5% each year, and increased fees for conductor, accompanist and voice coach in line with inflation (CPI, currently running at around 10%).

4.2 Recruitment Retention and Diversity

4.2.1 Recruitment especially of Tenors

Following DB's request that the Committee looks to address the problem of low tenor numbers, the meeting discussed the proposal document prepared by Jim Monach with Patrick Callaghan and Georgina Hulse. Of the various proposals all were thought to be useful and workable other than Point 3 (the 'Bring a Tenor' initiative which has not been successful when tried).

It is hoped that these efforts will help to build up a pool of tenors who will be able to sing on request.

ACTION: JB to feed back to JM that proposals as outlined above were approved and so can be taken forward to DB.

4.2.2 Assisted hearing technologies

It was agreed that there is a need to address this issue as significant numbers of Chorus members use hearing aids and sometimes find it difficult to hear instructions during rehearsals.

It was agreed that a working group should be formed to look at the issue in greater detail and that Chorus members with a particular interest should be invited to join.

ACTION JB to take this forward.

4.3 SPC Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan and four strategic aims were discussed. It was noted that there is still a need for the wording of a mission statement to be agreed.

The Strategic Plan document (now containing input from Maggie and Rachel Fright) was discussed and it was agreed that it is close to being complete.

ACTION Committee members to send their suggestions for a mission statement to JB.

ACTION The proposed vision statement and strategic plan to be shared with Chorus members at the next AGM. **JB** to finalise the document and the four aims in preparation so that this can happen (taking account of comments on p7).

4.4 Policies

4.4.1 Chorus Rules

All suggested changes were approved. (There was discussion of the wording relating to rehearsal attendance and it was agreed that the emphasis on attending all rehearsals if possible is an important message that should not be diluted.)

Sally Turnbull reported a misleading statement on the SPC website in the auditions

copy. The statement that 'most people' pass their audition should be removed as it creates false expectations of success and adds to disappointment.

ACTION: AA to ensure the website correction is made.

4.5 Governance Action Plan

The Action Plan was reviewed and it was agreed that good progress is being made. Outstanding items will be taken forward as and when appropriate.

5. Operations

It was agreed that recent concerts have gone well and that feedback has been entirely positive.

6. 2022/23 Season

The event planner for the Verdi Requiem is progressing and Marianne Grayson is preparing the singing list.

It was suggested that the numerous responsibilities associated with running SPC concerts might be shared so that AA is not overburdened. The committee agreed on the formation of an 'event working group' which would take over responsibility for forward planning – particularly with the Monte Carlo concert on the horizon.

MG, GH, CP, HK volunteered to join the group with immediate effect and to work alongside AA in an initial handover period.

ACTION Working group to be convened immediately so that responsibility for imminent concerts can be allocated to group members.

7. 2023/24 Season

Verbal updates were provided on the following upcoming concerts:

7.1 23/24 St Mark's Concert 28 October (self-funded)

7.2 23/24 Carol recording with BDB, Birkdale School Monday 20 November

AA reported that it might be necessary to find an alternative venue for the recording if the school needs use of the hall. Jenny Swan volunteered to research alternative venues in case this is necessary.

ACTION JS to make enquiries and report back to the committee in due course.

7.3 Christmas Concert City Hall 16 December 2.30pm

There will only be one matinee performance as in 2022.

7.4 23/24 Vic Hall 16 March 2024 Britten St Nicholas (self-funded)

It was agreed that the St John's choristers should to be invited to sing. Victoria Hall has been booked.

ACTION GH to approach Philip with the invitation.

7.5 Come and Sing Haydn Creation April 2024.

It was agreed that a non-traditional venue should be investigated if possible.

ACTION Event working group to investigate possible venues.

7.6 Mozart Requiem

To be discussed at the next meeting. All in hand at present time.

23/24 Trip to France (self-funded) 10-17 July 2024

It was agreed that financial arrangements need to be clarified with Matthew Morgan.

JM to obtain details from MM and clarify arrangements so these can be communicated via the Weekly Update.

ACTION The new events group to take arrangements forward.

8. Future Projects

A performance of Mahler 8 in June 2025 at Chester Cathedral was mooted, also a performance of the Rutter Gloria with BDB.

To be discussed further at future meetings.

9. Committee Officer issues/reports

9.1 MG reported that Chorus numbers are good and slowly increasing. She noted that Pat Hall is retiring as Sop 2 voice rep at the end of the season and will need to be replaced.

ACTION AA to ensure this goes into a Weekly Update so a replacement can be found.

ACTION Committee to organise a thank you to Pat from the Chorus.

ST reported that recruitment has proved very disappointing with a poor success rate at auditions this year. It was agreed that expectations of potential new members should be better managed (to avoid disappointment) and that this could usefully happen via the website, which should mention that being able to sight-sing is useful and that experience of choral singing is desirable.

ACTION AA to adapt website copy as appropriate.

KT suggested the idea of an interim 10-minute 'Maggie session' for potential new members at which potential issues could be picked up before audition. This would be billed as a 'one-to-one singing consultation' ie a positive benefit which would hopefully appeal to potential recruits. The committee thought this was an idea worth exploring.

ACTION: ST to put this idea forward to DB

9.2 Education and Outreach

GH reported on her activities and plans. She is currently preparing a programme of activities for 2024, including sight-reading sessions.

9.3 Marketing and Publicity

AA spoke of the pressing need for a marketing specialist to execute a professional publicity campaign for SPC concerts. She said that she had sounded out Alex Burn (who has excellent experience and credentials) and who is eager to take this on. AA suggested that AB be appointed to carry out 2 hrs/week with immediate effect at a cost to the SPC of apx £2000 pa. The committee agreed that this would be a worthwhile investment.

ACTION AA to approach Alex Burn as soon as possible.

9.4 Issues raised by other officers

Helen Kirk raised the idea of a 'summer sing' in August, possibly at Ranmoor Parish Centre. The committee agreed this was an appealing idea.

ACTION HK to send details to AA for inclusion in the Weekly Update.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Dress code for tenors and basses

Patrick Callaghan made the point that a formal DJ is an expensive item and can be a barrier to new members joining the choir. Two alternative dress codes were suggested - black trousers, black shirt and no tie or jacket or black trousers, black jacket and white shirt with no tie, depending on the occasion (eg jackets at City Hall).

The committee agreed that it would be useful to canvas opinion.

ACTION: AA to include the topic in the next Weekly Update and ask Chorus members to email PC with their thoughts.

10.2 Contract for GH

It was agreed that GH would be paid £20 for each half-hour session.

ACTION AA to draw up a contract for GH's work, to be shared with DB.