

Whitehall Choir Committee Meeting: Sunday 15th March 2020

Covid-19 response conference call - agenda as per PP's separate document, sent out on 15/03/2020

Attendees: Philip Pratley (PP) - Chair; Joanna Tomlinson (JT) - Music Director; Patrick Haighton (PH) - Treasurer; Kate Goulden (KG) - Soprano Rep; Anne Courtney (AC) - Alto Rep; Simon Hunter (SH) - Tenor Rep; Ian Williamson (IW) - Bass Rep; Laura Lowenthal (LL) - Business Manager; Martin Humphreys (MH) - Publicity Manager; Sarah Rollinson (SR) - Treasurer Elect; Richard Grafen (RG) - Webmaster; Alison Williams (AW) - Librarian; Aileen Stanton (AS) - Event Manager; Joanna Dacombe (JD) - Secretary.

Apologies: Antonia Romeo (AR) - President.

Meeting Summary

PP opened the meeting, thanking the committee for convening at short notice and highlighting the unusual circumstances that led to this conference call. PP paid tribute to Laurie Grace who sadly and unexpectedly passed away.

Item 1 - Whether to reschedule the 26/03/20 concert & arrangements for upcoming rehearsals

Our most recent advice to the choir had been that we would continue as planned. PP advised that the landscape had changed dramatically since then. The recommendation is now to reschedule the concert, pause rehearsals with immediate effect and recommence rehearsals on 21/04/20 at the earliest. This was approved by the committee.

Item 2 - Immediate actions for the committee

- a) **Professional musicians** - It was proposed and confirmed that the fees due to the professional musicians for the concert are honoured and paid (**Action 1**).
- b) **Concert finance** - PP thanked PH for the summary and modelling that showed we can absorb the small losses that will be incurred through rescheduling the concert. PH highlighted that, if required, we could rearrange the Rachmaninov concert to be included in next year's season (e.g. September/October 2020) as the choir has done well enough this year for the overall financials to be fine.
- c) **Business management** - LL updated the committee; 122 tickets had been sold to date, a combination of sales directly to choir members (71) and via Eventbrite (51). Eventbrite allows for easy postponement, without having to confirm the new date, and people can request a refund via the site. PH highlighted that, of those sold to choir members, half have committed to pay online but haven't yet so numbers requiring a refund are even smaller (**Actions 2 & 3**).
- d) **Hired music** - The scores could either be returned and rehired once the new concert date is confirmed or, if possible, the loan could be extended for members to retain their copies. The downside of the former was highlighted as requiring an additional administrative burden and SH flagged that members would lose their markings. AW advised she would ask if an extension is possible, and check them out until the end of 2020 if they are available (**Action 4**).

- e) **Venue liaison** - It was reconfirmed that St Alban's Church & Centre should be cancelled for the 26th March, with the intention to reschedule the concert when appropriate (**Action 5**).
- f) **Communications to members, audience & on social media** - A note will be drafted for choir members (see action 2) which will contain the key messages to be shared. This will be used as the basis of our communications on social media, our website and for ticket refunds to ensure alignment (**Action 6**). JT reminded the committee that choir plays an important part in many members' social lives and some continued contact would be beneficial for general wellbeing and morale (**Action 7**).

Afternote: JT has since continued to hold choir sessions via Zoom, adapting rehearsals for the platform (see appendix). These have been very well received by members.

Item 3 - Further actions for the committee

- a) **Financial SGM** - A Special General Meeting had been scheduled for 17th March in order to review the final 2018/2019 accounts prior to submission to the Charities' Commission. With the suspension of rehearsals, alternative arrangements need to be made to ensure the deadline is met. PP & PH proposed that choir members respond via correspondence, via part reps, to advise that they are content. SH & PH emphasised that we need confirmation of positive votes from choir members. PP confirmed that the accounts will also be put to a final formal vote once the choir can meet in person (**Action 8**).

Afternote: PH was subsequently able to confirm with the Charity Commission that in view of the consultation already undertaken ahead of the planned SGM, and in the unprecedented circumstances of the Government's Covid-19 response, they would accept the Accounts appropriately signed by the officers, knowing that these would in due course be placed formally in front of the Choir's AGM.

- b) **Summer term** - A review will need to be undertaken on the viability of recommencing rehearsals for the summer term from 21/04/20 as currently planned. It was agreed that the committee would reconvene for another conference call (**Action 9**). AW advised that the summer term music has been paid for but, given the circumstances, it was agreed that we would defer asking for payment from members for the time being.

Item 4 - Laurie Grace

PP thanked MH for providing the liaison between the choir and Laurie's family. MH advised that he has contacted Laurie's son, Joe, and is waiting for his address and also details of the funeral which will be shared when known. IW kindly offered to coordinate condolence messages to include in a card and it was confirmed that part reps will cascade this out to members to contribute (**Action 10**). In advance of this meeting PH and others kindly flagged names of ex-members who knew Laurie and who should be informed if possible (**Action 11**).

AOB

- JD confirmed with committee members that 8pm on a Sunday evening was a convenient time for the call in 3 weeks' time.
- PP thanked PH for his years of work stewarding our finances and the dedication and diligence he has shown while doing so. It was recognised that the fact we can face these unprecedented circumstances and expect to come through financially unscathed is a testament to the fantastic

work done by PH. PP regretted that this recognition was not shared in person due to current circumstances, and emphasised that it would be said more formally on another occasion. PP thanked PH for the care he has taken in the arrangements for the handover as SR steps into the role of Treasurer. The committee echoed PP's sentiments and shared their gratitude for PH's work, both as Treasurer and the wider activities undertaken in support of the day-to-day running of the choir.

PP thanked the committee for coming together at short notice, and to all for their efforts at such a difficult time.

Actions Summary

Ref	Action	Owner
1	Soloists for Rachmaninov concert to be contacted and payment arranged	SR
2	Create note to cascade to the choir sharing the latest updates, highlighting the process for ticket refunds for part reps to distribute and a personal note from JT	PP
3	Update Eventbrite, process refunds & manage any ticket returns	LL, PH
4	Extend the Rachmaninov scores hire until the end of the year, and advise if this has been possible	AW
5	Contact St Alban's Church & Centre to reschedule	JD & AS
6	Confirmation on the messaging to share, following action 2, for LL regarding ticket and refunds, PH/SR for our email subscription list, MH & FS to update social media and RG to update the website	PP
7	Work to be done to explore online options to continue to engage with choir members e.g. videos with vocal exercises	JT, MH
8	Collate member responses via part reps to confirm approval of accounts and then submit to the Charity Commission, and ensure the accounts have a formal in-person vote and include in AGM agenda	PH & SR, PP & JD
9	Schedule conference call for 05/04/20	JD
10	Share note for other part reps to cascade to inform members of the arrangements for condolence messages in tribute of Laurie	IW
11	Review list of names and contact, where possible, to advise of Laurie's passing	PP, IW

Appendix - Current Choir Rehearsal Format

Dear All

I've been working out what's the best way to keep us singing together while we can't be together physically. Rather than me making videos, I think it would be better if we meet up online and I suggest we use the Zoom app to do so. This will enable us all to see each other and to speak to each other. There is currently no technology that allows us to sing at the same time, due to varying delay but on Zoom we will be able to chat, we can also mute all of you and I can demonstrate and you can sing back for yourself.

I suggest our schedule is as follows:

Tuesday 24th March - Get together, acclimatise to Zoom, say hello, brief warm up. Glass of wine in hand optional. Probably around 30 minute session.

Tuesday 31st March - Vocal technique and sight singing.

Obviously this would have the potential to develop into working on the new music or other topics if it comes to that after Easter.

So, the first thing to do is download the Zoom app on your computer (as long as it's got an internal camera and mic or you can plug one in) or phone or tablet. It's the top one on here: <https://zoom.us/download> (or Zoom client for meetings via your phone app store). You only need the free version.

The meeting is scheduled for 6.30pm on Tuesday.

To Join Zoom Meeting click here:

<https://zoom.us/j/784456739?pwd=d3dyZkk3dFJJUXQ2MDM1cUdURHhwUT09>

You may need to enter these:

Meeting ID: 784 456 739

Password: 014812

Looking forward to seeing you on Tuesday!

Jo