

## Whitehall Choir Committee Meeting: Sunday 5th April 2020

### Covid-19 response conference call #2 - agenda as per email of 01/04/2020

Attendees: Philip Pratley (PP) - Chair; Joanna Tomlinson (JT) - Music Director; 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; Richard Grafen (RG) - Webmaster; Alison Williams (AW) - Librarian; Aileen Stanton (AS) - Event Manager; Joanna Dacombe (JD) - Secretary.

Apologies: Antonia Romeo (AR) - President.

### Meeting Summary

#### Item 1. Chair: Overview

PP thanked the committee for joining for another call, and the first via Zoom. Following the success of the recent online rehearsals and the current government guidance, PP advised that we will now resume online on 21st April after Easter rather than in person as originally hoped. Based on current Government planning, the choir will not be able to resume our usual in-person rehearsals until the end of May at the earliest (**Action 1**). SH shared that Buckinghamshire Council's current best-case assumptions are based upon the lockdown lasting until the end of April, some continuing restrictions until the end of May, and a return to more-or-less normal day-to-day life not until mid-late June at the earliest.

#### Item 2. Summary of actions in hand

JD confirmed that St Alban's church & centre were contacted and cancelled for 26th March concert, and St Peter's rehearsal space had been cancelled until the 21st April rehearsal.

#### Item 3. Activities during lockdown

PP thanked JT for all her work setting up the online rehearsals for the choir & invited her to share a summary of her plans for future online rehearsals. JT said that it was important to remember that members come to choir to sing in harmony and to meet socially. The former isn't currently possible so doing something social needs to be prioritised, with maintaining contact being the most important thing. JT said she would be flexible in terms of content, but suggested various options including:

- Sending members digital scores of the Baltic music so they could start getting familiar with it, aided by the learning files Patrick put together;
- Holding sectionals and perhaps muting and singing along to a recording;
- An introductory discussion about Baltic music;
- Musical appreciation sessions on other topics;
- Ian Tindale could be asked if he would provide input.

JT highlighted that the recent sight singing session was basic but that it was important to get everyone to the same place before progressing and there would have been some elements that were new for everyone. JT thanked the part reps for sharing ideas and feedback from each section.

PP invited the part reps to share any feedback they've had since the latest online session. KG said she had received good feedback; members found it useful, enjoyed the challenge of the sight reading session and were open to learning something new. Members had shared their appreciation of the work JT put into organising the sessions and KG confirmed she felt it would be useful to carry on meeting. She confirmed she was in favour of sending out music and holding sectionals.

AC shared that everyone seemed to be enjoying rehearsals and getting to see each other. She advised that she had set up some Alto sectional meetings over Easter to maintain contact and there were plans to compose a piece together.

SH advised that he'd had no feedback so assumed the sessions had been well received. He agreed that continuing with the sessions was a good idea, particularly on general musical skills.

IW had received some concerns around getting the Baltic music, highlighting an appetite for some rehearsal on music we plan to do. IW asked if it would be possible to get scores to members, perhaps digitally. IW shared that one of the other choral groups he's a member of is also using Zoom and at the end of their meetings they break into smaller discussion groups of 5-6. He confirmed that it has worked well and would recommend our choir adopt it as well (**Action 2**).

PP shared the additional point raised by IW prior to the call that the blind copy arrangement introduced recently to comply with GDPR has been felt to constrain communications. PP proposed sending a note out, enabling us to give members the option to be copied in part rep emails instead as before (**Action 3**). SH asked that it be made clear in the email that consent can be withdrawn at any time and there is no obligation to give consent.

#### **4. Additional points from around the call**

PP invited all members of the committee to raise any other business. LL shared that it had been very quiet regarding ticket refunds for the March concert and PP thanked her for her handling of the process.

MH said that activity online at this time was important but challenging. He confirmed that he posted the photo he took of our first online meeting, and that there was a positive reaction with the public as well as choir members. MH said he would welcome ideas, and asked if part reps could ask for suggestions from members. Various ideas were discussed, with the option of a virtual recording discounted given the amount of work required and that most groups are currently doing this. JT suggested our members be encouraged to share what they're doing with other groups, e.g. the Stay at Home Choir, and engage more with these existing initiatives (**Action 4**).

AW kindly offered to post the Baltic music to members. JT advised that it would not be possible to get this programme ready for June without a full term together in person, so the Baltic music would not be performed until next year. She confirmed that the music could still be sent digitally, if members wanted to start looking at it, as Patrick had organised pdf versions. JT highlighted the need to make decisions

regarding the Autumn term (**Action 5**). JT proposed waiting to book soloists for the Monteverdi that was planned for November given the uncertainty & the committee agreed. She recommended we confirm if there was a contract in place with Peter McCarthy (**Action 6**).

IW advocated continuing to meet as a whole choir, and recommended keeping this engagement in addition to introducing sectionals. He suggested a general meeting first, then dividing into sectionals, as well as suggesting separate break out sessions as a good way of getting different people from different parts of the choir together. IW shared the email from Laurie's son Joe regarding our condolence messages. PP thanked IW for coordinating the messages and sharing the response.

SH recommended that we tell members as soon as possible that we will not be performing the Baltic music in June, but share that the intention is to hold some kind of Summer event if possible (see Action 3). KG suggested that we could hold some kind of in-house music event with a social party.

JT shared that she had some suggestions for different scenarios:

1. Performing the Rachmaninov in late September would require time to revise in June. JT confirmed that if we were able to resume rehearsals in June there would be time to do the Rachmaninov and Monteverdi in the Autumn, perhaps touching on the Baltic music over the summer, for enjoyment at that stage.
2. Alternatively, JT confirmed that the Rachmaninov could replace the Monteverdi in the November concert slot if it starts to look like we will not be getting back to rehearsals at all next term.

*Afternote: SH sent further suggestions via email, such as a madrigals summer concert for friends and family and rescheduling the Monteverdi given the orchestral requirements. JT confirmed that these would be good options and substituting the Rachmaninov, or the unaccompanied Baltic programme as he suggested, depending on when normal rehearsals can resume.*

## **5. Chair and Secretary: new actions**

JD advised she would cancel the St Peter's rehearsal bookings from 21st April through to 26th May in line with PP's initial comments (see Action 1), but would keep the summer concert booking in case we can hold some kind of event.

## **6. Date of next call**

PP proposed an additional 30-minute Zoom call in 2 weeks' time to discuss the upcoming sessions in advance of resuming online with the choir on 21st April. There would then be more detailed discussion at our upcoming committee meeting regarding scenario planning for the Autumn term. SH requested the committee meeting start a little later than usual (**Action 7**).

PP thanked everyone for their time, and particularly the part reps for keeping our dialogue going with members.

### Actions Summary

Ref	Action	Owner
1	Cancel upcoming rehearsal bookings in St Peter's until the end of May	JD
2	Progress plans for future online sessions after Easter incorporating feedback from part reps	JT
3	Send an email for part reps to cascade sharing the latest updates, including current thoughts for the Summer concert and the option to opt out of blind copy in part rep emails	PP & JD
4	Maintain the choir's social media presence	MH, FS
5	Work through alternatives for next season, particularly for the Autumn term, and include on our next committee meeting agenda (30th April)	JT, JD
6	Confirm whether there is a contract in place with Pete McCarthy for November's concert	SR
7	Schedule a call for 19th April, & the longer committee meeting diarised for 30th April	JD