

## Whitehall Choir

### Minutes of Committee meeting, 17 January 2019, 6.30pm, 8-10 Great George Street

**Present:** Philip Pratley (Chair), Joanna Tomlinson (Music Director), Patrick Haighton (Treasurer), Ruth Eastman (Secretary), Kate Goulden (Soprano Rep), Sarah Rollinson (Alto Rep), Simon Hunter (Tenor Rep), Alison Williams (Librarian), Bridget Gardiner (representing Martin Humphreys)

**Apologies:** Ian Williamson (Bass Rep), Martin Humphreys (Publicity Manager), Laura Lowenthal (Business Manager), Richard Grafen (Webmaster)

#### 1. Previous minutes

*Agreed.*

#### 2. Membership

- a. Membership is now at 71 (S 19; A 21, T 12, B 19) with a few auditions remaining. This is the right size overall, although still need to work on balance of numbers between parts. Inevitable that some members will move away from London each year, so recruitment will always be a priority for us.
- b. Open Rehearsal format, on first Tuesday after each break, rehearsing in the church then moving to a social in the normal rehearsal room, works well. **Agreed:** to put this on a termly basis, with next open rehearsal on the Tuesday back from Easter break, 23 April.  

**Action: RE**
- c. The combination of current recruitment flyer and video on social media is effective. **Agreed:** use this combination for each open rehearsal, keeping current flyer design with new date each time.  

**Action: MH, JT**
- d. 'Come and Sing' workshop at the start of the season had also proved its worth. **Agreed:** this would become part of our annual calendar.  

**Action: RE**

#### 3. Choral development.

- a. Improvements in vocal awareness, in language, in our appearance and in overall performance had drawn positive comments from audiences and our own members. We have benefited from language tuition, and will continue with a programme of different languages. Part reps reported that our singers were enjoying the higher standard of performance, and completely recognise, though, there is work still to be

done. There was also appetite for another tour. Jo led the discussion through the following areas.

- b. Audition schedule and layout in rehearsals offer further scope for development. **Agreed:** next re-auditions would be in September this year, probably in the same venue if available, with Ian present as well to enable Jo to focus on feedback and voice matching. One of the most important changes to our sound was rejigging layout of the parts at the beginning of last season. Financial forecast to incorporate re-audition days. JT and PP to summarise this during rehearsal.

**Action: JT, PP, PH**

- c. Our sight-reading and general vocal, aural and musical development would benefit from using available on-line resources and also from encouraging members to have occasional singing lessons. Part reps agreed, passing on requests for top-tips from Jo on the members' page, and for particular work on our sound when singing quietly. **Agreed:** post links including to NYCGB sight reading videos on our Members' page and Jo to discuss importance of these points during rehearsal.

**Action: JT, PP, RG**

- d. Another area which has improved but still needs work is how we look in performance. **Agreed** to explore approach to filming warm up and rehearsals, to help improve facial expression during performance, and provide short clips for social media.

**Action: JT, PP, MH**

- e. Our sound is better when we are mixed, not standing in part order. **Agreed** that we will perform Creation in mixed formation, which places an additional premium on us as individual singers really understand our parts, and on us making proper rehearsal notes which can also be copied by those who may have missed a rehearsal. Jo will explain during rehearsal. Performing mixed, with our new numbers, will also help make best use of limited space in SJSS.

**Action: JT, PP**

- f. Midi files are a helpful guide; thanks to Patrick for these. **Agreed:** that summer term Shearing and Rutter files will be posted on our members' page before the end of this term.

**Action: PH, RG**

#### **4. Developing and using our online presence.**

- a. Overall commentary is that the website has stood us in reasonable stead to date with a style which it is now timely to develop further. It will evolve, particularly to give us a web presence optimised to mobile devices. This would mean fewer words, with photos commissioned specifically for the site, and a redesign to present the key information with a minimum of scrolling. This was **agreed**.

**Action: MH and BG with RG; PP**

- b. MH and BG propose a low key approach to audiences during our concert intervals, using an uncomplicated clip board questionnaire to find out more about how they heard about us. This was **agreed**.

**Action: MH and BG**

- c. PH proposed to email those who bought tickets through Eventbrite, also to ask how they heard about us and also to ask if they would like to be on our concert email list. This was **agreed**.

**Action: PH**

- d. In our pitch for potential members, it became clear that some of the more experienced new joiners liked being able to see what we had performed in past concerts. This is something we will continue.

**Action: RG**

## 5. Financials

- a. **The Annual Report** can soon be presented to the Choir in an SGM prior to submission to the Charity Commission. Our Gift Aid scheme as a charity is worth £3,500 pa to us. **Agreed** that subject to approval from the auditor this SGM would be on 19 February.

**Action: PH and PP**

- b. **Audience numbers** so far this season have been especially encouraging, with St Peter's being close to capacity for both the Heroines concert in November and for the 2018 Carol Concert. This meant we had met our budget projection. The arrangement with St Peter's that we share equally with them any profit from the Carol Concert would see us giving them a cheque for £1,220. This was **agreed**.

**Action: PH**

- c. **Projection for Creation at SJSS** was confirmed at 350, with, as previously agreed, a top price of £35. It's up to us to make maximum use of flyers, personal email with pdf flyers, and social media to promote this. The orchestra would again be the London Baroque Sinfonia; their excellent playing and the quality of the soloists is another reason to push the concert. Choir members should aim to sell 5 tickets each.

**Action: All**

- d. **Fundraising** through our website makes some money from going through our site to Easyfunding and Amazon. **Agreed** that we will make the buttons more obvious on our website, and relaunch these with new and existing members alike.

**Action: PH, RG, PP**

- e. **Making Music**, the association to which we pay our annual subscription, has a variety of resources to which all of our singers have access. **Agreed** that we will let everyone know more.

**Action: PH**

6. **Dates for concerts in 2020.**

Two concert dates and venues **agreed**

- a. Thursday 26 March 2020: Rachmaninov Vespers at St Alban's Holborn
- b. Thursday 26 November 2020: Monteverdi Vespers at Holy Trinity Sloane Square

**Afternote, action completed: RE**

7. **Actions being brought back to future Committee meetings**

- a. Strengthening the Jubilee Fund. IW and PP developing the approach.
- b. Actor for summer concert. JT and MH following up.
- c. Now that we have President, JT and PP with JW to follow up on Patrons.
- d. Friends Scheme proposal being developed by KG and PP.

8. **AOB – Piano in St Peter's Parish Hall.** Ian Tindale has written to draw attention to the limitations of the piano in our rehearsal room. It is almost falling apart. **Agreed** to explore urgently the options for buying and putting an upright of our own in the room.

**Action: PH**

9. **AOB – Creation programme.** Editing and printing process in hand.

**Action: RE with PP**

10. **Date of next meeting:** Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March at St Peter's

(Meeting closed 8.20pm)