

Whitehall Choir

Summary minutes of Committee Meeting, 29th May 2019, 6.00pm, Great George Street.

Present: Antonia Romeo (President) in attendance for items 1 - 6, Philip Pratley (Chair), Joanna Tomlinson (Music Director), Patrick Houghton (Treasurer), Ruth Eastman (Secretary), Kate Goulden (Soprano Rep), Sarah Rollinson (Alto Rep), Ian Williamson (Bass Rep), Alison Williams (Librarian), Bridget Gardiner (deputising for Martin Humphreys, Publicity).

Apologies: Martin Humphreys (Publicity Manager), Richard Grafen (Webmaster), Laura Lowenthal (Business Manager), Simon Hunter (Tenor Rep).

| | Item | Action |
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| 1. | Welcome and introduction | |
| | All Committee members introduced themselves. AR introduced herself as Permanent Secretary at the Department of International Trade and our President. She has been to one performance (Haydn Creation) and hopes to come to the next. She had not heard of the Whitehall Choir before. She thought the last concert was excellent. It should have been at capacity given the performance quality. Is that an issue? Our ambitious performances should be done in ways that attract attention and audiences. The Committee welcomed AR and her the evident commitment to our Choir. | |
| 2. | Choir development | |
| | JT summarised developments in the choir since her appointment. Key points:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership increased to optimum number for repertoire, venues – c75 including new tenors but still short of them.• Improvement evident in sound, tuning, performance style.• New web site What next? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to keep recruitment going to attract best singers.• Musically need to work on further on vocal technique, sight reading, and performance in 'letting go'.• Re-auditions in early July, with feedback.• Reputation of choir – should improve as we improve. Have to distinguish our performance from a recording, make it an event: daring, imaginative.• On-line presence to be further developed | |
| 3. | Our singers | |
| | KG presented a profile of our singers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership c 75 (those being re-auditioned). | |

| | Item | Action |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People hear about us from many sources, many from “Join us” link on web site. Some are friends of choir members. • Potential new members come for around two rehearsals before audition. This may include coming to an Open Rehearsal with social event at end; this is a successful new development. • Choir now better balanced than in the recent past; could always do with more tenors. • Range of ages from early 20s student to 79, from civil service and private sector. Being both good choral standard and a friendly choir is important to new singers. <p>Wide ranging discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the competition in terms of recruitment and retention • challenge in attracting recent graduates – but is this what we want anyway? • what distinguishes us from other choirs: 1) We are auditioned; 2) We pay an annual subscription so as to support larger scale performances; 3) We rehearse consistently through the year rather than just a few rehearsals before a concert; 4) We are strong on the social side. • lessons from the choir survey and things other choirs do: try to embed in the community local to our base at St Peter’s; commission works; do studio recordings. | |
| 4. | Financial overview including Jubilee Fund | |
| | <p>PH presented financial overview and IW provided Jubilee Fund summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management accounts format – showing budget as current position, and projection vs actual by concert and by season. • Accounts format as reported to the Charity Commission; importance of this because of value of ‘Gift Aid’ • Jubilee Fund as choir “nest egg”. Started on 50th anniversary 1992. Initially raised £20,000. Have kept it intact since (now £26k); money is borrowed and paid back from the main choir account; has allowed the choir to make 3 CDs, purchase a new piano etc, as well as even-out our cash flow to tide over during the season • Concert ticket analysis, highlighting the importance of meeting our budget projections (which means we can keep subscriptions to current level). Issues here around how to sell more tickets: getting choir members to sell more tickets; attracting as audience more people not known to the choir. • Value of Eventbrite in concert sales; now we will consider getting a card reader for rehearsal and on the door sales | |

| | Item | Action |
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| 5. | Running our choir - overview | |
| | <p>RE gave an overview of the running of the choir in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee roles and value of discussion around each meeting. • Planning horizons from 24 months to 1 week • The Chair, Music Director, Treasurer, Secretary take immediate issues in a 45 minute session each week before the rehearsal; can then circulate to Committee by email <p>RE summarised her role in planning ahead to book venues, organise rehearsal spaces etc, and noted the very good relationship we have with St Peter's.</p> <p>PP summarised our publicity scheme using MH's note on publicity timeline for the next concert.</p> <p>Among other developments, we would be looking to create and engage Patrons; AR welcomed this.</p> <p>PH's concern is always to look professional to the outside world.</p> | |
| 6. | Next steps with AR: Marketing and Communications | |
| | <p>AR and PP proposed a separate discussion with MH and members in our emerging social media team.</p> <p>In summary AR said the discussion had confirmed the priority was the need to drive up audience numbers. She noted that we already had more Twitter followers than many choirs. She believed that a small number of tricks make a massive difference and suggested a massive social media push for the next Come and Sing. AR agreed with the proposal that we would bring a team together to address social media, as a team brings in a range of different ideas.</p> | AR, PP to arrange |
| 7. | Plans for the party after the summer concert | |
| | <p>IW outlined a suggested plan for the party after the summer concert and it was agreed that PP would ask people to sign up to be on a rota to assist, particularly to clear up at the end.</p> <p>PH proposed a suggested donation of £5.</p> | PP, IW and team |

Meeting closed 8.25pm