

Whitehall Choir

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2017 at 6.30pm,  
8-10 Great George Street (with thanks to Philip Pratley for hosting), London SW1P 3AE

**Present:** Joanna Tomlinson (Music Director), Jonathan Williams (Chair), Ruth Eastman (Secretary), Kate Goulden (Soprano Rep), Jane Mackay (Alto Rep), Philip Pratley (Tenor Rep), Daniel Lambauer (Bass Rep), Martin Humphreys (Publicity Manager), Alison Williams (Librarian)

**Apologies:** Patrick Houghton (Treasurer) – JW had comprehensive notes from PH, who had to attend a Cambridge Opera Handel fundraiser, where he would do his best to plug Joshua when appropriate, so any reference to PH here is via JW; Richard Grafen (Webmaster)

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action
Minutes of last meeting: matters arising, not on Agenda	<p><b>1 Update on photos</b> MH reported that Leon Puplett has been contracted to do the Christmas concert at St Peter's, as he was not available for Joshua. Charles Tomlinson has offered to do dress rehearsal of Joshua at St John's Smith Square as a favour. PH, meanwhile, had secured special permission from SJSS to have concert photos taken, but the budget for that had been allocated to Christmas! RE, who feels the choir needs formal shots at venues other than St Peter's, offered to fill that gap by sponsoring a photographer at Joshua. Offer gratefully received on the understanding that the photographer would liaise with SJSS beforehand about protocol. Tim Jenkins, who has photographed the choir before, was chosen by RE and duly did a recce of the site. He took pictures of the rehearsal – along with Charles and with his blessing! – and the concert in agreement with JT and PP. Images from both photographers have since been posted on our Facebook and Twitter platforms. A gallery is going to be created on our website for the benefit of members and the outside world. Images will also be used for flyers, programmes and CD booklets, if not too out of date. More will follow after Christmas from Leon Puplett.</p>	
	<p><b>2 Open Rehearsal</b> JT is keen to have an Open Rehearsal again to aid recruitment and suggests 16 January 2018 (our second rehearsal in the New Year). This would give us the chance to regroup and 'reignite our spirits' the Tuesday before. Auditions would be that much later but not as late as September when there was the voice check. JT knows of a few people who are interested in joining. It will be held in the Parish Hall this time, not the church as unavailable. The music will be the Brahms Requiem. AW will line up 10 spare copies. JW will update flyer from last time and aim to have them by the Christmas concert. JT added new members would be welcome to come to the first week as well. (Dates of the Open Rehearsal and start of term were also published in Joshua programme.)</p>	AW JW
	<p><b>3 Eventbrite</b> PH wants to get this up and running for the Christmas concert and will talk to RG about it too. (Done.) There is still a slight logistical problem as people will be turning up with mobile phones and bit of paper so we'll need to be on top of this and remember to give them a programme as part of the ticket price.</p>	

	<p><b>4 Non-choir volunteers</b> PH thinks we should set up a network of non-choir members administered by a non-committee member of the choir; his wife, Jacky, who used to help at St Peter's concerts, no longer able to volunteer. People are needed for front of house and occasional catering, and it would be good to have a pool of about a dozen people, three of whom could be called upon for each concert. MH suggested a <b>call-out</b> for them in a concert programme. JW is including one in the Christmas programme. At one time, there had been talk of some kind of recognition to regular non-choir volunteers – KG cited her brother, Charles, who has sold programmes year after year yet he always paid for his own ticket. Missing the start of the concert is a pitfall, too. JT says front-of-house volunteers should get free tickets. Many agreed. We've avoided them in the past on financial grounds. Time to rethink? Possibly young people who brought friends along who did pay for tickets could be an idea? JW is going to go back to PH with the proposal of free tickets for volunteers.</p>	JW/PH
	<p><b>5 Friends' scheme</b> JW has a paper from PH about this. JW will give thought to Patrons over Christmas and put something in writing. He'd like to get this going by 2018. At the moment if they come to all the concerts, they win! (They pay £75 to be a Friend and they get a ticket to every concert and a free programme.) PH looking for a steer as to whether we need different levels of membership and we should be offering different deals. There's a lot of admin for 6 Friends and it's an opportunity for us to do more in terms of having regular people involved in the choir and giving us money and committing to concerts etc. MH has already asked Bridget Gardiner to look into schemes of other choirs and suggests a small group, not necessarily committee, to decide who are our competitors so we can dig deeper. When the new scheme is revived, we want to do it properly and not keep fidgeting with it.</p> <p><b>5 Remainder of Paul Spicer's leaving gift</b> PH reports (post-meeting) that Paul is not going to do a water feature, but has decided to put the remainder of his gift contribution towards garden lighting and planting a tree instead.</p> <p><b>Ken Holmes</b> JW had the very sad task of announcing the death of former Whitehall Choir tenor and treasurer Ken Holmes, who died the day before this meeting. An email would be sent to part reps to inform members who knew him. The Committee was deeply saddened and registered its recognition of Ken for his significant contribution to the choir for 25 years.</p>	
Financial update for the 2017-2018 season	Annual report with the examiner and PH would then like to send it round to the choir; committee has seen and commented for which thanks. We need a <b>Special Meeting</b> to approve it. Income and Expenditure sheets were circulated. Projections are based on an estimate of last year and a shortfall of around £3.5k, similar to last year, is predicted. Up until two or three years ago we regularly returned £3-£4k a year and that was what was paying for big projects like CDs, because it costs £12k to do a CD, but we have failed to make that sort of money each year to	PH

	<p>the extent that we haven't been able to repay our loan from the Jubilee Fund. The question now is: how we do get from minus £3.5k to plus £3.5k? We need another 20 members to be back to where we used to be on subs. As a result of the Open Rehearsal we have replaced all the leavers and have 52 active members, so we're on the right track. We also have to sell tickets. There's always the debate about <b>ticket price v. ticket number</b>. It was pointed out that there is no event for Joshua concert on Facebook. (RE put one up subsequently.) DL suggested at rehearsal everyone get their mobile phones out in the break and share the event. Actions: encourage people to Tweet about concerts and share on Facebook. <b>Cashflow</b> issue raised by PH: orchestra needs paying (£6k) and committee was asked if they would be happy for him to ask the Jubilee Fund if they would be ready to give us £2k at short notice in case we can't get through the month; it would just be for a month because the ticket revenue that St John's collect doesn't come to us until about a month later. This is why the more tickets sold by the choir, the better it is for us because we get the cash up front. JM suggested a bottle of champagne to the person who sells the most tickets through the choir (based on number of seats, not money); this might encourage people. DL kindly offered to sponsor a bottle of champagne; offer gratefully received. Thanks to PH for all his work on this.</p>	
<p>St John's Smith Square concert, Joshua, Friday 17 November 2017</p>	<p><b>Programme</b> nearly done. Thanks to RE for compiling and editing [and to JW, responds RE, for designing and producing]; also checked by PH and by JT. Should go to printers on Monday. <b>Volunteers</b> needed for programme selling and CDs. <b>Dress and timing:</b> DJs for men; email will go out to members saying gather from 2.30 ready to go on stage at 2.45, finishing by 6. <b>Protocol issues:</b> Bottles on stage and swigging in the middle of arias. Shuffling onto stage. Talking during tuning. Lazy stands and sits, often as much as plus or minus 3 beats where people are not paying attention (or failed to mark their copies). Following the score when not singing (JT doesn't mind this as long as people look engaged when soloists perform). Noisy page turns. This all needs to be addressed. JT will cover protocol in next rehearsal as well as priming people for the presence of photographers (done).</p>	
<p>Christmas concert, Tuesday 19 December 2017, St Peter's Eaton Square</p>	<p>JW will create simple flyer (with Eventbrite link on it). He will start work on programme too as will need to go to print quickly. KG has words to most of the pieces and will supply. Need to think about which verses for carols. The vicar, JT, PP and Roger Eastman are doing readings. Running order dependent on choices. Rehearsal from 6-7. Six volunteers from the choir will need to set up in the break before the concert starts – or before; should be possible as the church is booked out to us from 4pm. (Thanks to Gill Carruthers for offering to oversee the catering team.) For ticket prices PH wants to stick to £20 top price, which raised eyebrows last year, but this includes food and wine, latter paid for from choir funds; £15 for side aisles and £8 (restricted). For restricted tickets, we'll need a drawing of the church to see where those seats, since done by PH, will be, as well as</p>	<p>JT</p>

	volunteers to show people to their seats.	
Brandenburg Festival concert, spring 2018	We've said no thank you. If you use Bob Porter's (Brandenburg) orchestra you get first call in their concerts at St Martin-in-the-Fields, which he underwrites. If not, you sing somewhere nice but not as high profile and have to underwrite venue and orchestra costs yourselves. We need to think in the longer term what our relationship with Bob Porter is. Apart from anything, the choice of orchestra impacts on future programmes. Peter McCarthy and his London Baroque Sinfonia are valued by us for their enthusiasm and helpfulness. Agreed to review this again in two to three years' time.	JW/JT/All
Spring concert, Thursday 22 March 2018, St James's Piccadilly	Apart from the Brahms <i>Requiem</i> the concert will include Brahms's <i>Fünf Gesänge</i> (possibly only 3 of the 5 songs), and Schubert's <i>Gott ist mein Hirt</i> and <i>Zum Sanctus</i> and a piano piece for four hands (TBC) and one piano. The first half will be 30 minutes and the <i>Requiem</i> (65 minutes) will be performed in the second half. JW and PH chatted about ticket prices on the phone, and £20 and £15, minuted as tentative at our last meeting, are in line with prices for most St James's concerts, so they are being proposed, as are restricted tickets at £8. Date needs to be fixed for <b>video</b> of Jo talking about that before MH goes away (done, taking place pre-rehearsal 28 November, ditto video for January Open Rehearsal). In MH's absence Bridget Gardiner has offered to cover publicity – she is away until 20 January, so MH planning that most of the concert publicity will be done before Christmas. Someone still needed to do flyers as a matter of urgency; would be ideal if they could be produced over Christmas. (MH has since lined up a contact of Alice Farrow's whom she mentioned in the survey.) JT wondered if videos could be jazzed up a bit in future – shorter one of her interspersed with choir members, or maybe Ian talking about the piece? We also still need to think about who will do the programme.	All
Summer concert of American music including Bernstein's <i>Chichester Psalms</i> , Thursday 28 June 2018	Ticket prices will be the same as Christmas concert: £20, £15 and £8 (restricted). No interval. Post-concert party on the porch with drinks and simple crisps/nibbles. Bernstein specifies a countertenor or treble soloist; JT prefers the former – less stressful – and has a very good one in mind.	
Analysis of member survey results	<b>Repertoire</b> Lots of works suggested, which is great. JT's comments: pretty much every piece ever written was suggested. Some things not realistic for our size and budget. Joining other choirs not feasible for the next few years – we should be consolidating what we're doing; joint concerts also mean extra organisation. In Jo's <b>five-year plan</b> sent to the committee, she's included pieces that came up multiple times, such as <i>The Creation</i> , and a capella works, e.g. Rachmaninov <i>Vespers</i> , as our tuning and breathing improves. She's cautious not to go too far off-piste but wants to open us up to new directions. <i>Theodora</i> came up a lot but is very long (3.5 hrs for 2-hr performance time) so would need too much cutting. JT favours <i>Messiah</i> , considering it one of the best pieces in	

	<p>the repertoire. A Bach Passion is included and JT has discussed various Bach pieces with Peter McCarthy. <i>Matthew</i> more difficult because calls for much bigger orchestra and double chorus; the <i>St John</i> would be more accessible, possibly at St James's Piccadilly rather than SJSS as the latter is awash with Passions. All this needs to be considered in context of <b>2018-19 programme</b>. JT's proposed programme: <i>The Creation</i> at SJSS in November 2018 (ditched, temporarily, as already booked that month by another choir – alternative piece needed but venue might not be SJSS); Christmas concert; Vienna choir visit in spring in our home church, St Peter's; summer concert of women composers, as requested by many in the survey – great promotional value, too. JT will provide a list of possible pieces by next meeting. Following the meeting, RE suggested that the All-Women concert could take place in November 2018 (centenary year for Suffragettes) – possibly with the Austrian choir, if they choose to come then instead of the spring, and they could sing music by female composers of their country. Hinges on Austrian dates but concert could stand alone in any case. <b>Tours</b> are motivating but take a lot of organising. Referencing Patrick's survey after Vienna, pretty much everyone who went enjoyed it. UK tours not much cheaper than abroad after transport and hotel bills. KG said repertoire chosen should suit balance of singers going, as demonstrated in Vienna. JT wonders about an overnight UK cathedral trip not too far from London involving a Saturday Evensong and social in the evening, e.g. Wells, the Priory Christchurch, one of the Oxford or Cambridge colleges? Main thing is this wouldn't be too long after our summer concert so people would still be around. We need to research the possibilities. A Mag and Nunc by a female composer taken from the all-female programme?</p> <p><b>Recordings</b> JT's brother trained as an audio engineer so could help with cheap recordings for us. <b>Volunteers</b> Lots of people offered to help at concerts but not a lot were rushing to come on to the committee, at least not yet. That could all change as season progresses and new members feel more at home. We need to talk to people who expressed interest after Christmas and see how they're feeling. Thanks were proffered to Kate Goulden (and Kate Hand, not on the committee) for all the help they've given with tickets since offering to do so in their survey responses. MH wondered if help had been offered in opening up the church. It has! (MH subsequently contacted volunteers regarding a rota and a new one has been set up.) JW expressed a big thank you to RE for her work on this. (Thanks, JW, hopefully the findings will be useful!) <b>Re-usable cups at break</b> The church has given permission for us to use the dishwasher so re-usable cups, as per Kate Hand's request, to help save the environment, can now be used. JW would like to trial this in the run-up to Christmas. <b>Where we go from here</b> AW suggested that in return for the time people spent responding to the survey we let the choir know what we plan to do as a result. A covering email, including committee feedback, was sent to part reps on 10.11 for onward transmission. (The results are on the members' page of the website. In case anyone missed it when it was sent to you, a document containing</p>	<p>JT</p> <p>All</p>
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	the contents of the email has also been posted there.)	
Five-year forward look including proposed visit by Cantus Novus Wien 2019	JT still waiting to hear from their music director. Future repertoire depends on the timing. (JW emailed their chairman on 22.11, who said a decision should emerge during their meeting on 23.11.) Easter 2019 is on 21 April.	
AOB	<b>Attendance policy</b> DL asked JT to clarify the 80 per cent 'rule'. In Paul's day if you missed three rehearsals it was up to Paul whether you could sing in the concert. JT says 80 per cent means broadly that if you miss three or four rehearsals she would like to have a conversation with you. We need to reinforce the message that we expect people to come to every rehearsal and, when it comes to missing three, it's time to talk to Jo. The other slight policy change is that even if you miss the concert, come to rehearsals to help preparations.	
Future committee meetings this season (all at St Peter's except 26 April)	25 January, 8 March, 26 April (8-10 Great George Street? TBC), 14 June and 3 July (AGM).	RE/PP

The meeting ended at 9 pm.