



Committee Meeting - Minutes

Monday 5th September 2022

7.30pm via Zoom

1	<p>Welcome and Apologies Present: Simon Durk (SD), Keith Hamilton (KH), Gill King (GK), Helen Milner (HM), Pam Watkins (PW), Neil Fricker (NF), Sue Lawrence (SL), Oliver Walker (OW), Janet Thomas (JT) Apologies: Sue Coates (SC)</p>	
4	<p>Due to time constraints key discussions took precedence and Agenda points were taken out of sequence.</p> <p>Financial Report</p> <p>The Treasurer was pleased to confirm that the accounts for the previous Choir Year ended 30 June 2021, as presented at last year's AGM, were duly reviewed and approved by an independent qualified accountant. Those accounts formed the basis of the 2021 Annual Return to the Charity Commission, which was filed in February 2022. The format of the 2022 accounts is unchanged from prior years.</p> <p>The Choir remains in a reasonable financial position after a challenging season, with cash reserves of £18,036 (2021- £26,597) at the end of the year. We are all aware of the continuing impact that Covid-19 has had on our audience numbers, which are significantly down on prior years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the four concerts, we only sold a total of 481 tickets, with a very disappointing 88 tickets sold for the St John Passion. As a result, our concert revenues for the year show a 25% reduction on the equivalent concerts in the last full pre-Covid year (2018/2019) • The St John ticket receipts were 50% down on those for the equivalent March 2019 concert ('Sing Praises'). If this much reduced level of ticket sales represents the 'New Normal' post-Covid, consideration will have to be given to the choirs' future concert programme, as the current level of concert revenues does not support the staging of expensive large-scale performances. • Put simply, we cannot continue to fund a deficit on our concert programme of the order of £10k per season, as such losses are not sustainable in the long term and pose a threat to the choirs' continuing existence. We should aim, as we have done in the past, to promote a range of concerts that, over a two-year period, allow us to break-even. • After the cancellation of the 2021/21 season, the committee took the decision to maintain subscriptions this year at their previous level of £140, against a background of rising costs. We are very grateful for the continuing support of our members, whose subscriptions and fund-raising efforts are vital in covering the choirs general account expenditure (mainly rehearsal fees and venue costs). • Subscription income this year was £7,430 (2021-£5,660). As already mentioned, the cost of mounting the larger concert works, the Carmina Burana in November and the St John Passion in March, exceeded the ticket income by some £10k, and whilst we budgeted for this, we had hoped that these major works would draw in a new audience and increase numbers attending our concerts. • The SCS trustees are mindful that they have a duty to maintain a level of financial reserves that is right for SCS, a charity, and explain to its members and other stakeholders why holding these reserves is necessary. After careful consideration, the trustees are of the view that SCS should continue to follow previous practice and aim to retain a minimum level of financial reserves sufficient to cover the budgeted total concert expenditure for the following season. • Despite the losses incurred this year, our total funds remain sufficient to cover the budgeted concert expenditure of £16k planned for the 2022/23 season. • The Choir Development Fund has moved back into a small surplus of £26 (2021- deficit of £278) as a result of income raised from the well-attended Can you Swing? and John Butt SJP workshops, the latter a successful collaboration with the Nottingham Bach Choir. • As always, thank you to all choir members who have signed Gift Aid declarations, which means that for every £80 you donate by way of subscription, the choir receives £20 in Gift Aid to support our music-making. The choir's funds have benefited by Gift Aid of £1,565.11 	

	<p>(2021- £1,214.55) claimed and paid by HMRC this year. If you are a taxpayer but have not yet completed a Gift Aid declaration, please do contact our Membership Secretary, or myself, and we will be happy to supply you with a form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, there was a deficit for the year of £7,199 (2021 – a deficit of £1,469), the largest annual deficit in the choir's history. • Total funds stand at £16,479 (2021- £23,678). As we move into the second year of the Choirs relaunch post-Covid, it is likely that we will continue to face financial challenges and difficult decisions in the year ahead. <p>Discussion points</p> <p>The Committee had a long and considered discussion regarding the financial challenges facing the choir and recognised all households and small organisations are under pressure in general with the cost of living/energy crises in the country at this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Reserves Policy was noted, but it was also suggested that the 'aim to retain a minimum level of reserves sufficient to cover the budgeted total concert expenditure for the following season' did not take account of income received during the year. • At last years' AGM issues had been raised regarding the level of our Reserves, so it was agreed that the policy would be shared and explained at this year's AGM. • The Committee discussed subscriptions which had not been increased for 2 years acknowledging that our running costs, including hire of venues, music and rehearsal space were all set to increase. (Solihull School had for the first time indicated they would charge £30 for use of the Music Room for rehearsals). • JT proposed subscriptions be increased from £140 a year to £150. GK thought this would move the choir forward but was concerned about the cost of music hire. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the following would be put to the membership at the AGM: raising subscriptions to £150 but seeking to increase this to £160. Noting that if anyone was experiencing hardship, they should raise it confidentially with anyone on the Committee: we did not want to lose any choir member for this reason. • OW reiterated that we are on a journey, in the second year of a 3-year plan. We have already committed to some costs in year 2 and should see it through. We should ask ourselves if we are worried enough to need to change the programme. • KH commented that the plan was set against attracting new audiences and PW stated that Covid had disproportionate effect on our (older) audience but that hopefully they would feel more confident to venture out following the vaccination roll out. SD added that we should think carefully and creatively to keep our costs down in 2023-4 to balance cash flow. SL commented that some of our audience may find the Bach Passions hard but would love the Faure and Mozart. PW thought that Handel's Messiah would be a big draw. KH stated that hopefully we would see a pick up of ticket sales from our first concert in November. • OW advised that David Rice would join us as Accompanist for 2 terms which could be reviewed thereafter. 	<p>KH</p> <p>SD</p>
6	<p>Review of Summer Concert</p> <p>OW felt the summer concert went well, he questioned whether the programme was too full. PW thought it was the right content and length and had received very positive feedback. OW would look to amend the Saturday rehearsal time as, on reflection, it was too squeezed.</p>	
7	<p>Autumn Workshop 1st October</p> <p>Arrangements were not yet confirmed but OW hoped to have an update at our first rehearsal. PW advised we had not booked a venue for the workshop as yet.</p>	OW
8	<p>November Concert Arrangements</p> <p>OW was hopeful the programme would draw people in. He had reduced parts in the orchestra but would have to consider the physical arrangements in the Chapel as it would be a tight fit. GK had acquired choir scores due to the great tenacity of one of her contacts.</p>	
9	<p>Concerts 2022-23</p> <p>PW advised that St Alphege Church was not yet confirmed as our venue for Christmas. She continued to chase. SD asked for a contingency plan and several potential venues were identified: Solihull Methodist, St Phillips in Dorridge, Shirley Methodist.</p> <p>PW advised that she was still seeking a venue for the March concert and although we had stated our June concert was at Packington, this had not yet been booked. As a general comment, all venues</p>	

12	<p>Fundraising</p> <p>SD had been approached by The Forrest Hotel, Dorridge to sing on their Christmas Lights night on Thursday 1 December. It was a good fundraiser, earning £300. It was suggested we would get the Banner from Cornelia to promote the choir and see if Mark could produce a promotional flyer.</p> <p>JT agreed to research a contact at John Lewis and Touchwood to see if they were open to sponsor a similar event with the caveat that we could not commit the choir unless there were sufficient numbers to take part.</p> <p>SD would ask Pam Price if she was still willing to act as Fundraising Lead and any plans for 2022-23.</p> <p>There was also a discussion around charging £1 for concert programmes. KH would explore if this was an option with Ticket Tailor.</p>	<p>SD</p> <p>JT</p> <p>SD</p> <p>KH</p>
13	<p>AOB</p> <p>a) The Committee agreed that HM should publicise the Ex-Cathedra Workshop on 4 February 2023 as there was no conflict of interest.</p> <p>b) JT asked if the concert programme for 2022-23 still included a Come and Sing Day: The Armed Man as this had not been mentioned or budgeted. SD thought OW could advise at the next Committee Meeting- add to the agenda</p>	<p>JT</p>
14	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>AGM 21 September 2022 8.30pm</p> <p>Next Committee Meeting: Tuesday 1 November 2022 7.30pm via Teams</p>	

Appendix 1 - Future Concerts - Updated 05.09.2022

Concert Date	Venue	Programme	Comments
2022/23 Season			
01.10. 2022 <i>The Music Makers</i>	tbc	Workshop	Budget £350
12.11.2022	Solihull School chapel	Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis, RVW. The Music Makers Elgar, Faure Requiem	Orchestra £3,125 Organist: £150 Soloists £600 Venue: tbc Total: £3,875 excl. venue
10.12.2022	St Alphege Church tbc	To include Ceremony of Carols	Organist: £150 Harp £200 Soloists x 2 £100 Venue: tbc Total: £450 excl. venue
18.03.2023	tbc	Concert: Messiah Handel	Orchestra £2,650 Organist: £200 Soloists £1,000 Venue: tbc Total: £3,850 excl. venue
Summer 2023?	tbc	Workshop with Themba Mvula including Gospel Favourites	Postponed to 2022-23 season Budget £350

<i>Singing with Spirit</i>			
17.06.2023 <i>Looking at the Stars</i>	Packington tbc	Concert including Esenvalds, Part and Whitacre	Pianist £150 Soloist £150 Venue: tbc Total: £300 excl. venue
Autumn 2023 <i>Majestic Mozart</i>	tbc	Singing Day: Mozart with Paul Spicer	
Autumn 2023	tbc	Mozart Concert: Magic Flute, Requiem, Coronation Mass	
Christmas 2023	tbc		
Spring 2024 <i>Viva Italia!</i>		Workshop: tbc	
Spring 2024		Concert: Petite Messe Solennelle - Rossini	
Summer 2024 <i>Sacred & Profane</i>		Concert: Opera Choruses	

Appendix 2 – 2022-23 Rehearsal schedule – (05.09.2022)

Autumn

Sept 7, 14, 21, 28

Oct 5, 12, 19

Nov 2, 9

Concert - 12 November (Elgar Music Makers, Faure Requiem)

Nov - 16, 23, 30

Dec 7

Concert - 10th December (To include Britten Ceremony of Carols and L'Estrange The Story of Light)

Spring

Jan 11, 18, 25

Feb 1, 8, 15

March 1, 8, 15,

Concert – 18th March (Handel – Messiah)

Summer

April 19, 26

May 3, 10, 17, 24

June 7, 14

Concert – 17th June

Appendix 3 - Committee Members and Other Roles (Non-committee members in italics)

Chair	Simon Durk	<i>Fundraising</i>	<i>Pam Price</i>
Secretary	Janet Thomas	<i>Concert Management</i>	<i>Mike Norris</i>
Treasurer	Keith Hamilton	<i>Soloist Liaison and contracts</i>	<i>Janet Gibbins</i>
Membership Secretary	Sue Lawrence / <i>Sue Coates</i>	<i>Bursaries</i>	<i>Vacancy</i>
Librarian	Gill King / <i>Paul Clark</i>	Section Reps	
Marketing / Publicity	Vacancy	1 st Sopranos	<i>Barbara Williams</i>
Bookings	Pam Watkins	2 nd Sopranos	<i>Pam Price</i>
Newsletter	Helen Milner	1 st Altos	<i>Janet Gibbins</i>
Committee Member	Neil Fricker	2 nd Altos	<i>Carolyn Small</i>
<i>Tickets</i>	<i>Liz Hamilton</i>	Tenors	<i>Mark Emms</i>
<i>Design and IT Support</i>	<i>Mark Emms</i>	Basses	<i>David Lewis</i>

Other Support

Rehearsal refreshments	<i>Jane Elliot</i>
Concert refreshments	<i>Cornelia Heaney/Adrian & Stephen Bromage</i>