

# **NORTH KINGSTON CHOIR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**8<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Attendees:** Penny Hamilton (PH), Chair; Sue Manson (SM), Treasurer; Nello Bearzatto (NB), Events; Sally Winter (SW), Membership; Shira Keshet (SK), Communications; Georgi Vaughn (GV), Secretary; Jessica Bate (JB), Musical Director.

**Apologies:** Phil Meir (PM), Social.

## **1. Finances – SM**

SM reported to the Committee that the choir's finances are still in a comfortable position with £5,000 reserves. Due to Covid-19, there has been little income or expenditure. SM noted that the choir had paid a deposit of £486 to Twickenham Exchange for our postponed concert and suggested that the choir should ask for its deposit back. The Committee agreed to discuss this when discussing events.

## **2. Autumn term debrief – PH**

PH noted that there had been positive feedback from members who took part in the five online sessions with Jim Hawkins (JH). Members enjoyed the sessions and appreciated the opportunity for singing while the choir is unable to meet. SM noted that it was disappointing that the number of members attending had dropped off over the term, especially at the final session. The Committee felt that some members may have intended to attend but felt less inclined after working from home all day. It was also noted that some members may not have wanted to be in the video recordings in the final session.

PH noted that the Live Lounge events have been very successful and had great feedback from members.

## **3. Spring term plan – PH**

The Committee discussed whether it would be possible to return to in-person rehearsals in the spring term. The Committee is aware that some choir members have expressed enthusiasm for socially distanced rehearsals.

JB said that she would not be able to lead rehearsals during Covid-19 restrictions. The Committee noted that this would mean finding another choir director to lead rehearsals.

The Committee noted the updated government guidance for performing arts organisations at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>

This guidance includes:

- The number of individuals participating should be limited as far as possible. This could mean limiting rehearsals to, for example, 20 members in alternating weeks.
- Individuals should be positioned 2 metres apart and in a way that avoids face-to-face singing as far as possible. This is not ideal for a choir as it would make it hard for singers to hear each other.
- Individuals should wear face coverings when singing where this is feasible.

- The duration of activity should be limited as far as possible. This could mean rehearsing for 30 minutes, breaking for 15 minutes (during which no social mixing may take place), then rehearsing for another 30 minutes, for example.
- The need for good ventilation when rehearsing indoors would require having doors and windows open, plus possibly shorter periods of singing with breaks in between where the room is vacated.

The Committee noted that a thorough risk assessment would thus need to be carried out. The Committee felt that complying with the necessary safety measures would not make rehearsals a very enjoyable experience. The Committee also noted that although Kingston is currently in tier 2, this could change at any time and make it impossible to continue rehearsals. The Committee felt therefore it would not be worthwhile to make arrangements for in-person rehearsals. Additionally, the Committee did not feel it would be responsible for the choir to incur liability in case of viral transmission at rehearsals.

The Committee discussed whether to continue online sessions in the spring term. SM stated that the choir would have to charge fees to cover this and was not optimistic that enough members would sign up. If the choir hired JH again, we would need a minimum of 16 members signed up for £5 per session. Another choir director would likely be more expensive. Members would need to pay their fees in advance for the term. The Committee agreed to survey choir members to gauge interest.

The Committee noted that choir members may prefer rehearsals to return to Monday evenings, as some members may have other commitments on Tuesdays which have meant they are unable to attend virtual sessions. PH will discuss this with JH or other potential choir directors. The Committee will look to organise around five fortnightly sessions between January and Easter, if a sufficient number of members are interested.

The Committee felt that JH was popular with members and has built up a rapport with the choir, so it would be good to continue with JH if possible. PH will discuss with JH whether he is able to continue next term. The Committee decided not to record any videos with JH if the sessions go ahead.

JB suggested that an alternative to regular rehearsals could be mini-workshop sessions with different choir directors, possibly for a few hours at the weekend rather than weekday evenings. The Committee felt that this was unlikely to improve member engagement as members have other plans at weekends. The Committee also felt that members would prefer regular sessions.

PH noted that the Live Lounge events have been well attended and popular with members. JB has been pleasantly surprised by the number of members volunteering to take part. The Committee agreed that Live Lounge events should continue next term. JB would like to encourage more collaboration from the band and other members as backing singers. PH pointed out that this would involve more work putting videos together. JB suggested that if some more members could be trained to edit videos, this would take the pressure off Tristan. SK stated that she would be happy to be trained up. PH will also ask other members if they would be interested.

JB suggested that it would be nice to make the videos from previous Live Lounge events available to members online, as unlisted YouTube videos. The Committee agreed. JB to email PH a list of all those who took part. PH will contact all participants to ask for permission to put videos online.

The Committee fixed two dates for Live Lounge events on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January and Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

JB suggested doing another Shallow-style virtual choir video. The Committee felt that this would be good to do alongside the regular sessions, as it might engage some members who cannot commit to regular sessions. The Committee felt this activity would not detract from the regular sessions, if they go ahead, as these would not involve a virtual choir video. JB to decide on song choice and organise one or more Facebook Live rehearsals.

**Action points:**

- **PH to liaise with JH re further virtual sessions in the spring term.**
- **Member survey to be undertaken to sign up members for virtual sessions once PH has confirmed what the choir can offer.**
- **JB to organise Live Lounge events on Friday 22nd January and Friday 19th March 2021.**
- **PH to ask for volunteers to help with editing videos for the Live Lounge.**
- **JB to plan Shallow-style video for spring term.**

**4. AGM – PH**

The Committee discussed whether the AGM should be a standalone event or attached to another choir event. GV noted that a minimum of two fifths of the membership, or 21 members, need to attend for the meeting to be quorate. The Committee decided to arrange the AGM for a Monday evening. PH will emphasise to members that attendance at the AGM is an important part of choir governance when she circulates notice of the AGM. The Committee fixed a date of Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 for the AGM.

PH noted that most Committee members would have little to report for the year. PH will write the chair's report for 2020. SM will update the accounts and write a year-end report.

**Action points:**

- **PH to send notification to members of the AGM on Monday, 1st February 2021.**
- **SM to update accounts and write year-end report.**
- **PH to write chair's 2021 report.**
- **GV to write AGM agenda.**

**5. Committee resignations/nominations – PH**

PH asked whether any Committee members wanted to stand down at the AGM. PH noted that it was unlikely that many members would put themselves forward for the Committee in the current circumstances. SM, SK, NB, GV and SW all confirmed that they were happy to continue in their current roles unless someone else comes forward. PH noted that she had intended to stand down after four years on the Committee and three years as chair, but will continue as chair, given the current challenging circumstances.

PH will check with PM whether he intends to stand down. The Committee noted that PM has not attended any Committee meetings this year and that it is an important part of choir governance for Committee members to be fully involved in the decision-making process.

PH will put out a call for nominations to choir members.

**Action points:**

- **PH to put out a call for Committee nominations.**
- **PH to check with PM whether he wants to stand down.**

## **6. Events – NB**

NB noted that he had asked Southwark Cathedral to move the choir's booking to December 2021. This will be either 4<sup>th</sup> (the choir's preferred date) or 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021. NB is waiting to hear back. The choir has not yet paid a deposit to Southwark Cathedral; this will be £260, to be paid closer to the time.

The Committee noted that it would not be possible to go ahead with a concert at Twickenham Exchange in May 2021. JB stated that it would take time for the choir to get back to the necessary standard for such a venue and it would not be possible in 2021. The Committee will discuss rescheduling this event once there is more certainty about when it will be possible to return to normal rehearsals. SM noted that the choir has paid a deposit of £486 to Twickenham Exchange and we should ask for our money back since we are currently unable to schedule a new date. NB to contact the venue and request a refund of our deposit. SM to forward NB the choir's new bank details.

NB noted that the choir's booking at the Hampton Court Flower Show had been moved to either 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021. The Committee agreed that this date should currently stand, as it will hopefully be possible to restart rehearsals after Easter and it is good to have an event to look forward to.

The Committee agreed that it would not be possible for the choir to perform at Ham Fair in early June 2021 as it will not allow enough rehearsal time even if rehearsals restart after Easter.

### **Action points:**

- **NB to confirm December 2021 date with Southwark Cathedral.**
- **NB to request refund of deposit from Twickenham Exchange.**
- **SM to forward NB the choir's new bank details.**
- **NB to cancel Ham Fair for 2021.**

## **7. Communications – SK**

SK reported that she had been managing the choir website but there had been nothing to promote to the public. PH suggested that if the videos made with JH turned out well, perhaps one of these could be released publicly as an NKC Christmas video.

SK noted that she would take down the videos of JH's rehearsals, which were no longer needed and had not had very many views.

### **Action points:**

- **SK to liaise with PH re putting out one of JH's choir videos to the public.**
- **SK to remove JH's rehearsal videos from the choir website.**

## **8. Membership – SW**

SW noted that the choir currently has 33 out of 34 female places and 13 out of 18 male places filled. There are 52 women and 6 men on the waiting list. As the choir is not currently meeting, SW has not offered the free places to people on the waiting list. The Committee agreed that SW should contact those on the waiting list to let them know that a place will be available for them when rehearsals restart. The Committee agreed that the waiting list for women should be closed and that this should be stated on the website.

### **Action points:**

- **SW to close the women's waiting list. SK to add a note on the choir website to this effect.**
- **SW to email those on the waiting list who can be offered places to let them know that places will be available for them when rehearsals restart.**

## **9. Social**

PH noted that Lucy Aurelius (LA) had offered to run another quiz night in the New Year. The Committee agreed that this was a good idea and set a provisional date of Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021 for a quiz night. PH to check with LA that this date works.

The Committee discussed other ideas for social events. JB noted that the social aspect of the choir contributes to the cohesion of the choir and is keen to preserve this while the choir is not meeting in person. The Committee was not sure that alternative online events (such as wine-tasting, a murder mystery evening or choir Desert Island Discs) would attract members who do not already engage with online social activities, but the Committee will bear these ideas in mind.

### **Action points:**

- **PH to liaise with LA re date for quiz night on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021.**

## **10. AOB**

JB thanked PH for her leadership, patience and persistence in these difficult times. JB said that PH was the glue that had held the choir together during the Covid-19 crisis. The Committee wholeheartedly agreed.

**Date of next meeting: PH to arrange via WhatsApp.**