

NORTH KINGSTON CHOIR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

15th March 2021

Attendees: Penny Hamilton (PH), Chair; Sue Manson (SM), Treasurer; Georgi Vaughn (GV), Secretary; Nello Bearzatto (NB), Events; Shira Keshet (SK), Communications; Vanessa Hartley (VH), Social; Jessica Bate (JB), Musical Director.

Apologies: Sally Winter (SW), Membership.

1. Finances – SM

SM reported to the Committee that the choir currently has a healthy bank balance of £5,880. SM noted that the choir had received a refund from the Twickenham Exchange of £486 and an HMRC Gift Aid rebate of £588.

2. Summer term plan – PH

PH thanked GV for circulating to the Committee some information from Making Music about what the government's provisional roadmap means for music groups and what risk assessments will involve. PH reviewed the key dates of the roadmap in the document "COVID-19: Can my group get back to in-person activities?" (Annex 1 hereto):

- **Until 29th March** – Full lockdown in place and no in-person rehearsals possible.
- **Step 1, 29th March** – "six people can meet outside socially – we see no reason why this could not include rehearsing. It can be in a public place or private garden". The Committee noted that although choir members could organise such small-group activities amongst themselves, it would not be feasible for JB to conduct rehearsals in groups of this size and the Committee should focus on organising rehearsals for the full choir when this becomes possible.
- **Step 2, 12th April** – Indoor rehearsals will not be possible but outdoor rehearsals are allowed: "Outdoor gatherings or events, organised by a business, charity, public body or similar organisation, can be organised, subject to specific conditions: that they comply with COVID-Secure guidance including taking reasonable steps to limit the risk of transmission, complete a related risk assessment; and ensure that those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits".
- **Step 3, 17th May** – Both outdoor and indoor rehearsals can take place: "At this step, both outdoor and indoor gatherings or events, organised by a business, charity, public body or similar organisation, can be organised, subject to specific conditions: that they comply with COVID-Secure guidance including taking reasonable steps to limit the risk of transmission, complete a related risk assessment; and ensure that those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits".
- **Step 4, 21st June** – COVID-secure requirements (e.g. social distancing, face coverings) may be lifted at this point.

The Committee also reviewed the seven priority actions that the choir must take in order to restart rehearsals (see Annex 1):

1. Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment and share it with your stakeholders.
2. Clean more often.
3. Ask participants to wear face coverings in indoor spaces or where required to do so by law (exemptions apply).
4. Ensure social distancing.
5. Increase ventilation in indoor spaces.
6. Keep a record of attendees for NHS Test and Trace.
7. Turn people with Covid-19 symptoms away.

PH noted the importance of involving members in the planning process and being transparent with them. PH noted that any risk assessment would need to be clear and available to members.

JB informed the Committee that she would be amenable to running outdoor rehearsals if members are keen. JB noted that it may be difficult to manage members' expectations if rehearsals involve a lot of restrictions. JB noted that some choir members may feel nervous about her leading rehearsals, as she works in a hospital. The Committee was confident that members feel JB is an integral part of the choir and would not want to start rehearsals without her.

The Committee noted that since indoor rehearsals pose more risk of infection, it may be better to rehearse initially outdoors, weather permitting. The Committee agreed that 17th May is the earliest date that rehearsals could restart because it would give the option of rehearsing indoors if necessary, rather than cancelling rehearsals. Some Committee members felt that the choir should start rehearsals as soon as possible under the regulations, as members seem keen to return. Other Committee members felt that 17th May was quite soon to organise a venue and risk assessment, and considering the need to make sure choir members are not put at risk. SM also noted that the week of 31st May is half-term, when the choir would not ordinarily rehearse. The Committee agreed to a target date of 7th June to restart rehearsals.

PH noted that the Committee needed to contact Fern Hill School to find out when the school would be reopening for outside hire and discuss their risk assessment and COVID-secure requirements. The Committee noted that it would be ideal if Fern Hill could accommodate the choir as it has a large and well-ventilated hall as well as outdoor playground space which could be used for rehearsals. The Committee noted that it may be necessary to find another venue if Fern Hill will not be open to outside hire as of 7th June. SK suggested 1st Kingston Hill Scout Hut on Park Road as a possible venue with both indoor and outdoor space. The Committee noted that choir members may also have other ideas of available venues.

GV explained that Covid-secure rehearsals would need to follow government restrictions, including: wearing of face coverings (unless exempt); 2m social distancing at all times, including breaks; a maximum of 30 minutes' singing time at once, separated by a 15-minute break; cleaning of chairs and any other equipment before and after rehearsals; maximising ventilation by keeping doors and windows open; following NHS Test and Trace requirements.

PH asked JB what would be required for outdoor rehearsals. JB noted that a power supply would be needed for the keyboard. JB to check with Jem Goddard whether the choir has previously purchased a portable power supply. JB noted that it might be necessary for her voice to be amplified in order to be heard outdoors. The Committee noted that it has funds available if new equipment needs to be purchased. SM noted that any venue would need to provide access to toilets and sufficient parking. JB noted that whether rehearsals take place indoors or outdoors will make a difference to the choice of repertoire, but that arrangements would necessarily be simple because the choir has not been able to meet for a year.

The Committee agreed that it needs to get a sense of its members' risk appetite in order to tailor the plan for rehearsals. The Committee agreed that this could be done initially in an informal way by asking members for comments in the sectional WhatsApp groups. This feedback will then guide the Committee in its planning. The Committee agreed that this informal survey should explain to members the sort of restrictions that are likely to be in place for rehearsals.

PH raised the subject of other choir activities before rehearsals can restart. The Committee noted that although there had been good engagement with the latest virtual choir video, I'll Stand By You, with 33 members having submitted videos, virtual choir fatigue was likely to be setting in amongst members. With in-person rehearsals now in sight, the Committee agreed that the choir should not do another video.

The Committee felt that the Live Lounge events had been popular with members and it would be good to continue them until rehearsals restart. The Committee set the dates of Friday 9th April and Friday 7th May 2021 for two (hopefully) final Live Lounge events, with the former date including the premiere of the I'll Stand By You video and the latter date possibly including a "best of" from the past year.

Action Points:

- **PH to contact Fern Hill to discuss when outside hire will be possible and COVID-secure requirements.**
- **SK to contact 1st Kingston Hill Scout Hut to see if it would be a suitable alternative venue.**
- **GV to draft wording to send out to sectional WhatsApp groups to gauge members' views on restarting rehearsals.**
- **GV, PH and NB to gather members' responses from their respective WhatsApp groups.**
- **PH to ask members for other rehearsal venue suggestions if necessary.**
- **JB to organise Live Lounge events on Friday 9th April and Friday 7th May 2021.**
- **PH to promote Live Lounge dates in choir newsletter.**

3. Events – NB

NB noted that the choir has a provisional booking at Hampton Court Flower Show on 11th July 2021. Given the Committee's target date of 7th June to restart rehearsals, the Committee agreed that the choir would not be ready to perform by 11th July and this performance should be cancelled or if possible postponed to 2022.

The Committee agreed that it should preserve its December 2021 booking at Southwark Cathedral. The Committee discussed whether the choir should look to book another event towards the end of the autumn term which could use the same repertoire. The Committee agreed that it is good to have events to look forward to. JB suggested she contact the V&A as it would be a familiar venue. The Committee agreed. The Committee discussed other outdoor venues such as Kew Gardens, RHS Wisley or Kingston Christmas market, but agreed to consider these possibilities nearer the time.

Action points:

- **NB to contact Hampton Court Flower Show to cancel July 2021 performance and rebook for 2022.**
- **JB to contact V&A re possible December 2021 performance.**

4. Communications – SK

SK asked the Committee whether some of the Live Lounge videos should be published on the choir website, since there has been little content recently. The Committee felt that as an inclusive, non-audition choir, our public image should focus on the choir as a whole, rather than individual members. PH suggested that SK publish a new blog article with an update about what the choir has been doing during lockdown, with a montage of still photos from the Live Lounge events rather than videos. The Committee noted that the I'll Stand By You virtual choir video could be published on the website after its premiere.

Action points:

- **SK to publish new blog article about the choir's lockdown activities.**
- **SK to publish I'll Stand By You video on the website after its premiere.**

5. Membership - SW

SW was unable to attend the meeting but the Committee noted that there were no updates from SW on membership.

SM noted that SW did not appear to have followed up on the action point from the previous meeting to email those on the waiting list who can be offered places in order to let them know that places will be available for them when rehearsals restart.

The Committee agreed that it might be strange for new members to join rehearsals under COVID restrictions in June, so new members should be informed that their places will be available as of September 2021, when normal rehearsals will hopefully be possible.

Action points:

- **PH to follow up with SW re emailing new members.**
- **SW to email those on the waiting list who can be offered places to let them know that places will be available for them from September 2021.**

6. Social – VH

VH noted that although choir members may organise their own informal get-togethers from 29th March, a full-choir social would not be possible until after 21st June. VH suggested a picnic or outdoor meal as an option for an informal outdoor social event before the summer. The Committee noted that a picnic was more of a weekend daytime event, while choir social events usually take place on Friday evenings. VH noted that we do not know whether social distancing requirements will still be in place for indoor venues at this point. The Committee suggested that VH make enquiries about booking a venue with outdoor space, such as the Pottery or the Anglers. The Committee agreed to set a date of Friday 2nd July 2021 for a possible social event, with details to be confirmed.

Action points:

- PH to send members a “save the date” for Friday 2nd July 2021 in the newsletter.
- VH to investigate possible venues.

7. AOB

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 20th April 2021

ANNEX 1

COVID-19: Can my group get back to in-person activities?

(<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/can-group-get-back-in-person>)

The roadmap out of lockdown in England released by the UK Government on 22 February does not specially mention music and nor does it signal an immediate change in what groups can do.

However, it does allow for some very limited activity from 29 March and sets out a provisional road map of when fuller activities might be able to return. We have set out as much as we can below and are seeking further clarifications from DCMS (see below also).

What can my group do?

Until 29 March: no in person rehearsals. Full lockdown is still in place as far as leisure time music group activity is concerned and no in person activity can take place.

Online rehearsals are of course possible. See our resources to find out more.

From 29 March: six people can meet outside socially – we see no reason why this could not include rehearsing. It can be in a public place or private garden. Anyone meeting in public should think carefully about what might happen if people stop and watch – which is not a permitted activity.

Provisional roadmap

Below are some provisional dates and activities that set out what groups might be able to do further down the line. The dates are the earliest possible dates the government has said activities might be able to take place. It is all subject to government review and confirmation, which we expect to get approximately a week before each of the dates below.

DCMS have pointed us towards the [Government guidance on Reopening businesses and venues](#) to provide clarity on how the road map will affect leisure time music.

Step two (12 April earliest)

Community centres and other public buildings can open but the Government guidance on [Reopening businesses and venues](#) says:

“indoor events that bring people together - even if they do not mix with other households - must not run until Step 3.”

Indoor rehearsals will not be possible at step two.

The same guidance does allow for outdoor activity:

“Outdoor gatherings or events, organised by a business, charity, public body or similar organisation, can be organised, subject to specific conditions: that they comply with COVID-Secure guidance including taking reasonable steps to limit the risk of transmission, complete a related risk assessment; and ensure that those attending do

not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits (unless another exemption exists, such as for work purposes, or supervised activities for children)."

So, outdoor organised rehearsals will be possible in step two with no formal limit on the numbers that can take part, but with some conditions:

- Completing a relevant risk assessment (see COVID secure rehearsals below).
- Having measures in place to mitigate risk (see COVID secure rehearsals below).
- Managing numbers safely within social contact limits: *"those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits"*.
 - This means that the total number of people attending a rehearsal can be more than the social contact limit – but that they must always remain in sub-groups within social contact limits.
 - So, the social contact limit at this step will be 6. If your outdoor space would safely allow for 42 people (as an example) to attend, all 42 could attend but they would have to stay in a maximum of 7 sub-groups of 6 people. With no mixing / switching between the sub-groups.
 - Making Music advise that you go further than this and treat everyone as a sub-group of 1 – and do not allow for any mixing at all. This will mean your rules can be very simple and clear and make the rehearsal much easier to manage.

Step three (17 May earliest)

The Government guidance on [Reopening businesses and venues](#) says:

"At this step, both outdoor and indoor gatherings or events, organised by a business, charity, public body or similar organisation, can be organised, subject to specific conditions: that they comply with COVID-Secure guidance including taking reasonable steps to limit the risk of transmission, complete a related risk assessment; and ensure that those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits (unless another exemption exists, such as for organised sport or exercise, supervised activities for children or a significant life event)."

So, indoor and outdoor rehearsals will be possible in step three with no formal limits on numbers but with some conditions:

- Completing a relevant risk assessment (see COVID secure rehearsals below).
- Having measures in place to mitigate risk (see COVID secure rehearsals below).
- Managing numbers safely within social contact limits: *"those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits..."*
 - This means that the total number of people attending a rehearsal can be more than the social contact limit – but that they must always remain in sub-groups within social contact limits.
 - So, indoors the social contact limit at this step will be 6. If your venue would safely allow for 42 people (as an example) to attend, all 42 could attend but they would have to stay in a maximum of 7 sub-groups of 6 people. With no mixing / switching between the sub-groups.
 - Making Music advise that you go further than this and treat everyone as a sub-group of 1 – and don't allow for any mixing. This will mean your rules can be very simple and clear and make the rehearsal much easier to manage.

Step four (21 June earliest)

The government hope to lift all COVID secure requirements at this step. There will be more information on this nearer time following government reviews, in particular a promised government review as to when specific mitigations are no longer necessary, e.g. face masks, social distancing etc.

COVID secure rehearsals

When in person rehearsals can go ahead again all groups should undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and put in place strong risk mitigation measures.

Read the Making Music resource [Risk assessment for COVID secure rehearsals](#) including a template risk assessment to find out more.

You should also read the DCMS guidance in full. We have pulled out the 7 priority actions you must take as an organisation below.

The 7 priority actions you must take as an organisation

1. Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment. Share it with all your stakeholders.
2. Clean more often. Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask your participants, professionals and volunteers to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.
3. Ask your participants to wear face coverings in any indoor space or where required to do so by law...Some exemptions apply. [Check when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own.](#)
4. Make sure everyone is social distancing. Make it easy for everyone to do so by putting up signs or introducing a one way system that they can follow.
5. Increase ventilation by keeping doors and windows open where possible and running ventilation systems at all times.
6. Take part in NHS Test and Trace by keeping a record of all your attendees for 21 days. From 18 September, this will be enforced in law. Some exemptions apply. Check [Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#) for details. *Please note: you must register for an official NHS QR code and display the official NHS QR poster from 24 September 2020. [Find out how on the government's website](#)*
7. Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away. If an attendee (or someone in their household) has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell, they should be isolating.