

# **NORTH KINGSTON CHOIR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**20<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

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

## **1. Finances – SM**

SM reported that the choir still has a healthy bank balance of £5,866.

PH asked if the cost of running summer term rehearsals should be paid out of choir funds, with members paying fees again from September 2021. SM felt that it would be worth organising collection of fees for half a term (i.e. £25) from all members who wish to attend. The Committee agreed.

NB asked SM to confirm that the choir had received a refund of the deposit from Twickenham Exchange. SM confirmed this.

## **2. Communications – SK**

SK reported that she had written two blog posts for the website, one about the Live Lounge events and one about the I'll Stand By You virtual choir video.

## **3. Membership - SW**

SW reported that four men have approached the choir with interest in joining. SW has responded to invite them to come for a taster session once normal rehearsals restart in September. SM asked if SW had contacted the person at the top of the women's waiting list to offer her a place in September. SW stated that she hadn't yet, but would do so. SW noted that if all four new men join the choir, this would still leave one free male place. The Committee noted that there may be some members who would not want to take up their places again in September. SW may need to follow up on this later in the year.

### **Action points:**

- **SW to email the person at the top of the women's waiting list to offer a place in September 2021.**

## **4. Social – VH**

VH reported that she had been considering venues for the summer social event, ideally looking for outdoor space but with some cover. Options that VH is investigating include the Anglers in Teddington, the Pottery in Park Road and the Queen's Head in Richmond Road. VH noted that it would be preferable to find a venue on the Kingston side of the river. The Committee was happy with the options presented. VH will continue to research these options, including set menus on offer. VH will reserve space if possible.

**JB joined the meeting.**

JB noted that she and Tristan will unfortunately be unable to attend the social on the previously reserved date of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021. The Committee agreed to move the social to Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

**Action points:**

- **VH to follow up on venues and menu options for July social.**
- **PH to inform choir members in newsletter about new date for social: Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021.**

**5. Summer term plan – PH**

**(a) Members' views**

PH reported back on members' views on returning to rehearsals, as canvassed in the sectional WhatsApp groups. PH noted that choir members were keen to return to rehearsals, as long as it is done within guidelines. Overall, there was little sign of hesitance to return to rehearsals. Most members said they would be happy to rehearse indoors or outdoors, although there was a slight preference for rehearsing outdoors without masks because it makes singing easier. PH noted that the Committee would need to bear this in mind when considering whether to organise rehearsals indoors or outdoors and with or without masks.

**(b) Venue**

The Committee agreed to run six weeks of rehearsals in the summer term, starting on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and ending on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

PH reported that Fern Hill School would be happy for us to return to rehearsals there from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021. PH asked the Committee whether the preference would be to rehearse outdoors if possible. PH noted that if the roadmap goes to plan, there will be no restriction on the number of members allowed indoors from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, as long as 2m distancing and mask-wearing is observed. NB noted that although the choir has 50 places, it is unusual to have more than 30-35 members attend each week, and that this number of people should be able to fit in the school hall with 2m distancing.

VH commented that it would be preferable to have rehearsals outdoors if possible, as there is lower risk of transmission outdoors than indoors. The Committee noted that June to mid-July will have light evenings and is unlikely to be too cold for outdoor rehearsals. JB noted that the playground at Fern Hill is accessible without entering through the building and that there are also toilets accessible directly from the playground. JB believes there may be access to electricity from a groundsman's hut.

The Committee noted that although a risk assessment would still need to be made and measures put in place for outdoor rehearsals, this would be simpler than organising indoor rehearsals. It is possible that all restrictions may be dropped from 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, which would mean the choir could move indoors at that point if desired, but this will not be clear until closer to that date. The Committee therefore agreed that rehearsals should be outdoors and would be cancelled if necessary due to inclement weather. This would mean no limit had to be set on the number of members who could attend, as may be necessary indoors.

The Committee agreed that in order to minimise the amount of equipment used, chairs would not be set out in the playground but members would be invited to bring their own chair if desired. The Committee will arrange markers to indicate where members should stand/sit in order to ensure 2m distancing.

The Committee agreed that a decision would be taken on Monday lunchtimes as to whether rehearsals will go ahead in the evening. PH and VH will be responsible for checking the weather forecast in order to take a decision and communicating this decision to members each week.

JB noted that members' expectations will need to be managed, as distanced outdoor rehearsals will inevitably not be the same experience as a normal rehearsal. For example, it will be more difficult for members to hear each other singing. The Committee agreed, but felt that members are keen to return to rehearsals and will not be put off by the limitations of outdoor rehearsals.

**Action points:**

- **PH to liaise with Fern Hill to confirm that outdoor rehearsals in the playground will be possible and establish what amenities are available outside, what alarm systems will be in place, etc. PH to ask if hire cost is less if only using playground.**
- **PH to notify members in choir newsletter that there will be a six-week series of outdoor rehearsals from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

**(c) Equipment**

JB noted that the choir has a battery pack to provide power outdoors if no electricity supply is available. Jem Goddard is going to test it with the choir keyboard.

The Committee noted that JB would need a microphone in order to be heard by choir members spread over a larger distance than usual. The Committee noted that this could also be used in the future for choir performances, not just temporarily for rehearsals. JB has asked the band members to suggest appropriate equipment to purchase. GV noted as an example that it is possible to buy a Shure headset system for around £200. The Committee agreed that this would be an acceptable level of expenditure.

The Committee noted that it would be necessary to purchase some kind of markers to be set out to show people where to stand. SW had an idea of suitable plastic markers and will investigate further.

**Action points:**

- **JB to liaise with band re buying a headset microphone system.**
- **Committee to approve expenditure.**
- **SW to find out about plastic markers and report back to the Committee.**

#### **(d) Risk assessment**

GV noted that the choir would have to follow guidance on pre-registration, cleaning and setting out spacing even for outdoor rehearsals. The Committee agreed that PH should ask Fern Hill if it is possible to visit for a recce during half-term in order to plan how the space will be set up, although the Committee noted that this is less critical outdoors than indoors.

GV explained that according to guidance from Making Music, choir members should be asked to fill in a questionnaire ahead of each rehearsal to confirm that they have no Covid symptoms and have not been told to self-isolate. GV noted that this would be required even if members check in using the Test and Trace app. GV suggested this would be best done online in order to avoid handling of pens and paper on arrival, as well as to prevent potentially infectious members from attending. The Committee noted that this should be possible to do using Google Forms, Doodle or Survey Monkey. NB offered to do this. The Committee agreed that members would be strongly encouraged to fill out the questionnaire in advance, but could be asked to do it on arrival if not previously done, rather than being turned away from rehearsal. The Committee noted that the choir already holds contact details for all its members but will need explicit approval from members to use their details for Test and Trace.

GV asked whether the Committee should organise staggered arrival times for choir members. The Committee felt that this would not be necessary since members do not tend to arrive all at once for rehearsals. Members should be asked not to all arrive at exactly 8pm and to observe 2m distancing if required to queue on arrival. The Committee agreed that members will not be asked to wear masks on their way into the playground or during rehearsals, since government guidance does not mandate mask-wearing outdoors, although members are welcome to do so if they feel more comfortable.

The Committee noted that volunteers will be required to set out places and manage arrivals at rehearsals. NB offered to take charge of this for the first rehearsal; subsequently, the process will hopefully become smoother. The Committee agreed that volunteers should be asked to set up from 7pm the first week, possibly later once the process and timing is established.

SK asked if members' temperatures should be checked on arrival at rehearsal. GV pointed out that having a normal temperature is not proof of non-infectiousness. NB noted that members would be asked to confirm that they do not have a high temperature as part of the pre-rehearsal questionnaire. The Committee therefore felt that checking members' temperatures would not be necessary, especially considering the lower risk of infection outdoors.

The Committee discussed whether rehearsal times should be shorter than normal in order to limit exposure time. The Committee felt that this was less critical outdoors than indoors, since ventilation is not an issue. JB noted that since rehearsals will be very different from normal, it would be best not to run a full 90-minute rehearsal and suggested 8-9pm. GV pointed out that rehearsals are likely to start later than 8pm given the extra measures in place. The Committee agreed that the choir should aim to sing for about 60 minutes, possibly including a short break, but that rehearsals would not officially be scheduled to finish at 9pm as it will depend on how it goes on the day.

The Committee agreed that choir members would be asked to bring their own sheet music to rehearsals, either printed or electronic. The Committee noted that this was generally the arrangement anyway, so should not be onerous for members. Members will be instructed not to share their sheet music.

GV agreed to write up the risk assessment.

**Action points:**

- **PH to ask Fern Hill if it is possible to visit in half-term for planning purposes.**
- **NB to make an online pre-rehearsal questionnaire for members to fill in each week.**
- **PH to ask for choir members volunteers to help set up for rehearsals.**
- **GV to write up risk assessment.**

## **6. Events – NB**

NB reported that he had been in contact with Southwark Cathedral and it is available on either 4<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021; final date to be confirmed.

JB reported that she had contacted the V&A re a possible Christmas performance: they are not yet sure whether they will be able to host Christmas performances but will be in touch when they are able to start planning.

JB reported that planning was on course for the (hopefully) final Live Lounge event on Zoom on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. JB noted that a lot of members had put themselves forward to perform. The event will therefore not be a 'best of', as previously planned, but include more new performances to allow as many members to participate as possible. The Committee noted that the Live Lounge events had been very popular with members and thanked JB for making them such a success.

**Action points:**

- **NB to confirm date for Southwark Cathedral concert in December 2021.**
- **JB to continue to liaise with V&A re possible Christmas 2021 performance.**
- **JB to organise Live Lounge event on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**

## **7. AOB**

There was no other business.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021**