

## Newcastle upon Tyne Bach Choir

Minutes of committee and concert planning group meeting held 1830, 06 January 2020  
11 Northumberland Avenue, Forest Hall, NE12 9NR

### In attendance:

Kate Ashley	(KA)	Paul Hardy	(PH)
Olivia Cameron	(OC)	Trish Hutson	(TH)
Gill Clancy	(GC)	Adrian Rees	(AR)
Douglas Coughtrie	(DC)	Douglas Rennie	(DR)
Eric Cross	(EC)	Tessa Sayers	(TS)
Lindsay Cross	(LC)	Peter Slater	(PS)
Alexandra Durning	(AD)	Bill Tarpy	(BT)
		Mike Weatherall	(MW)

### 1 Welcome and apologies

TS welcomed attendees and thanked DR for hosting. Apologies were received from Alice Bosomworth (AB) and Trevor Page (TP).

### 2 Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting held 10 June 2019 were accepted as a true record.

#### *Collection of subscriptions and gift aid*

GC noted that subscriptions for 2019-20 have been paid more promptly than in previous years with all but one member having paid in full or in accordance with an agreed instalment plan.

#### **Actions**

GC, TS to discuss gift aid with Simon Pallett

TS, BT to consider including gift aid information in new members' guidance.

#### *Accounting treatment re: income from purely social events*

GC confirmed such income can be included in the choir's accounts, provided that it is disclosed separately from other sources of income.

#### *Sub group for website revamp*

Please refer to comments at Section 5 below

#### *Refreshments during concerts held in King's Hall*

During the meeting of 10 June 2019, it was noted that availability of concert refreshments should be considered, given the popularity of refreshments provided at the Summer 2019 concert held at All Saints' Church.

The committee discussed feasibility of providing refreshments in King's Hall and a number of practical concerns were raised;

- Availability of space in or in the vicinity of King's Hall from which to host refreshments (PS)
- Cost implications if university policy requires refreshments to be provided either directly by their own catering department (BT) or by an approved third party supplier (EC)
- Health and safety implications may arise from provision of refreshments, as noted on the most recent health and safety report (DC)

BT noted that audience members had previously commented on the absence of refreshments and suggested that, where refreshments cannot be provided, the availability of water fountains could be mentioned on concert tickets with a suggestion to attendees to bring reusable water bottles.

#### **Action**

OC to confirm current university events catering policy.

### 3 Treasurer's report

GC presented the report enclosed at Appendix I commenting that;

- Cash in bank as at January 2020 is comparable with balances held at January 2019
- The net cost of the Elgar concert has not yet been finalised but a provisional loss of approximately £2,000 is anticipated
- Income receivable from Sage does not include programme sales, which are estimated at £300 based on programme sales at previous comparable concerts
- The advertising cost of £1,824 for the Elgar concert includes the design and print of posters, flyers and programmes; the supplier has not provided a full cost breakdown, but £650 of the total cost relates to artwork design.
- Donations made by the choir toward the cost of hosting social events during the Elgar concert weekend exceeded the actual cost of these events by £173.08. The unspent balance could be either (a) transferred to choir reserves in full to fund future social events, (b) applied in part to offset the cost of refreshments provided at the Christmas concert (increasing the total net income from the Christmas concert available for donation to Streetwise Opera), with the remaining £32.76 transferred to reserves, or (c) attributed to the two largest known donors whose combined contributions exceeded the unspent total and treated in accordance with their preferences (once ascertained).

GC requested feedback on the format of the treasurer's report, which discloses a greater level of detail than the previous report layout; the committee agreed that the additional information was beneficial.

EC commented that cash from programme sales can be difficult to secure if not collected from programme sellers at Sage immediately following the performance, and recommended that cash collection be added to the concert task list of the appropriate choir member. GC added that task lists would be beneficial for all administrative rôles, particularly during handover periods.

The trustees elected, by a vote of 6 to 2, to fund the £140.32 cost of Christmas concert refreshments wholly from the unspent balance of Elgar social event donations, increasing the amount payable to Streetwise Opera to £1,107.21. GC suggested making a formal presentation of a big cheque to Streetwise Opera.

DC suggested setting a target figure for choir donations toward future social events, to reduce the likelihood of unspent balances arising. GC noted that a target would have been difficult to calculate for the Elgar concert weekend, given that more than one social event took place, and that some of the refreshments were donated directly by choir members rather than purchased out of cash donations.

AR suggested that, when donations towards social events are next invited, the choir are informed in advance how any unspent balance will be treated (e.g. retained to fund future events).

#### Actions

GC to discuss outstanding income from sale of programmes with Sage

DR to provide bank details to GC for payment of Christmas concert donation and to discuss arrangements for presentation of cheque with Streetwise Opera

TS to arrange treasury assistant capacity to provide support during busy periods.

### 4 Concerts

*March 2020*

*Saul (Händel)*

*King's Hall*

Online publicity PS will create a series of videos to promote the performance on social media, and intends to film EC's introduction to the work (to be given at the first rehearsal), with the footage either to be featured in the videos or used as a point of reference when deciding what information to include. PS commented that videos perform better than photographs as a marketing tool on Facebook, and that it would be interesting to see if ticket sales for a King's Hall concert could be enhanced through promotion on social media.

Print publicity PS suggested that printing costs could be reduced by printing fewer A4 size posters (unless economies of scale dictate otherwise), as feedback gathered from NBC audience surveys suggests that very few respondents made the decision to purchase a ticket on the sole basis of having seen an A4 poster and that the A6 flyers were a more successful format, though word of mouth and mailing list advertising remained the most successful advertising methods. GC recalled reading a review in the Telegraph newspaper in which a performance of Saul was described as the classical highlight of 2019, as a potential reference to include in publicity materials; PS will investigate this. EC has selected images to be used in publicity materials, and BT volunteered to compile the poster layout and arrange printing via eBay (estimated print supplier lead time

one week) following the discussion of the treasurer's report in which the committee noted the high cost of advertising for the Elgar concert and confirmed that there is no formal arrangement with the existing supplier. Tickets OC provided copies of the latest King's Hall event listings, which include the Saul concert, and noted that tickets are shown as "coming soon" on the choir website; therefore, tickets need to be made available for sale as soon as possible. TS volunteered to contact Rosemarie D'Souza and David Glover about ticketing arrangements. DC asked how many tickets were to be ordered for printing, given an estimated seating capacity of 280, and suggested that the choir be advised of the number of unsold tickets remaining in the final week prior to the concert so that advertising and choir members' sales efforts could be tailored accordingly. GC noted that the ticket sales website should give a posting cut-off date after which any ticket orders would be available to collect on the door only.

### **Actions**

GC to advise EC, PS & BT of quantities of print advertising ordered for previous comparable concerts as a guide to numbers of posters and flyers required.

EC to provide text to TH, AR & PS to be used in online advertising

BT to obtain quotes for printing from eBay suppliers and provide GC with cost estimate

TS to inform previous print supplier of the committee's decision to produce Saul publicity "in-house" by email copied to Maria Goulding

EC to request soloists and orchestral musicians to provide bank details to GC so that fees can be paid by BACS rather than cheque wherever possible.

### *June 2020                      Missa Brevis (Kodály), Rejoice in the Lamb (Britten)                      King's Hall*

EC confirmed the date of Friday 12 June and that the programme will include *Magnificat (Finzi)* and one or two solo organ pieces, in addition to the works noted above. The final full rehearsal, with organ, will take place on Monday 08 June, with a shorter rehearsal beginning as close to 1700 as possible on Friday 12 June. OC confirmed the booking of King's Hall between 1700 and 2200. The committee agreed that publicity material for the June concert would be produced "in-house".

### *November 2020                      Christmas Oratorio (Bach)                      St. George's, Jesmond*

EC confirmed the date of Saturday 28 November and asked the committee to consider whether it would be preferable to perform the oratorio in full or to omit any of its six sections. BT suggested a full performance could be given with a substantial refreshment break midway through, as with a recent Sage performance of the complete Brandenburg Concertos; LC noted a full performance including longer break may increase costs where soloists or orchestral musicians are hired at an hourly rate. TH noted that St. George's Church may not be especially comfortable for audience members seated for a long performance.

### *December 2020                      Christmas concert                      Jesmond URC*

The committee discussed EC's suggestion of performing two Christmas concerts in December 2020, with the possibility of beginning Christmas rehearsals prior to the November concert, noting that a second performance of the Christmas programme would present little financial risk compared with other concerts (where a second performance would double the cost of soloists and orchestral musicians).

A provisional date of Thursday 17 December was proposed for a Christmas performance at Jesmond URC, with the date and location of a second performance still to be decided. GC suggested that a children's charity be nominated as beneficiary of the Christmas concert(s).

### **Action**

DC to ask the choir to suggest venues where we might be welcome for a second Christmas concert

DC to contact Alison Shiel to reserve Jesmond URC on Thursday 17 December.

### *TBC 2021                      Visit to Gelsenkirchen*

Musikverein Gelsenkirchen's new director, Juliano Suzuki, is keen for the choir to visit again and has provided a list of potential dates in May and June 2021 to EC. The committee welcomed the invitation and agreed that a 2021 trip should be suggested to the choir, reflecting also on the extensive preparation and organisation effort required in arranging the previous visit. DC suggested an organisers' sub group be established if a future visit is confirmed.

## **5 Publicity**

PS will compile a list of publicity tasks he currently undertakes, noting how far in advance of a concert that each task should take place, and circulate this to the committee to add their suggestions and comments. EC

suggested that the publicity sub group prepare guidance on all publicity tasks required for a Sage concert, a King's Hall concert and a Christmas concert, and how publicity material can be used to keep the NBC website up to date.

PS and PH volunteered to review the NBC website after the Saul concert, with the involvement of website manager David Glover.

BT is compiling a consolidated choir mailing list, to be cross-referenced with GC's membership list, and will investigate hosting options that would allow the committee greater access to send emails to the choir directly while maintaining data security.

#### **Actions**

PS to circulate draft publicity task list

BT to send finalised mailing list to EC

## **6 AOB**

The committee felt that defined "job descriptions" would be beneficial to all rôles, to aid in the handover from previous committee members and to make it easier to find out who is responsible for any given task, and agreed that each committee member should begin to compile a task list for their own rôles.

The committee discussed a note prepared by TP on the feasibility, benefits and resource requirements of a potential Friends scheme. Some members supported the note's conclusion that the costs of such a scheme may outweigh the potential benefits to NBC in particular, though LC felt that further relevant insight could be gained by investigation of Friends schemes administered by other choirs comparable in size to NBC. EC asked what function the committee would want a Friends scheme to fulfil (i.e. would this be a loyalty programme or a means of increasing income?); the consensus was that such a scheme should help its participants to feel connected to the organisation, but in ways that would not be financially detrimental and that could appeal to the participants' altruism, as already expressed by the choir's regular donors. It was also noted that the administrative burden of a Friends scheme would likely be greater if the scheme offered participants financial incentives such as free tickets.

EC reminded the committee of the Elgar Society's request that NBC demonstrate how its educational objectives are being met – the committee will need to consider how this can be done (e.g. working with Newcastle schools).

EC asked for the committee's feedback on previous workshop sessions, and if there was a preference for the approaches adopted by either of the vocal coaches who delivered workshops in 2019; both workshops were considered to have been beneficial but there was an overall preference for Larry Zazzo as the first choice to deliver the next workshop ahead of the Saul concert. LC suggested that feedback be gathered from the choir immediately after the next workshop and BT volunteered to create a feedback form for this purpose.

DC asked if the choir might like to send a card to the Waynflete Singers, to mark their upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; the committee agreed and suggested creating a personalised card.

#### **Actions**

LC to investigate Friends of Cappella Novocastriensis scheme

EC to investigate availability of vocal coaches for a workshop session to be held prior to Saul concert

BT to prepare a feedback form for singers to complete after the next workshop session

DC to arrange Waynflete anniversary card for choir to sign

EC to send King's Hall exam layout diagram to DC to aid in rearranging exam desks following rehearsal on Monday 13 January

## **7 Date of next meeting**

The committee agreed a provisional date of 16 March 2020 at 1830, with venue to be confirmed.

## Appendix I – Treasurer’s report

### TREASURER’S REPORT –January 5, 2020

#### Funds in Banks

At the time of writing the current financial position is:

Co-op Current Account	22,583.14
Barclays Savings Account	11,071.22

**TOTAL FUNDS**      **33,654.36** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subscriptions received** **8,880**      (c.200 to come)

#### Financial Activity/January 2020

CONCERT 1		
<b>INCOME</b>		
Ticket sales		10573.00
Programmes-Door		
Programmes-C/O		130.00
Music		370.00
Donations (social)		1030.55
<b>TOTAL Inc</b>		<b>12103.55</b>
<b>EXPEND</b>		
Music/choir		306.34
Music/orch		157.74
Venue	SAGE	5,220.00
Advertising		1824.00
Tickets		33.05
Soloist fees	+expenses	3896.00
Orchestra fees		60.00
Eric (travel)		214.20
Social media		264.01
Social events		857.47
Commission(tkts)		1057.30
<b>TOTAL Exp</b>		<b>13890.11</b>
<b>INC/EXP</b>		<b>-1786.56</b>

- The balance due from the Sage has yet to be transferred /Univ. settlement
- No monies were received after the performance for Programme sales. In 2018 both Messiah and Elijah netted in the region of 280.00 and ticket sales were good for Elgar so should be at least similar.
- As noted, DONATIONS received from choir members for the two social events came to 1030.55. After costs we have 173.08 left in the social fund. A decision needs to be made with regard to this money. One possibility would be to use it to offset the cost of the Christmas Social after the carols concert. Thus increasing the available donation to 1107.21.

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2020

<b>INCOME</b>		£
Ticket sales		502.52
Donations		742.00
Music		324.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1568.52</b>
<b>EXPEND</b>		
Music buy		266.31
Venue hire		145.00
Soloist fee		50.00
Refreshments		140.32
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>601.63</b>
<b>Proceeds</b>		<b>966.89</b>

- Available to donate

G Clancy 05/01/2020