

NORTH KINGSTON CHOIR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

25th May 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.

1. Summer term plan – PH

PH thanked GV for preparing the Covid rehearsal plan and risk assessment. The Committee went through the rehearsal plan in detail and discussed it. The Committee noted that the logistics, expected behaviour and risk assessment should be shared with choir members ahead of rehearsals starting.

The Committee discussed the latest government regulations which limit outdoor gatherings to 30 people or fewer. GV explained that according to guidance from Making Music, it is possible for the choir to rehearse in a group larger than 30 as long as there is no close contact between members, i.e. as long as members stay 2m apart, every person counts as a “group” of one. The Committee suggested that a short explanation of this be added to the rehearsal guidance to be shared with members.

JB suggested adding some wording to the expected behaviour about not singing too loud although the conditions may be challenging when outdoors and spaced out. The Committee agreed.

The Committee noted the importance of members observing 2m distancing during breaks. GV to add wording to the logistics to explain that members may sit, chat or move around in the break, but 2m distancing must be adhered to.

The Committee discussed the NHS Test & Trace requirements. It was noted that the choir’s responsibility is to hold members’ contact details for 21 days and provide them to Test & Trace if contacted. It is not the choir’s responsibility to contact Test & Trace if a member tests positive; this is the responsibility of the member. No close contacts should take place at rehearsals as 2m distancing should be adhered to at all times. However, the choir will request members to let the Committee know if they come down with symptoms and test positive in case the Committee needs to take further steps. GV to rephrase the wording regarding Test & Trace.

The Committee suggested changes to the expected behaviour wording to emphasise individual members’ responsibility to follow guidance and say that members’ cooperation will be appreciated.

The Committee discussed monitoring of local case numbers. GV will record the number of cases for the last seven days (per latest reporting date) for both Kingston-upon-Thames and Richmond-upon-Thames in the Covid rehearsal plan each Sunday. GV will notify the Committee if there is a significant increase in local case numbers. If this is the case, the Committee will consider the current government guidance in order to decide whether rehearsals should continue to take place.

The Committee noted that PH had emailed choir members to request any members at high or moderate risk to let the Committee know. Few responses had been received. The Committee has decided that it will not exclude members at high or moderate risk from rehearsals, especially given that rehearsing outdoors and 2m apart reduces transmission risk considerably. The Committee noted that it is for each member to assess their level of risk and act accordingly.

The Committee noted that NB had created a healthcheck questionnaire on Google Forms to be sent to choir and band members every Monday ahead of rehearsals in order to prevent potentially infectious members from attending rehearsal. The Committee noted that this will have to be done every week because it refers to current symptoms. The Committee discussed whether volunteer choir members should have access to the questionnaire results in order to check in members at rehearsals. The Committee felt

that since the results contain sensitive medical information, only Committee members should have access to these. NB agreed to arrive at all rehearsals early in order to check in members. NB will change the date on each week's survey and send the link to PH each Sunday.

The Committee noted that GV had registered the choir as a venue and obtained a QR code to display at rehearsals. This will enable members who use the NHS Test & Trace app to check in, for their convenience. However, the choir needs to keep a separate register of attendees and their contact phone numbers. GV noted that the choir already holds the phone numbers of all members, so these will not be requested every week. NB has added a tick-box to the healthcheck questionnaire for members to approve of their contact details being used for Test & Trace. The Committee noted that in order to comply with government regulations, the healthcheck results should be held for 21 days after each rehearsal and then deleted.

The Committee discussed what kind of signage would be required for rehearsals. The Committee felt it was a good idea to have an A3 printout of the expected behaviour in order to remind members. Signs with arrows to direct members to the playground and reminders to keep a 2m distance for other members will also be necessary. NB volunteered to organise printing of signage.

PH, NB, SK, GV and JB will conduct a site visit to Fern Hill playground on Saturday 29th May 2021 and make a final decision on number and placement of signs. The Committee will consider the positioning of the choir and equipment, as well as queueing and traffic flow around the area, to ensure 2m distancing can be maintained at all times.

The Committee decided that members would not be requested to wash or sanitise their hands on arrival, since members should not be in close contact or touching shared surfaces or equipment. However, the choir will provide hand sanitiser in case it is required. The Committee decided that it was not necessary to ask volunteers to clean the toilets ahead of rehearsals, but antibacterial wipes will be provided and members who use the toilets will be asked to take responsibility for wiping the door handles and other touchpoints before and after use. Disposable gloves will also be provided in case they are needed.

The Committee noted that SW had purchased markers to be set out each week 2m apart to indicate to members where to stand. NB to collect the markers from SW ahead of the site visit to try them out. JB noted that Making Music's example risk assessment suggested that there should be a minimum of 3m between the choir director and the front row of singers. GV stated that this was an indoor requirement and not so relevant outdoors. The Committee agreed that it is nevertheless a sensible precaution to take outdoors. GV will add this to the risk assessment.

The Committee noted that bin bags for safe disposal of rubbish would need to be provided if there are no bins available in Fern Hill playground. The Committee will check this at the site visit on 29th May.

The Committee noted that it is necessary to have a first aid kit available. The Committee will check whether there is a first aid kit in Fern Hill playground; if not, PH will buy one.

The Committee noted that a headset microphone had been purchased for JB, who will try it out at the site visit on 29th May. The Committee will consider the positioning of electrical equipment at the site visit. JB noted that the electrical access point is under cover and it should be possible to set up all electrical equipment under cover in order to keep it dry.

The Committee discussed a refund policy for fees in case rehearsals have to be cancelled. The Committee agreed that if individual members are unable to attend, no refunds will be offered because the choir will still have incurred the costs of running rehearsals. This would be similar to a member being off sick in previous terms. The Committee agreed that if the choir has to cancel rehearsals, it may be appropriate to offer all members a refund. SM suggested that the Committee should wait and see how many rehearsals go ahead, with the possibility to offer a fee discount to members for the autumn term if several rehearsals are cancelled. The Committee agreed to review this retrospectively.

JB asked whether arrangements should be made to live-stream rehearsals online for those who are unable to attend. The Committee felt that there would be limited demand for this among members, based on the numbers attending previous online sessions.

PH stated that she had requested volunteers to help with setting up for rehearsals. 12 members had volunteered. The Committee agreed that Committee members should take charge of the setup for the first rehearsal. After this, PH will organise a rota and write clear instructions for volunteers in subsequent weeks.

The Committee reviewed the Insurance tab of the rehearsal plan. The Committee is satisfied that it has conducted a thorough risk assessment, complied with government guidance and taken appropriate measures to ensure a safe return to rehearsals.

Action points:

- **GV to update rehearsal plan and risk assessment with suggested changes.**
- **GV to record local case numbers on a weekly basis.**
- **NB to provide PH with link for healthcheck questionnaire each week.**
- **NB to check in members on arrival at rehearsals.**
- **NB to organise printing of signage.**
- **PH to buy hand sanitiser, antibacterial wipes, disposable gloves and first aid kit.**
- **PH to organise rota of volunteers to help with setup and write instructions.**
- **PH, NB, SK, JB and GV to conduct site visit at Fern Hill School on 29th May 2021.**
- **NB to collect markers from SW ahead of site visit.**
- **PH to email members a link to logistics, expected behaviours and risk assessment, once finalised.**
- **PH to remind members verbally of expected behaviours at the start of every rehearsal.**
- **Committee to review possible fee refund at end of term if rehearsals cancelled.**

2. Finances – SM

SM reported that 10 members had paid their fees so far. SM will chase up members who attend rehearsals but have not paid their fees.

VH asked what the choir's reserves policy is. SM stated that the choir should hold reserves of between three and six months' turnover, i.e. £3,000-6,000.

Action points:

- **SM to chase up members who have not paid fees.**

3. Events – NB

JB informed the Committee that Ellie Giffard's wedding has been rescheduled to 4th September 2021 but the venue restrictions mean that only 15 singers can be accommodated indoors. The Committee felt that the songs may therefore need to be rehearsed separately by a small group, rather than using full-choir

rehearsal time for this purpose. The Committee noted that under current government regulations, a maximum of six people can rehearse together indoors. The Committee agreed that the choir will do all it can to arrange to sing at the wedding, but it is too early to plan when it is not clear what restrictions will be in place over the summer.

JB informed the Committee that Tom Speight (TS) had asked the choir to accompany him on two songs at his album launch show at the Fighting Cocks in Kingston on Tuesday 28th September 2021 (doors 8pm, onstage 9pm). JB said TS will be playing an acoustic set, which would mean the choir will feature more prominently than previously. TS will join the choir for a rehearsal in September if this goes ahead. JB noted that a downside is that the venue has a capacity of 150 and TS has no guest list, so the choir would have to pay for tickets (£10 each). The Committee felt that the choir might be keen to join TS at a local venue. The Committee agreed to canvass members via the sectional WhatsApp groups to get an idea of how many people are interested in performing before making a decision on whether the choir would pay for tickets or ask members to buy their own. JB felt that a minimum of 16 members would be needed to go ahead.

NB reported that the choir's booking at Southwark Cathedral is confirmed for Saturday 4th December 2021 at 1.00pm.

Action points

- **JB to liaise with Ellie Giffard re performing at wedding.**
- **PH to canvass members on TS event via sectional WhatsApp groups.**

4. Communications – SK

SK reported that the I'll Stand By You virtual choir video had been published.

The Committee noted that, once finalised, the risk assessment and the logistics and expected behaviour documents would need to be published on the website for members to read ahead of rehearsals.

Action points

- **SK to publish risk assessment, logistics and expected behaviour on members' area of website, once finalised.**

5. Membership

SK noted that she had received several membership enquiries via the website which she had passed on to SW. PH noted that several members had been in contact to say that they would not attend the summer term rehearsals but would rejoin in September. The Committee agreed that any members who feel unable to join rehearsals in the summer term can take a sabbatical until September and will not forfeit their place.

6. Social – VH

VH reported that she had two options on hold for the social event on 9th July 2021: the Pottery in Park Road and the Anglers in Teddington.

The Anglers has an outdoor deck with a retractable roof but the minimum spend is £850, including food only, not drinks; alternatively, a £250 private hire charge. The Committee felt that the minimum spend is too high and members will not want to pay a cover charge, so this option was discounted.

The Pottery has a garden but no cover if it rains. The Pottery's party menus are sharing plates, which VH is concerned some members might find inappropriate in the current situation. The Committee felt that the Pottery could be a good option, particularly since it is more local. VH will liaise with the Pottery to see if it is possible to reserve tables for drinks and allow people to order food as desired.

VH will also investigate whether the garden of the Queen's Head in Richmond Road would be an appropriate alternative venue.

Action points:

- **VH to cancel reservation at the Anglers.**
- **VH to liaise with the Pottery re food options.**
- **VH to investigate the Queen's Head as a possible venue.**

7. AOB

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 29th June 2021