



## Minutes of the Committee meeting held at Hockliffe Grange, Hockliffe, LU7 9NL on Tuesday 10 January 2023

Present: Tessa Cox (in the Chair); Peter Snelling; Ian Smith; David Roberts; Julia Dickens and Siân Rees

### Action

#### 1 Apologies and welcome

Tessa welcomed members of the committee to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Imogen Allen and Vanessa Skelton.

#### 2 Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 – approval and matters arising not covered elsewhere

2.1 Tessa enquired whether the missing part from the lighting rig had been located. Ian said he had been unable to find it at St Andrew's Church where it had been on loan. It was uncertain whether or not Stuart Freake had been asked about the missing part.

2.2 Peter had received a very positive email communication from Woburn Church regarding bookings. All the dates requested are in the church diary and will be confirmed once the new vicar is in place.

2.3 Tessa confirmed that since the last committee meeting Amanda Owen had taken on the role of membership secretary. Carol Yirell has now handed over all documents in her possession relating to the role.

2.4 Tessa has contacted Susanne Minocha regarding Danesborough GDPR documents. She will ask Susanne to pass them to Ian. Once the documents have been returned it will be necessary to carry out a GDPR review.

**Tessa & Ian**

Tessa raised the idea of setting up a centralised Google documents system. The Milton Keynes Youth choir uses this system and **Tessa** said she would approach their treasurer to find out more about how the system works.

**Tessa**

2.5 Tessa had been in touch with Will Swann regarding the Milton Keynes Chorale's conducting scholarship and had discovered that Mark Jordan had been responsible for organising the scholarship. **Ian** offered to pursue the matter with Mark Jordan.

**Ian**

2.6 There had been no progress with regard to recruiting new committee members or a new chair. **Tessa** agreed to approach a choir member who had been identified as a potential successor as chair.

**Tessa**

2.7 David had received a reply from Neville Funeral Service confirming that the current sponsorship arrangement would continue and he had sent them an invoice.

2.8 Peter reported that he had drafted an email to Danesborough members informing them of a chorus WhatsApp group he is setting up which is intended to be used for emergency communications with chorus members. Members will be invited to opt-in to the WhatsApp group.

**Peter**

2.9 The minutes were agreed as circulated.

### 3 Publicity and Marketing

#### 3.1 Recording of choir for website/publicity and social media content

Tim is keen for us to get some recording content on our website and also available on social media. David has some earlier recordings of complete works, eg Rossini from 2008, but would need consent from the pianist and organist. There may also be suitable recordings from Germany.

Ian

Unfortunately it wouldn't be possible to record at a concert rehearsal because we would need individual permission from all orchestra members.

Ian said he would think about the best way forward.

#### 3.2 Social media content

Tessa had been working with Tim Haines to improve our Facebook content. They have been aiming to post on Facebook once a week and to make the content more accessible. Tessa explained that it is possible to schedule posts for times when the greatest number of people will be looking at Facebook. She also stressed the importance of striking the right tone and getting a variety of content to draw people in.

#### 3.3 Committee input on notes from November's marketing meeting

A discussion ensued about current publicity arrangements. It was generally felt that some of our current publicity methods are perhaps no longer particularly effective e.g. library displays. It was pointed out that the Christmas concert leaflet drop in Leighton Buzzard had not appeared to bring in extra audience members. Julia thought that regular emails to those on our mailing list in the run-up to concerts might be effective. It was also thought that intensive plugging of our concerts on social media could prove effective.

It was decided that it would be useful for the communications sub-committee to convene to follow up on the points raised in the November marketing meeting. Siân offered to speak to Jenny Harris about this.

Siân

#### 3.4 Nick Cutts and Choral Favourites on Stony Radio

Nick Cutts, managing director of Alina Orchestra, had invited a representative from Danesborough Chorus to join him on his Sunday afternoon classical music radio show. The representative would be able to choose their favourite choral music. The committee members thought this would be an excellent way to get extra publicity for the choir. Tessa said she would speak to Tim Haines and Hannah Dixon to see whether they might be interested in appearing on the show together.

Tessa

### 4 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season 2024 – 2025

#### 4.1 How to celebrate the anniversary season

After some discussion it was decided to kick off the anniversary season with a choir dinner to be held in early September 2024. Ian offered to speak to Harry Adam to find out whether the Leighton Buzzard golf club of which Harry is a member and which was the venue for the choir's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner might also be used as a venue for the 50<sup>th</sup>.

Ian

It was decided to hold a choir party (possibly with a hog roast) to round off the anniversary season in the summer of 2025. Julia kindly offered Hockliffe Grange as a venue for the party.

#### 4.2 Sponsoring a soloist

This item was touched upon briefly and will be rescheduled for the next committee meeting in May. However, Tessa suggested that Friends might be approached to sponsor a soloist or a fundraising event could be held to raise funds to hire a soloist.

Further discussion of plans for the 50<sup>th</sup> season will be put on the agenda for the committee meeting in May.

**Tessa**

### 5 Woburn Church bookings for 2023 and beyond

This item was covered in item 2.2 Matters arising.

### 6 Future scheduled events (a) this season

#### 6.1 18 March 2023 - Dvořák *Stabat Mater*

Extra sopranos and basses would be required to strengthen those sections. Ian had already approached a couple of members of Bedford Choral Society and they had agreed to sing. He said he would ask a couple more basses and another soprano to join us.

**Ian**

The intention is still to host a reception for Friends prior to the concert on 18<sup>th</sup> March. **Tessa** would ask at rehearsal whether any choir member has contacts at the Inn at Woburn, the proposed venue for the reception.

**Tessa**

#### 6.2 23 March 2023 – Redborne Upper School concert

Members of Danesborough will be supporting Redborne Upper School choir in their performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria*. Jonny Price will be inviting three singers from each voice section to perform with the school choir.

#### 6.3 24 June 2023 – Puccini *Messa di Gloria*, Purcell *My heart is inditing*, Finzi *Dies Natalis*

Ian would need to let Nick Cutts know that we would be using a different edition of the Purcell. He confirmed that he has given Beverley Thompson the soloists' details. The tenor soloist in the Finzi, Mark Le Brocq, has been booked.

**Ian**

Future scheduled events (b) 2023-2024 season

#### 6.4 25 November 2023 – Rutter *Gloria*, Paul Patterson *Magnificat* and Bruckner *Ecce sacerdos & Afferentur regi*

**David** said it would be necessary to hire an organ as the tuning problems with the Woburn church organ meant it could not be used to accompany the brass instruments required for this concert.

**David**

#### 6.5 23 March 2024 – Bach *St John Passion*

Peter would need to know the cost of the orchestra. **Ian** said he would contact Nick Cutts to request a costing.

**Ian**

6.6 29 June 2024 – Will Todd *Mass in Blue* and a compilation of jazz songs e.g. *Fly me to the moon*

Ian suggested we hire the Nicky Iles Trio and offered to approach Nicky. A soprano soloist will need to be booked for the *Mass in Blue* and Jacqui Dankworth, our president, was mooted as a possible soloist.

Ian

It was also suggested that we might consider approaching Alexander L'Estrange to see whether Joanna Forbes L'Estrange might be available to sing. Peter asked to be given the cost of hiring Nicky Iles.

It was noted that a piano would need to be hired.

## 7 Rehearsal dates for the 2023-2024 season

The following dates were agreed and Siân said she would book the hall.

Siân

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2024 with a break for Easter on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

## 8 Come and Sing fundraiser

It was decided that there was insufficient time to arrange a Come and Sing event for this season. However, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024 was put forward as a suitable date for next season. Siân agreed to contact The Chrysalis Theatre in Milton Keynes to check availability and cost of hire. It was noted that a decent piano would be required for the event. It was envisaged that the day would run from approximately 10.00 am to 4.00 pm with a short performance at the end of the day in front of an informal audience of mainly friends and family.

Siân

## 9 Treasurer's report

9.1 Peter reported that the deficit so far this season was marginally under budget which was encouraging but he noted that there were still two concerts to sell.

9.2 Currently we have no wedding bookings for the season.

9.3 Membership subscriptions are not showing too much of a shortfall and should the two new members who have started this term, join, then we will have 86 members.

Peter emphasised the need to keep pushing recruitment and said we should be concentrating our efforts in the Milton Keynes area as this is the area from which we now draw the majority of our members.

9.4 Peter noted that ticket sales were below budget for the November 2022 concert. The Christmas concert, however, was only £90 below budget but the sheet music was written off having been purchased two years ago and, therefore, did not appear in the budget. Christmas concert refreshments also came in below budget but this was not necessarily surprising as we had a smaller audience than we would normally expect. One possible reason for the smaller audience was that we now have fewer members in Leighton Buzzard. We were also competing with a World Cup football match and other events in Leighton Buzzard on the same evening.

Peter

A discussion then followed which considered altering the timing of future Christmas concerts and looking into the possibility of changing the venue. Woburn Church may now be too expensive to hire for a Christmas concert. Fulbrook Middle School in

Woburn Sands, Redborne Upper School in Ampthill and St Mary & St Giles, Stony Stratford were all suggested as possible venues.

It was felt that the timing of the Christmas concert might be having an impact on audience numbers. Scheduling the concert for earlier in the day would allow children to attend and might increase audience numbers. It was decided that the Christmas concert on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024 should be scheduled for 3.00 pm and promoted as a family event with a shorter, simpler programme than usual. A simpler programme might mean we would not require a pre-concert choir rehearsal.

- 9.5 Peter reported that some Friends had not yet switched their standing orders to the new bank account. Seven or eight Friends have not returned the gift aid forms for the new charity. Peter said he would ask Yvonne to follow this up.

**Peter**

- 9.6 Peter had been looking at the concert budgets for the 2023-2024 season. He was anticipating a loss of £7000 and was anxious to find ways of reducing the loss. He was keen to reduce the overall loss for the season to £5000.

Expenditure for the concert in November 2023 would include the hire of music, an organ, plus organist, a ten-piece brass group and percussionist.

It was estimated that it might be possible to reduce the budgeted cost of this concert by £1000.

The anticipated cost of hiring soloists and orchestra for the March 2024 concert was £3000 and £5000 respectively.

Expenditure for the June 2024 concert would include piano hire, hire of a jazz singer and a jazz group. Ian thought he might be able to negotiate a reduced fee for the jazz group.

- 9.7 Tessa mentioned that in September she would be contacting organisations such as the East Anglian Air Ambulance which had asked us to provide a choir for their Christmas events in 2022 to see if they would wish to hire us for Christmas 2023. This could provide a little extra income.

**Tessa**

## **10 Closing The Danesborough Chorus (charity 279281)**

Peter said that closing the old charity was on hold as we are still waiting for HMRC to register the CIO for gift aid.

## **11 Recruitment of new committee members and replacement Chair**

This item was covered in 2.6 Matters arising.

## **12 Future meeting dates**

These were confirmed as 9 May, 5 September and 11 October (AGM).

## **13 Any other business**

There was no other business.