

## Minutes of Scottish Chamber Choir Committee Meeting

Wednesday 17 January 2024 (19.00 to 21.00) (on Zoom)

Present: Brian Kerr (chairing), Julie Morrice, Iain McLarty, Valerie Holehouse, Alison Fraser, Stéphanie Robin, Marjory Lobban, Catherine Hadshar, Graham Drew, Alan Miller, Alastair Wilson

Apologies: None

1. **Welcome:** Graham (rejoining) and Alan (new to the Committee).

### 2. **Matters arising from Minutes of meeting on 06/09/23**

#### (a) Library storage

Valerie explained that the choir's library stock now stood at 56 sets of music and was now stored by Sue Shoosmith near Biggar. In addition, Valerie held at her house: several handwritten manuscripts of MacMillan's *Cantos Sagrados* (commissioned by SCC), copies of John McLeod's *Hebridean Prayers* and a full set of *Oxford World Carols*. Marjory confirmed that library stock was covered by the SCC insurance policy. The committee recorded thanks to Valerie for all her work on updating of the library, and to Sue for providing storage.

It was agreed that all commissioned works should be kept. Copies of the MacMillan would in the first instance be offered back to the composer: the choir would likely hire a typeset version for future performances. Other potential archives included the Scottish Music Centre or Edinburgh University. *World Carols* could be lent out this year, as the choir would not be using them in 2024. **(VH, IMcL)**

#### (b) Reserve Resilience Policy

Marjory was considering a policy encompassing the 3-year period covering the Brahms collaboration (November 2022) up to the final concert in the 2024-25 season and taking in a mix of *a capella* concerts, commissioned works and concerts with professional musicians or soloists. The Committee reviewed provisional accounts for the period from July 2023, noting that Making Music costs should form a new separate category. **(ML)**

### 3. **Concert on 25 November 2023 at Old St Paul's**

The concert had been very worthwhile and successful musically and in terms of profile, with a sizeable and appreciative audience. Although loss-making, that had been expected in forward planning. The loss of nearly £2.2k on the equivalent of 148 tickets at £15 was down to soloist and concert musician costs; break-even would have required selling c. 300 tickets.

There was brief consideration of boosting the audience feedback response rate, including through use of QR codes and publicity at the venue. **(GD, SR)**

Discussion of the venue noted access issues for choir, audience and musicians; inconsistent responsiveness, inadequate heating and parking issues. On the other hand, OSP was central, well suited to sacred music performances including with organ, and easily accessible by public transport. OSP would not be the first choice in future, nor was it ruled out. **(GD)**

It was agreed that the choir would be consulted on preferences for Thursday or Friday evening rehearsals in concert weeks, noting that the choice would depend on the venue; and that in general there should be a 50/50 morning/afternoon split for Saturday rehearsals (although not in the current season). The Committee would come back to this. **(BK, AW)**

#### **4. Concert on 2 March 2024 at Canongate Kirk**

Venue arrangements are in place, and the Saturday afternoon rehearsal confirmed for 3.00-5.00 pm (people should get there prompt): Brian will update the choir. Prices were confirmed as £15/ £7 concession, as for the OSP concert. Graham will draft publicity material, consulting Iain and Julie and liaising with Stéphanie, and with Jim for the website; she will also handle Twitter arrangements. Marjory will get flyer details on TicketSource. Julie/ Graham will liaise with Catrina on Facebook arrangements. Graham will liaise with Stephanie on poster and flyer numbers. **(BK, SR, GD, JM, ML)**

The Committee thanked Martin for his excellent programme notes **(AW)**. It noted that any future need to go to a commercial printer could mean increased costs.

Iain suggested that Martin could arrange printing of the Ailie Robertson commission at the same time as programmes for March. Julie will liaise with Martin on quotes. **(JM)**

Brian confirmed that he will join a Making Music online seminar on Facebook in mid-February and feed back to the Committee in due course. **(BK)**

#### **5. Concert on 25 May at St Machars**

The completed commission from Ailie Robertson is expected by mid-February, with a workshop with the composer later on. The piece consists of settings, in Scots, of poems by three women poets from the North-East of Scotland.

Other programme elements will be Rheinberger Mass, *Woo Gloria*, and either two short pieces or one 10-minute piece. Iain will reflect and decide in due course. **(IMcL)**

The venue is booked. Stéphanie will consult St Machars on their usual ticket pricing. **(SR)**

A coach will be arranged: Julie, Brian and Stéphanie will consider, with Iain, and agree venue timings and arrangements (coach departure time and place, pick-up and drop-off points, arrival in Aberdeen, time of rehearsal and concert, departure). The choir to be canvassed on whether they will use the coach or be travelling independently. **(JM, BK, SR, IMcL)**

On publicity, we should consider offering free tickets to under 18s. Graham will contact various choirs in Aberdeen (see gerontius.net); Stéphanie will liaise with St Machars, and then with Graham on the flyer which is needed for the March concert programme (ideally by mid-February). Graham will deploy the concert blurb (once available) with local choirs and contacts (in line with GDPR requirements) and consider scope for press releases. Iain also suggested a short interview with the composer about the poems. Julie offered to get in touch with the Scottish Poetry Library; Alison to engage contacts at Aberdeen University/ Aberdeen NYCoS; Brian to enlist the support of choir members. **(GD, SR, BK, JM, AF, IMcL)**

Julie had had no response so far from any of the high schools she had approached about workshops with the composer. £1.5k in funding from the Hope Scott Trust had now arrived.

## **6. 2024-25 Season**

The Committee discussed the preferred date for the Christmas Oratorio concert at the Canongate Kirk, for which we will be looking for a good audience to help cover costs, in light of known clashes. This will be confirmed in due course. **(IMcL, JM, BK, SR)**

Iain noted the need to revisit the date of the late May 2025 concert in view of his travelling commitments. Brian and Iain will consider further and revert to the next Committee meeting. Others wishing to join this discussion should please contact Brian. **(BK, IMcL, All)**

## **7. Matters arising from the AGM**

(a) Iain raised early proactive recruitment to the Tenor and Bass sections, including offering a Tenor scholarship. The Committee discussed publicity routes, bearing in mind that University and SCC autumn terms do not coincide. Alison will consult Milda and liaise with Iain on this. Graham will approach Catrina about using our Facebook page. **(AF, GD, IMcL)**

(b) The Committee approved the final draft Safeguarding Policy and agreed that it would be formally adopted at the next AGM. The policy already formally applies. **(CH, AW)**

(c) The Committee remitted discussion of the draft Access and Inclusion Policy to the next meeting. Brian will meanwhile update the choir on current proposals and canvas interest in the post of Inclusion Officer. **(CH, BK, AW)**

(d) Brian noted inconsistencies between the choir's constitution and the SCVO template provisions on Trustees. OCSR rules stipulated all committee members as trustees. Brian will consider further, consulting others as appropriate, and the Committee will come back to this at its next meeting. **(BK, AW)**

(e) Discussion of Privacy and Data Protection noted the importance of the SCC fulfilling its legal obligations including in terms of data ownership, use and sharing. Helpful guidance was available on the ICO and Making Music websites. **(BK, AW)**

## **8. AOB**

The Committee discussed cover arrangements for rehearsals and concerts in the event of sudden indisposition or unavailability of the MD. It was noted that there was considerable experience of conducting/ directing within the Choir - including Jim Murdoch, Julie Morrice, and Walter Thomson. It was agreed that it was important that an individual should know well ahead of concert dates if there was a possibility that they would be called upon, so that they could prepare/ be prepared. Iain and those three will discuss further. **(IMcL, JM)**

**Date of next meeting** (currently 20 March): Alastair will canvas alternative dates. **(AW)**

Alastair Wilson

28 January 2024