

Minutes of Scottish Chamber Choir Committee Meeting

Friday 15 March 2024 (16.00 to 18.00) (on Zoom)

Present: Brian Kerr (chairing), Julie Morrice, Iain McLarty, Valerie Holehouse, Stéphanie Robin (until 17.30), Marjory Lobban, Catherine Hadshar, Graham Drew, Alan Miller (item 6(c) only), Alastair Wilson

Apologies: Alison Fraser

1. **Welcome/ Apologies**: As above.

2. **Matters arising from Minutes of meeting on 17 January 2024**

(a) Library

Iain had sent a message to James MacMillan a month ago about the original scores of *Cantos Sagrados* but had not yet received a reply. The Committee will explore other options at its next meeting if no reply is received. **(IMcL, VH, AW)**

(b) Recruitment, Scholarship

Iain confirmed that Grant Haddow has recently taken up the Tenor scholarship. Ailibe Rees has recently joined the Alto section and Stefan Ward-Caddle the Bass section. The Soprano and Alto sections are now both full. We will need to advertise for further recruitment to the Tenor and Bass sections in the Autumn. **(IMcL, AF)**

(c) Contingency Planning

Discussed and follow-up action agreed. **(IMcL)**

3. **Concert on 2 March 2024 at St Giles**

The concert programme had been successful and very well received, and arrangements had worked out well, despite the last-minute unsuitability of Canongate Kirk, thanks to some very fast footwork on the final Friday. The concert had made a profit of £980. Ticket sales were 158 (80 sold in advance), compared to 159 (92 in advance) at OSP in November 2023.

The Committee discussed boosting audience feedback and agreed that:

- An email address for audience comments will be set up and publicised on the SCC website and in programmes; Graham will receive and collate comments. **(GD)**
- The Choir will be reminded to ask their friends/ contacts to email feedback **(BK/ JM)**
- We will continue to use the hard copy form in programmes (and provide pencils) **(GD)**
- Further thought will be given on an ad hoc basis to whether brief mention at the beginning/end of concerts would be helpful. **(JM/ BK, consulting IMcL)**

Discussion of potential future venues included the following points:

- Despite its higher hire cost, St Giles could be worth considering again, perhaps once every year or two years, provided we choose the programme carefully and target the period from Easter to summer, when “passing trade”/ footfall is high.
- We would still have made a modest profit at St Giles on 2 March even if we had had to pay the standard full venue fee.
- The relatively professional concert support set-up at St Giles is a valuable factor.

- “St Giles at 6” offers a free venue, gives good exposure, and may be suitable for programmes with less well known composers.
- We should also continue to keep Canongate Kirk very much in mind as an affordable, accessible, central venue with a good acoustic, provided the heating issue is resolved.

The Committee agreed to add St Giles to the list of venues, along with Canongate Kirk, depending on the programme; “St Giles at 6” is an additional potential option.

(SR, BK/JM, IMcL)

Marjory summarised the financial position to date. The deficit increase is largely down to payment for the new Commission. Making Music and Insurance are now listed as separate headings in the accounts. Martin Tarr has indicated that costs associated with the new printers are not as high as feared. A forecast of costs for the Aberdeen concert will soon be available. **(ML)**

4. Concert on 25 May 2024 at St Machar’s Cathedral, Aberdeen

Following discussion of the flyer and associated publicity material for Ticket Source, it was agreed that Graham will:

- consult Julie and Brian before finalising the material, giving prominence to the new commission and the local angle, e.g. for deploying by Julie with schools in the area;
- once finalised, liaise with Marjory on the blurb and Ticket Source event creation;
- arrange electronic distribution to local music societies and choirs, and liaise with Brian on arrangements for hard copy distribution locally. **(GD, ML, BK, JM)**

Transport arrangements are all in hand and ticket prices confirmed. It was agreed that we will check with St Machar’s whether they have any volunteers who might be able to help with “on the door” arrangements; the choir will also be canvassed for volunteers. **(SR, JM)**

5. Concert and Rehearsal Schedule 2024-25

The Committee decided on 8 March 2025 as the date for the spring 2025 concert, in Edinburgh, probably at Canongate Kirk or Stockbridge Parish Church.

The programme for 25 May 2025 will include a Palestrina Mass but will not all be Renaissance music. The Committee discussed potential venues and agreed that:

- Iain will make contact with contacts at Dunblane Cathedral, including discussing the possibility of a local collaboration (Roseneath Singers), which could also increase local audience. **(IMcL)**
- Brian will follow up with Alison and Catherine on Melrose as a potential venue, bearing in mind already planned Borders Chamber Choir concerts in the area. **(BK, AF, CH)**
- Brian having already circulated an updated schedule to the choir, Cath will provide a further update once venues are finalised and programmes further developed. She can now also book rehearsal space at the Dean on a termly basis, as before. **(CH)**

Choir members were subsequently canvassed, electronically and by show of hands at the rehearsal on 18 March, on their availability to repeat the 24 May programme in Edinburgh

on 31 May, 1 June or 7 June. Unfortunately, there are insufficient numbers across all parts to make this viable. However, a repeat performance in Edinburgh of *Lost Lights* will be scheduled as soon as it can be fitted into a concert programme.

The Committee welcomed the suggestion of a further repertoire consultation in the Autumn with the choir about future programmes in 2025-26 to 2028-29. A programme planning workshop has been scheduled after the AGM on 7 October; Iain will work with Milda to plan this nearer the time. **(IMcL)**

6. Matters arising from the AGM

(a) Access and Inclusion Policy: Catherine will follow up on the Policy Officer point and report back to the choir in due course. Noted that Amy Wilson has offered to work with Cath on this issue. **(CH)**

(b) Data Protection and Privacy Policy: Brian, working with others as appropriate, will clarify the responsibilities involved in the role of Data Protection Officer and whether any specific training is implied, so that the SCC continues to be fully in compliance with relevant GDPR requirements, including those on handling personal information, registration with the ICO as a data controller, maintaining google groups and mailing lists and providing opportunities for periodic website cookies opt-ins. **(BK)**

(c) SCC Constitution: The Committee discussed an analysis by Alan Miller comparing provisions in the current SCC constitution, as an Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), and the SCVO model constitution. The following points arose:

- a legal requirement as a SCIO to maintain Registers of present and past Trustees and Members;
- clarifying the position regarding Trustees vs. Committee members, including the specific position of the Musical Director (who provides advice at the AGM and at Committee meetings but does not vote, and who is not a Trustee of the SCIO);
- whether we should, in view of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion obligations, establish a clearer distinction between different levels of membership, e.g. singing members (who have passed an audition) and non-singing members (for whom membership is unrestricted);
- making explicit provision for remote (i.e., virtual or electronic) decision-making.

Alan and Brian will consider further in light of the principles set out in the analysis and the Committee discussion, and revert to the Committee. Cath will liaise with Alan and Alison on compiling Registers of Trustees and of Members. **(AM, BK, CH, AF)**

7. AOB (None raised.)

8. Date of next meeting

Rehearsals after the summer break will re-start on 2 September. The Committee will meet on Monday 26 August, at 7-9 pm. The 2024-25 schedule has been updated to reflect this.

Alastair Wilson

3 April 2024