

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of an extra ordinary meeting held online on 29th September 2021.

Present: Members: Ryland Lee (RL), Chairman; John Adams (JA), Deputy Chairman; Martin Butler (MB), Secretary; Section Leaders (SLs): Dave Allen (DA), Jeremy Jones (JJ), David Ewens (DE), Paul Lyden (PL). Officers: Clive Waterman (CW), Musical Director; Andrew Evans (AE), Assistant Secretary/Publicity Officer; Chris Peake (CP) Health & Safety Officer; Steve Richardson (SR), Publicity. Nigel Shaw (NS)

Minutes: Andy Sherwood

Apologies: John Kay.

The meeting was called for the purposes of :	Action
<p>Discussion of current situation led by RL. Review of Data gathered by MB. Discussion on Covid situation within the choir, led by CP. Discussion on Musical matters led by CW. Re-arranging the cancelled committee meeting due to take place on the 30th September, and deciding the format to be used. Make a decision as to whether rehearsals should re-start and when. Set out any modifications to our guidelines for preventing the spread of Covid within the choir.</p> <p>RL We have reached a 26% infection rate amongst choristers attending rehearsals which is significant and may still be rising. Also, two choristers who have advised that they will be staying away until Christmas. We need to deal with the situation to satisfy members that we have their safety at the forefront of our minds, so that they can be confident that we can start again.</p> <p>We need to investigate whether the measures we put in place were sufficient and whether the degree of compliance was acceptable.</p> <p>If you have any symptoms you need to be testing. We don't know whether people are faithfully testing at all. It is not foolproof but hopefully the current situation will now convince people to do what we have asked them to do.</p> <p>MB There are currently 13 people with positive lateral flow tests or positive Covid most of which were reported between the 24th and 27th September. Some are approaching the end of their quarantine period; It should be noted that Quarantine periods vary from person to person. There is some evidence of infection being spread at rehearsal for example infections occurring within groups sitting together or associating at break times. We do need to be seen to be dealing with the issue of Covid infections, no least if Health England get involved.</p> <p>CP Transmission is most likely by aerosol, probably originating from an asymptomatic though infectious choir member or members. Clive and Hayley would be especially vulnerable as they are facing the choir. We also note the increased risk of infection that could result from people moving around in relation to others. Another important point is that the effectiveness of our individual vaccinations may vary, resulting in uneven levels of protection. The highest risk of infection would appear to be when we are singing rather than when not, this would be an effect of increased aerosol production along with not wearing masks during singing.</p>	

It would be important to point out that anyone experiencing symptoms should not attend a rehearsal. What is key though is that masks must be worn at all other times. Regarding performance a similar approach would need to be adopted. Everybody must remember that the pandemic is not over and that this is not the time to relax.

CW We have become a bit casual, probably because people wanted to be back as normal as soon as possible. We have been shown what can happen when we don't pay attention to detail, for example when taking refreshments and ventilation of the space we are using. There may be an advantage in clearing the room of all people for 5 minutes and resuming once the air has cleared. Masks are another issue when moving around. We can only do the very best we can, hopefully by the end of this meeting we can put certain matters right.

OPEN FORUM

SR Almost positive that I am not the source of infection.

RL Some transmission does seem to have taken place within our environment. NS Surprised to see only himself and one other wearing masks and noted how close people were standing to each other during break. Also, there has been no control over whether people have actually done a lateral flow test, maybe a gentleman's agreement is not enough and there should be some enforcement.

PL There should be lateral flow tests available on site to identify those who may be infected.

RL We need to show that we trust those attending rehearsal to do the right thing, also there is no point in testing on arrival as the result would not be available immediately. Tests must be done before arrival and more than once a week. It must be self-policed. Hopefully people will now realise what we are saying and not be too relaxed.

AE Has been feeling unwell but 6 lateral flow tests have all come up negative

NS The velux windows were shut hence there was no air flow in the room, can they be opened?

RL They were open at the first rehearsal; however, they will close automatically if there is rain. Did attempt to induce air flow by opening more doors but it is an issue.

NS A big fan could increase the flow rate.

RL (to the group) When should we start rehearsal, and what will we do differently?

SR Depends on whether Clive and Hayley are fit and able.

(Meeting was interrupted at this point by time out of Zoom logins.)

AE Asked how ill people had been with Covid, CW spent 2/3 days in bed.

MB Colin Hinks had been quite unwell.

DA First 4/5 days are worst, If you continue to have symptoms then you are required to continue isolating.

CW Out of quarantine by 3rd October as is Hayley. However, the situation is ongoing, and people are going to continue getting positive results to tests for some time. So, we are going to have a choir of varying force and knowledge for quite some time. In regard to events, the October concert would be very difficult to put on. RL/MB We have had confirmation from John Carr that the concert has been cancelled anyway.

RL We cannot ignore that 13 out of 50 i.e. 26% have been infected.

Bearing in mind that both Clive and Hayley will be out of quarantine by the 5th October, what is the view on when we should re-start rehearsals ?

DE It's a question of how much support you will get for any dates given, we don't know whether the choir membership has been fully vaccinated.

MB/RL There is one person for whom health reasons is not able to be vaccinated.

DE Second tenors are concerned for their safety and also have doubts about their ability to perform at the required standard.

RL Separating rehearsals from concerts, concerts would not be undertaken if it was not felt that the choir was not ready, as we would not want our reputation damaged. It is the choice of each individual whether to attend rehearsals for the moment according to their own feelings about the amount of risk they are taking.

We will need to re-issue guidelines to the effect, for example that there will not be a coffee break, there will be a 5 minute comfort break, masks must be worn when not singing and lateral flow tests must be completed.

JJ I have not attended any rehearsals, feedback from those Basses that did attend indicate that many were not happy with the break or the conduct of the choir during the break. They would favour abandoning the coffee break, but having a 5 minute break for going outside, shortening the duration of the rehearsal and wearing masks when not sitting down. We have to put this across to choristers because we have a duty of care to everyone. Despite that the majority of us are fully vaccinated we can still carry and pass on this infection.

RL We can't be heavy handed, we don't want people to think that anyone in particular is being blamed. I think a lesson has been learnt by many that we were too relaxed.

JA I agree with JJ about changes that he feels necessary. Are screens going to be made available for Hayley and Clive ?

CW Would like to see break time taken out, ventilation must be increased, masks must be worn and rehearsal time shortened. Doesn't mind wearing a mask and using a microphone.

NS Screens may produce an eddy current behind Hayley and Clive so if they are far enough away the screens will probably have no benefit.

RL We seem to be moving towards :

- 1, No coffee break – all agreed.
- 2, Ventilation – Doors won't be shut, wear something warm.
- 3, 5 minute outdoor break.
- 4, 7:30 till 9 rehearsal time – all agreed. (CW Not having concerts takes the pressure away from rehearsals. An hour and a quarter to an hour and a half will be sufficient.)
- 5, When out of seat a mask to be worn by all.
- 6, Committee members to help re-enforce message to all choir members, by example or by reminding people.

<p>SR Some people not happy with the practical aspects of taking lateral flow tests, i.e. having to take a swab from the back of the throat, However, newer tests being sent out require only a swab of the nose.</p> <p>NS If people need to go to the toilet then they should just go rather than waiting for the 5 minute break.</p> <p>RL When should we invite people back with new guidelines?</p> <p>CW as soon as I and Hayley are ready then we can re-start, for me this is Friday week (8th Oct). We were trying to run before we could walk with what we have been doing to date</p> <p>RL We need to have opportunities to sing things just for the fun of singing them rather than new stuff.</p> <p>SR Agrees with 8th October, people should be free to make their own decisions.</p> <p>NS Noted that people's feelings will change in regard to attending rehearsals in regard to what is going on in their lives at different times.</p> <p>AE Happy with 8th October.</p> <p>ACTION: Put together a revised set of guidelines to be implemented, along the lines of what has been suggested at this meeting and recorded above.</p> <p>ACTION: CW and HT to try out various types of visors/masks to evaluate which would be most suitable.</p> <p>(Meeting interrupted by Zoom logout again.)</p> <p>Next Committee meeting to be re-arranged on Zoom, on 7th October 8pm.</p>	<p>RL/ MB/ CP</p> <p>CW/ HT/ SR</p> <p>MB/AS</p>
--	--

--	--