



Headington Singers

MEMBERS SURVEY 2019

Introduction

Headington Singers is a community choir that provides the opportunity to sing choral music for the sheer fun of it. The committee acknowledges that it is important to regularly canvass the views of the choir to see how well we are meeting this broad aim. A survey was circulated to all choir members during the autumn term. 63 completed questionnaires were returned and collated for discussion by the committee. This report is a summary of the themes and resulting action plan.

General

The overall responses to the survey were very positive and encouraging. The most cited reasons for enjoying the choir were the friendly atmosphere, companionship, singing and the range of music tackled. There was also a great appreciation of the standard of musicianship of the conductor and accompanist.

When asked what we could do better the main theme centered around finding ways of making the most of rehearsal time. The final decision on how rehearsals run should fall to the musical director, but the following suggestions will be considered. It is acknowledged that rehearsals should start on time, so arrangements have been made to start a warm-up in the event of the conductor being held up. A short break in the rehearsal is felt to be beneficial but it is agreed that notices should be kept to a minimum and relevant to the choir. Posters advertising concerts can be displayed on a table in the foyer. Key information, such as concert arrangements will be re-enforced by email. The raffle traditionally takes place after half term, a suggestion was made to hold this earlier in the term to allow for more focused practice nearer to the concert. This suggestion will be taken into consideration, balancing it with the need to gather up prizes and publicize the event.

It is acknowledged that many members would appreciate sectional rehearsals, however, the practicalities of arranging this should be noted, particularly the cost of hiring additional rooms. One possible option is for the last 15 minutes of a rehearsal to be devoted to one section, allowing the rest of the choir to leave early. This should be at the discretion of the conductor and only in exceptional circumstances.

Repertoire

The answers to this section demonstrate the diverse (and sometimes contradictory) tastes of the choir members. The most popular selection being a single 'big work'. The choir has a sub-committee of members that meet regularly to discuss and plan what we will sing each term. This group is called CROP. CROP have discussed the responses to the survey and reviewed the groups' function. A full summary of CROP's role is on the website. The following points are offered as a response.

- CROP will consider all the suggestions made.
- CROP aims to provide a balanced programme covering a wide range of musical tastes and for singers of all abilities. We need to be able to source the scores for our music legitimately and balance the budget for concert expenses over the course of each year.
- The historic repertoire can be found on the Headington Singers website
- The major works are cyclical over time to give everyone an opportunity to sing them.

- There is usually a Christmas themed programme on alternate years and a 'big work' every Easter.
- CROP works to plan a programme that does not go above what the choir can reasonably achieve, though this can be an inexact science!
- CROP agrees that 'big works' are (rightly) popular, and includes as many of them in the rolling programme as is feasible, bearing in mind that the overheads of such concerts usually mean that these concerts run at a loss.

CROP welcomes suggestions for consideration. It is helpful to have information about how long the piece lasts, what accompaniment it requires and if soloists are needed,

Concerts and rehearsals

Most members felt that missing a few rehearsals was unavoidable and that the decision to sing in the concert was an individual decision and self-regulating. It was also felt to be important to note that rehearsal and performance space dictate the overall size of the choir and that there may be a waiting list of members, who might be impacted by members who drop out during the term.

It was overwhelmingly agreed that the current programme of 3 concerts a year was right, generally allowing enough time to rehearse. It was noted that many members like to prepare for rehearsals and value being made aware of what to practice in advance.

Warm up

An overwhelming majority of members value the warm up, finding it helpful, although several commented that they prefer singing exercises to physical ones. The individual comments have been fed back to the conductor for consideration.

Light Relief

Around a quarter of the members expressed an interest in participating in community singing events, however, the Light Relief group has been disbanded, chiefly because there is no one prepared to lead it. This does not exclude new ideas in the future, particularly around Christmas.

Communication

Most members are very happy with the current modes of communication and welcome an increased use of email to emphasize key messages. It is important to note that many of the key messages, such as concert arrangements, are also easily located on the Headington Singers website.

Social Programme

The most popular ideas for additional social events are those involving singing in some way. Several members commented that being a member of the choir is a social event and question whether we need anything more. It was noted that there should be greater publicity about the post rehearsal trip to the pub, including a termly new members evening. There were also some ideas for possible social events, that could be considered in the future.

Running the choir

The survey prompted a discussion on succession planning and how the future smooth running of the choir can be safeguarded. Ideas include co-opting members to shadow roles on the committee or to take on a time limited project. It was noted that the choir does not currently have a Chairperson; whilst this does not cause problems on a day to day basis it means that there is no one available as overall decision maker should the need arise.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey; every response has been considered and the overall findings discussed at length by the committee.

Overall the survey results demonstrate that the choir members are very happy with the way things are and that there are no major changes required. Several useful suggestions have been put forward that the committee has noted and will be drawn upon in the future; likewise, CROP is grateful for the suggestions for future repertoire and will draw upon these for many years to come.

Headington Singers Committee

February 2020