



Registered Charity Number 263150

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Feedback from the WCS 2009 Membership Survey

Many thanks to those of you who responded to the membership survey conducted earlier in the year. We've collated the results and this document is intended to give a summary of the main points. If you would like to see the full results, including full data tables and all comments, then please contact me (christine@wimbledon-choral.org.uk) and I will send you the information.

Summary

Your views do count, and our new Musical Director was particularly keen to understand the musical preferences of the choir, so that these could be taken into account when planning the next few seasons.

Overall 94 responses were received, from a choir membership of about 180. This was slightly fewer than the last major survey conducted in 2003, where there were 121 respondents. Nearly three-quarters of the response to the survey came from Sopranos (34%) and Altos (37%). 7% of respondents were tenors and 15% basses. 6% did not provide the information.

Nearly half the responses were from members who have been with the choir for more than ten years and one-third were from people who have been members for 2-10 years.

The survey confirms that the choir enjoys tackling large, traditional, works but is not averse to including shorter, more contemporary pieces in the repertoire. Light operatic choruses and musicals are less popular.

The responses to questions on concert dress reveal that a change in concert dress for ladies to black top and long black skirt would be welcomed, provided a sense of professional uniformity is maintained. We will therefore be trialling this approach for the November concert. Any change to concert dress for men proved less popular so no change is proposed at this stage.

Musical Preferences

1. Which style of works do choir members prefer to sing ? (QA1-QA5)

Most members (97%) said they enjoy singing large traditional and familiar works. 85% enjoy singing large challenging works such as Vaughan Williams's 'A Sea Symphony', and a similar response was given for smaller, traditional works such as Vivaldi's 'Gloria'.

When asked about newer, more contemporary works such as 'Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing' the positive response decreases, 64% saying they enjoy these works, but 27% being neutral. However only 5% said they do not enjoy more contemporary works.

Light operatic works and concert versions of musicals are less popular with the choir, with only 36% saying they enjoy singing such works, 31% saying they do not, and 30% being neutral. This is supported by the responses to Q10, where musicals and operatic choruses featured high on the list of pieces members would definitely not like to perform.

2. Concerts of shorter pieces (QA6)

Nearly half said they enjoy concerts made up of several shorter pieces, but a large number (38%) gave a neutral response. 10% said they do not enjoy such concerts.

In additional comments provided at QA11 some said concerts of shorter pieces were less satisfying, and less likely to appeal to audiences. However, several comments refer to choir members' appreciation of the variety in repertoire; while larger more challenging works are satisfying to sing some members like the contrast of a lighter summer concert.

3. Choice of musical works (QA7-QA10)

These questions asked members to identify three works they most and least enjoyed performing with WCS, and up to five they would like to and would definitely not like to perform. Several found it difficult to restrict mentions as requested, and some took extreme measures (one mentioned over 90 works!)

Top of the 'Most enjoyed' list was Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', with 36 votes. As this was the work being rehearsed and performed at the time of the survey it reflects how popular that particular concert was. Close behind 'Elijah' were Brahms's 'A German Requiem' (another very recent concert) and Vaughan Williams' 'A Sea Symphony'. The next 3 were Berlioz - 'Te Deum', Rachmaninov - 'Vespers' and Verdi - 'Requiem'.

The response to questions on musical preference is inevitably diverse, but a few works were mentioned repeatedly. A table has been produced to show the works members would like to perform in descending order of number of mentions, with the corresponding figures showing how many said they would not like to perform the work alongside.

Bach's 'St Matthew Passion' is at the top of the list of pieces members would most like to perform, with 23 people choosing this work, and only two people saying they would definitely not like to perform it.

Ten works mentioned most as pieces members would like to perform				
	Number of members saying . . (raw numbers)			
	Would like to perform QA09	Would not like to perform QA10	Most enjoyed QA07	Least enjoyed QA08
Bach - St Matthew Passion	23	2	4	-
Bach - Mass in B Minor	15	2	14	5
Elgar - Dream of Gerontius	15	4	13	4
Britten - War Requiem	14	7	1	4
Bernstein - Chichester Psalms	13	6	3	2
Monteverdi - Vespers	13	-	-	1
Mozart - Requiem	12	-	8	1
Fanshawe - African Sanctus	10	4	1	1
Orff - Carmina Burana	10	9	4	7
Bach - St John Passion	9	4	3	-
Verdi - Requiem	9	-	19	1

Musicals are at the top of the list of pieces members would definitely not like to perform, with 19 mentions.

Of major classical works which members would not like to perform Beethoven's 9th Symphony (Choral) received most mentions (11).

Some members also suggested additional works to be considered for inclusion in the choir's repertoire.

4. Comparison with last Survey

It was very interesting to compare with the last survey, conducted in 2003, and to see whether views have changed. Since that survey we have performed 5 of your top 10 'would like to do' works from 2003, and your new selection in this category contains only one of the same works as last time – Elgar - 'Dream of Gerontius'. As you're aware, we are tackling Elgar's 'The Kingdom' next season, which fewer may be familiar with, but which we're sure you will find just as rewarding to perform.

Your top 10 'least enjoyed' contained only 3 of the same works from that category last time, perhaps reflecting our more recent repertoire, with Elgar - 'From the Bavarian Highlands' and Stanford – 'Songs of the Fleet' topping the list. Interestingly, these are followed by Walton – 'Belshazzar's Feast' and Vaughan Williams – 'A Sea Symphony', which both also score highly in the 'most enjoyed' and 'would like to do' categories, demonstrating the varied tastes within the choir.

Concert Dress

5. Ladies (QB1-QB6)

Fewer than half (42%) are happy with the current uniform of white blouse and long black skirt, with just over 50% either not happy or neutral.

Half of those who answered the question preferred a black blouse; just over one-third stated a preference for a white blouse, and a small number (4%) preferred a coloured blouse. Most members who responded to the question would prefer to wear 'Any black top' (52%), with 30% preferring a blouse. Over half said there should be an option for the blouse to be untucked (53%) while 30% said the blouse should be tucked in.

About half (54%) preferred 'current floor-length matt long black skirts', and one-third (33%) preferred a long black skirt of any material. 49% said women should have the option to wear smart black trousers instead of a skirt, although 40% said they should not.

Analysis of responses from only female choir members regarding concert dress for ladies shows no real difference in the results.

6. Men (QB7-QB9)

Although only half the total sample (55%) said they were happy with the current uniform, nearly a third did not answer this question, mainly Sopranos and Altos. Analysing responses of male choir members only at this question, 71% said they were happy with the current uniform. Note that small numbers are involved (Base: 17 men).

Two-thirds of the sample answered the question about colour of men's shirts (QB8). 90% of these stated a preference for a white shirt.

Two-thirds of men said the bow tie be dropped in favour of open-necked shirts sometimes, with the other third not in favour. Comments indicate the 'sometimes' refers mainly to Christmas concerts.

Thank You!

Finally, thanks again to all who contributed to the survey. Your continued input and suggestions are essential to the development of the choir, so please feel free to provide feedback to your voice representatives or a member of the committee at any time.