

SISKIYOU SINGERS BOARD RETREAT

August 18, 2018

Katharine Lang's home

Board Members Present: Cynthia Tank, president; Scott Nelson, Laura Barlow, Laurie Morey, Katharine Lang, Mary Bergstrom

Others Present: Mark Reppert, artistic director; Keith Baldwin, Rich Gleitsmann, Priscilla High

Meeting convened at 9:05 a.m.

Presentation of *Siskiyou Singers Strategic Plan: 2018 – 2023*

Members of the Strategic Plan Committee (Keith Baldwin, Rich Gleitsmann, Priscilla High, Melissa Ryan, Cynthia Tank) spent the summer revising the choir's existing plan. In presenting their final report, Keith Baldwin, chair, said the revised plan built upon its excellent predecessor, which was successful in achieving most of its original goals.

Amendments to the Plan

The new plan clarifies the choir's Mission, Vision, Values — in particular, providing definitions to each of the Values and adding a new value, Transparency.

The new plan replaces the original's five detailed Key Activities with three overarching Objectives: Financial (cash reserve and revenue generation), Choir Vitality (acquiring and retaining qualified singers from all age ranges and social and cultural demographics), and Audience Development (expanding and retaining our audiences).

Since the last plan was adopted five years ago, the choir's annual expenses have risen. Thus, the Reserve Fund target will need to be increased. Given the typical variation in choir expenses from year to year, the committee suggests a target average of two years' expenses.

Recommendations

- Establish a formal budget and subsequently use normal budgeting processes to manage choir financial operations (this should be a minor effort, as Laura Barlow already maintains a spreadsheet containing most, if not all, of the information needed for a budget).
- Increase the choir's cash reserve objective (\$40,000 at the end of fiscal 2017 – 2018) to an amount that reflects current average annual operating expenses. Calculate this objective as an annually updated average of the current year's and the previous year's operating expenses (approximately \$55,000 at the end of fiscal year 2017 – 2018).
- Establish a *Membership Committee*, charged with acquiring new choir members and retaining current members.
- Continue the *Development Committee*, which is charged with raising funds to cover annual operating expenses and with achieving the cash reserve objective.
- Establish a *Marketing Plan Committee*, charged with developing a marketing plan.

A brief side discussion focused on ways to retain choir members, including the new third-week orientation session, the buddy system for new members, and ongoing guidance by section leaders. Mark plans to host a coffee with section leaders before rehearsals begin to underscore their role in the care and feeding of our choir members.

The board took action on the Strategic Plan later in the meeting.

Minutes of Board Meeting, June 2, 2018

No amendments were offered.

Motion and second to accept the minutes as presented. Approved without objection.

Artistic Director's Report

Holiday Concert: Mark predicts the choir is going to love learning and performing the Dvořák Mass. The Carus and Cyberbase versions won't entirely match Mark's arrangement, which is an amalgamation of the four versions of the mass that Dvořák composed. The score will be ready to distribute to choir members at rehearsal; the version now available in the member's area of the website is a "not-that-rough" draft.

The second half of the holiday program will consist of mostly easy pieces, except for the arrangement of "Silent Night," which we will tackle immediately at the first rehearsal.

Attracting Younger Members: Mark has heard, directly and indirectly, from some of his former North Medford High choir students who say one of the biggest stumbling blocks for them to join Siskiyou Singers is child care. It isn't clear whether the barrier is the cost of care, lack of availability, or simply an unwillingness to leave children with a sitter one night a week for rehearsals. The board discussed the challenges associated with providing child care at the church (increased insurance costs, background checks for caregivers, and the fact that most young children need to be in bed before 9 p.m.). Developing a scholarship fund for child care is one possibility and might be eligible for grant funding.

The board authorized Mark to explore with potential singers the barriers to joining and whether financial assistance would help, and to say that the board is receptive to the possibility of providing money to assist with child care.

Music Library: Storage of the choir's past scores is increasingly problematic. The library now consists of 89 (!) cardboard file boxes containing a total of at least 20,000 copies of 400-plus individual pieces; we are running out of room in our storage unit and recently have had issues with rats. Mary says ReStore has, for a very reasonable price, metal filing cabinets, which might be resistant to rodents. Scott notes that the advantage of the existing shelves is that they are on wheels and can be moved to allow risers to be taken in and out of storage. Other possibilities: discard some music that we won't ever use again; put casters on metal cabinets so they are movable; stack cabinets; use metal file boxes; move music to archival storage; maintain most music in the cloud and run off copies as needed.

Mark will look into culling the library; Michael will explore availability and costs of storage alternatives.

Baltics Tour Costs: Mark continues to be concerned about people who want to go on the Baltics tour but cannot afford it, particularly a choir accompanist. Among the ideas: a fund-raising variety show; GoFundMe; grant funding. The board agreed to explore how much would be needed to bring along an accompanist.

Pre-concert Lectures: The board agreed that we should continue with lectures before two of the holiday concerts, not all three.

President's Report

President-elect: To everyone's delight, Cynthia announced that Mary Van Wesep has agreed to be the next board president.

Motion and second to appoint Mary Van Wesep as board president for 2019-2021. Approved without objection.

For the coming year Mary V.W., as president-elect, replaces Scott, as past-president, on the board's Executive Committee.

Baseball Caps: As a gift of appreciation to a hard-working and supportive board, Cynthia handed out spiffy new Siskiyou Singers baseball caps. She encouraged board members to wear their caps during registration and the first several rehearsals so that we can offer additional hats for purchase by choir members. Cost per hat will depend on how many we order. Cynthia agreed to handle hat ordering.

Lunch

Our potluck was uniformly delicious and, even more remarkable, was consumed on the patio, as the smoke had miraculously cleared for a few hours. Yet another example of the power of song.

Treasurer's Report

Financially, the choir is doing well compared to last year. Almost-final numbers for FY 2017-18 show us more than \$9,000 ahead of where we needed to be, even with our planned \$8,000 transfer to the reserve fund.

Motion and second to authorize transfer of \$8,000 from the choir checking account to the reserve fund saving account. Approved without objection.

Development Committee / Strategic Plan

The board was unanimous and vociferous in its praise for the work of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Motion and second to adopt the Siskiyou Singers Strategic Plan: 2018 – 2023. Approved without objection.

Motion and second to reauthorize the Development Committee in perpetuity. Approved without objection.

Laura volunteered to chair the Development Committee, although probably not in perpetuity.

Laurie volunteered to chair the new Membership Committee and will recruit choir members to join in this effort.

Michael volunteered to chair the Marketing Plan Committee, although the board agreed that this is a more complex and thus longer-term project. He will begin by looking at how other successful small non-profits do their marketing and seek out the counsel of choir members with expertise in this area.

Regarding the cash reserve, the board's consensus was that over the coming year we should focus on covering orchestra costs, which will be greater than usual, and then resume our goal of sending money to the reserve fund next year.

New Business

Program Ads: Cynthia will ask Sue for the spreadsheet that Scott Calvert used for ads so that we can incorporate this data into Salesforce, our customer-relations management software.

Fall registration: Cynthia, Scott, Mary B., Laurie, Laura, and Michael will staff the various registration stations the first two weeks of rehearsal to hand out and collect registration forms, accept checks, provide music, and direct potential new members to auditions.

Fall Workshop, Oct. 6, Ashland Community Center: For the provided breakfast, Katharine will do coffee, tea, and fruit; Cynthia and Michael will get doughnuts. Mary B. will help with setup. Scott will get the door code. Lunch will be brown bag.

Art Display at Spring Concert: Cynthia floated the idea of soliciting local school children to do artwork that would be displayed in the Recital Hall lobby during our concerts. Mark suggested getting children of singers in the Baltics to provide the artwork. No action was taken on this proposal.

Location of Next Board Meeting, Sept. 15: Tank – Zuzel residence, 245 Deborah Drive, Talent.

Old Business

Risers Inserts: Mark and the board agree that purchasing a wedge-shaped insert for our risers, which would allow a curved configuration, would be a worthwhile investment (cost: approximately \$4,500). Scott will look into possibility of grant for this purpose. We will not need (and, given the size of the orchestra, probably could not use) the inserts for the upcoming Holiday Concert, so we have time to work on securing funding.

4th of July Report: Michael reported on the choir's 4th of July booth in Lithia Park. It was a beautiful day, and the choir collected 25 new email addresses, 13 from individuals interested in singing with us. Mark has contacted all of the potential singers, and interested audience members have been added to our email list. However, staffing the booth was a challenge, as few choir members were available and/or willing to commit to a two-hour shift. The board agreed to consider whether the booth is worth the expense and effort in future years. We may wish to skip next year in any case, given that so many choir members will be in the Baltics in the weeks leading up to the 4th of July. Laurie, as head of the Membership Committee, will chair the event going forward.

Euro Tour Report: Laura says we have made our second payment to the tour company. Of the 35 individuals (singers and non-singers) who signed up, two have since expressed some doubts about being able to go. The board will continue to pitch the

tour to choir members, who can still join the tour if they are able to catch up on payments.

New Board Members: We are technically out of compliance with our bylaws, which call for a board of at least 10 members. The board discussed several prospects among choir members and pledged to broach the idea with them.

Reimbursement for Spring 2018 Concert Expenses: The Baldwins, who hosted our soloist and emcee for the spring concert, ended up going above and beyond for our guests and incurred more expenses than anticipated. The Baldwins have expressed a desire to donate much of these funds back to the choir, but the board agreed that this should in no way be considered a condition of the reimbursement.

Motion and second to reimburse the Baldwins \$575, with the understanding that these funds are the Baldwins to do with as they wish. Approved without objection.

Complementary Tickets Policy: Given the ongoing confusion, Mary B. has requested a policy on comp tickets and a list each season of who is authorized to receive them. Mary V.W., who was not in attendance, agreed in June to write such a policy.

Motion and second to adjourn. Approved without objection.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.