

Group management notes for The Scratch Youth Messiah

Royal Albert Hall – Saturday 7 December 2019

Rehearsal 11:15–12:45; concert 14:00 (ends 16:00)

(prior to the start of the rehearsal there will be notices and warm-ups, so please arrange to be in your seats no later than 11:00)

There is a lot of information here, with topics listed alphabetically rather than in order of importance. There have been no material changes since 2018, but please take time to read the whole document as it will help the day to run smoothly. You may also wish to share some of this information with parents.

The Royal Albert Hall uses a 4-colour Zone scheme to help with group management; each choir has been allocated to a zone, and will receive a tailored email with the information needed.

Arena seating

All tenors and basses, and a small number of sopranos/trebles, will be seated in the Arena, in close proximity to the orchestra. Please make it clear to everyone in your party that *at no time* should anyone (child, chaperone or leader) walk through the orchestra layout, unless given specific permission, as there will be cables and precious instruments in this area; music stands will have been carefully positioned with music, and must not be knocked over.

Arrival time

Because there are so many participants, and some groups will need to find a dressing room to drop off coats (see below) and then find their way back to the auditorium, the Royal Albert Hall staff will open the outside doors at 10:00—one hour before you are required to be seated. Please aim to arrive in plenty of time; we regret that it will be impossible to avoid a certain amount of queuing and congestion, especially as you come to take your seats in the auditorium. When you enter the hall the orchestra will be rehearsing; *we know the children will be excited, but please ensure that they are as quiet as possible when finding their seats.*

Bucket collection

WaterAid will have collecting buckets at the exit doors at the end of the concert and at the interval. Parents and chaperones who are tax-payers might like to try and get hold of GiftAid envelopes which will be on display in bars and in the Door 6 foyer and can also be requested from programme sellers. If your singers have brought cash for WaterAid, then it will be gratefully received by the buckets, but it will not count towards your choir's total.

Coaches (*instructions revised 2019*)

Coach drivers should not park across exits, even for the purpose of unloading. There are four colour-coded coach drop-off points around the Hall, corresponding to a particular door number, and coaches should drop off and pick up in the particular Zone allocated to your group and nowhere else. (We will send an email with details of your zones, access door and associated dressing room.) If your drop-off/pick-up point is on the main road (A315 Kensington Road/Kensington Gore), coaches should park on the south side of the road next to the Royal Albert Hall so that groups of children do not have to cross the busy road.

Dress

Please come ready dressed for the concert, as there is nowhere at the Royal Albert Hall for 1,500 people to change! The Royal Albert Hall is generally comfortably warm.

Young singers: children and members of choirs should wear their school or choir uniforms, or anything else **reasonably smart** which identifies them as a group. With 1,500 children participating from 50 choirs this is the only safe option. Group polo shirts or sweatshirts are perfectly acceptable, and we suggest they are worn with black trousers.

Adult singers/staff/chaperones: If you have a TRBC polo shirt in the appropriate colour, by all means wear it (visit www.trbc.co.uk). Otherwise please dress smartly, although with so many

children in polo shirts and similar, wearing a DJ or the female equivalent would be too formal and rather conspicuous. Do please remember, however, that you are appearing at the UK's premiere concert venue, and dress accordingly – please leave baggy T-shirts and torn jeans at home on this occasion.

Dressing rooms

Drop points/dressing rooms where coats and non-valuables may be left have been allocated according to your zone, and will be notified by email.

Dressing rooms may be crowded and will not be gender segregated and are therefore not suitable for changing. **Red Zone** groups have space in Gallery East; **Yellow Zone** in Gallery West; **Blue Zone** groups use DRs 9, 10 & 11; and **Green Zone** have Chorus Rooms A and B. These will not be locked at any time, so valuables must NOT be left in them (please dissuade your group from bringing anything other than essentials; see **Personal belongings**, below). Ask a steward to direct you to your Dressing Room on arrival. *Leaders should bring sufficient strong bin bags, clearly labelled with their group name*, to accommodate the coats and bags of their group, and these should be filled and left together in the designated room.

The Royal Albert Hall recommends that, if at all possible, choir groups go straight to their seats in the hall with their coats and bags, and chaperones collect everyone's coats and take them to the allocated dressing rooms. This will only work if you have sufficient chaperones, and we understand that it will not be possible for every choir (especially smaller ones), but please do this if you can: it saves time and reduces crowding throughout the Hall.

Not only scores but also packed lunches must be taken into the Hall at the very beginning of the rehearsal. The same applies to money if the children want to buy a programme (£3).

We suggest that one of your chaperones is specifically designated to make a careful note of the best route from your Dressing Room to your allocated seating area. The Royal Albert Hall is a very confusing and complicated building, and it is easy to get lost – make sure that you have at least one person who can negotiate their way around.

End of concert

At the end of the concert, the Event Manager will instruct you on leaving the Hall in a way designed to avoid congestion. The audience will be asked to clear the auditorium first, then the choirs will exit. Please follow instructions and wait your turn.

Entering and exiting the Royal Albert Hall (*instructions revised 2019*)

Your tickets may show a printed door number for entry to the Hall, but for youth events such as this the Royal Albert Hall has implemented an access plan based on coloured zones (mentioned above), each one of which has a specific door for entrance and exit: **Red Zone** groups enter via Door 2; **Yellow Zone** use Door 10; groups in **Blue Zone** use Door 1, and **Green Zone** use Door 12. Please use only the door notified to you, which will offer the simplest route to your Dressing Room and place in the auditorium. At the end of the concert you should exit by the same door after retrieving coats etc.

To comply with the requirements of Westminster City Council, the leader of each group will be required to sign their group in on arrival, and out on departure. We will arrange for there to be someone at each Zone entrance so that you can do this easily and quickly.

The 4-part voice layout of the choir means that although an entire group will enter the auditorium by one door some singers may then need to cross the Stage and find seats on the other side of the hall. Please follow the advice of stewards and Concerts from Scratch staff.

If you have a small number of singers without a dedicated chaperone for their voice-part, you will find that the rest of the group has been allocated seats in a nearby area of the Hall so that chaperones have easy access to the children they are chaperoning.

Exiting in an emergency. Exit the Hall via your allocated door in accordance with instructions given by the Event Manager, and then make for the Meeting Place allocated to your Zone.

The Hall's twelve doors are numbered consecutively anti-clockwise around the building, with Doors 5, 6, and 7 adjacent to a busy main road, although separated from it by a wide pedestrian area. It is once again possible to walk all around the outside of the building.

First Aid

There will be First Aid cover in place throughout rehearsal and performance. Chaperones should note the position of RAH Stewards stationed at the internal doors, and escort any child needing assistance to the nearest Steward who will take the appropriate action.

Lost children

A lost child should report to one of the RAH Stewards. Make sure all children know (a) how to recognise a Steward and (b) what Zone they are in. If the child does not have enough information to enable the Steward easily to reunite them with the correct group, the child will be escorted to a dedicated spot, from where they can be subsequently collected.

Lunch break

Your rehearsal ends at 12:45, and the performance starts at 14:00. **Packed lunches** (*see below*) are eaten in your seats, and there will be time for children to visit the **toilets** (*details below*).

All singers MUST be back in their seats by 13:50 so that the performance starts on time.

Meeting point

To avoid 'people jams' at the end of the performance, the RAH has designated Meeting Points outside the building which correspond to the Zone colours. At the end of the performance, or if an emergency evacuation is required, the group leader or other responsible adult should, immediately make their way to this point with an identifiable 'lollipop sign' or similar to act as a focal point where the members of your choir can be collected by parents, or meet as a group prior to boarding their coach. As it will be dark by the end of the concert (4pm), group leaders should bring a high-vis jacket to aid identification. If parents are collecting their children from the Hall after the show, they must go to the Meeting Point and find their 'lollipop sign'. Stewards will request that parents leave the building if they are waiting for their children in corridors or doorways.

Your Meeting Point is determined by your Zone colour, and will be on the same side of the Hall as your official entry/exit door and your coach set-down/pick-up point. An email will be sent with images of the area in question; we suggest you print the image, bring it with you to the event, and make sure before you enter the Hall that you know exactly where your Meeting Point is. All RAH doors will be staffed by red-jacketed RAH Stewards, who are trained in the geography of the Hall and the Zone system, and will be able to direct members of your group to the correct Meeting Point.

Non-attendance and gaps

If singers drop out and you can't find replacements, please try and let us know. Arranging the seating at the Scratch Youth Messiah is time-consuming and complicated, and we may want to reseat other singers to ensure there are not large gaps in prominent places. Once on stage, avoid leaving gaps in the middle of a row: negotiate with other singers in the same row so that any gaps are at the outside edges – furthest away from the centre.

Packed lunches

Lunch is eaten in your seats between 12:45 and 13:30. Strong-smelling or very crumbly food is discouraged, as are nuts (many children have allergies). RAH staff will issue group leaders with bin bags for the collection of all rubbish at approximately 13:30. We suggest food is brought in a disposable bag (preferably paper) which can be discarded once the food is eaten – this will reduce the amount of 'stuff' the young people have to manage.

Personal belongings

Please dissuade children from bringing anything non-essential; all items should be in a single bag small enough to stow neatly underneath a singer's chair. Singers should bring all the following items with them into the auditorium:

- a packed lunch (*see above*)
- their *Messiah* music (there will be no spare copies available on the day)
- a pencil (but only if your singers understand about marking a score)
- £3 if they wish to buy a **programme** (*see below*)
- possibly a **reading book** (*see below*)

Other items should be at the group leader's discretion. We advise that mobile telephones are NOT brought to this event, but any which are thought necessary for safety reasons **must be switched off** at all times when you are in the auditorium.

Photographs (*instructions revised 2017*)

No photography or recording whatsoever is allowed during the performance, other than by official photographers; anyone seen taking photos or making any kind of recording will be challenged by RAH stewards. Please help us by pointing this out to parents if you possibly can; *this is NOT like a school concert – we use professional orchestral players and soloists, and filming/photography/sound recording is not permitted without their permission being sought in advance*. Some schools also expressly forbid photos to be taken of pupils. Parents and staff may take photographs during the applause at the end of the concert, but posed 'group photos' of individual choirs on stage will not be permitted. It is essential that the performing area is cleared as quickly as possible at the end of the performance, and on-stage photography will seriously hinder this.

We hope that schools/choirs will have no objection to our using photos in our own future publicity. However, if we wish to use a photo in which individual children might be identified, we will contact the school first. Only low-resolution group images will be used online, so that no-one will be able to zoom in on individual children even if they download the image. Should a third party ask to use one of our photos we will either refuse, or refer them to the school concerned.

If photos are to be uploaded to social media, it is essential that the tagging facility is disabled so that children cannot tag themselves and their friends and thereby be identified.

Programmes

Programmes will be sold by WaterAid volunteers, with the minimum donation suggested as £5 for adults or £3 for participating children. They will sell at the entrance doors, in the main corridor running around the Hall, and also on stage. All choirs are named, and every individual child's name which was notified to us by the deadline is also listed (not chaperones, I'm afraid). We encourage everyone to support WaterAid, and please consider in advance how you might manage if all your singers wanted to buy a programme . . .

Publicity

We have publicised this concert widely, but the Royal Albert Hall is a big place to fill, even though we have only been allocated 3,800 out of a possible 5,200 seats. Especially if you are within easy reach of London, ***please do everything you can to get local media interested***, and to get local supporters to the Hall – there are half-price tickets for children and further discounts for family tickets. If you are bringing a coach, please fill any empty seats with audience, and encourage parents to fill a second coach with supporters. Ask the young people themselves to talk about it as much as possible on social media (our Facebook page and Twitter ID are at the foot of every e-mail). Singing is great at any time, but is even better when you have a large appreciative audience to sing to!

Reading books

About half the choirs taking part will be singing all twelve choruses; others will be singing as few as three. During the rehearsal, if children are not singing, we would like to encourage them to follow the music being rehearsed by others (this will help when they come to learn new choruses themselves). If this is not practicable, group leaders might consider allowing children to bring a small-format book to prevent restlessness, but books must NOT be read during the performance itself.

Recording

Because professional musicians are involved, recording of any kind is strictly forbidden.

Scores

If your singers are 'sitting out' for one or two groups of choruses, please encourage them to follow the score when others, including the soloists, are singing. Following the music while someone else is performing really helps with music literacy, and we recommend that as many singers as possible have a vocal score to follow. They will also enjoy watching and listening, so we hope the reading-book option (see above) will be a last resort.

Sponsorship money

Donations to WaterAid must be paid in advance, as there is no facility to count and record money on the day. WaterAid asks that money is donated by setting up a JustGiving page, even if you have arranged a single event like a sponsored cake sale. Once the page is set up, circulate the link widely and encourage your singers to do the same so that as many people as possible have the chance to add to your fundraising.

Standing and sitting

Stands and sits are indicated in our chorus notes (essential reading – get them off the website!). If you are a singing adult chaperone who knows the work from front to back, but whose group is only singing part of it, we warmly invite you to sing everything. Please sit or stand for this according to what is comfortable. If you are the only person standing amongst seated non-singers, do sit to sing if this feels more comfortable. The same might apply to a chaperone seated amongst younger children: even if your group is singing, your voice might be of more use if your head is at the same height as theirs, so you also might prefer to sing from a sitting position. Just do whatever is easiest. The children should *always* stand to sing.

Ticket mailing

Tickets will be despatched to you on between 20 and 22 November. Please contact Annie Hastings *at once* on 07930 391560 for any of the following reasons: (a) if there appears to be a mistake with your ticket numbers; (b) if they have not arrived by Wednesday 27 November; (c) if your numbers of singers or chaperones changes. If singers drop out (we do hope they won't!), then please try and find replacements to join you, preferably under the age of 25. We will be in the Main Box Office (Door 12) on the day between 10 and 11.00, but most problems are more easily sorted if notified in advance.

Toilets

There are numerous toilets all over the building, some of which (front of house) are reserved for children's use. You will see signs on the walls of the main circular corridor pointing to the nearest ones, or ask a steward. There should be time for children to use these before the rehearsal starts, and also during the lunch break.

Youth Messiah Mentors

We are being joined by experienced young singers from the National Youth Choir and similar groups. These singers will be dotted around in twos and threes throughout the choirs, and will be sporting burgundy-coloured polo-shirts with 'Youth Messiah Mentor' on the back. If adult singing chaperones find themselves sitting next to YM Mentors, they might like to consider moving into the middle of the group they are chaperoning, in order to spread the level of musical support more evenly though the performing area.

That's all . . . phew!