

Music Librarian's Report to NMM - July 2024

Introduction

This year saw the completion of the series of music audits I began a couple of years ago. You will recall your input in the Phase 1 audit. During this year I completed Phases 2 and 3, delivering reports of my findings to the Committee in each case. These phases will have been under the radar for most of you because I did it all! I kept these Phases separate to break the task down into manageable chunks and to preserve my sanity!

The aims of the Phase 2 audit were to:

- Identify and properly catalogue all NMM's sheet music assets held in the archive store (the Lok 'n' Store rented unit in Hedge End) – subject to the "summer programme" scope.
- Determine if any more pieces could be held by members in their personal libraries should they be called forward to a future summer programme.
- Decide if any pieces should be removed from our assets and recycled or disposed of in some other way (with reasons why).

The aims of the Phase 3 audit were the same but focussed solely on Christmas music.

What did I find out and what happens next? The headlines

NMM owns a lot of music! I had previously reported in Phase 1 that we had about 6400 copies of summer programme music. Phase 2 covered about 2900 copies. Phase 3 covered about 3700 copies. Therefore, NMM's total music asset is about 13000 music copies currently. The vast majority are original manuscripts. The rest are licensed copies where we have acquired a licence to make a specified number of copies locally.

We still held a number of photocopied pieces made in NMM's earlier days when awareness of copyright matters was less than it is today. These were mostly in poor condition and will be recycled if feasible.

We also held some pieces dating back to the earliest days of the choir. These were not listed in any records I inherited from my predecessor. Many are in very poor condition and will be disposed of. Others are in better condition but we do not have enough copies to go round the current singing membership. We are unlikely to sing them again in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we will either destroy/recycle them or try to sell them on eBay.

A note on new music acquisition

The Music Committee meets twice a year. One meeting is in the autumn to consider potential new music for the following summer. We also choose which other pieces we carry forward from the previous summer and what we bring out of the archive. The other meeting is in late spring and does the same but for the following Christmas programme. It's a process that works well having changed it a couple of years ago. I can buy new music well ahead of the start of a forthcoming season rather than receiving music a few weeks into a rehearsal programme.

Most new songs are nominated by choir members. Do keep suggestions coming in, preferably with a link to an arrangement online. Music Committee tries its best to include them in a programme, subject to a suitable SATB arrangement being available at a reasonable cost. I maintain a list of your suggestions. It is possible that something may be held over to the following year for re-consideration if it did not make the cut.

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One of my librarian duties is to source and buy all new music on behalf of the choir as agreed by the Music Committee. The preference is to buy manuscript copies in the most cost effective way possible, preferably from within the UK. However, this is not always possible. Reasons for this include:

- The piece involved may not be available in our geographic territory (usually Europe) but may be in another (usually the US)
- The preferred arrangement is only available at prohibitive cost. In such cases I will consult the Music Committee to see if we can find another acceptable arrangement.
- The preferred arrangement may be out-of-print. In such cases I will try to find and contact the rights holder to find out if it truly is out-of-print and, if it is, how to obtain a licence to make copies for NMM use. This is a tortuous process and only pursued if we feel it is worthwhile.
- It is only available for licensing as a digital download. In such cases, I will buy a licence to cover the number agreed by the Committee. This has been recently set at 52 copies (up to 50 singers with a copy each for our MD and accompanist). It's somewhat less for SA only or TB only pieces.

In all cases, this will be subject to budget limits set by the Committee. Over the last two seasons (Christmas 2023 and Summer 2024), to keep costs reasonable, we have had to rely more on locally printed licensed copies rather than manuscript pieces. However, this does place more onus on you, the members, to take even more care of your music. Locally printed copies use lesser quality paper and can be damaged more easily. Remember hole reinforcers are your friend!

Points for you to note

- Music and drinks do not mix! Try and keep liquids away from your music!
- Let's maximise the life of our music. Keep an eye on wear and tear and take preventative actions rather than wait until it's too late. Torn punch holes are the most common form of damage on our music. As I said above, hole reinforcers are your friend! It's only a couple of quid for a packet.
- Do report loss or damage to me as soon as noted. However, please do thoroughly check before reporting loss. A number of you did so this year (thank you!). But with a bit more searching you all found those "losses" (thank you again!).

Some final words

I would like to thank you all for continuing to hold and care for the music entrusted to you. Committee agreed earlier this year to ask you to hold your Christmas music too. Calamities are thankfully rare. Your personal libraries will grow a little bit each season. We could not function as a choir if we had to issue and collect back all music at each rehearsal or concert. It really is appreciated.

Have a great summer and see you in the autumn.

With my best wishes

Tony Jardine

New Music Makers Librarian