

A CHECKLIST OF USEFUL POINTS when coordinating a "BIG CHOIR"

Occasionally, in the case of big national demonstrations, Raised Voices cooperates with other choirs in the nation-wide Campaign Choirs network, facilitating our coming together to sing as a single 'big choir'. For this rather complex exercise to be carried out to everyone's satisfaction, advance planning by RV is advisable, a coordinator volunteers for the event, who will then take certain preparatory steps and be involved in a high degree of activity on the day of the event. It may be useful to have more than one coordinator, working in close cooperation.

The coordinator/s should be enlisted on the Campaign Choirs e-mail group list. This will be her/his/their main means of communication with the other choirs. But it is useful to have also the individual e-mail addresses of the person who maintains the Campaign Choirs website, and of the key choir leaders or activists, so as to be able to correspond with them additionally. These addresses will usually be obtainable from the co-ordinator of the last Big Choir event.

The main tasks in coordinating a Big Choir are:

- First, about five weeks in advance of the event, contact other choirs and ask if any of their members are planning to come to London and whether they would wish to join us in singing at the event.
- If the answer is positive, affirm RV is willing to coordinate a 'Big Choir' and start seeking their wishes as to the songs to be included in the Songsheet. Negotiate a choice of songs that most choirs are likely to know or able to pick up without difficulty - and are suitable for street singing.
- When the list is agreed, draw up a Songsheet and e-mail it out as a *pdf* file to the CC list and other addresses, meanwhile passing the lyrics, notation and music files of each song to the manager of Raised Voices website to put up on the site.
- Ask the manager of Campaign Choirs website to put up a notice of the event with a link to the songs.
- Decide whether an amplifier will be used to project recordings of the songs on the day, and if so, make the necessary recordings. (Note: the choir needs to confer about this with the London Political Choir Strawberry Thieves who have organized this in the past.)
- Consult the website of the demonstration organizers, to find out the route and departure time of the march, the location and time of the rally. Advise them of our participation.

- Find out from them where and when the out-of-town coaches will arrive. (This can influence our choice of singing spots - so the incomers don't have too long a walk to reach us.)
- Walk the proposed route, and select appropriate venues and times to sing together. Note possible short-cuts. Consider disruption to public transport.
- Map the key underground stations, public toilets and other useful resources along the route proposed for the demonstration.
- In deciding the first meeting time of the gathering singers, factor in half an hour for rehearsal.
- Make a plan, with number, location and time of singing spots, and put it to Raised Voices for discussion, amendment and agreement.
- Once choir has made its decisions, and no later than two weeks in advance of the event, e-mail the plan to other choirs, and ask the manager of the Raised Voices and Campaign Choirs websites to put up the details.
- Prepare, and take to the event some or all of the following, as appropriate:
 - large placards announcing who we are and the cause we are singing for;
 - a publicity placard for Raised Voices;
 - RV leaflets to hand out;
 - the RV banner;
 - song-numbers on a pole;
 - a supply of songsheets in a labelled bag;
 - Sop/Alto/Tenor/Bass cards;
 - a megaphone;
 - the amplifier if needed.
- The day before the event, consult the Transport for London website to get information about bus re-routing and underground station closures.
- Ensure you have a list of mobile phone numbers of key members of participating choirs, and that all concerned have yours, so that you can be in touch on the day.
- At the event:
 - be alert to choirs arriving;
 - gather singers into appropriate order;
 - liaise with the song leaders;
 - decide when singing should start and end;

- remind participants of next steps in the programme;
- distribute tasks e.g. holding placards, distributing leaflets, to other choir members;
- at the end, make it clear at what point the singers are dispersing and the Big Choir is over.