

KATE ALLEN'S SESSION – SW ARM 10/10/09

AIM: to think about events in new ways that help us:

- i) attract and keep new wider audiences
- ii) attract and keep new members
- iii) increase funds
- iv) gel and bond our groups together to create stronger communities

First we looked at some SW member groups that have planned and delivered events that engaging with their communities in quite new and different – nay *quirky* – ways. We looked at the six projects funded through the Minor To Major 2009 grants schemes (more info available [here](#)).

Then we used an image of a hot air balloon to represent the four key aspects to explore new approaches to event planning:



THE ROPES: represent what is holding you back

THE SKY: represents what would make your performances fly

THE PEOPLE: represent who you need on board

THE CLOUDS: represent the things that may blow you off course

Our group discussion around these four themes revealed the following:

1. THE ROPES: what is holding you back?

This discussion brought out some of the problems our groups encounter. It was nice to realize that we all seem to experience the same difficulties!

1	Money:	Our group is not bringing in enough money to keep going
2	Image:	The community around us perceives us as old fashioned/not 'for them'
3	Age barriers:	We can't get young people interested We can't get anyone under 50 interested
4	Gender barriers:	We are struggling to enlist new men Our men are members of multiple choirs and do not turn up
5	Peripatetic:	The risks involved in being a 'traveling' group
6	Cost of tickets:	We don't want to put the prices up but we need more money coming

		in
7	Selling Tickets:	We find it difficult to sell tickets through our regular channels
8	Venue:	Cold/Uncomfortable for us Col/uncomfortable for our audience Not drawing in audiences
9	Competition:	Lots of other choirs/orchestras close-by Lots of other events locally
10	Repertoire:	Is limited Is outdated We love the music but our community doesn't Isn't bringing in big audiences
11	Scheduling/timing/ calendar:	Our events performances clash with other events Its hard to know when best to schedule events to make them attractive/accessible to audiences
12	Volunteer Time:	Our group/committee don't have the time/resources Its hard to be realistic about the amount of w=time we need to put in
13	Parking:	Parking chaos for events
14	Publicity:	How do we get good publicity
15	Internal differences:	Not all members are prepared to 'move forward' Change is hard We don't all have the same vision for our group
16	Crisis of confidence:	Change is a daunting We've tried some new things and they haven't worked out, so we are nervous about trying again
17	Falling Audiences	People don't come People don't come back Lack of interest

2. THE SKY: what would make your performances fly?

This discussion brought out ideas for doing things a little differently. Interestingly, this discussion threw up ideas that seemed to address many of the above problems – and more! I've written them up here in an order that corresponds to the table above:

1	Money:	Think about quirky fundraising as well as grants – they work as promotional tools and help your image too! For example - bag packing at supermarkets while performing outside - car wash in tuxedos with a mini performance - hand out leaflets and sell tickets at the same time!
2	Image:	The way we promote our group/our events is key to the image we present We can use everything we do as a way to 'cross message' our image - fundraising - literature - repertoire THINK! Who is it aimed at? What is the content/look/style it saying about you? What impression are you promoting about the group?
2. THE SKY: what would make your performances fly? cont'd		
3	Age barriers:	Age inclusion enriches our groups and widens participation Use defined projects to begin a relationship Use the experiences of other groups to learn from and build on Consult with young people to learn what it is they would want to get from membership – and respond to their comments

		Consider youth sections, rather than bringing everyone together
4	Gender barriers:	Consider merging with other local groups Female tenors Find other ways to bypass sight singing
5	Peripatetic:	
6	Cost of tickets:	Work at selling more rather than putting prices up Look at alternative venues Consider aligning your performance alongside a wider event Think about how and where to place/advertise your tickets for sale
7	Selling Tickets:	Use Making Music approved online sales service http://www.wegotickets.com Sell tickets at fundraising events Look after your sellers, get them on board Whole choir/orchestra approach
8	Venue:	Think out of the box! Find exciting places – Corfe Castle/local farmers markets Arts festivals Food festivals Busking!
9	Competition:	Work with other groups, not in competition.
10	Repertoire:	Consult wider communities and ask what they want Dare to vary the repertoire – don't completely change! Look to projects like Making Music's Adopt A Composer
11	Scheduling/timing/ calendar:	Anti Clash diaries – see David Edge/Rosemary Allen Work with other events
12	Volunteer Time:	Our group/committee don't have the time/resources Its hard to be realistic about the amount of time we need to put in
13	Parking:	Hmm! Not much we can do here – set up a car share scheme?
14	Publicity:	Community work is interesting – get free editorial space Had out leaflets at fundraising events Get people to sign up to email lists – give them a free glass of wine Speculate to accumulate
15	Internal differences:	Internal mentoring/ambassadors for change Discuss and identify a shared vision/create a plan
16	Crisis of confidence:	Build on successes Don't try to do everything at once
17	Falling Audiences	Think quirky Use all of the above!

3. THE PEOPLE: who do you need on board

This discussion explored who can help you overcome your obstacles and realize ideas.

1	Your group	Find out what resources you have within your choir and <i>use them</i> .
2	Animateurs	
3	County Music Service	Cornwall: http://www.cornwallmusicservice.com/ Devon: http://www.devon.gov.uk/musicservice Dorset: http://www.dorsetforyou.com/index.jsp?articleid=384549 Gloucestershire: http://www.gloucestershiremusic.co.uk/

		Somerset: http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/learning/music/ Wiltshire: http://www.wiltshiremusic.org.uk/regular_activity.asp
4	Making Music	Has a whole team of people and a wealth of expertise and experience. In person: contact Kate Allen 01822 835 946 Online: go to http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/MM/home.aspx
5	Partners	Who do you work with? How do you get them on board and get the most out of these relationships
6	Venue	How can you get the most out of the proprietors/managers etc
7	Personal networks	Its not what you know, but who you know!
8	Ticket sellers	Look after them – a bottle of wine for Christmas doesn't go amiss
9	Parents/families	Make the most of your current membership and audience. Reach out through these connections. - family tickets - offers
10	Media	Get them on board –look for editorial space to cover and advertise your events

4. THE CLOUDS: what might blow you off course?

We wanted to explore this but ran out of time except a few groups ventured helpful tips such as:

- Get agreements from partners in advance to stop things going 'off course'.
- If fees and costs are involved, make sure you get good quotes in writing
- Understand all the roles involved in a project/performance, and make sure everyone knows and is in agreement about exactly the part they play.

and I would add.

- talk to your RDO
- use the new case study archive once it is up and running
- submit your write-ups to the case study archive to share your experiences for the benefit of other groups.

and lastly – the 5 minute 'burning issues you'd like help from Making Music on' list included:

- Demographics of membership – ideas to help lack of tenors/men/youth
- case studies to share successful work and ideas and address the insular attitude of groups
- sustainability of audience development work
- Rehearsal space
- Measuring impacts of what works regarding promotion

WE'LL DO OUR BEST!