



Various Voices

London sings out! 2009

Evaluation

prepared for **Various Voices** by **dan** www.wearedan.com

Various Voices
London 2009

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Summary

In a unique partnership between the Various Voices charity and London's Southbank Centre, thousands of singers from across the UK, Europe and further afield converged for what organisers had designed to be an uplifting and inspiring four-day festival of song.

Initiated by the three stakeholder choirs - the London Gay Men's Chorus, Diversity Choir and the Pink Singers - the Various Voices London 09 festival was planned and run by volunteers working in conjunction with a small professional team, in a collaboration with Southbank Centre as host venue.

Various Voices London was a celebration of the rich Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender choral culture reaching out to share the enriching, empowering and enjoyable experience of singing. This was a festival dedicated to singing with the belief that within singing lays the truest form of self expression, and it aimed to offer everyone many opportunities to do so.

The XII Various Voices 2009 was one of the largest choral festivals in the history of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gender choirs world-wide. The vision of the festival was inspired by the values of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympics Games and the festival was granted the London 2012 Inspire mark recognizing the outstanding achievement of the project and its contribution to the London cultural landscape.

With reference to the mission statement goals of celebration, interaction and growth, the festival clearly achieved its aims; from artistic planning to project management, these ideals remained at the core of its activity. The results are outlined in more detail throughout this evaluation.

The weekend consisted of 29 ticketed concerts, 37 workshop sessions on 21 different topics, approximately 46 individual public events, concerts and master-classes, and approximately 46 rehearsal sessions. The actual attendance of the public on site is not on record, however 8470 individual tickets were sold with 11,197 attending ticketed concerts (estimates on footfall can be found in the Audience Figures section).

Evaluation Process

This evaluation was commissioned by Various Voices London in early 2010. Qualitative information was gathered from a number of sources:

- Participating choirs were asked to rate their experience of the festival (see Feedback from Participating Choirs) through a brief questionnaire. They were required to answer from the perspective of delegates, performers, workshop participants and audience members.
- Key people from Various Voices and Southbank Centre were asked to comment on what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the festival, what they would do differently and what advice they might offer the organisers of a future festival.

Quantitative data was drawn from:

- Ticket sales data from Southbank Centre were analysed relating to both performances and the workshop programme (see appendices)
- Fundraising outcomes
- Budget reports for the project as a whole and for marketing spend in particular.

The report's authors analysed all the information and opinion gathered, drawing also on their own experience of working on delivery of the festival, in order to produce what is intended as a factual and experiential account of both process and product. It is hoped that this provides useful indicators for organisers of future Various Voices festivals and for other project collaborations of this nature between a voluntary sector organisation and a major public venue.

Mission Statement

- To **celebrate** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) identity through song and to showcase on an international stage the achievements and diversity of LGBT choirs of Europe and around the world at every level.
- To **foster interaction** between choirs and singers, both in singing activities and socially; and to develop new interaction between delegate singers and ensembles in London. Interaction can be between LGBT choirs and also with choirs of all kinds and at all levels. Also fostering interaction with audiences around London, to signal LGBT visibility loud and proud, across the city.
- To **facilitate growth** of all those ensembles and individual singers involved, through motivating their leaders, inspiring singers and through the development of new skills and ideas.

"All over the world people have dreams and sing about them, Various Voices was our dream and we sang out loud, we dare to go on dreaming."

Martin Brophy, Executive Chair



Podium Paris singing in front of the Royal Festival Hall (photo Paul Brown)

Project Development

Bid Process

In order to win the bid to stage Various Voices in London, the organisers had first to convince the three London Choirs, The Mayor of London's office, Visit London and Southbank Centre to support them and help in delivery of the proposal at the bid weekend in May 2006.

The small team led by Martin Brophy visited Paris three times: once before the bid to look at the planning first hand and twice afterwards. The Paris Festival had not proved financially viable festival models and the viability of the Berlin Festival model was unknown as they had failed to finalise their accounts or respond to any request for information. A decision was made to change many aspects of the festival, as explored elsewhere in this report.

Early support at the bidding stage also came from Design for Diversity (who created the design style for the website and the Various Voices logo), the London Eye, Thames Clipper Company and Jakob Hartmann Tours. The bid weekend was hosted at the City Hall, with a trip on the London Eye, and a guided tour of the Thames, before being put ashore at City Hall for meetings, presentations and lunch at City Hall. The artistic vision and business plan led to the bid's success.

The core offer was for a four day festival, on one site, with a 12-hour programme each day where delegates would create their own festival experience from a wide ranging programme. The registration fee would be less expensive than previous festivals. It would include access to a wide range of free events and reduced price tickets to concerts (see Ticketing and Delegate Package section for more details).

Awareness-raising & taster events

As part of an awareness-raising and taster programme, Various Voices team was involved with a series of events, for example *Europride Sings* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the award winning *London Sings* float for Europride, flash mobbing 'promenaders' queuing for last night of the Proms, 'Put a Name to a Face' at the National Portrait Gallery, Sing London events and the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the 2008 World Gay Football Tournament; as well as and attendance at meetings such as the London Mayor's LGBT Forum. Additional events were organised in collaboration with the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and with young peoples' groups from the Roundhouse.

The Artistic Programme

Artistic Directors

Various Voices initially appointed Charlie Beale to devise the outline artistic programme. Andrea Brown, Musical Director of host choir Diversity, was appointed to take over the role in October 2008 when Charlie's other work commitments took him abroad. Andrea developed the programme, introducing new strands, such as the workshop programme and identifying key artistic collaborators and creative ideas.



Diversity Choir in performance in the Queen Elizabeth Hall with BSL interpreter (photo Francesca Moore)

The programme for the festival was designed to attract as broad an audience as possible. In order to achieve this it incorporated a wide mix of amateur and professional performers, concerts and events.

Various Voices worked closely with Southbank Centre's artistic teams and particularly with Learning and Participation to integrate their usual public events such as *Friday Tonic* (early evening concert in the Front Room of the Queen Elizabeth Hall) and the *Friday Lunchtime Concert* (Clore Ballroom).

Other events in the mix included *Out Ballroom Live!* – an afternoon of ballroom dancing attended by fans as well as passers-by. The idea was to attract people into the buildings and to create a festival feel.

Many of the public stumbled upon events and then returned later in the weekend - this was reflected by growing attendances to unticketed events growing over the weekend.

The festival concerts took place primarily in the three main auditoriums: the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room. In order to make the festival as visible and accessible as possible the other public spaces were also utilized – events such as rehearsals, cabaret and performances were taking place at all hours of the day (from 11:00am to 1:00am) throughout the site.

'Choirs3' Delegate Concerts

Each delegate choir had an opportunity to perform for 30 minutes. They were grouped into three choirs per concert, branded as *Choirs³* and 19 of these concerts were scheduled in all three auditoriums across the four days. Uniquely for this Various Voices festival these concerts were themed in order to attract particular audiences and assist with the marketing, for example, *Come to the Cabaret, a Touch of the Classics, East Meets West*.

This was a new concept for delegates, who were previously used to wandering in and out of concerts and being given no idea what theme a performance might take. The new model was also designed to encourage choirs to talk and work together.

"We had an excellent time participating in the festival - it kind of "glued" us together - the possibility to work with other choirs was fantastic!" WEIBratons



South London Choir performing in the Royal Festival Hall (photo Joanna Plumbe)

The artistic content of the programme was designed to reflect the vision of 'growth through singing, celebration and interaction', presenting a kaleidoscope of music from classical to popular to avant-garde performed by visiting and guest choirs working together to produce concerts with a diversity of sounds and performance styles. From Croatia to Vancouver, early music to eighties pop, the Choirs³ performances showcased the huge wealth of talent found in the choral community world-wide. Almost 60 delegate choirs as well as guest choirs worked alongside international professional artists and performers including:

- Lorraine Bowen
- Our Lady J
- Lea DeLaria
- Lesley Garrett
- Jonathan Hellyer
- Amy Lamé
- Timberlina
- Sandi Toksvig



Our Lady J in performance in the Purcell Room (photo Paul Brown)

all headlining a huge variety of events from public singing warm-ups to choral workshops, a *Best In Show* talent contest, a *Big Gay Sing*, the European premiere of *Sing for the Cure*, May Day madrigals lining the banks of the Thames at the *Opening Ceremony*, late-night and daytime cabaret stages, gay ballroom dancing. Highlights included a collaboration with Southbank Centre's innovative Voicelab performing Orff's choral masterpiece *Carmina Burana* with a 200-strong festival choir being joined by the London Philharmonic Choir and the New London Children's Choir.

Cabaret Stages

The Cabaret stages and impromptu performances – groups / choirs just singing out cause they felt like it, in the public spaces both inside and outside the buildings - provided a constant source of free sparks of joy and community singing for delegates and passers by to enjoy and sometimes to join in.

Delegate choirs were offered a half-hour slot for cabaret performances, taking place in both the Front Room at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Clore Ballroom in the Royal Festival Hall. There were some constraints on scheduling due to problems of potential sound bleed with concerts in the auditoriums, but both afternoon and evening slots were available.

Participating choirs were provided with a stage area, basic stage lighting and p.a., a keyboard or piano and introduction by a festival compere.

Associated Events

Associated events, such as the Southbank-organised Slow Food Market, added to the experience of the festival and gave additional footfall and performance opportunities, drawing in a new and interesting audience for events in the public spaces.

Other musical groups such as the London Gay Symphonic Wind, and people from the Roundhouse's Young Adult Music projects also had opportunities to perform however formally or informally.



*Lesley Garrett and Sandi Toksvig at the Opening Ceremony
(photo Joanna Plumbe)*

Participation: Workshop and Masterclass Programme

Workshops

A full programme of workshops and masterclasses ran throughout the festival period across the Southbank Centre complex, covering four main themes:

- Developing your voice – Using your voice in the best way possible
- Exploring musical styles - developing diversity in musical choices and making your groups more versatile
- The whole performer - mental and physical aspects of singing, using the body, dance, breathing and posture
- Leading your group - for choral directors, leaders and other organisers including topics such as administration, marketing, programming and fund-raising



Workshop participants in the Front Room (photo Pat Longford)

A total of 36 sessions covering 21 different topics (ie some topics were repeated at different times in an attempt to increase opportunities for delegates to attend) were held across 6 different spaces, ranging from a free public warm up held each morning in the Clore Ballroom, to specialist taster sessions on Bulgarian singing through to practical advice on audition skills:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| • <i>Warm Up for all</i> | • <i>The art of audition</i> | • <i>Choral Masterclass: 1, 2 and 3</i> |
| • <i>Queer Studies</i> | • <i>Spotlight on Musical Theatre</i> | • <i>Singing and Performance Anxiety</i> |
| • <i>Taster workshop - Falsetto</i> | • <i>Arranging Music for Choirs</i> | • <i>Taster workshop - Bulgarian Singing</i> |
| • <i>Running Your Choir: 1 & 2</i> | • <i>Choral Conducting</i> | • <i>Taster workshop - "Choralography"</i> |
| • <i>Singing Together</i> | • <i>Jazz Singing from Scratch</i> | • <i>Beatboxing for Beginners</i> |
| • <i>Healthy Voice: 1 & 2</i> | • <i>Taster workshop - Improvisation</i> | |

A full workshop schedule, including ticket sales, is shown in Appendix 5.

Led by a wide range of professional singers, musicologists and music educationalists (such as Harvey Brough, Sophie Fuller and Mary King) as well as leading figures from some of the participating choirs (including Samir Savant and Dessislava Stefanova), most of the workshops were ticketed at £5 and well attended, achieving an average 44% paid attendance across the board (see ticket sales analysis).

Part of the programme was deliberately free, open to a wider public, and took place in public spaces too, such as the masterclass programme in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall. These events were well attended and added to the festival atmosphere.

While on the whole very positive (61% of choirs that responded found them either 'excellent' or 'good'), reaction to the quality of workshops, seems to have varied tremendously, from calling them 'the secret gem' of the festival, and 'well-conceived and organised' to 'terrible' and 'disappointing'. Clearly, some tutors were much better received than others, but Ed Breen reports that 'there were many occasions when delegates told me how moved they were by the help they were getting from the tutors.'

Only just over half the choirs responding to the survey had participated in the workshop programme at all.

Masterclasses

Complementing the workshop programme were a series of free masterclasses where whole choirs could benefit from working with renowned choral directors. Led by international clinicians Sue Coffee, Tim Seelig and Laurence Cummings, these were held in the public area of the Queen Elizabeth Hall (The Front Room), were open to both delegates and members of the public, and were an interesting and much praised part of the 'growth' element of the festival.



Delegates in the Clore Ballroom (Photo Joanna Plumbe)

Project Management Team and Structure

There is an outline of the staffing structure for both Various Voices and of Southbank Centre's key personnel who engaged with the festival in Appendix 4. Various Voices organisation consisted of a team of volunteers drawn from the three stake-holder choirs.

The final structure consisted of a small Key Strategy Team which was a mixture of volunteers and paid consultants, led by the Executive Chair, Martin Brophy. The core of approximately 20 volunteers, 'Team London', had lead during the development of the festival taking on different roles throughout the planning and production period, including a Treasurer, a Volunteers Coordinator, and Fundraisers.

VVL created a series of policies to guide them. A 'respect agenda' included a Volunteer Charter putting respect and recognition at the heart of our volunteering culture. Policies were also developed on financial management, working with children and young people, conflict of interest and a hosted accommodation charter.

A professional Project Director/Producer, who set-up a desk within Southbank Centre offices and, supported later by the Event Producer, acted as the interface between Various Voices teams and Southbank Centre departments. The Project Director contracted and managed a Project Coordinator, the marketing and press agencies, the professional artists and musicians, an accountancy firm and stage management team. Working alongside the Project Director, the professional Artistic Director (in liaison with the co-Artistic Director in the early stages) programmed the festival and was the main point of contact with Southbank Centre's Artistic Programming department.

The Head of Operations was the main interface with Southbank Centre's technical production team and had overall responsibility for the logistics of backstage volunteers and choral activity, and in liaison with the Volunteers Coordinator, the front of house volunteer teams, including the Production Office, Information Desk and Bag check etc.



Martin Brophy (Chair), Andrea Brown (AD) rehearsing with Lesley Garrett (photo Joanna Plumbe)

Choir Liaison

Choir liaison was an essential and complex task and was crucial to the festivals success. Liaison consisted of choir visits, and overcoming language barriers by using volunteers who could speak different languages having direct contact with the choirs. Wherever possible Various Voices went to considerable lengths to provide information in four languages in the early stages of the planning, however this could not be maintained in the later stages of project due to resource limitations. In spite of this, it is felt that liaison with choirs was very effective and overall contributed to the festivals smooth running.

"We had a wonderful time!" ARCU

"Overall, our first VV experience was exhilarating!" Loud and Proud

Festival Volunteers

"The Various Voices team was a pleasure to work with not to forget the volunteers, who were also excellent." Southbank Centre Visitor Services



Festival Volunteers staffing the information desk (photo Paul Brown)

The volunteers for VV were recruited using a number of methods. There were already a number of committed volunteers when the Volunteers Coordinator joined the project, who were primarily friends and family of Various Voices members as well as members of the host choirs. The Volunteer Coordinator made contact with theatre schools in London supplying them with posters as well as widely distributed communication to invite new people to a volunteer rally and information session.

This was organized in a function room at a local lesbian and gay place in Soho in the heart of London's lesbian and gay district. This was an opportunity to introduce the team and talk through all the roles available to volunteers. The volunteers were then registered on the VV database.

There were three areas in which volunteers needed to be trained.

1. Front of House
2. Back of House
3. Information Desk

The Head of Operations and Volunteers Coordinator produced training and developed information packs. Two training sessions for each of the areas was co-coordinated with Southbank which took place in the backstage and front of house of the Southbank Centre. The volunteers were key in running the complex backstage 'conveyor belt' - additional materials were produced on a day-to-day basis so that volunteers had an at-a-glance guide of what needed to be accomplished on each shift. The more technical training for stage management was undertaken by the employed overall stage manager and this training took place in small teams that were dedicated to each performance.

All volunteers were requested to take time to self study the Southbank Centre so that they could be able to help guests move around the building. Information packs were available for each shift as well as key managers and experienced people so that volunteers were never left unsupported.

Choir and Delegate Registration

Choir Registration

In all, 65 choirs registered for the festival with 59 of these ultimately participating. This resulted in choir registration fees of £8,606. In addition, 23 choirs expressed initial interest but did not go on to register. The smallest choir brought 3 members, and the largest, approximately 135 members. A list of all registered choirs can be found in Appendix 6.

Registered choirs by gender type

Choir type	Number of choirs
Men	29
Mixed	24
Women	12

Registered choirs by country

Choirs attended from a total of 14 different countries. 12 of these were European countries (and predominantly from northern Europe), the others being from the USA and Canada. Unsurprisingly, the highest number of choirs attending from a single country were from the UK (19), but there were also 16 German choirs. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, the Croatian choir was sponsored by Various Voices and Diversity Choir.

Country	Number of choirs
	1
Belgium	2
Canada	2
Croatia	1
Denmark	3
Country	Number of choirs
Finland	1
France	3
Germany	16
Ireland	1
Norway	1
Sweden	1
Switzerland	3
The Netherlands	7
UK	19
USA	4

Delegate registration

1,788 delegates and guest singers registered (of which 118 were guest singers), resulting in total delegate registration fees of £129,165.

Individual delegates registered from a total of 16 countries, including Australia and Luxembourg in addition to the 14 countries represented by choirs. The nationalities most strongly represented were, in order UK, Germany, Netherlands, USA and France.

Country	Number of delegates
Unspecified	15
Australia	3
Belgium	36
Canada	58
Croatia	18
Denmark	65
Finland	31
France	102
Germany	322
Ireland	42
Luxembourg	1
Norway	18
Sweden	46
Switzerland	79
The Netherlands	158
UK	638
USA	156

The Collaboration with Southbank Centre

The Agreement

Various Voices led by Martin Brophy approached the new Southbank Centre Artistic Director on her appointment to the post in late 2005. It was agreed that Southbank Centre would support the festival as collaborator and host venue.



Jude Kelly, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre (photo Paul Brown)

"Various Voices at Southbank Centre was spectacular – a feast for the ears and an important celebration of LGBT identity and community as well as an opportunity for choirs of all kinds to meet and make music together. We were delighted to be working with Various Voices to showcase on an international scale the diversity, achievements and ambitions of LGBT choirs across the globe."

The agreement struck meant that in practice that virtually the whole of Europe's largest arts centre was given over to the festival, free of charge, for the duration of the four day event. In terms of physical resources, this included:

- the three main performances venues, Royal Festival Hall (RFH), Queen Elizabeth Hall (QEH) and Purcell Room (PUR)
- dressing rooms and backstage facilities
- public spaces, both indoor and outdoor, including the Clore Ballroom, QEH Foyer and Riverside Terrace
- the Spirit Level at RFH, which provided rehearsal and workshop studios, and office and storage space
- function rooms throughout the RFH

In addition, office facilities and desk space for the Project Director and Project Co-ordinator were made available from late 2008.

Human Resources

Human resources provided by Southbank Centre as part of the package included:

- a dedicated Event Producer was appointed by Southbank Centre to work part time for four months leading up to the festival. However, the main costs of this post were re-charged to Various Voices as one of the terms of the agreement.
- security staff and reception
- customer services personnel including ticketing, duty managers, hosts (ushers)
- two Production Managers and a full technical team (additional technical staffing costs incurred were re-charged to the festival)
- marketing support staff
- support with artistic programming
- a collaboration with Southbank's Voicelab project ('With One Voice' / Carmina Burana concert)
- backstage catering staff
- catering and bar staff in the public spaces
- IT staff to set up and resource the festival office and information point

"A real sense of energy, joy and pride throughout the process... Some of the Various Voices singers have joined us in subsequent Voicelab projects."

Southbank Centre Voicelab

Online Project Management System and Website

The Various Voices Website and bespoke online Project Management System was produced by Chris Denning, a web systems developer by trade, but created for Various Voices on a voluntary basis by himself with some assistance from IT-savvy volunteers in Team London.

The organisation of the festival, the volunteers and communication with delegates was made possible by the extraordinary hours of work undertaken in his spare time. If the system had been developed with a fee attached it is likely it would have cost in the region of £10,000-£20,000.

As there was a large team of volunteers collaborating on the planning with little in the way of central office or infrastructure, an online system seemed the most effective solution.

IT solutions were vital to save administration time when there was a huge amount of information to capture from the participants. Plans were constantly evolving, and so a database-driven solution was a huge improvement over sending multiple versions of documents back and forth for review.

The project management system provided a bespoke online system for Various Voices 2009 which performed a variety of interlinked functions.

Traditional project management system

This provided "Team London" volunteers and VVL paid staff with typical productivity tools for team working: a shared task list, a team contact list, a meeting calendar, a directory of external contacts, and a collection of useful links. As this was a bespoke system, it could be tailored to the organisations exact needs. Notable exceptions from this system were an email group and an online file store. Because of time constraints we used the Yahoo Groups system for this functionality, especially as the off-the-shelf functionality was good enough, i.e. didn't need customising.

Festival event management

A complex database-driven system was developed to plan all the events in the festival. As well as the concerts, workshops, public events and meetings, the organisers needed to plan room allocations for rehearsals, warm-ups and so on. This totalled over 750 individually timetabled events in over 60 locations, and the plans were constantly being updated.

The system allowed VV to store this information centrally, ensuring everyone had access to the current information. It also had built-in checks to avoid planners accidentally programming two events in the same location. It included detailed reporting so that we could view the festival in different ways, for example an at-a-glance view of the whole festival by day, individual allocations for each room, and personalised schedules for each performing choir. Volunteers and staff had detailed access to the information, but a limited view of the information also fed into the published programmes.

Online registration for choirs and delegates

As the organisation was expecting up to 100 choirs and a few thousand delegates to register, there was a lot of detailed information to capture, registration fees to be charged, and a potential language problem. This was minimised by handling all the registration online, asking choirs and delegates to fill in their information via our website and pay online. Some of the information was collected in stages, so mailshots were sent to choirs or delegates asking them to log in again and supply extra information.

The choirs provided detailed information on the songs they were singing, and also any technical or production requirements for their performance. This combined with the festival event database produced detailed reports for the stage management team, as well as the raw input for the printed festival programme. This database was also used to print the ID badges for delegates, and as an input into the Southbank Centre box office system to register the delegates for discounted ticket prices.

Volunteers database

Around 100 volunteers were encouraged to register online as well to minimise administration. They were also asked to indicate the types of tasks they were interested in and their availability. This helped manage volunteer allocations online, allocating them to particular choirs and/or concert blocks.

Numbers of volunteers by area of interest

Volunteer area	No. of volunteers
Accommodation host	24
Backstage assistant	44
Bag and cloak check	33
Compering	12
Crowd stewarding	36
Delegate check-in	59
Front of house	56
Information desk	65
Key liaison assigned to visiting choir	37
Multi-lingual support	25
Office work	32
Photography	8
Roving help and information	50
Runner	32
Shop assistant	24
Sightseeing guide	29
Social event organiser	16
Special care supporter	10
Team leader	23
Ticket checking	51
Volunteer coordinator	17
Workshop support	23

Mailshots

Again, to minimise costs and administration, most information was disseminated to choir administrators, delegates and volunteers by email mailshots. Using the information in the database enabled the organisers to send targeted mailshots, for example to choirs performing in a particular concert block, or delegates singing a particular festival song.

Marketing and Press Campaign

"60 LGBT choirs from 14 countries, 2000 singers, 50 concerts, 96 hours, one unforgettable weekend!" (festival strapline)

The Various Voices organisation engaged a professional marketing agency, makesthree, and press agency, Vada Media, to plan and executive the marketing and press campaigns for the festival.

These agencies worked alongside the South Bank Centre marketing and press teams to promote the festival to as wide an audience as possible although specifically targeting: the delegate choral participants, the London and UK LGBT communities, classical, choral, education workshop and cabaret audiences who had previously attended SBC concerts and events.

A separate Various Voices Festival micro-site was launched and the marketing campaign included: direct mail, posters, postcards, advertising and e-marketing. Many Various Voices volunteers and choirs participated in the promotion of the festival through targeted leafleting and distribution, as well as assisting with database collation, distribution, and word of mouth.

The South Bank Centre contributed to the marketing and PR in-kind through various distribution channels, their website and expertise. The festival also received sponsorship from Visit London, and its media partner was the Pink Paper.

Marketing Budget

Actual Spend for marketing & press, not including in-kind support: £64,942

Marketing & Press Fees	23,200
Branding and Design	6,000
Print	12,470
Direct Mail	2,550
Microsite, Online and E-Marketing	4,470
Advertising	10,768
Print Distribution	3,484
Photography	2,000

Additional costs for merchandising: Festival Programme (£8,335), festival T-shirt (£2,946), Photo Gallery (£500).

Advertising

Advertising was placed in a range of publications, including:

- specialist music publications: Classic FM Magazine, BBC Music Magazine, The Singer, Gramophone Magazine
- LGBT publications: GT Magazine, Pink Paper, Diva
- National newspapers: The Daily Telegraph and the Guardian Guide
- London listings magazine Time Out

Marketing Materials

Marketing materials included: 25,000 festival brochures, 15,000 postcards, 12,000 workshop brochures, A3 and A0 posters, stickers and badges.



*Festival brochures on display in the Royal Festival Hall
(photo Paul Brown)*

Examples of the press coverage achieved are given in Appendix 3 of this document.

"It was great thing to have opportunity to participate in such important event, to meet and hear other choirs, to present our work to larger audience and to sing in fantastic hall - Thank you for that! Maybe next time with little bit lower prices!" Le Zbor

Ticket Pricing and Delegate Package

In a departure from previous Various Voices festivals the delegate choirs' package did not include free tickets to the concerts for the visiting choirs. The organisers made this decision based on the economics of putting on a Various Voices festival at this unprecedented scale and at such a high profile venue. However, a pricing system was put in place whereby the delegates could buy tickets at discounted rates which were incremental depending on how early they booked.

In the first 'early bird' round delegates could buy all tickets at a 50% discount. Festival organisers were frustrated in their original plan to put these on sale 12 months in advance due to protracted discussions with Southbank Centre around details of the collaboration, and the process of finalising the artistic programme.

The feedback from choirs on the pricing policy was mixed: some felt that overall it had made cost of attending the festival too high and would have preferred an all inclusive delegate registration fee. Others were surprised at how inexpensive tickets were and did not feel this impeded their enjoyment or ability to attend their choice of events e.g. if booked early the cost of attending a choir concert or workshop for a delegate cost £5.00. The delegate choirs were also able to buy tickets before they went on sale to the general public.

Generally the ticket pricing was kept as low as possible in order to encourage audiences to book to see more than one event. There was an emphasis on keeping tickets to concerts that involved the participating choirs as inexpensive as possible. In particular the delegate choir concert ticket price was deliberately low with discounts in place for multiple bookings. The cost of seeing one the larger scale professional concerts such as With One Voice or Big Gay Sing were higher, although lower than the average cost of attending events such as these at the Southbank Centre. Below are some samples ticket prices (NB Many of the events were also free of charge).

Meetings and Receptions

The festival encouraged and facilitated meetings between interested groups, and hosted meetings for Legato, Sing Out (the UK LGBT Choirs organisation) and the cultural festival of the Gay Games Cologne 2010. Various Voices London also hosted a drinks reception for Musical Directors, Executive Directors and Chairs of Choirs from around the world.

Delegate Support

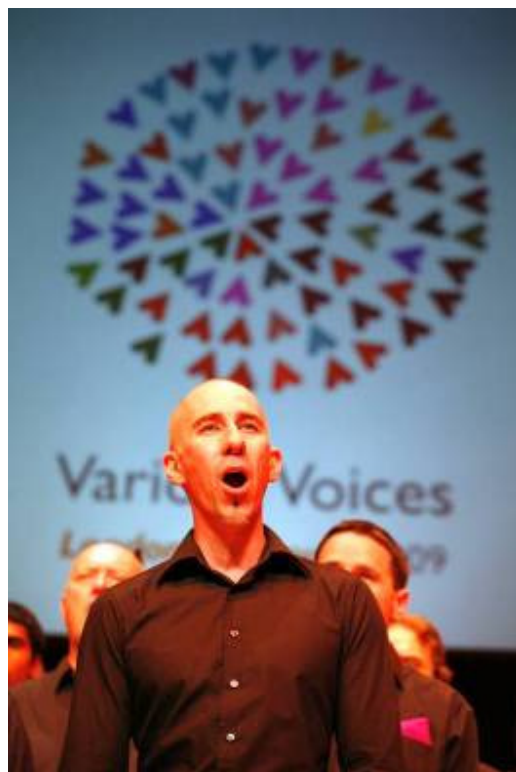
The delegate support team provided the information and infrastructure to encourage delegates and choirs to register for the festival from 2007. With extensive information online about travelling to and visiting London, they also encouraged people to register as hosts providing accommodation, creating the unique Hosted Housing Charter and developing a relationship with Hotelopia as hotel booking partner offering specially negotiated deals for groups as well as individuals providing an additional small income stream for the festival.

The team also put together a booklet of discounted tickets and offers from local businesses, LGBT shops, bars and tourist attractions.

Many of the offsite and early arrival events were arranged by the team, including tours and walks around London, social events, as well as the Closing Party at the famous Heaven nightclub across the river from Southbank Centre.

Sample Ticket Prices

Delegate Choir Concerts	£10	regardless of venue
Big Gay Sing	£17/£15 (full price)	Queen Elizabeth Hall
Sing for the Cure	£25/£20/£15/£12	Royal Festival Hall
With One Voice	£28/£21/£16/£12/£9	Royal Festival Hall
Our Lady J	£16	Purcell Room
Small and Perfectly Formed	£12	Purcell Room
Why We Sing	£10	Purcell Room
Workshops	£5	various venues



The Pink Singers performing in the Queen Elizabeth Hall

Finance and fundraising

Fundraising

Various Voices fundraising strategy was to use the skills and contacts of those volunteers with professional fundraising/grant-giving experience. The strategy was to concentrate on the two more productive of the four income areas – so Trusts and Individuals, with a lesser focus on Statutory and Corporate donors.

Funds achieved

- Significant trust grants were achieved from Paul Hamlyn Foundation (£32,500) and The Foyle Foundation (£20,000).
- Individual givers (early Vanguard contributors) to a sum of £1,250.
- Using an LGMC contact to get sponsorship in kind from Markson Pianos

Other funding approaches

- Applications made, but not granted, were made to the Leche Trust, the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, the John Ellerman Foundation, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

The following three strategies would have benefited from a more coherent approach:

- Raising funds from members of the three host choirs (ie those who were in a position to give and interested in so doing, rather than a blanket appeal to all members).
- Raising funds from contacts of choir members
- Tapping into the Diversity Networks of corporate donors, particularly in the financial services sector.

*"An exciting and wonderful experience; the whole of the Southbank Centre had a great buzz about it all weekend and the event has had a positive long term effect on our choir through opening up new opportunities, collaborations and ideas."*Diversity choir

Overview of Festival Finances

The Various Voices budgets came in on the targets as set by the Project Director in October 2008, and exceeded targets on the box-office sales giving the organisation a surplus which has contributed to post-festival administration, as well as to the future activities of the charity.

The main income streams were through the delegate registrations and the ticket sales. The organisation also received grants from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Foyle Foundation which directly contributed to the creation of the artistic and education programmes. There was a great deal of in-kind support received from the stake-holder choirs, the Various Voices volunteers who contributed their professional expertise, and from the co-producer the Southbank Centre who only charged for additional technical staffing required for the festival to the amount of £11,425.

The key areas of expenditure were in the areas of professional staffing and administration, the production of the artistic programme and marketing.



Guest choir Surrey Harmony in the Royal Festival Hall (photo Joanna Plumb)

Budget summary

Income	£
Delegate Registration	126,251
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	32,500
Foyle Foundation	20,000
Private Donations	1,275
Choir Loans	10,000
Ticket Sales	79,778
Merchandising	4,019
Total Income	£273, 823
Expenditure	
Overheads (including fees and SC technical costings)	112,168
Choir Repayment (including £10,000 loan)	22,048
Marketing (excluding fees)	43,909
Choir & Delegate Registration	8,551
Artistic Programme	55,542
Workshops	7,062
Outside/Social Events	876
Merchandising	11,781
Total Expenditure	£249,889
Surplus	11,876

Audiences



Audience gathering in the Royal Festival Hall (photo Paul Brown)

The final audience attendance figures are shown and analysed in Appendix 2. The key points are summarized as follows:

- 8,470 tickets were sold throughout the weekend, 11,197 attended the concerts.
- Delegates were offered priority booking at discounted rates, and overall accounted for 55% of the total tickets sold.
- There was an average of 160 delegates attending each ticketed concert event.
- In the 19 delegate choir concerts category (Choirs³), the average number of tickets sold was 277, whilst average attendance was 397. The lowest attendance for a delegate choir concert was 109 (in the Purcell Room) and the highest was 559 (in the Royal Festival Hall)
- The highest attended concert overall was With One Voice at 1259, however this included a significant amount of invited guest due to the large number of performers on stage. The most successful in terms of ticket sales was The Big Gay Sing which sold 92% of capacity, with 95% attendance. Others that did well were Small and Perfectly Formed which sold 90%, attendance at 94% and Voices of Our City which sold 87%, attendance at 90%.
- The average audience size in each hall was as follows: RFH: 34%, QEH 51%, PR 60%.

- The least successful ticketed events were Why We Sing (Purcell Room) which sold 33 tickets, 92 attended and Sing of for the Cure (Royal Festival Hall) which sold 159 tickets, with 960 attending.



Bank Holiday afternoon ballroom dancing in the Clore Ballroom (photo Paul Brown)

What shouldn't be underestimated was the amount of people attending the public and free events. There is no record of the footfall, however there is a consensus that the site was very well attended and the amount of people grew over the weekend with an estimated footfall in the region of 10,000.

The estimate for the Opening and Closing ceremonies attracted approximately 1000 people to each, the Out Late! cabaret event in the Front Room (foyer) of the Queen Elizabeth Hall was full to capacity (approximately 1500 people), the Clore Ballroom dancing event was also approximately 1500, the first night party in the same space was also very well attended with additional security in place.

"The choirs were inspired by Various Voices London. They felt they became better choirs, and individuals felt they became better singers." LGMC choir member

Access, Diversity and Inclusivity

Various Voices ensured that diversity and inclusivity were always high in its agenda. Examples include:

- Discounted tickets were available across the programme for disabled audience members with companion seats available for wheelchair-users.
- Many of the performances were British Sign Language interpreted by a specially-recruited professional team of LGBT interpreters who entered enthusiastically into the spirit of the occasion.
- A multi-language and accessible website was developed
- Accessibility was part of the design brief for marketing materials
- To recognise a commitment to support LGBT communities in Eastern Europe, Various Voices London and Diversity Choir jointly sponsored the choir Le Zbor to attend the festival from Croatia
- Each choir had a native speaking chaperone to help and assist them from arrival to departure
- Volunteer assistance was available to support disabled delegates throughout the festival
- An event was developed to highlight homophobic bullying in sports on the anniversary of Justin Fashanu's death, supported by Stonewall FC, the FA and the Justin Fashanu All-Stars.



LGMG in performance in the Queen Elizabeth Hall (photo Francesca Moore)

Documentation

Filming

The festival organisers originally hoped to document the event creatively on film, but due to financial restrictions were ultimately unable to realise this with some regret. However, the festival was the inspiration for the making of a short film "*The Sleeping Beauty of East Finchley*" from cheek2cheek productions, which was launched at LGBT film festivals in 2010 and illustrates the life changing experience of a young woman coming out through song and finding herself and her love at Various Voices London. Both Various Voices and Southbank Centre actively supported the project, facilitating free use of the Purcell Room for two days filming and other site shots during the festival where festival delegates were extras on the film set. Southbank waived its usual fees for filming permission and also made the Purcell Room available with technical support outside the festival period for follow-up filming.

Audio Recordings

Having looked at other festivals, an early decision was made that, attractive though it was to have a commercial CD of the festival in reality it was a legal and copyright nightmare and was unlikely to be commercially viable due to the relatively small volume of sales anticipated. It was decided that each choir would instead have access to an archival recording of their performance only. Southbank Centre facilitated audio recordings of all auditorium events, providing a master CD of each.

Photographic Documentation

The main visual legacy of the festival was captured by the six photographers who were commissioned to document every event over the four days. These were subsequently made available to view or purchase via the festival website and also edited into a 74-page book on sale for just under £16. After-sales of photos and the photo book have been disappointing and less than anticipated.

Feedback from Participating Choirs

Over 60 choirs participated in the festival from 14 countries in Europe and North America, including the three London host choirs and a number of guest choirs, invited simply to perform rather than also attending as delegates. Feedback was sought from all participating choirs through a short questionnaire, attempting to gain an insight into their experiences as:

- Delegates
- Performers
- Audience members
- Workshop participants

A representative of the choirs was asked to rate their experience as either:

- a. Excellent – exceeded expectations
- b. Good – met expectations
- c. Satisfactory – ok, but some things could have been better
- d. Disappointing
- e. Poor - most things did not meet expectations

For each answer, they were given the opportunity to add comments if they wished. We also asked them to summarise their experience of the festival as a whole.

From the 22 choirs who responded the outcome was overwhelmingly positive. We also received a range of useful comments, which have been included where they help to illustrate a point, and have also informed the points we address.

Overall impression from participating choirs

Of the choirs responding to our survey, 80% reported a positive experience of the festival:

"An exciting and wonderful experience; the whole of the SBC had a great buzz about it all weekend and the event has had a positive long term effect on our choir through opening up new opportunities, collaborations and ideas."

"It was a great experience that we would not miss for any price."

Only three choirs reported a negative experience overall: one choir reported that they preferred their experience of the Paris and Berlin festivals, another would have liked the opportunity to sing in a wider range of public spaces across London, and a third thought the festival should have been advertised more widely.

Choirs responding as Delegates

"Our first - we didn't really know what to expect... and were amazed at the organisation: everything was perfectly planned before and during the festival. People were always friendly, we got our badges immediately and knew where to go and when."

Responding as delegates, all but one said their experience was Excellent, Good or Satisfactory, with over two-thirds in the top two brackets. Comments praised the organisation and the 'community feel' of the festival.

One choir expressed concern that the scale of the event achieved might make it off-putting for the next hosts. A few comments focussed on the cost to delegates, and in particular the fact that concert tickets were not included in the price of registration, as with previous festivals. This is explored further in the 'Audience Members' section below. Two choirs were disappointed that registration fee did not include public transport.

Choirs responding as Performers

An overwhelming majority of respondents graded their performing experience as 'Excellent' or 'Good', at 50% and 32% respectively. They cited the quality of the venues, backstage facilities and audience size as all contributing to this.

The small minority of less satisfied choirs commented on the limited access to, and prohibitive expense of additional rehearsal time. 'Production-line' methods backstage were criticised as inflexible.

Choirs responding as Audience Members

Although 76% of respondents reported their experience as audience members as Excellent or Good, there was a wider range of critical comment in this area.

The issue of ticketing arrangements was raised:

"I would have been prepared to pay for a 'season pass' that would let me attend more concerts than I did..."

"A bit hard to keep track of what was going on when - I had a sense of missing a lot, and wishing I could see more choirs. We really didn't like having to buy tickets for separate concerts. I do prefer having the festival registration include admission to all concerts. It makes it easier to be spontaneous and to ultimately see more."

Choirs responding as Workshop Participants

"The workshops were the secret jewel in the weekend; for just £5 a go I got to learn so much about singing and running a choir."

The workshop programme was in general very well received by the choirs. However, almost half of the choirs responding had not attended workshops at all. Some had simply chosen not to, others found the language barrier an issue, or found that the workshops they had wanted to attend were fully booked.



Photo Paul Brown

Key Learning and Outcomes

Management

- There is general agreement that it would be advisable for future festivals to engage the role of professional Project Director/Producer at least one year before the dates of the festival (in this case it was 8 months before), this would have eased the extreme pressure that the team was under to meet key deadlines. Similarly it would have been a smoother if the Southbank Centre had engaged an internal Events Producer at an earlier stage of the planning.
- As the original Artistic Director was unable to continue in his role due to a move to the USA, the responsibilities were handed over to a new Artistic Director – this transition did take some time and areas of responsibilities were not clear-cut in the beginning, which had the effect of the artistic programming being behind schedule. This was rectified quite rapidly - however in future it would be advisable to ensure that should such a transition to occur in any of the key roles that it be closely monitored and clarification of responsibilities reached as quickly as possible.
- Accountancy and book-keeping – this was being undertaken on a voluntary basis by the Various Voices Treasurer. As activity increased the work-load became too much for a single volunteer to undertake, and an accountants firm was engaged to ease some of the pressure by putting the information in an accounts package that could be translated into audited accounts. However the day-to-day financial activity in the month immediately following the festival was underestimated (e.g. payment of invoices and collation of paperwork) and some payments were made very late and subsequently it took a long time to produce the final figures and there was a late VAT payment. For future reference it would be advisable to engage a professional book-keeper throughout to work alongside the Treasurer to keep on top of the work-load and liaise with the accountants.
- Post-festival – it would be advisable to put in place clear plans for the post-festival administration, promotion, merchandising sales etc, including the continued employment of some of the key staff. One of the issues with the organization being voluntary is that many of the volunteers were unable to continue working beyond the festival dates and/or were less motivated to do; there was a high degree of volunteer “burn out”.

Delegate Package

- There was an initial reluctance by host choir management, Legato (the international body awarding the festival to the host city) and delegate choirs to embrace changes to the new financial model, which was a challenge.
- The changes Various Voices proposed were to make the festival more inclusion by opening up every event to all as opposed to the previously used one-fee models presented, eg in the Paris festival where delegates paid a fixed fee and given access to 2 concerts with little or no public ticket sales.

The idea for the London festival was to have a low delegate fee that included the elements that every delegate would want. Delegates and the public would choose to buy tickets and transport. The early publicity with on-line ticket sales you could create their own festival experience, combining paid concert tickets and workshops with free events and social events, choosing what they did with their time and by planning in advance fully "own their festival". There were many concerts, workshops and activities both free and ticketed going on at competing times and it was anticipated that there would be a higher than traditional sales of tickets to the public; the new model supported this but there was resistance to this concept

- The Various Voices festival model was different from previous festivals in that it wasn't a private LGBT event but a festival that was open to all, welcoming the public, non-LGBT choir's participation as well as broadening its programme to include professional performances, such as Our Lady J and Chantage.
- Rehearsal spaces for delegate choirs were identified 200 metres from the Southbank Centre at Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre, who kindly offered a preferential rate. This was also the site of the merchandising marketplace, chosen to avoid paying commission to Southbank Centre, but with mixed results. Because of the prohibitive rate of commission built into the contract of the vendors within at the Southbank Centre complex we offered a commission free market place, with community coffee shops idea to the delegate choirs to be run at Coin Street but no choirs were interested. A booking commitment was made to Coin Street some six months beforehand to secure this space, but a lower than expected take-up meant the cost of this had to be subsidised. Many choirs choosing to find alternative spaces themselves.

Relationship between Various Voices and Southbank Centre

- There was no doubt that the two organisations had shared values and commitment to the festival – the partnership at senior level was a strong one and ultimately both organisations were proud of what was achieved. However, there are some key points to note around this relationship and how it practically unfolded.
- One key learning regarding the engagement between a large voluntary organisation and a large professional venue was the different approach to timelines. It is the very nature of a voluntary organisation that it needs long lead-in times in order to execute plans, as volunteers are working in their free time, often in the evenings and alongside full-time jobs, and they may not always have the expertise or time to execute tasks as efficiently as a professional. It is the nature of a large busy professional venue that it works to much tighter deadlines and mainly during office hours. This was a frustration to Various Voices in the early stages of the planning as it felt hindered by not being able to engage as fully with the Southbank Centre on issues such as finance and practical production planning.
- There was a long period of time when the contractual agreement between the organisations was verbal only, and this caused some anxiety for both organisations, although more so for Various Voices as it had started to registrations of choirs from April 2008 and was therefore already in the early stages of budgeting for the festival. Southbank Centre clearly found it difficult to make clear commitments in writing until it had sufficient practical details on the programme itself. Ultimately these issues were resolved, the gentlemen's agreement held and the final contract was satisfactory to both parties.
- It would be useful in a future collaboration such as this to clarify and understand the roles and responsibilities within both organisations, and possibly for there to be some skills-sharing or mentoring to be put in place. It has also been noted that not only would the volunteers have benefited from the sharing of expertise from the professionals, but that also there was expertise within the volunteer organisation (eg IT, project and volunteer management and fundraising) which impressed the professionals.
- Once the Various Voices professional team was brought on board and embedded within Southbank Centre offices the relationship between the organisations improved rapidly and was ultimately extremely positive.

- The presence of the Various Voices festival in the offices immediately helped to create awareness of the scale and ethos of the festival within the different departments, although it has been noted that it might have been beneficial to have created this awareness earlier in the relationship between the organisations.
- More advanced planning was required by Southbank Centre in the initial setting up of the VVL on-site facilities to make these a higher priority. The festival information desk in the Royal Festival Hall was very successful, but also very last minute; many of the requirements for the 'festival office' arrived rather late in the day, and some technical problems were discovered too late to resolve effectively over a weekend period.
- The organisers considered plans to expand the site of festival events beyond the boundaries of Southbank Centre, including Jubilee Gardens and Trafalgar Square, however, due to logistical constraints and legal issues, these ideas were not pursued.



Diversity Choir with Andrea Brown (Artistic Director) (photo Joanna Plumbe)

Artistic Programme

- Overall the programming was considered a great success and the diversity of what was on offer beneficial to creating an exciting festival atmosphere and attracting a broad audience.
- The programme was created with distinct strands ie some of the events were specifically created for the festival such as *Small and Perfectly Formed*, *Best in Show*, *With One Voice* and *Big Gay Sing* which did particularly well, although a less successful example of this was the charitable concert *Sing for the Cure* which proved to be difficult to sell to a UK audience. There was also some question over whether there was a clash in programming as this event took place at the same time as the sell-out concert *The Big Gay Sing*.



Lorraine Bowen and Timberlina lead the Big Gay Sing! (photo Joanna Plumbe)

- Our Lady J and Chantage - both off-the-peg products programmed on the basis of their reputations and particular vocal styles - attracted their own followings and achieved good audiences and feedback.
- Some of the delegate choir concerts did well whilst others had disappointing sales. The reasons for this are not clear-cut, and could be attributed to a mixture of cost, artistic content, timings, and promotion. Also the huge range of venue sizes meant that it wasn't always possible to match the programme to scale of venue e.g. an audience of 200 in the Purcell Room was exciting, but the equivalent in the Royal Festival Hall may have felt less atmospheric.

- It was originally planned that on the final (Bank Holiday Monday) night of the festival there would be a Royal Festival Hall concert by a high profile artist such as Rufus Wainwright or KD Lang, and simultaneously a world music event taking place in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Southbank Centre was taking the lead on this, but despite efforts from both organisations, neither event came into being. Possibly with a longer lead-in time and more clarity on what was trying to be achieved, this could have been more successful.
- Various Voices and Southbank Centre jointly commissioned the composer Steve Martland to compose a new choral piece which would premiere as part of the *With One Voice* concert. Unfortunately, the composer was unable to deliver and therefore the programme had to be adjusted accordingly quite late in the day. This concert was also the main creative collaboration with Southbank Centre, whose *Voicelab* project co-ordinated rehearsals of a 'festival chorus' and helped secure the services of professional soloists, musicians and conductor.

"The Various Voices festival was a joyous occasion, with hundreds of singers over the site, singing with abandon, power and charm. The With One Voice concert which presented Carmina Burana in the RFH was quite simply the best performance of the work I have ever been involved with – a sentiment echoed by many of the Voicelab singers who took part. Come back soon!" Mary King, Director of Voicelab, Southbank Centre

- With reference to *With One Voice*, in retrospect, Various Voices and Southbank Centre might have collaborated more closely in agreeing how to place this concert in the wider context of the festival in its stage presentation.
- Uniquely, this Various Festival invited 'guest' non-LGBT choirs and performers to join some of the concerts. Although this was departure from previous Various Festivals which were solely LGBT choral groups, it had the positive effect of creating an inclusive and integrated feel to the weekend as well as attracting non-LGBT audiences who may not have considered attending on the basis of thinking that this was a 'gay only' event. This decision was initially met with some resistance from a small minority of people, but overall it was considered to be the way forward and extremely positive.

Workshops

"A couple of us led workshops and those were good experiences - well-conceived and organised" Feedback from delegates

- Even though priority booking was open to delegates only, some delegates reported disappointment at being unable to attend the workshop they wanted, either because it was full or due to a diary clash.
- There were also factors affecting the workshop programme around scheduling, language issues and venue. The workshop organiser has acknowledged that the main thing he would do differently is schedule more workshops earlier in the day. This would mean fewer delegates having to decide between attending either a concert or a workshop, and would allow them more time to get out exploring the host city.
- The large-scale free events in this part of the programme - masterclasses and Wake Up Warm-Up were considered a great success, all well attended and well-received. Southbank have subsequently mirrored the warm-up in their Chorus 2010 festival.

Marketing & PR

- Employing the expertise of professional Marketing and Press agencies to work alongside Southbank Centre and the Various Voices volunteer team proved to be invaluable. It helped ensure the production of high quality marketing materials and campaign, and kept things running to a very tight and extensive promotional schedule. The professionals were also crucial in achieving the special deals with distributors and advertisers giving the organisation good value for money in all areas.
- The use of a professional Press Agent was also important in order to short-cut to key journalists in the industry. There was not as much support from the LGBT press as anticipated, perhaps because singing is not seen as sexy or controversial, therefore placing early stories in the press was a real challenge.
- The aim was to promote the festival to as wide an audience as possible – finding the balance between promoting the LGBT choral festival to the LGBT community without alienating all music-lovers was a fine balancing act – one example of how this was achieved was having a choice of imagery and copy for the advertising and posters which could be targeted accordingly.

Merchandising

- Choirs wanted to sell their own CD's as merchandising but this proved difficult to negotiate under the terms of Southbank Centre commercial trading rules, so a separate rehearsal space close to Southbank Centre was used to facilitate this instead. This was not the ideal situation and in future it would be advisable to address this issue earlier.
- Sales of t-shirts and programmes were not as high as expected and it may be concluded that in future more planning would be given to the promotion and pricing of the merchandising, or possibly lower expectation of units sold.

IT

- The online system that was put in place was of a very high standard, however it did take some time to convince delegates and Southbank Centre production staff to embrace it, which was frustrating at times and took up a good deal of volunteer time resources in sending out reminders.
- Southbank Centre were unable to import Various Voices data into their box office system (eg delegate data), which again used up volunteer team and administrative resources in cross-entering data. This issue was partly resolved by semi-automating the process. However overall the IT systems proved to be invaluable and ultimately Southbank Centre technical production staff praised it very highly.

Fundraising

- A very ambitious fundraising strategy was in place by 2008, and the use of Various Voices in-house contacts did prove important in establishing the organisation's credibility - it being an amateur voluntary organisation with no track record. However, there was some disappointment in that the targets were not achieved, which may be attributed to it being a voluntary team without the time and resources required. If the organisation had engaged a paid fundraiser to lead the team these may have been resolved and thereby better results achieved.
- Also, the opportunity for Various Voices fundraisers and Southbank Centre's development team to collaborate was not realised. Concerns about conflict of interest when pursuing the same funders were voiced as part of the problem. This outcome was disappointing.

Volunteers

- There were many volunteer success stories to tell from inception to delivery. The front of house and backstage volunteers being unanimously praised for their excellent work, and the hard work of many in the teams and the choirs and generous sharing of expertise and skills. There is however a general consensus that the festival could not have happened with volunteers alone and it was important to bring in paid consultants in certain key areas in order to achieve an event of this quality, scale and in this venue within this timescale.

Legacy

- Various Voices London will continue to develop new LGBT choral projects and collaborations in the UK and with international partners. Developing ideas include mentoring, workshops for choirs, festivals planning, concerts and events. VVL is committed to help choirs and other small groups to get started, assisting with artistic planning and business development of the next VV festival in 2014. VVL is also keen to see LGBT choirs take part in the Cultural Olympiad for 2012. The organisation is currently in development to realise these legacy commitments, building on the success of VVL.

60 lesbian and gay choirs from
14 countries, 2000 singers,
50 concerts, 96 hours
One unforgettable weekend

Appendices

- 1 Summary of the festival programme
- 2 Ticket sales analysis
- 3 Media coverage
- 4 Staffing and organisational structures
 - 4a Various Voices
 - 4b Southbank Centre - key staff working on the festival
- 5 Workshop and Masterclass programme including sales analysis
- 6 Registered Choirs and Delegate Numbers by choir