

IN CROWDS WE TRUST

Brett de Gaynesford, Deputy Development Director at Somerville, reports back on the first successful crowdfunding campaign run by an Oxbridge College. Crowdfunding aims to finance a project by raising small amounts from a large number of people.



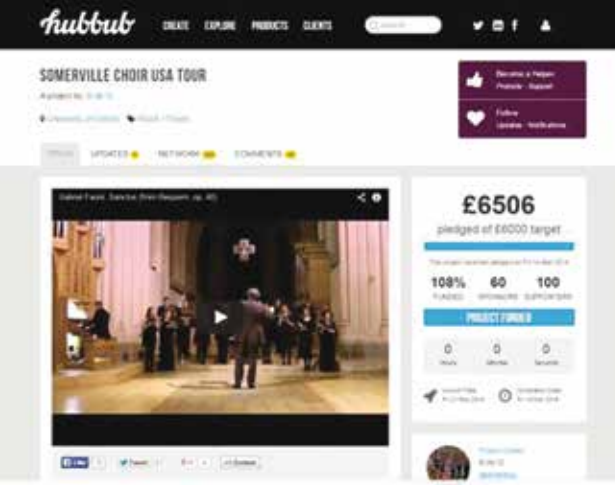
Somerville's great traditions of community and innovation are just two of the reasons that we decided to try launching a crowdfunding campaign for the first time in 2014. The crowdfunding model has already enjoyed great success in US universities, and we liked the opportunity it provided for the students themselves to generate interest in their project, and connect with those who might be keen to support their efforts.

Somerville was the first Oxbridge college to try fundraising via crowdfunding, and did so to support the College Choir in its ambitious goal to fund a US tour. Already one of Oxford's top choral groups, we wanted to help Somerville's choristers pursue their full potential. They managed to raise approximately £6,500 in three weeks, while contributions from a generous donor, the College and the choristers themselves brought the total to £27,000 – enough to cover the full costs of the tour. Crowdfunding success at this level is unusual in the UK and we are really proud of what they achieved. It has

also given us the confidence to launch Somerville's own crowdfunding platform, a first for an Oxbridge college.

We are very grateful to all of those who generously supported the choir, navigating these uncharted waters with us and enabling the choir to enjoy a highly successful US tour. We are so pleased to share with you yet another exciting update. Former organ scholar Robert Smith's debut commercial solo CD will be released this winter, making him the first Oxbridge organ scholar to have landed a recording contract with a well-known international label. This was made possible by the US tour and a subsequent solo tour to Germany in August. The BBC has also expressed an interest in his recording.

Again, many, many thanks to all who supported and rooted for our Choir. When we launch Somerville's own crowdfunding platform early next year, please do take the opportunity to see what new and wonderful things our students are aiming to achieve.



Singin' USA. Somerville College Choir on the steps of Trinity Church, Boston (left) and (clockwise from top-right) organ scholar Robert Smith; local publicity; taking a break in Boston's Copley Square; screenshot of the choir's US tour fundraising page on Hubbub.

American moment

Chorister Ian Buchanan (2011, Physics) reports back on a highly successful Choir tour



With new singers joining each year, Somerville College Choir has to work hard to maintain its high standard. This year we decided to grow our reputation further with a tour to the US, because we believe we have something special to offer and that we would all benefit immeasurably from

the experience. Our efforts certainly paid off – the tour was a triumph!

Receiving standing ovations at all our concerts – as we toured a sliver of the East Coast – has shown just how well we can compete on an international stage. The joy of singing together almost every day meant we improved as a choir with each performance, which fuelled the excitement we felt at every venue.

When we weren't singing, we were either travelling or sightseeing together and got to know each other much better, which meant that we quickly became a much

tighter-knit choir. We looked out for each other and had a fantastic time doing it.

As we ended our last service at Trinity Church, Boston, a few of us had to hurry back to the UK, but most members of the choir were able to take advantage of the opportunity to travel a bit further. Our organ scholar, Robert Smith, went on to perform a recital in Minnesota for instance, though a few of us decided to taste a few bites of the Big Apple.

None of these adventures and successes would have been possible without all the wonderful support we received. We set out to show that Somerville College Choir was capable of meeting international standards and, from the response we received, I'd say we achieved that goal. We'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to all of you who helped make our dream come true! We are incredibly fortunate to have such an encouraging and generous network of family, friends and fans cheering us on to new musical heights. It's an exciting time to be in the choir. It's a great time to be a Somervillian. Thank you all so, so much.