

Stratford upon Avon Choral Society

Registered Charity No. 502020
www.stratfordchoral.org.uk



TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

1. Trustees

Tim Moore-Bridger – Chairman
Glenda Kershaw – Treasurer
Jackie Gough – Secretary
Carol Jackson – Membership Secretary
Jean Hutchison – Librarian
Fiona Macvie
Liz Statham
Sheelagh Douglas
Philippa Vandome
Neil Harrison
Chris McKinty

2. Structure and Management

The Society is managed by a committee, which comprises five officers and six ordinary committee members. Each officer is elected annually, and ordinary committee members are elected for a period of two years. Officers can be re-elected on up to nine consecutive occasions. Ordinary committee members can be re-elected on up to four consecutive occasions. All officers and ordinary committee members are trustees of the charity who give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits (save those benefits of membership afforded to every member of the Society). In planning activities for the year, trustees have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit at committee meetings.

The trustees meet regularly and are responsible for all decisions made in relation to the Society's activities. Sub-committees have been set up for publicity and to assist with the selection of the music to be performed by the Society. The sub-committees, some of whose members are not trustees, report back with their recommendations to a full committee meeting of the trustees.

3. Objects

The objects of the Society as defined in the Society's constitution adopted on 23rd May 2022 are:

To advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals.

To further such charitable purpose or purposes as the trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

4. Chairman's report

It gives me great pleasure to provide a report on the 2023-24 season, which has been extremely successful in many ways.

Our first concert in November was Handel's Oratorio *Samson*. This work has some similarities to *Messiah* but is more rarely performed by Choral Societies. It was enjoyable to learn the choruses, which were not in fact too difficult. The Oratorio is somewhat operatic in form, with six soloists and a chorus employed to set the scene or to comment on the action. The story of *Samson* is set in Gaza. The war there had just started a week before our performance, which was potentially problematic. However, Handel's wonderful music enabled singers and audience to transcend the horrors of the present time, and to reflect on the uplifting story of Samson.

Prelude to Christmas was our December concert. There is always something magical about a pre-Christmas concert, with traditional and less well-known carols, and an eclectic mix of readings. The reviewer in the Stratford Herald particularly enjoyed Rutter's *Candlelight Carol*, and the fact that the audience could join in with some of the traditional favourite carols as well. We were extremely pleased to have Tim Raistrick reading once more, and for the first time Juliet Grundy. Their choice of readings was delightful, and I particularly enjoyed the arrangement of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, with the choir joining the readers in a wonderfully amusing version of the carol. I am pleased that Juliet subsequently joined the choir to sing in our March concert.

A week or so before *Prelude* we were invited again to sing carols at the Shakespeare Hospice, when they have the lighting of their Christmas tree. It was again cold, but our efforts were much appreciated. The Choral Society is very much an organisation based in the community, and we should take every opportunity we can to take our musical endeavours beyond just our three major concerts. The Hospice carol singing may well be an annual fixture, and I hope there may be others as well. I am very grateful to Jon for conducting us once again.

We knew that Mozart's *Requiem* would be a popular item both for us to sing and for our audience, and so it proved to be. Many of us had sung the Requiem before but it was Oliver's inspiring direction that enabled us to see things differently and produce what I think was a superb performance. An audience of something over 240 was the highest that I can ever remember for a concert in Holy Trinity and may well have been the highest ever. To see the church packed in the way it was made for a remarkable occasion.

As last year we have been rehearsing for a summer concert, scheduled for June 15th at St. Andrew's. We will be performing *Shakespeare in Song* – a selection of modern settings of songs taken from the plays, including seven arrangements by George Shearing entitled *Songs and Sonnets*. Once again two instrumentalists, students from King Edward VI School will be joining us. In addition, we will have the pleasure of hearing Oliver singing a few pieces. It has been great fun to learn, and I very much hope that members of the choir not singing will join us for what promises to be a delightful concert.

This year we have again been joined by the Regency Sinfonia and by the Holy Trinity organist. We have also had good soloists. It is imperative that we invite soloists to sing with us who suit the choir and the location, normally Holy Trinity, and the work that we are singing. Our booking secretary Val does a fine job, but it isn't easy always to find the right soloists to invite. Then, as happened twice this year, they sometimes fall ill at the last moment. I'm very grateful to Val and of course to Oliver for being able to find excellent replacements at very short notice, for both *Samson* and the *Requiem*.

Concerts have all been at Holy Trinity as is usually the case. This has not been without its problems. First of all, we had some misunderstanding with the church authorities about the rehearsal on the Saturday afternoon, in particular over the way in which the choir and the soloists were accommodated into the church while tourists were visiting Shakespeare's grave. This was a problem that we had not understood nor foreseen. We were able to discuss this at some length with the church authorities and resolve any misunderstandings, and what we now have is greater clarity about the Holy Trinity expectations of us, and more suitable arrangements for the choir and soloists during the Saturday rehearsal.

In the Spring there was also a real issue with the Holy Trinity organ. This was being repaired and scaffolding had been erected around the organ at the beginning of the year. We had been assured that it was highly likely that the scaffolding would be removed before our concert. We were therefore extremely worried when ten days before the concert we were told that it might not be removed in time. We were forced to consider alternatives and approached the Stratford Playhouse and King Edward VI School to see if they could rescue the situation for us. Both parties were extremely supportive. As it happened, we didn't need to go to either the school or the Playhouse as the scaffolding was taken down just in time, but it did mean that contact with them had been made. Perhaps in future it might not be a bad idea to consider a concert taking place other than at Holy Trinity.

The Choral Society is very fortunate to have so many loyal followers, and I am particularly grateful for the support of our Patrons, and our Sponsors, The Rigby Foundation and Holiday Inspirations Ltd.

Within the choir membership very many assist in different ways throughout the year, and I am very grateful to you all. But my special thanks go to the members of the committee who do such a tremendous job on behalf of the Society. We have had five full committee meetings, all on Zoom, and the music subcommittee has met three times. Committee meetings however do not in any sense represent the full work of members of the committee. There is so much to organise and arrange for a Society such as ours. There are the concerts themselves, and all they entail, rehearsals, programmes and publicity, the management of our finances – which you will see from the Treasurer's report are in a strong position – dissemination of information to members, organisation of auditions and re-auditions, ordering and distributing music before rehearsals start, and then collecting and returning the music to the respective libraries, production of a Newsletter every couple of months, social events, such as the splendid evening at the RSC to attend *Ben and Imo* at the Swan Theatre, a comprehensive website, which will prove invaluable in the future, as we develop new means of distributing tickets. This list is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates some of the ways in which members of the committee have maintained the work of the Choral Society, for which I am very grateful. I hope very much that other members of the choir will reflect on this and think if they would like to join the committee to continue this invaluable work.

Two committee members are standing down this year. Sheelagh has been on the committee for five years and has been in charge of tickets and relations with Patrons and Season Ticket holders. I'm very grateful to her for the way in which she has managed this essential, and often tricky task.

Then there is Carol, a member of the choir since 1988 and membership secretary for the last nine years. She is incredibly efficient, involved in all that we do. Anyone who saw her "Desert Island Discs", which we arranged during COVID, will remember her high-powered life in London before she migrated to Chipping Campden in the eighties, and will not be in the slightest surprised that she has proved to be an outstanding membership secretary. She has organised seating for concerts, registers at rehearsals, auditions and reauditions, communication with all members of the Society, management of the full database of members, and much more besides. She has been an invaluable colleague and supporter to me since I became Chairman two years ago. Singing is in her blood, and I am delighted that Carol is going to continue singing with the choir in the years ahead. Thank you very much, Carol, from all the membership of the Choral Society.

Then there are Rachel and Oliver. Rachel is the supreme professional, such a wonderful accompanist that she is almost not noticed at all. Anything that Oliver asks she does at once without a slip. How she does it is miraculous, but it greatly enhances our rehearsals and the ultimate performance. I am very pleased that she will be seen as a performer in her own right in the summer concert.

And Oliver is a quite outstanding Musical Director. He has that quiet authority which comes from being a fine schoolmaster, coupled with a superb singing voice. He makes us work hard each Monday, but he makes it such fun. There is always a feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction at the end of our rehearsals. His attention

to detail, concentrating on articulation and dynamics, has I'm sure made us a far better choir than we once were. We are incredibly fortunate to have Oliver as our Musical Director and thank him for all his efforts with us.

In conclusion it is worth saying that our aim is to provide singing and an appreciation of music for those who wish to perform, and enjoyment of music for our audience. I feel pretty sure that those two aims have been met this year.

Next year we have a most exciting programme, with Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* in November, Handel's *Messiah* at Christmas, and just before Easter Bach's great *St. John Passion* with an orchestra of period instruments. There is very much to look forward to.

5. Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30th April 2024

Another successful year for the Society financially. We had forecast to break even, which was unusual in a Prelude year, when we would hope to add to our reserves, but we were aware that the costs of both the autumn and spring concerts would be high. The surplus of £3,143 is almost entirely due to audience numbers that we attracted to our concerts. The budget is based upon ticket sales (excluding patrons and season ticket holders) of 120, though we aspire to 150. We outperformed budget in all three concerts with ticket sales of 134, 158 and an amazing 226 in the main season.

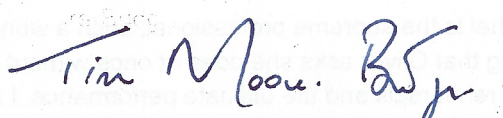
The summer concert appears in the accounts for the first time, the surplus being from the June 2023 concert. The associated costs in the accounts include the honoraria and rehearsal room hire (from May 2023), though the subscription income included relates to the 2024 concert, the subscriptions relating to the 2023 concert being in last year's accounts. The summer season ending with the June 2023 concert did make a modest profit, which we would hope to repeat in June 2024, although numbers singing are slightly down. Donations appear to be down, but this is due to the legacy of £2,500 included last year.

Costs continue to rise steadily with inflation. As mentioned above, honoraria and rehearsal room costs have increased due to the summer season. The main above inflation cost is in the NFMS subscription and insurance. This is due to moving into a higher banding, with the inclusion of our summer season income. Sale of some of our stock of Carols for Choirs Book 5 has helped to mitigate the extra cost.

We have ended the year with reserves of £32,733. This enables us to plan for more expensive concerts in the next few years. In particular, the orchestra costs for the Bach concert in March 2025 will be far higher than usual, and we are also performing *Messiah* this year, instead of repeating *Prelude*. We expect that this will begin to eat into these reserves.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the Society's trustees:

Signature: 

Full Name: Tim Moore-Bridger

Chairman

Date: 3/07/24

Charity Name Stratford Choral Society	No (if any) 502020
--	-----------------------

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/05/2023	To	Period end date 30/04/2024
---------------------	---------------------------------	----	-------------------------------

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	1,332	-	-	1,332	3,640
Member subscriptions	12,230	-	-	12,230	13,000
Patron subscriptions	1,045	-	-	1,045	1,240
Gift aid	2,928	-	-	2,928	2,531
Concert ticket sales	11,160	-	-	11,160	9,456
Programme sales and sponsors	2,661	-	-	2,661	2,682
Contribution to music hire and folders	900	-	-	900	1,440
Interest	237	-	-	237	119
Other fund raising	100	-	-	100	192
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	32,593	-	-	32,593	34,300
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	32,593	-	-	32,593	34,300
A3 Payments					
Rehearsal room hire	2,463	-	-	2,463	2,066
Conductor and accompanist	8,150	-	-	8,150	6,340
Concert musicians	12,880	-	-	12,880	13,344
Concert venue hire	2,233	-	-	2,233	1,909
Other concert costs	881	-	-	881	755
Programmes and posters	1,614	-	-	1,614	1,511
Music and folders	350	-	-	350	1,446
NFMS subscription and insurance	543	-	-	543	299
Web site costs	78	-	-	78	290
Print, post and other expenses	258	-	-	258	213
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	29,450	-	-	29,450	28,173
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-

Total payments	29,450	-	-	29,450	28,173
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,143	-	-	3,143	6,127
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	29,590	-	-	29,590	23,463
Cash funds this year end	32,733	-	-	32,733	29,590

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank	23,010		-
	Building Society	9,583	-	-
	Petty cash	140	-	-
	Total cash funds	32,733	-	-

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature <i>T.P. Moore Bridger</i>	Print Name T Moore-Bridger	Date of approval 17/6/24
--	-------------------------------	-----------------------------



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of

STRATFORD UPON AVON CHORAL SOCIETY

On accounts for the year ended

30/04/24

Charity no (if any)

502020

Set out on pages

1

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/04/2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

[Signature]

Date:

17th June 2024

Name:

PHILIP BUSHOP

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVISER REGULATED BY F.C.A.

Address:

BOWNHAM BIRMINGHAM ROAD HENLEY-IN-ARDEN B9550D