

Stratford upon Avon Choral Society

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



TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

1. Trustees

Tim Moore-Bridger – Chairman
Glenda Kershaw – Treasurer
Jackie Gough – Secretary
Maralyn Arnull – Membership Secretary
Jean Hutchison – Librarian
Fiona Macvie
Liz Statham
Philippa Vandome
Neil Harrison
Chris McKinty
Ian Duffin

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 2nd June 2025 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

I am very pleased to be reporting on the 2024/25 season of the Stratford Choral Society, which has been outstandingly successful.

Our first concert in November was Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, a work that is relatively unknown to the general public. It is a mass that is neither short nor particularly solemn. We greatly enjoyed learning the choruses and found them relatively straightforward. The work was performed in its original version with a harmonium and piano accompaniment. Although we perhaps worried that this would not give us sufficient support we need not have been concerned. The pianist and harmonium player were excellent, as were the soloists. The result was a splendid concert, warmly appreciated by a large audience.

As in the previous two years we were invited to sing carols in early December at the Shakespeare Hospice. They are our neighbours at St Andrew's Church and allow us to use their car park for our Monday evening rehearsals. It is always beneficial to the Society to be seen and heard by members of the public who do not necessarily attend our concerts, and it is a way also of advertising what we are presently rehearsing. The afternoon was less cold than in previous years, and most enjoyable for the group who came to sing. Singing carols at the Hospice is now a regular part of our season and is to be welcomed.

Our December concert was Handel's *Messiah*. We are now performing *Messiah* every other year as it is such a popular work with audiences and singers alike. We were anticipating a good audience and in the event the church was absolutely packed! An audience of somewhere around two hundred and fifty was exciting for us all, and in my experience of the choir unprecedented. Our reviewer described it as "compelling and absorbing listening". Those of us who have sung *Messiah* on numerous occasions agreed that this performance was one of our very best.

In the New Year we embarked upon the task of learning Bach's *St John Passion*. It is fair to say that some of the music was demanding, and there was a great deal to sing. However, it was also inspiring, and especially so when we had our final rehearsal and were able to see exactly how our responses fitted into the text sung by the Evangelist. The concert itself was a triumph, and something of which the Society can be very proud. Our reviewer for this concert, by special invitation, was Christopher Morley, for many years the senior music critic of the Birmingham Post. We wanted to make sure that this special concert – enabled partly by a generous bequest from the estate of Colin Nichols, who with his wife Patricia sang with the Society for many years – was reviewed by someone of great experience. So, we were thrilled when, in his review, he stated that "the choral input of a very high standard was maintained throughout the evening with the many chorales particularly effective." He concluded his review by saying that "there were riches galore, enjoyed by the packed audience".

All three concerts have been greatly enjoyed by singers and audience alike. Crucial to the success of our concerts of course is the choice of soloists and orchestra. We have been incredibly fortunate this year to have outstanding soloists in all three concerts. It would be invidious to pick out any individuals but I'm sure no one would disagree that Nathan Vale as the Evangelist and Alexander Ashworth as Christus in the *St John Passion* were quite outstanding. Soloists are by their very nature quite expensive for a society like ours, but it is essential that we be prepared to pay what is necessary in order to secure the participation of such gifted performers. The choir is only as good as the soloists with whom

we sing. Similarly, we must be prepared to engage good orchestras. We had the Regency Sinfonia again for *Messiah* and they were extremely good as usual. We had excellent piano and harmonium accompaniment for the Rossini. For the *St John Passion* we engaged Instruments of Time and Truth, an ensemble playing period instruments. They were superb, described as a "wonderful orchestra" by our reviewer, and he should know! We must always be alert to what is best for whatever we are singing and know that the right accompaniment will enhance the performance.

We have now started to prepare for our summer concert in June. The programme will comprise selections from *European Sacred Music*, edited by John Rutter. Some fifty members of the choir are participating in the summer season, and as in previous years we will also have two students, a flautist and a trombonist, from King Edward VI School joining us. We are very much looking forward to what is always a joyous way to end the Society's year.

The Society relies very heavily on the work of the committee. I'm extremely grateful to all officers and committee members for their commitment and hard work. They all have specific roles but in addition support each other and do whatever is necessary in preparation for the concerts. In the autumn, for example, Val Rayner, who has been the Booking Secretary for many years even after relinquishing the role of Honorary Secretary, found it necessary to step down from this role also. This could have left us in a very difficult position, for the Booking Secretary is the link with orchestras, soloists and venues. I am extremely grateful to our Librarian Jean Hutchinson and to our Publicity Manager Liz Statnam for volunteering to take on and divide Val's responsibilities between them, and in addition to everything else they do. The efficiency and smooth running of the concerts is in no small part a testimony to their endeavours.

Two committee members are standing down at the AGM. Chris McKinty has been on the committee since 2023 and has been responsible for the Newsletter. I am sure everyone would agree that under her guidance it has become an interesting and informative addition to the choir. I am glad that she will continue to produce the Newsletter in future though not on the committee.

Fiona Macvie, Vice Chairman and Chair of the music subcommittee, is also standing down, after ten years as a committee member. Fiona is an outstanding supporter of the choir, always ready to assist in whatever way she can. Amongst much else it is she who opens and closes the church for our Monday rehearsals. I hope she may remain on the music subcommittee after she leaves the general committee at the AGM.

Last year we received the approval of members to move to an online ticket system, in the hope that this would prove to be easier and more effective than the way we had largely done it before, by personal contact with family, friends and neighbours. We have been delighted by the success of this system, if audience numbers are an indication. We have had three very large audiences, with more than two hundred each time, and something over two hundred and fifty for *Messiah*. One of the aims of the Choral Society is that it should promote the appreciation of music in the community at large as widely as possible. The fact that we have had such audiences would indicate that we are achieving that.

We were sad to learn of the death of Tony Reason, a long-time member of the tenor section of the choir, in January, and of Duncan Fairfax-Lucy, a past President of the Society, in March. Some members of the choir sang at his funeral.

The choir depends very much for rehearsals on the expertise of Rachel Bird. It amazes me that she can respond instantly to Oliver's requests and her support of the choir is absolutely invaluable. We are very fortunate to have her as our accompanist.

Oliver Neal Parker, our Musical Director, has the charisma and the skill to help the choir to achieve far more than perhaps we expect. He is a superb schoolmaster, knowing just how much to encourage, how to explain, and how to drive us on. The rehearsals are demanding but great fun. The concerts are exhilarating. No wonder that the choir is in such fine fettle as it looks forward to its 190th year in 2026.

5. Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30th April 2025

24-25 has been another financially successful year for the Society. This may seem a strange statement, given that we achieved a deficit of £2,742. However, this was actually far less than the original forecast.

We had planned to use some of our reserves, and a legacy, to enable us to perform our Bach concert, expensive in terms of soloist numbers, but also because of using period instruments. The concert eventually made a loss of over £5,600, though it certainly felt worth it.

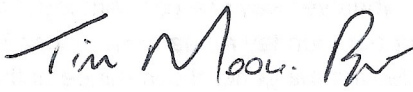
The main reason for the better than forecast result was the high level of ticket sales for our concerts, a total of 127 over budget. This has left us with reserves of £29,991, more than sufficient to cover the concert costs of the coming season.

Our costs, of course, continue to rise. Given the success of the last season a modest increase in subscription rates to £135 is proposed (patrons increasing to £99).

Many thanks to all who contributed to the success of the 24-25 season.

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

Signed on behalf of the Society's trustees:

Signature: 

Date: 23/6/25.

Full Name: Tim Moore-Bridger

Chairman

Charity Name Stratford Choral Society	No (if any) 502020
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Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 5/1/2024	To	Period end date 4/30/2025
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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	1,361	-	-	1,361	1,332
Member subscriptions	12,612	-	-	12,612	12,230
Patron subscriptions	1,140	-	-	1,140	1,045
Gift aid	2,645	-	-	2,645	2,928
Concert ticket sales	11,920	-	-	11,920	11,160
Programme sales and sponsors	2,867	-	-	2,867	2,661
Contribution to music hire and folders	399	-	-	399	900
Interest	536	-	-	536	237
Other fund raising	72	-	-	72	100
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	33,552	-	-	33,552	32,593
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	33,552	-	-	33,552	32,593

A3 Payments

Rehearsal room hire	2,325	-	-	2,325	2,463
Conductor and accompanist	8,680	-	-	8,680	8,220
Concert musicians	18,188	-	-	18,188	12,880
Concert venue hire	2,459	-	-	2,459	2,233
Other concert costs	902	-	-	902	881
Programmes and posters	2,009	-	-	2,009	1,615
Music and folders	417	-	-	417	350
NFMS subscription and insurance	566	-	-	566	543
Web site costs	140	-	-	140	78
Print, post and other expenses	608	-	-	608	187
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	36,294	-	-	36,294	29,450

A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)

	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-

Total payments	36,294	-	-	36,294	29,450
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Net of receipts/(payments)	- 2,742	-	-	- 2,742	3,143
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	32,733	-	-	32,733	29,590
Cash funds this year end	29,991	-	-	29,991	32,733

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

Categories

B1 Cash funds

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
Bank	20,001		-
Building Society	9,850	-	-
Petty cash	140	-	-
Total cash funds	29,991	-	-
account(s)	OK	OK	OK
Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
<i>T Moore Bridger</i>	T Moore-Bridger	2/6/25	

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



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name
STRATFORD UPON AVON CHORAL SOCIETY

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30th APRIL 2025

**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 DD / MM / YYYY.

**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:

Philip Bishop

Date:

14th May 2025

Name:

PHILIP BISHOP

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

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVISER
REGULATED BY F.C.A

Address:

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BIRMINGHAM RD
HENLEY IN ARDEN B95 5QD