

Sestina Music

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

The Directors are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a Directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes.

The financial statements comply with the the Charities Act (NI) 2022, Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic Of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019.)

The company is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 14 November 2013. The company number is NI 621437 and the registered office is The Acorn Centre, Culmore Road, Derry BT48 8JB. The company is a registered Northern Ireland Charity - reference NIC 100067.

Directors

The directors of the charitable company (the Charity) are the trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. The trustees during the year and at 31 December 2024 were as follows:

David Black (Chair)
Irene Kingston
James Kelley
Karenanne Coughlan-Pierse
Maurice Kelly
William Irwin Thompson (Resigned 11 January 2024)

Trustees' Report

Sestina Music has continued to be challenged during 2024. The year opened with the business of the Charity in the care of temporary administrator, the renowned cellist and administrator of the Cork International Festival, Norah O'Leary, who stood down in October 2024.

Our Director of Music, Mr. Mark Chambers has also notified us of his intention to stand down from his post at the end of the season 2024-2025. The impact of this decision for the group cannot be over-emphasised. Mark is a wonderful musician and has been an inspiring role-model for the young members of the group. His tenure of the post for 14 years has produced excellent performances of superb music throughout Ireland and latterly in England. Most significantly, he has furthered the careers of many young musicians, the majority from these shores. The many young Sestinas include already established classical soloists, a BBC Radio Three producer and numerous people now teaching and performing in the Arts. This was the primary Charitable Objective of Sestina Music- the nurturing of outstanding young performers and Mark has been exemplary in doing this. The Directors thank him most sincerely and acknowledge that he will be greatly missed.

The Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have continued to support Sestina Music with the extraordinary granting of our applications, a testament to the success and achievements of the Charity. The Next Generation work with young people has been actively supported by the Continuo Foundation and the Board continues to meet regularly to set the direction of Sestina Music and provide necessary support to our staff.

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Our purposes and activities

The purposes of the Charity are to promote the performance and study of music, in particular early music and contemporary repertoire in, though not exclusively in, Ireland and in doing so, to actively seek and develop the skills of young artists while supporting and encouraging the development of interest in music, particularly early European and contemporary music.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the directors have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit requirement (PBR1). We endeavour to encourage a wide range of young people and children to take advantage of our expertise and promote all within our community to take part in our activities and to attend our performances.

We have put these strategies into action through various performances and courses as outlined in the Chairman's Report and in our programme for the coming season. This programme of activities focuses very much on bringing classical music to the community and in fostering the development of those who will be among the foremost artists of the future.

Achievements and performance

Following the successful "Carols at the Museum" recitals during December 2023, Sestina's "In Praise of St. Cecilia" Easter programme was very well received with above expected levels of sales at the recital in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church Belfast and a sell-out in Thomastown Concert Hall in Kilkenny. Excellent feedback was received from both online and survey research and it was particularly pleasing that all the players and 75% of the singers were from Ireland. A further feature of this programme was the "Sing with Sestina" workshops in both venues with the full ensemble and members of the public enthusiastically taking part. 18 Children attended the "Kids Sing" element of the recitals.

Our Next Generation Programme, the audition process and promotion of an annual cohort of young people through our rehearsals and performances, led to 8 emerging young professional singers progressing to Stage 2 of the scheme, which was most satisfying. Mark Chambers has continued to work with Cork, University College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy of Music to encourage young singers to be involved in Sestina Music's programmes.

The September 2024 "Lux in Umbra" performances in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast were well received and attended. Regrettably due to funding constraints we were unable to proceed with our Carols Concert in December 2024. The Next Generation webinars and workshops continued throughout December with success.

Financial review

During the year the Charity received grants of £60,301, donations of £5,279, box office receipts of £8,683 and bank interest of £172, resulting in total income of £74,435. Artist and production costs were £40,619 and administration overheads were £22,777. This resulted in a surplus for the year of £11,039 which when added to opening reserves of £19,658, left reserves of £30,697 at the year end.

The Directors were pleased with the results for the year. At the year end unrestricted reserves were £38,247 and restricted reserves were £-7,550 as tranches two and three of grants will be released during the remainder of season 2024-25 (ends July 31st) following mid-season reports.

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Reserves policy

The officers have reviewed the reserves of the organisation. This review encompassed the nature of the income and expenditure streams, the need to match variable income with fixed commitments and the balance and nature of the reserves themselves.

Reserves are needed to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned emergency costs. Due to the nature of the activities of the Charity no material unplanned costs are expected. The only major costs are artist fees, production costs, venue hire and publicity for events but the directors would not undertake a major event unless reserves were already in place or funding was secured to cover the costs of the event. The Directors in consultation with Arts Council NI consider that a satisfactory level of reserves is three months unrestricted administration costs which would currently be in the region of £10,000. At the year end the Charity has £38,247 of free reserves.

Risk management

The officers have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks which the Charity faces and confirm that systems are in place to ensure necessary steps can be taken to lessen these risks. In particular, the officers are paying especial care to the future needs of the Charity as it faces major changes in Season 2025-26.

Volunteers

The Charity continues to be very involved in the community, relying on substantial voluntary help to assist its excellent professional staff. As part of our new "Next Generation" audition and involvement programme, we continue to encourage the successful youngsters to be involved in front-of-house and concert management operations of our performances.

Plans for future periods

Plans are well-developed for the Easter Programme "Concert Spirituel" in collaborative self-funding performances in Belfast, Kilkenny and Wexford. As before, this project includes the Stage 2 Mentoring Course of the Next Generation Programme, "Sing with Sestina" workshops and a Harmony Hub innovative event.

The Board are currently considering the future of Sestina Music and will be assessing the Charity's future over the coming months.

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Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Charity Trustees (who are also the directors of the Sestina Music for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a Trustees' Annual Report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the profit or loss of the company for that year.

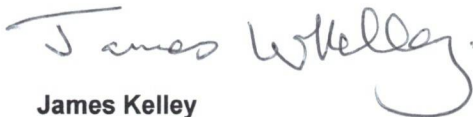
In preparing these the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the organisation will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the organisation. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the organisation and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

This report was approved by the Board on 28 February 2025 and signed on its behalf by



James Kelley
Director