



Cappella Caeciliana
Registered Charity NIC100255
Trustees' Annual Report 2023/24

OVERVIEW

The Trustees of Cappella Caeciliana (“the Society”) present their report for the year ended 31 March 2024. This sits alongside the independently verified financial accounts which have been prepared by the Honorary Treasurer.

Our aims as a charity are:

- (i) The advancement of the arts and culture
- (ii) The advancement of education
- (iii) The advancement of religion



This was the Society’s second full reporting year with Matthew Quinn as Musical Director. Matthew is now very well established in this role and has directed a significant number of highly rated performances with the choir. During the year Matthew undertook work with a number of highly-rated ensembles such as Chamber Choir Ireland, Northern Ireland Opera and the Ulster Orchestra, and was appointed as Musical Director of London Youth Choirs Chamber Choir.

The choir’s significant role in music making in Northern Ireland over three decades, and the contributions made by previous Musical Directors Bob Leonard and Donal McCrisken, and by Matthew Quinn since his arrival in January 2022, were recognised in an article in the Summer 2024 of the prestigious *Choir & Organ* magazine. This article can be viewed at <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/choir-and-organ/features/article/cappella-caeciliana-30-years-of-music-making>.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AND GOVERNANCE

The Society had income of £18,079 during the year. Expenditure of £31,378 resulted in a deficit for the year of (£13,299). However, it should be noted that this deficit is largely driven by a concert in Crumlin Road Gaol on 2 April 2023 (i.e. right at the start of the financial year). For this event most income (ticket sales and 90% of an £8,100 Arts Council of Northern Ireland / National Lottery grant) had been received in the previous financial year, but with nearly all expenditure for it being incurred in the financial year being reported on. Having said this, the Society's funds have been at a lower level than the trustees would like as income has not kept up with the costs of our more ambitious programming and venue usage, this being despite a significant increase in ticket prices in recent years. The cash position at the end of the year was £638. Going forward the trustees are hoping to target a cash reserve of £1,200. It is intended to try to help manage this in 2024/25 by applying to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for National Lottery funding, supplemented by seeking commercial and private funding.

The Society operates via a written constitution. It continues to operate a two-strand oversight process, with the Musical Director (who is not a Trustee) having full involvement with the Trustees in artistic and event-related planning and decisions, but with governance and financial decisions reserved to the Trustees.

The Society was pleased to welcome a number of new members to the choir during the year, and to maintain good relations with its former members.

PUBLIC ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

In carrying out the charity's activities, the Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance. A broad review of our activities to further our purposes for the public benefit during the year and of our achievements during that period is as follows:

ST JOHN PASSION IN CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL

On **Sunday 2 April** the choir presented Bach's *St John Passion* to a capacity audience of 185 in Crumlin Road Gaol. This concert received excellent critical feedback, some of which can be viewed in video format at <https://tinyurl.com/CappellaGaol>.

As well as being joined by guest soloists Zahid Sidiqqi, Malachy Frame, Emma Morwood, Margaret Bridge, John Porter and Adam Reaney, the lineup also included an orchestra of professional musicians supplemented by some excellent up-and-coming young players.

This was a major undertaking in terms of logistics and expenditure, with ticket sales covering less than 25% of the event's cost. The choir is very grateful to have received significant funding for the concert from the National Lottery via the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Energia Group / Power NI and Deloitte. Without this, the production could not have taken place.



A CELTIC COLLECTION IN BELFAST HARBOUR OFFICE

On **Friday 9 June** the choir presented a concert *A Celtic Collection* to a near-capacity audience of 95 in Belfast Harbour Office (use of which had been kindly granted by Belfast Harbour Commissioners as part of their community engagement programme). A highlight of the programme was the premiere of *Quicksilver* by Cappella member Anita Mawhinney. This composition was funded by the National Lottery via the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The concert also saw the premiere of *The Blue Bird* by Dr Anselm McDonnell.

A recording of *Quicksilver* made at this concert is available at <https://tinyurl.com/CappellaQuicksilver>. A recording of *The Lark in the Clear Air* (arranged by Matthew Quinn) made at this concert is available at <https://tinyurl.com/CappellaLark>.



MASS AND CONCERT IN NEWTOWNARDS

On **Saturday 21 October** the choir sang at a Thanksgiving Mass for the restoration of St Patrick's Church, Newtownards. The music programme included William Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*, marking the fact that 2023 was the 400th anniversary of the composer's death. The Mass was immediately followed by a short concert in the church, where the choir was joined by St Patrick's parish priest and founding Cappella member Fr Martin O'Hagan. Between the two events the choir sang to around 200 people. Cappella is very grateful to Fr Martin and the Parish of Newtownards and Comber for their invitation, and for providing excellent refreshments to choir and audience at the end of the evening.



CAPPELLA BY CANDLELIGHT IN CENTRAL BELFAST

On **Sunday 26 November** the choir presented *Cappella by Candlelight* in St Patrick's Church, Donegall Street, Belfast, to an audience of 220. Despite the large attendance, an intimate atmosphere was created. It is hoped to repeat this 'candlelit' concert format (in a different venue) in the 2024/25 season.



CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN NAZARETH CARE VILLAGE

A group of current and former choir members visited Nazareth House Care Village on **Sunday 10 December** to give a carol concert and to recognise the care village having been made available to Cappella as a rehearsal venue for 20 years until the onset of Covid-19. The singers were pleased to be joined by Dr Brendan O'Hare (organist). Cappella is very grateful to the Care Village for their invitation and for providing refreshments after the concert.

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS IN THE PORTICO OF ARDS



On **Saturday 16 December** the choir was delighted to make its second visit to The Portico of Ards, Portaferry. A concert *The Magic of Christmas* was presented to an audience of 160 people. This was part of Portico’s annual programme which is supported by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Owing to Matthew Quinn being unavailable, a deputy was required, and the choir was delighted to be able to secure the services of James Grossmith to conduct the concert. Cappella is most grateful to James for stepping in at only a few days’ notice.

CELTIC CHORAL CELEBRATION IN COVENT GARDEN

At **St Patrick’s weekend**, the choir made its first-ever visit to London. On Saturday 16 March it presented a concert *Celtic Choral Celebration* in St Paul’s Church, Covent Garden (the well-known “Actors’ Church”), to an audience of 85, including various opinion formers. As well as giving the opportunity to act as ambassadors for the Northern Ireland musical scene in front of a brand new audience and to showcase composers from the island of Ireland, this visit also fulfilled the role of a social event and in particular helped the integration of recently-joined members.

Cappella was pleased to have received financial support for this event from Energia Group / Power NI. Thanks are also due to the Irish Embassy in London for their support, including the attendance of Mr David Johnston from the Embassy.



WIDER ACTIVITY

During the year, the choir continued its ‘virtual’ work, particularly aimed at those who cannot attend our events in public. Various video recordings were published, and regular social media postings were made giving access to previous audio and video recordings. The choir’s existing CD recordings also continued to be broadcast regularly on BBC Radio Ulster.

REPORT AGREED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIETY:

Sarah Alcorn, David Macartney, Louise McMahon, Philip O’Rawe, Micaela Reis

TRUSTEE CHANGES IN THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2024: None

PRESENTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2024.