

Grosvenor Chorale

Trustees' Report 2022-2023



At our AGM, held at Castlereagh Presbyterian Church, our rehearsal venue, on June 3rd, 2024, our Musical Director summarized the year.

Chairman's 2023-2024 Report

The 2023-24 Season was all about giving everyone the opportunity to improve just 1% each week. The hope was that these small gains made by every member would allow the choir to move forward musically into new territory and feel prepared to perform without any last-minute pressure.

The year began with two new members, Kaz and Antonia, who were soon joined by Lucy after the October break. I hope they have enjoyed their first year as part of the choir, and I thank them for their dedication. We also welcomed Susan Shepherd back following her period of maternity, having welcomed little Daniel into the world last July and following an extended break due to work commitments; it was lovely to again have Pam Alcorn in our ranks. Sadly, we had to say farewell to Judith Poston this year. Judith travelled to every rehearsal from Ballymena. We have recently enjoyed rekindling our friendship with Judith and appreciate all the effort she made to be at rehearsals.

We also began by reintroducing our Members' Handbook, designed by Andru Kyle, with the aim that everyone knows what is personally and collectively expected of a group of over thirty individuals to create a voluntary unified effort that is challenging yet supportive and relaxing yet energising. Members broke into groups throughout the year to discuss direction, reflect on performances and brainstorm logistical ideas; these times were felt helpful for everyone. Members are all encouraged to continue contributing to the hive of ideas that keep Grosvenor Chorale moving forward and remember our collective responsibility to each other as outlined in our agreed handbook.

Our first engagement was to celebrate our Thirtieth Birthday, which we did through a concert in our rehearsal home at Castlereagh Presbyterian Church. We were able to perform to a packed hall. Members of the church congregation provided a light supper at the close of the evening, and we raised some funds for their church building fund. We were also delighted to welcome Loughview Integrated Primary School Choir and violinist Jude Kingston as guest artists. A short time later, we also gave the world premiere performance and recording of "Sometimes I Dream Of Blue" as guests of the Northern Ireland Concert Band as part of their 10th anniversary celebrations in Stormont's Great Hall. It was a privilege to be part of Anselm McDonnell's new piece, and the choir is delighted to see how his music is being recognised with several high-profile commissions throughout the year. This concert was later broadcast on BBC Radio Three.

In November, we had the opportunity to lead a performance of the Coronation Anthem, Zadok the Priest, with the Royal Irish Regimental Band in the Waterfront Hall. The rest of the month was then taken up by preparing for Christmas, and the Annual Festival of Nine Lessons with Carols was held in St Colmcille's, Ballyhackamore. We are thankful to them, our members who

belong to this parish and our organist, Stephen Hamill, for helping us lead a packed congregation in the hymns and carols of the season. It was good to be able to record Andrew Carter's "Great Our Festivity" and to be met with words of appreciation from the composer himself. The final engagement of 2023 was as lunchtime guests of the Custom House in Belfast when we performed a programme of festival favourites.

We were delighted, having entered with Roxanna Panufnik's "Sleep, Jesus, Sleep", to have been chosen as one of the winning choirs for RTÉ Lyric FM's "Choirs for Christmas".

2024 began with some new repertoire as we prepared to raise awareness and some funds for Kiwoko Hospital in Uganda under the auspices of Ballygowan Presbyterian Church at the end of January. Following our rehearsal, we were treated to tea, sandwiches and buns. Then we gave many brilliant performances, which included various hymns written by Northern Irish composers, the beautiful piano extemporisation around Ola Gjeilo's "Ubi Caritas", and rounding the evening off with a version of Uganda's National Anthem. We are grateful to Darren Day for accompanying us.

In April, we prepared for the Bangor International Choral Festival's Open Choral competition, where we performed James Macmillan's "O Radiant Dawn" and Alex L'Estrange's arrangement of "Lullaby of Birdland". The performance sparkled with professionalism and committed singing to a very high level, proving how good we can be when we internalise the music and go beyond the notes. It was excellent, and being awarded the Runner-Up Prize was a good result, but even better was the engagement with the audience, who were completely on our side.

After discussing possible Summer Concert repertoire and venues, we settled on an evening of easy-listening jazz at 2 Royal Avenue (the old city centre bank buildings). This was an excellent opportunity to make many weekly 1% gains to learn all the new repertoire and, more importantly, enter into the style these pieces demanded. We had to consider a lot of new lyrics, singing pieces we 'thought we knew' but were written differently, fitting a lot of syncopation around the beat, which we were forced to feel rather than go along with everyone else and then perform this without being able to follow a written accompaniment as the band would improvise around the choir quite freely. The result was excellent, along with the band of Scott Flanigan (piano), Rod Patterson (bass) and Tim Rooney (drumkit), although too much did 'click' a little too close to the gig! The work of each committee member toward this event is so much appreciated, as is Sarah Bell, who managed to source staging and seating. It is essential, although I realise it is difficult, to be prepared for the next rehearsal if one is missed rather than just coasting along until it works, and this not happening from everyone did mean we didn't always perform from within the music and truly put our own stamp on all of it.

I would like to thank Rob, Roz, Andru and Sarah, our committee members who have worked together to make everything happen throughout the year. Each has brought their talents and expertise through creativity, planning, organisation, contacts and desire to help everyone enjoy the choir season. Each week, there has been some discussion about topics big and small, and as a team with clear opinions, they always have respected each other and come to an agreement on what is best for the rest of the members and the choir as a whole. We have continued to be assisted by our ex-officio committee member, Joanne McAuley, who continues to act as our treasurer and we were delighted that Peter Turner agreed to continue to liaise with the Charity Commission on our behalf. It really is a great team to be on, and if you've never done it, be sure to make it known that you'd be happy to be considered as I'm sure plenty of other members will be only too happy to give you their vote!


Next week, we will finish our year together with a meal at Horatio Todd's before reconvening in August for our first gig of 2024-25 (did Tomorrow's World not predict we'd be living on Mars by then?!).

Next year, I hope we can continue striving to make those personal 1% gains. I hope we continue to share ideas of what music we would like to perform and be open to new venues and styles along the way. I hope our teammates matter enough to everyone that we turn up prepared to progress rather than catch up. I hope we will trust each other enough to step outside the comfort zones we usually walk within and test new musical waters. I hope that we encourage each other much more than we criticise so that when it matters that we improve it will come from a genuine hope for improvement in ourselves rather than using others as our excuse. Next year, I hope we can all contribute to more than the music and bring our own skills, musical or otherwise, to build each other up.

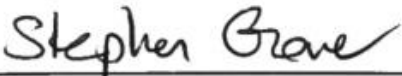
Treasurer's Report

Subscriptions remain stable, although a few latecomers haven't shown up on this report - we'll keep them for next year! We've had a good year for concerts and competitions, notably the Carol Service gathering £1100 for the Samaritans and also runner-up at Bangor Festival. There are a few bills still to come - music & expenses for our Director; photocopying for Carrickfergus Grammar School; outstanding payments for our Royal Avenue concert. These will appear in next year's report!

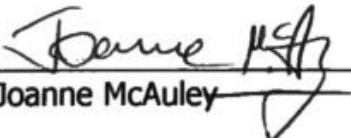
Trustee:


Edward Craig

Trustee:


Stephen Glover

Trustee:


Joanne McAuley

Trustee:


Peter Turner