

Islington Choral Society Chair's report to Annual General Meeting for 2023-24

25 February 2025

1 Introduction

Good evening everyone, and welcome to our Annual General Meeting for the year ending in July 2024, our 51st. It's good to see so many members here, firstly to ensure that we're quorate, but more importantly as I hope it reflects the commitment so many have to the Society. Besides the business side of the AGM it's worth first remembering all our achievements during the year.

2 Concerts

We started the 2023-24 season without Michael Waldron, who took over as Interim Director of Music at Trinity College Cambridge for the Michaelmas term. Mercifully Laurence Williams, having left in July, stepped up as our Acting Director of Music for the term, with Ben Markovic as our new Assistant Musical Director.

They were immediately faced with the challenge of Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor K427*, which is scored for double chorus and has all the brilliance and complexity of the young Mozart. The choir rose to the challenge of singing eight parts and we gave a really enjoyable performance on St Cecilia's Day – 25 November – appropriately coupling the Mozart with Handel's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*, accompanied by the Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra and, wonderfully, a theorbo player.

We welcomed Michael back in January 2024 to rehearse Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* and Duruflé's *Requiem*. It's an especially poignant setting of the Requiem Mass written between 1941-47 and originally a commission by the Vichy administration. Our concert took place in Holy Trinity Sloane Square, its atmospheric Arts and Crafts interior making the Duruflé especially dramatic. We were accompanied by the orchestra of the London Choral Sinfonia, who opened the concert with Vaughan Williams' *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus*, and soloists Amy Lyddon and Samuel Pantcheff.

In the summer term we returned to LSO St Luke's, again with musicians from the orchestra of the London Choral Sinfonia, and tackled something more recent but equally moving – Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man*. It rounded off a year of singing three very different works based on a traditional Mass setting: *The Armed Man* starts like many a 15th century Mass with the warning that 'the armed man shall be feared' but sets it against the Islamic Call To Prayer, widening out into settings of Hindu and secular texts before circling to a hopeful conclusion. We were privileged to hear the Call to Prayer recited by Sukhrob, who had fled Russia with his Ukrainian wife, and been hosted by one of our members.

And last term we returned to the ever-welcoming St Andrew Holborn for a performance of Haydn's *The Creation* with the Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra. It was not exactly a Christmas concert given the November date, but the optimism and sheer fun of Haydn's music framed within the neatly cropped story felt properly festive. Our soloists were Ellie Laugharne, Oliver Johnston, and - unable to keep away from ICS - Laurence Williams.

I should record that Ben Markovic left in December due to a clash with his studies, and Laurence has been our Acting Assistant Musical Director during the current term. He really is going to leave at the end of March.

3 2024 Tour

In May many of us joined the ICS 2024 tour to Spain. Vanessa Easlea, our tour manager, worked closely with the tour company OneStage, finding us a luxurious hotel in Segovia and ensuring everything went smoothly - coaches and outings, drinks reception and final dinner. Accompanied by James Orford on the organ, we performed Duruflé's *Requiem* in two ornate and atmospheric Spanish Gothic cathedrals, in Segovia and Valladolid, where the [admittedly post-Mass] audience numbered almost 700.

4 Committee

There have been several changes to the committee personnel this year and more will be formalised this evening. I'd like to thank all our committee, including our Secretary, Ruth Pyatt, who has provided consistent fast and effective support, and Frances Sawtell our Membership Secretary who has fielded



Islington Choral Society

dozens of enquiries from prospective members, welcomed them to trial rehearsals and signed up many enthusiastic new members – some on the evening of their first trial rehearsal. With eight new members this term our membership is now well over 150.

Other invaluable committee members include Alison Rice, who deals calmly with publicity and produces our lovely programmes; Helen Mills, who manages our website and social media strategy; and Roger Miles who tackles the challenges of fundraising and risk management. I'd also like to thank Alan Rickett who liaises with the staging provider – a nerve-racking job which he carries out as a non-committee volunteer.

Milton Bevan and Irene Weinreb have stood down from the committee. Both have contributed a great deal to ICS, most recently Irene's input, with Vanessa Hall-Smith, into redrafting our constitution.

At the last AGM it was announced that our Treasurer was standing down. Vanessa Hall-Smith generously agreed to take this on and will present her Financial Report in a moment. She's been attending committee meetings and is now standing to become a full member of the committee. One of our altos, Jane McNeill, has volunteered to conduct an independent examination of the accounts.

And finally Chris Rose, our indomitable Librarian, announced a year ago that she intended to stand down at this AGM, and we have been fortunate that not one but two enthusiastic volunteers offered to shadow her for this year – Gill Andrews and Mary Crampsie. You'll have seen them working alongside Chris handing out scores. I'm pleased to say that both of them have indicated that they're happy to become Librarians, and as Chris stands down from the committee Gill will be joining it. Chris has served singlehandedly for many years and I'd like to say thank you on behalf of the whole choir for all the stress and hard work that's allowed us to smoothly collect music [and remember the orchestra has to have music too] each term.

5 Trustees

The Chair and Secretary are customarily both trustees, and our third is Tricia George who acts as an independent – i.e. non-Committee – trustee, as required by our constitution. She has kindly agreed to continue in the role for another year.

6 Choral Scholars

Although not strictly a 2023-24 item, I wanted to record the start of our Choral Scholars initiative. After auditions held over summer 2024, we appointed our first four Choral Scholars: Alex Cooper [soprano], Meg Webb [alto], Roshan Patel [tenor], and Luke Muschialli [bass]. As well as providing a valuable opportunity for the scholars to gain experience, they are playing an active part in ICS rehearsals and concerts, helping us to tackle more ambitious works, and giving short recitals each term. We look forward to future benefits in raising the name and reputation of ICS in the community of aspirational young choral singers and potential members.

7 Tour 2026

I've mentioned last year's successful and enjoyable tour to Spain. We tour in alternative years, so sadly there's none this year, but we are already thinking of 2026. Vanessa Easlea deservedly intends to stand down as tour organiser, and Tiz Blackwell has agreed to take over her role. An introductory meeting with our contact at OneStage, the tour company, will take place next week. Repertoire and destination have not yet been discussed, but members will be notified as soon as details are finalised.

Vanessa will stand down from the committee later in the year and Tiz will join the committee. She cannot be here this evening so won't be formally elected tonight.

8 Conclusion

Vanessa our Treasurer will present the accounts in a few minutes, but with membership numbers high and well-attended concerts – almost 340 tickets sold for *The Creation* - our financial position remains strong, ensuring we retain the necessary future resilience. We are already planning next year's programme and look forward to another ambitious and rewarding year of collaborative and creative music.



Islington Choral Society

Islington Choral Society
Income and Expenditure
1 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

	Year ending 31.7.2024 £	Year ending 31.7.2023 Re-stated £	Difference £	Notes
INCOME				
Membership subscriptions	23,367	26,140	(2,273)	1
Donations	2,320	1,180	1,140	
Gift aid	5,505	0	5,505	2
Tour Income	30,941	27,820	3,121	3
Advertising/sponsorship	0	3,500	(3,500)	
Concert 1,2 and 3	14,487	24,434	(9,997)	4
Miscellaneous	916	424	492	5
Total Income	77,536	83,498	(5,962)	
EXPENDITURE				
Musical Director and Assistant Musical Director	12,383	7,887	(4,496)	6
Rehearsal Venue Hire	6,342	6,092	(250)	
Concert 1,2,3	29,689	30,399	710	
Music Hire	2,633	0	(2,633)	7
Making Music subscription	471	440	(31)	
Tour expenses	60,875	0	(60,875)	3
Miscellaneous expenditure	807	2,945	(2,138))	8
Bank charges	160	120	(40)	9
Total Expenditure	113,360	47,883	(65,477)	
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(35,824)	35,615	(209)	

Islington Choral Society

Income and Expenditure

1 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

Notes to Income and Expenditure 1 August 2023 – 31 July 2024

1. Subscriptions amounting to £1,190 for 2023.4 were received in July 2023 and included in the 2022.3 accounts.
2. Gift aid for the 2022.3 year was received in February 2024 but mistakenly included in the accounts for 2022.3. The accounts for 2023.4 have been done on a receipts and payments basis, so the information shown for the 2022.3 accounts has been re-stated with Gift Aid included in the 2023.4 accounts. Accounts will be done on a receipts and payments basis going forward.
3. The 2022.3 accounts have been re-stated to show tour income and expenses which were not detailed in the 2022.3 accounts. The tour income and expenditure is kept separate from the main charitable income and expenditure – see also notes 12 and 13.
4. Ticket sales income for Concert 3 which took place in July 24 was received after year end and will be included in the accounts for 2024.5
5. Miscellaneous income includes reimbursement for failing to return borrowed scores (£194) bank interest (£301 in total - £96 from account ending 5910 and £205 from account ending 7823) and monies received via Easyfundraising (£421). See also note 10.
6. Musical Director and Assistant Musical Director fees include concert fees which were recorded as a concert expense in the 2022.3 accounts.
7. Music hire was included as a concert expense in the 2022.3 accounts but is recorded as a separate item in accounts for 2023.4
8. Miscellaneous expenditure includes drinks for choir social events (£413), leaving/thank you gifts (£131) and refunds (£263).
9. Bank charges for 2023.4 include a £100 penalty for closing account 7823 early. Bank charges for 2022.3 have been re-stated to show charges relating to the tour accounts.

ISLINGTON CHORAL SOCIETY

FUNDS FLOW FOR THE YEAR

1st August 2023 – 31 July 2024

	Balance carried forward 31 July 2024	Balance brought forward from 31 July 2023	Difference	Notes
	53,438	89,262	(35,824)	
Represented by				
HSBC Charitable A/C ending 5910	3,207	39,202	(35,955)	
HSBC BMM A/C ending 6194	19,118	8,837	10,731	10
HSBC Money Markets ending 7823	0	10,176	(10,176)	
HSBC Money Markets ending 2245	30,000	0	30,000	11
HSBC BMM overseas tour ending 6186	0	300	(300)	12
HSBC Charitable overseas tour ending 5929	1,113	30,747	(29,634)	13

Notes continuing from previous page:

10. HSBC Money Markets account ending 7823 was closed in the course of the year 2023.4. There was a penalty of £100 for early closure of the account. The balance of £10,076 was transferred to BMM account ending 6194. £205 interest was added to the account during the year and has been recorded as miscellaneous income – see note 5).

11. A new Money Markets account ending 2245 was opened with a deposit of £30,000 transferred from account ending 5910 for a fixed term of one year expiring in June 2025.

12. The Overseas Tour Accounts operate to cover the income and expenses of the Choir's overseas tours. These usually occur every two years although the 2024 tour was the first since 2018 due to the pandemic. In May 2024 the tour took place in Segovia in Spain and the fees paid by members covered hotel and other incidental expenses eg coaches and visits, together with a small surplus from the 2018 tour. The balance of £300 remaining in account ending 6186 at the end of the 2022.3 financial year was transferred to account ending 5929 together with £4 interest.

13. The balance of £1,113 in account ending 5929 will be used towards the costs of the next tour.



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Islington Choral Society

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 July 2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

1068263

Set out on pages

2

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/07/2024.

**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 in connection with the examination which give 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..

Signed:

Date:

18/05/2025

Name:

Elizabeth Jane McNeill

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

n/a

Address:

10 St Paul's Place

London N1 2QE

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

None