

Trustees' Annual Report for 2021-22 (Year ended 31st March 2022)

Review of the Year

Early in the year the Board identified some new priorities as we began to emerge from the strictures of the Covid pandemic.

Priorities (1-5 in order; others not in any particular order)

1. Planning for recovery of the choir and a return to face to face singing
2. Planning for a hybrid future
3. Programming and budgeting going into the future
4. Regular Communication with members through 'View from the Chair'
5. Making the choir fit for the next generation
6. Creative use of members and their gifts who are not on the Board
7. Digital Presence
8. Developing and optimising social media
9. Developing the Friends Scheme
10. Commence succession planning by inviting guest conductors as and when appropriate
11. Outreach, recruitment and diversity
12. Continuing to improve governance and financial regulation

We continue to make progress on these priorities but are aware that there is always more to be done; some are by their nature medium to long term goals and others are permanently ongoing.

The Board worked very hard to develop and become more collaborative, flexible and collegiate and improve the way of working as we face the challenges which we had identified. In particular, the Board now gets permanent access to the financial position of the choir and a formal report at every Board meeting; the budgeting of each activity is agreed formally by the Board as a whole. The Treasurer has facilitated this and continues to develop and improve this essential part of our financial governance. We have worked on the Risk Register, dealt with many of the outstanding items and simplified its format. It has been agreed that this will be formally reviewed at a Board meeting every six months.

We used Zoom to produce a video to present our recording of Dupré's *De Profundis* to a new audience. The project was done in collaboration with St Thomas, 5th Avenue, New York where the organist who played for our original recording, Dr. Jeremy Filsell, is now Director of Music. Some of the movements were recorded anew in New York. The recording was streamed in June and the film was very ably produced by one of our Board members, Alison Benton. In May we delivered, by Zoom, a 'Come and Sing' focussing on C.V. Stanfords's *Three Motets* which was well attended by an international audience. In these difficult months we adapted as best we could and, against the sector trend, not only maintained a togetherness and community but also expanded our horizons in terms of both activities and supporters using both Zoom and YouTube.

We were able to forge a relationship with Hennessey-Brown music. In light of our responsibility as a Registered Charity, we note this is no ordinary agency. Their strap line is 'Creativity, diversity and empathy in music management'. They have a heart for mental illness and diversity. We have undertaken fee paying engagements with them and one of the co-founders, Jonathan Hennessey-Brown played cello with us in the February Concert in St Peter's Eaton Square. (www.hennesseybrownmusic.com)

Zoom cannot replace the real thing and it was an absolute delight to return to 'in-person' singing and performance. The Board spent much time working on a recovery plan for the choir for when the pandemic receded and also working out how we could safely return to in-person singing. Plans were made so that, as soon as possible, the choir would once again be able to get back to its core activity.

Some of our members found the obligation to wear masks and keep social distance during rehearsal to be rather onerous but to the best of our knowledge, we did not spread covid due to any rehearsal or performance and we have also had very little hesitancy from choir members about attending rehearsals even among those members who are most vulnerable.

Despite everything we managed to rehearse for and sing very well in Canterbury Cathedral in July even though socially distanced and wearing masks except when singing.

Against all the odds we also engaged in two hugely successful weekends of recording in Tonbridge School and the recording will be released and launched in October 2022 on the Naxos label. In this venture we were strongly supported financially by a most generous anonymous donation of 10K + gift aid. We were thrilled to be able to engage Roderick Williams and none of us will ever forget the moment when he first came into the chapel where we were recording, gave a winning smile, and opened his voice-box - pure magic.

We were then into the Christmas cycle and on the very night when we sang a delicious concert in St Stephen's, Walbrook, for the Michael Varah Memorial Fund, it was clear that the Omicron clouds were gathering. As a result we had regrettably to cancel our concert in St Paul's, Covent Garden. We produced a brief 'Christmas with Vasari' video which we streamed to compensate for the cancelling of the Covent Garden concert with some Carols which we had, auspiciously as it turned out, recorded during our recording sessions in Tonbridge School for just such an eventuality.

Inevitably, an event as big as the Covid pandemic has meant that a few people have not kept in touch with us for all sorts of reasons. The door has remained open to them and we expect to see some return as society at large resumes a degree of normality. The Board aspires to be more active in recruitment and in trying to increase diversity in the membership. We are delighted to have recruited a number of new members.

As Omicron infections decreased and winter turned to spring the Board felt able to relax protocols again in early 2022.

We were able to perform a concert of French music, including a very emotional Duruflé Requiem in St Peter's Eaton Square in February which really felt as though we were getting back to some sense of normality. This was followed in early March by Evensong in St Luke's church, where we regularly rehearse.

The musical year ended on a sad note for Vasari, as we had the privilege of singing at the funeral of Bidy Backhouse, Jeremy's beloved mum. Bidy was a staunch supporter and friend of Vasari, and it was deeply moving to join singers from many generations of her church choirs to pay a fitting musical tribute to a wonderful woman who will be greatly missed.

We remain deeply grateful for all the support that our Patrons and Friends provide to the choir. Vasari Singers relies on funding from sources other than subscriptions to put on concerts and events and to sing Cathedral services, so every little helps. As well as the financial support, it is lovely to see so many familiar smiling faces at our events - thank you.

Financial position

The financial results of the Charity are reported on pages 2 to 4. Our reserves of £24,106 at the end of the year are considered consistent with our reserves policy to maintain funds sufficient to support the ongoing operations of the Charity for a period of between 3 and 6 months and to ensure funds are accumulated to support larger projects on a periodic basis. The Covid epidemic has had a mixed effect on our finances: on the one hand, there has been little income except for donations and subscriptions; on the other hand, expenses (both those for concerts etc and those relating to rehearsals) have been reduced for much of the year, although there have been some increased expenses to deliver a number of online projects. Additionally, pre-COVID income projections for own-promotions concerts have been unattainable with less ticket buyers than before the pandemic, despite increased marketing efforts.

Under Sections 144 and 145 of the Charities Act 2011 an audit is not required for this year; the Trustees of the Charity have elected for the accounts to be examined by an independent examiner and their report is on page 1.

Financial policy

As a matter of accounting policy, the Board has decided to not hold CD stock on the balance sheet going forward to better align with stock accounting practices for charities and for simplified financial reporting.

Governance and administration

Vasari Singers is a Society and a UK registered charity (number 1071299) and is governed by a constitution. The primary object of Vasari Singers is “to promote, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of choral music in all its aspects by the presentation of public concerts”.

The Society’s members are those that have been invited to join the choir as a full member, paying the relevant annual subscription. Its management is vested in a board that comprises the Officers of the Charity (being the Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer) and up to three other members, all of whom are elected by and from the members on an annual basis. The board may co-opt a member onto the board, pending election at the next AGM. The Music Director may attend all board meetings.

The Board has simplified the management of our Risk Register, mitigated many of the previously identified risks and resolved to review the Risk Register at six monthly intervals.

During the reporting year and subsequently (except as otherwise indicated), the board comprised the following members:

Chairman	David Jackson (Until 26 th January 2022) Paul Robertson (Elected 26 th January 2022)
Secretary	Stephanie May
Treasurer	Imants Auziņš
Concert Manager, Choir Fixer & Publicity	Alison Benton
Librarian and Technology	Yvonne Connell

The Music Director is Jeremy Backhouse.

The choir's registered address and contact details are:

Vasari Singers
c/o St Luke's Church Office
194 Ramsden Road
London SW12 8RQ
secretary@vasarisingers.org or info@vasarisingers.org
www.vasarisingers.org

Paul Robertson
Chair, Vasari Singers
25th January 2023

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE VASARI SINGERS

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vasari Singers for the year ended 31 March 2022 which are set out in pages 6 - 8.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND BASIS OF REPORT

As the charity trustees of the Vasari Singers, 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 Vasari Singer's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Vasari Singers as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Rachel Robinson ACA
47 Holmdene Avenue
London
SE24 9LB

28 January 2023

Vasari Singers

Income and expenditure account 2021/22

Income (£)		Expenditure (£)	
Concert income	3,784.66	Concert expenditure	6,771.39
CD sales	459.84	Cathedral expenditure	1,728.58
Royalties received	336.96	GBA #2 recording	14,824.12
Sponsorship/donations	5,118.13	Music purchase	461.24
Restricted donations	12,625.00	CD purchases	182.40
		CD stock write off	1,663.00
Subscriptions	11,184.68	Royalties paid	4.00
Interest	2.68	Publicity etc	418.00
Total income	33,511.95	Fees	10,590.40
		Administration	1,375.94
		Miscellaneous	631.23
Excess of expenditure over income	5,137.61	Total expenditure	38,649.56

Vasari Singers
Statement of assets and liabilities at 31 March 2022

	31 Mar 2022 (£)	31 Mar 2021 (£)
Current account	1,805.11	1,153.41
Deposit account	21,679.90	24,236.99
CD stock	0.00	1,663.00
Debtors		
2020/21 subscriptions tax relief due	1,877.90	
2020/21 donations tax relief due	757.75	
CD float	50.00	
		2,685.65
2021/22 subscriptions tax relief due	2,533.18	
2021/22 donations tax relief due	651.67	
2021/22 restricted donations tax relief due	2,525.00	
SPES Jul '22 expenses	400.00	
Guildford May '22 expenses	150.00	
Coventry Apr '22 expenses	27.32	
CD float	50.00	
	6,337.17	
Creditors		
2020/21 royalties payable	219.00	
2020/21 advance subs	276.00	
		495.00
2021/22 royalties payable	4.00	
2022/23 advance subs	1,774.50	
Fees paid in 2022/23	2,175.00	
GBA #2 recording expenses paid in 2022/23	1,473.38	
SPES Feb '21 expenses paid in 2022/23	288.80	
	5,715.68	
Net current assets	24,106.50	29,244.05
Reserves		
General reserve	0.00	6,820.96
Sponsorship reserve	0.00	22,423.09
Unrestricted reserve (legacy general and sponsorship reserve combined)	23,981.50	0.00
Restricted reserve	125.00	0.00

Analysis of reserves

	Unrestricted reserve (legacy general and sponsorship reserve combined)	Restricted reserve
Brought forward at 1 Apr 2021	29,244.05	0.00
Result for year	737.45	12,625.00
Unrestricted reserves used in year	6,000.00	
Restricted reserves used in year		12,500.00
Carried forward at 31 March 2022	23,981.50	125.00