

Company registration no. 3685489

# Music Illuminated

Registered charity no 1074016

## Report and Accounts for the period ended 31 August 2024

Directors (at 31 August 2024):

Matthew Saunders  
Fiona Cairney  
Pui Wah Poon

Registered address:

20 Wimborne Close  
Epsom  
Surrey  
KT17 4DP

Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee without share capital.

## **Review of activities 2023–2024**

The Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra (ERSO) was founded in 1931 by Ernest Read, the pioneer in the development of music education and youth orchestras.

The charity Music Illuminated was formed in 1998 by ERSO members in order to continue the running of the orchestra following the ending of this role by the Ernest Read Music Association.

ERSO takes great pride in working to a very high musical standard. Over ninety years after the orchestra was founded, the community of musicians who make up ERSO strives to continue Ernest Read's legacy with our charitable work with emerging professional musicians and children together with our core symphonic concerts which aim to illuminate the music to our audiences.

### **October 2023 concert**

The theme of our October concert was great classics. The evening began with the overture to Mozart's Magic Flute expertly conducted by our Assistant Conductor Olivia Tait. We were delighted to present the runner up from the previous ERSO Soloist of the Year, Adam Cubitt. Adam is a hugely talented young cellist who gave an elegant and confident performance of Haydn's Cello Concerto in C. The evening concluded with Beethoven's iconic Pastoral Symphony. Conductor Chris Stark provided illuminating insights into this beloved piece through commentary and excerpt prior to the full performance which was warmly received by our appreciative audience.

### **March 2024 concert – Open your eyes to Opera**

Our "Open your Eyes to Opera" project involved putting on a concert presentation of Ravel's L'Heure Espagnole, the French one-act comedic opera. The project provided valuable developmental experience to young opera singers at the start of their professional careers as well as an engaging and accessible introduction to opera for our audience.

The opera, which has a cast of 5 singers, was chosen as it is suitable for the voices of young opera singers, and because we felt it would be especially engaging for our audience, many of whom were at their first opera, as it is extremely funny and lasts for one hour so we could perform the work in its entirety

To select the singers, we asked the London conservatoires to nominate singers as well as advertising the opportunity via the conservatoire's vocal studies and opera departments. We held a 2-stage audition process (a video round and a live piano round with a professional accompanist). Candidates were asked to submit a CV highlighting relevant experience and a video which was assessed by our Principal and Assistant Conductors. All candidates selected for the live piano auditions were given valuable and detailed feedback on their performance from our selection panel which included committee members as well as our conductors.

We were thrilled to be able to cast five talented young singers and also to be able to appoint a young Director who was able to help our cast to create compelling performances which worked within the physical constraints of the space in the church and also within the modest budget we had available.

### **Outcomes**

The five young opera singers gained the rare and valuable opportunity to take on a significant role, working with a full orchestra and a professional conductor with considerable operatic experience whilst at the beginnings of their professional lives. The singers were each given complimentary tickets and took the chance to invite teachers and professional contacts such as directors and casting agents.

As with all of our Talent Programme projects, we designed the rehearsal process to maximize the benefits of the project for the young singers. We began the process with a piano rehearsal where our Principal Conductor prepared the singers for the orchestral rehearsals. During the project process our Principal Conductor held several invaluable coaching sessions with each singer to help them prepare vocally. The whole cast also had rehearsal sessions with Chris and the Director to work on their characterisation and roles.

Having the opportunity to work with our director helped the young singers to develop their performance skills which will be a huge help and confidence boost in their future work. One of the singers was initially quite hesitant and was incredibly proud to have honed some very impressive comedic skills by the concert day.

*"The rehearsal process and concert were such a lovely, rewarding experience, thank you so much for the opportunity!"*

Phoebe Rayner who played Concepcion

*Congratulations again on a wonderful evening, and thank you for having us to sing with you. These opportunities are so rare and exciting for us!"*

Guy Beynon who played Torquemada

*A lovely performance with @ersolondon on Sunday evening. An audience made up of many people who had not seen an opera before. Brilliant work by everyone, thanks for having me!*

Jack Dolan who played Gonzalve

Members of the public who formed our audience also benefitted from our project. Opera can often be seen as elitist and difficult to understand, and so we spent the first half of the concert explaining the story and introducing the characters with well-chosen musical examples so that the audience became truly engaged and could appreciate some of the key comedic moments. Our Principal Conductor Chris Stark has considerable experience of bringing music to life through his educational work as Principal Conductor of RPS Award-winning Multi-Story Orchestra. We also created surtitles which were moved along by our assistant conductor in time with the music so that in the full performance the audience could understand what the characters were singing.

The church of St Johns Waterloo, where the opera was performed, has an active “Culture Club” which supports local people who are facing hardship (such as asylum seekers, refugees, homeless people, people who live alone etc) through community activities. We were delighted to provide free tickets for 15 members of the Culture Club and were so pleased that they enjoyed the experience.

*“Everyone loved it!, It was very funny and the introduction really helped people relax, and give them permission to laugh!”*

Outreach, Engagement & Development Co-ordinator , St John’s Waterloo

### **June 2024 concert**

The concert began with Overture for Orchestra by Grazyna Bacewicz who is one of the best known Polish female composers. This piece was composed during the German occupation of Poland and while the sense of struggle is never far away, Bacewicz’s optimistic music seems full of courage and strength.

We were thrilled to present the talented winner of our ERSO Soloist of the Year, Laura Kim who gave a virtuoso performance of Saint-Saëns Introduction et rondo capriccioso.

The concert concluded with Shostakovich's dramatic Symphony no 10, widely considered to be a depiction of the Stalin years in Russia. Conductor Chris Stark offered illuminating insights into this unique piece through commentary and excerpts prior to the performance which was clearly very much appreciated by our enthusiastic audience which included a large group from the church’s Culture Club.

### **ERSO’s work with Camden Children**

As a Camden-based orchestra, our work with children and young people is focused within the borough and we have developed a strong and lasting relationship with the Camden Music Service who are restricted in their resources and warmly welcome our work. Engagement with music brings many well-documented educational and social benefits to children, especially to children from disadvantaged backgrounds (very relevant in Camden where 37% of children live in poverty, rising to over half in the poorest wards). Each year we hold two workshops with Camden and we hope that these very positive experiences for the participating children and their parents will encourage them to continue with the children’s extra-curricular music-making. We know from our work with Camden Music that *“offering these performing opportunities with inspiring adult players has led to improved attendance, group retention and recruitment.”*

We are committed to ensuring that our events with Camden children are accessible to children from lower income families and so our workshops and entry to the informal concerts which end the day are always free for all participants and audience members.

Conducting is shared between our professional Principal Conductor and Assistant Conductor and the conductor for the Camden orchestra, so that the children have exposure to a variety of conductors. We pay the fees for the Camden orchestras' conductors for the day as we aim to make these events completely cost neutral for the Camden Music Service as we appreciate that their budgets are extremely limited, and we do not want to detract from any of their other plans.

We break into sectional groups for a part of the day so that the young players can learn more about their parts and their instruments in detail from our young professional section leaders (recruited through our ERSO Talent Programme to lead the string and brass sections), our professional leader, conductor and assistant conductor and the ERSO players.

The workshops are carefully planned in conjunction with Camden Music to ensure that the children are playing for an appropriate amount of time and have suitable breaks, and to make sure that there is sufficient variety in what was happening to keep their interest. We provide cake and biscuits and hot chocolate for the children to enjoy during the breaks.

A key part of all of our children's projects is to ensure that the young musicians feel well supported and able to enjoy both the rehearsal and the performance. To ensure this, each child is assigned an adult buddy who sits next to them and plays from the exact same part to help make it clearer where we were in the music. The buddy is also able to advise on musical issues, answer questions and ensure that they feel supported and able to enjoy the rehearsal and concert experience. We make maximum use of our resources by getting our conductors to provide extra support to children when they are not conducting the orchestra.

Safeguarding is always a key part of the planning process for all of our projects with children. All ERSO players were briefed on our safeguarding policies, which we ensure fit with Camden Music Service's safeguarding policies, and we ensured that we have at least two players with enhanced DBS checks in each rehearsal plus others as back-ups.

### **November 2023 Camden children's workshop**

Our November "I like to move it!" workshop saw ERSO working with the children from the Camden Training Orchestra, the most junior orchestral ensemble offered by the Camden Music Service's Saturday Centre. This entry level group is the children's first experience of regular weekend music-making at the Saturday Centre and provides a pathway for children to progress towards the higher levels of ensembles on offer from the Music Service.

It was agreed with the Camden Music Service that it would be extremely beneficial to the children to spend a full afternoon working with ERSO. We were delighted to be joined by 24 young people, the majority of the Training Orchestra players, who ranged from beginners up to children who are around Grade 4, and who were in years 6 to 10.

We carefully selected three very different pieces of music which complemented our travel related theme, and which were at an appropriate level of difficulty for the young players:

- The BBC 10-Piece arrangement of Delia Derbyshire's *Dr Who Theme*. The BBC 10-piece arrangements are a valuable resource for events of this type as they enable each child to play their part at Beginner, Intermediate or Grade 4-5 level so that each child can be comfortable with the level of difficulty in their part.
- The BBC 10-Piece arrangement of John Adam's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*.
- An arrangement of *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines* created for the Training Orchestra by our conductor Chris Stark.

We liaised with the Camden Music Service to ensure that we understood which children needed extra support due to special needs. Five children needed specific support (a partially sighted cellist who needs to learn the music in advance and children with dyspraxia; dyslexia; ADHD and anxiety) and we made sure that we paired them with experienced adults who could make sure that the children were well supported.

The workshop ended with a free, informal play through for the children's families. Our conductors introduced the music to give context and the children performed incredibly well and were met with cheers from their proud parents. As the workshop took place early in the academic year, it was the first concert for some of the children and we hope that this exciting opportunity will reinforce their enthusiasm for their instruments and playing in orchestral ensembles.

### ***Outcome of the workshop***

The event was very successful - the children who performed with us and their families gave extremely positive feedback, as did the senior team at the Camden Music Service.

*"Thank you so much for this project, and all the projects you bring to us - we are very grateful."* Head of Camden Music Service

We always evaluate the success of each of our children's concert with the participants and their families and ensure that the findings are applied to future projects. We were delighted that the feedback showed that the children who performed with us greatly enjoyed their afternoon, and that their families were extremely grateful for their children to have had the chance to take part in *"such an inspiring and wonderful"* event.

There were some lovely comments about the best thing about the event, with a focus on the music choice; the fun of the afternoon; and the support from the ERSO players.

### **Participants**

- *loved having so much percussion as it was new to us.*
- *getting to know the members of ERSO who were all lovely and getting some tips for my instrument. It was great to play with others and perform.*
- *lots of fun, no pressure to be perfect.*
- *eating cake and playing together.*

### **Parents**

- *Opportunity for our child to get a taste of playing at a high level.*
- *Thank you for giving our daughter this wonderful opportunity.*
- *Learning from players at a high standard – inspiring.*
- *The quality of the adult musicians and the choice of music - challenging and great.*
- *The vitality of the performers, the choice of music, the conductor's introductions and ERSO.*

When asked if we could improve the experience, we were repeatedly told by the participants and their parents : *Nothing! Make it longer! More of the same! Plan this event again! Do it more frequently! More pieces!*

The event achieved our anticipated outcomes:

- the children had the chance to hear how their instruments could sound with practice and what it would be like to play within a larger, more advanced ensemble through sitting side-by-side with ERSO playing a variety of musical styles.
- the experience helped to develop the children's skills as orchestral musicians through working with the ERSO adult musicians and more experienced professional conductors.

#### **April 2024 workshop**

In our Film Music all day workshop we worked with the children from the Camden Sinfonia, the next level orchestral ensembles offered by the Camden Music Service's Saturday Centre. The Camden Sinfonia currently has 25 members aged 12 – 18, ranging from grade 5 to 8 and we were delighted to welcome the majority of the members - to our workshop. This all-day event gave the Sinfonia players the opportunity to work with ERSO on music that was more challenging for the young musicians than their

The Camden Sinfonia currently has 25 members aged 12 – 18, ranging from grade 5 to 8, and we were delighted to welcome the majority of the players to our workshop.

This all-day event gave the Sinfonia players the opportunity to work with ERSO on music that was more challenging for the young musicians than their usual repertoire and to play something that the Sinfonia would not be able to attempt on their own due to key missing instruments (e.g., bassoons, cor anglais, violas and doubles basses). Working with the Sinfonia's conductor and the Camden Music senior team, we considered a variety of types of music to ensure that we selected something exciting and inspiring for the children to play with ERSO. We asked the Sinfonia's conductor to survey the young players, and this led to the selection of three well-known pieces – Star Wars, Frozen and The Pirates of the Caribbean. Despite being extremely popular, these are actually very challenging pieces to play – especially Star Wars – and as there was a considerable volume of music to learn we undertook to print and copy all of the Star Wars parts and sent these to the Sinfonia to practice at a rehearsal prior to the workshop to ensure that the children felt comfortable with the challenge.

Conducting was shared between our professional Principal Conductor Chris Stark, best known as co-founder and Principal Conductor of RPS Award-winning Multi-Story Orchestra, our Assistant Conductor Olivia Tait who is currently working as a Conducting Fellow at St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Sinfonia's conductor Seb Marshall so that the children had exposure to a variety of conductors.

The day was carefully planned in conjunction with Camden Music to ensure that the children were playing for an appropriate amount of time and had suitable breaks, and to make sure that there was sufficient variety in what was happening to keep their interest. We provided cake and biscuits and drinks for the children to enjoy during the breaks.

A key part of all of our children's projects is to ensure that the young musicians feel well supported and able to enjoy both the rehearsal and the performance. To ensure this, each child was assigned an adult buddy who sat next to them and played from the same part. The buddy's role was to advise on musical issues, answer questions and ensure that the children felt supported and able to enjoy the rehearsal and concert experience. We made maximum use of our resources by getting our conductors to provide extra support to children when they were not conducting the orchestra.

We liaised with the Camden Music Service to ensure that we understood which children needed extra support due to special needs. Some of the players were new to the Sinfonia, having just moved up from a more junior ensemble, and these children needed extra help. We also had two children with ADHD and autism who were paired with adults who have experience in dealing with special needs.

Safeguarding is always a key part of the planning process for all of our projects with children. All ERSO players were briefed on our safeguarding policies, which we ensure fit with Camden Music Service's safeguarding policies, and we ensured that we have at least two players with enhanced DBS checks in each rehearsal plus others as back-ups.

The workshop ended with a free, informal play through for the children's families. Our conductors introduced the music to give context and the children performed incredibly well and were met with cheers from their proud parents.

### ***Outcome of the workshop***

The event was very successful - the children who performed with us and their families gave extremely positive feedback, as did the senior team at the Camden Music Service.

There were some lovely comments from the children saying how much they had enjoyed the chance to play such exciting and challenging music; how much fun the day had been and praising the warmth and level of support from the ERSO players. The two young percussion players were especially thrilled to have access to the huge range of percussion instruments that were provided by our percussion team and to have the chance to learn how best to play these. A young trumpet player was thrilled when the first trumpet player – a music student at the Guildhall School of Music and Dance – suggested that he should play all of the trumpet solos and he was really proud of himself to have done this so well.



Parents were incredibly proud of what their children had achieved in such a short amount of time and extremely appreciative that their children had been given the chance to participate with a much larger and more advanced ensemble, and to work with other professional conductors.

When asked if we could improve the experience, we were repeatedly told by the participants and their parents : *Nothing! Make it longer! More of the same! Plan this event again! Do it more frequently! More pieces!*

The event achieved our anticipated outcomes, and we hope that having the chance to work on much more challenging repertoire as part of a large and more advanced ensemble will inspire them to continue to progress with their music and continue to reap the many associated benefits.

## The ERSO Talent Programme

The ERSO Talent Programme was developed in 2017 to bring together all our work with young career musicians. The Help Musicians UK's 2017 Study into musicians' mental health identified precarious finances and work insecurity as top concerns, especially for those new to the profession. The Covid-19 pandemic has placed even greater strain upon young musicians at the start of their careers due to reduced training, development and work opportunities over the last few years. The 2019 report "Help Building Sustainable Careers in Classical Music" commissions by Help Musicians UK stated:

*It is apparent that those first formative years of professional life can be the most challenging for musicians who must juggle auditions, developing networks, continuous practice, learning of repertoire and building up a wide range of non-music skills from project management to finance to marketing.*

The ERSO Talent Programme's purpose is to help young musicians to bridge the gap between formal training and a musical career through the provision of valuable professional experience and mentoring.

In recent years, the ERSO Talent Programme has provided opportunities for emerging orchestral musicians, soloist, conductors and composers. In the 2023-4 season the Talent Programme focused upon:

1. **Opportunities for Emerging Opera Singers** as described above through our Open Your Eyes to Opera project.
2. **Opportunities for female conductors**

Female conductors face greater challenges in becoming established than their male counterparts, and so we created our Assistant Conductor role. Our first Assistant Conductor Tait came to the end of her 2 years in the role at the end of the season. We made contact with the Royal Philharmonic Society who have a prominent role in encouraging female conductors. They were delighted to share our opportunity with the young female conductors that they are in contact. We invited five candidates to interview and selected the two most promising to audition with ERSO and were delighted to be able to select Alice Knight as our new Assistant Conductor.

The Assistant Conductor role is a 2-year role which provides valuable, paid experience to a young career conductor at the beginning of their career and makes a significant contribution to their prospects. Benefits include:

- Being mentored by Chris Stark, who is highly regarded and has extensive experience of working with professional orchestras and amateurs, and in many genres of music.
- Getting regular hands-on experience working with a larger group of musicians than is often possible at a conservatoire in a variety of styles of music.
- Working with a high-quality amateur orchestra, which is highly likely to be something that a working conductor will do in their career, and which can require different approaches than working with the trained professionals that they work with at their conservatoire.
- Learning about how best to plan and manage a concert programme and rehearsal schedule.

### **3. ERSO Soloist of the Year 2024**

The ERSO Soloist of the Year competition began in 2018 and is an annual event which provides emerging soloists with the valuable and rare opportunity to rehearse and perform a concerto with a full symphony orchestra. The competition is open to players who have played in at least one concert with ERSO during the season, widening the eligibility to many music students, post-graduates and professional musicians at the start of their careers. Candidates audition for a panel of Committee members, our professional leader and conductor. All candidates are given feedback upon their auditions.

The panel selected two Finalists who shared a half day of rehearsal time with ERSO and Chris Stark after the orchestra had spent a half day rehearsing each of their chosen concerti. This was a huge opportunity as the young soloists were given the chance to work on a movement of their concerto with a full orchestra and receive valuable advice and insights from our professional conductor and leader which will help them to develop their performances in the future. The winner Laura was awarded the invaluable opportunity of performing as a soloist with ERSO in our June concert and also a £150 fee. Winning the competition and gaining this concerto experience is an extremely valuable to the winner's CV.

Reaching the Final of the competition also makes a significant difference to the young musicians – since the competition began over two thirds of the finalists have been engaged as soloists by ERSO which has helped to boost their CVs and led to extra work.

We ask participants for feedback about the competition and learnings are incorporated into the plans for future years.

### **4. Paid Section Leader roles**

The Paid Section Leader scheme began in 2016 with the aim of supporting emerging orchestral players. These 2-year developmental positions (Deputy Leader, Principal 2<sup>nd</sup> Violin, Principal Cello and Brass Leader) have proved to be extremely successful and beneficial to the role holders.

The roles provide aspiring professional musicians with valuable experience of leading, coaching and managing their sections and they benefit from mentoring from our professional leader and conductor. The roles also give valuable arts administration experience through being a member of ERSO's Committee, helping to manage the running of the orchestra and contributing to the future

plans for the orchestra including helping to plan and deliver our ERSO Talent Programme and education projects with children.

The Section Leaders are appointed through a rigorous process every 2 years on a rolling basis to preserve continuity of the team and enable new section leaders to learn from more experienced role holders. Shortlisted candidates are invited to auditions, designed to be similar to those for professional orchestras, which include prepared orchestral excerpts, sight-reading together with an interview to assess the candidates' suitability to undertake the organisation and coaching elements so integral to these roles. Each candidate is given formal feedback to help with their preparations for future auditions in their professional lives. As with all our projects, we continuously monitor the success of these roles through feedback from conductors, our Leader and the role holders.

The ERSO Section Leader roles provide valuable, paid experience to emerging professional musicians at the very beginning of their careers and makes a significant contribution to their prospects by boosting their CVs.

## **Notes to the financial statements**

### **1. Constitution of the scheme**

Music Illuminated is a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Acts and is also registered as a charity. Accordingly, there is no share capital.

Music Illuminated is governed by a Memorandum and Articles incorporated on 17 December 1998, as amended by Special Resolution registered at Companies House on 20 May 2016.

### **2. Accounting policies**

#### **2.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements**

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention.

#### **2.2. Income and expenditure**

Direct income from musical activities, in the form of ticket and other sales and subscriptions, is included and accrued in the accounting period to which it relates.

Donations and grants are also accounted for in the period to which they relate. Donations and grants totalling £4,000 relating to projects in the 2023/24 season were received during 2022/23.

Payments representing basic rate tax reclaimed from HM Revenue & Customs under the Gift Aid scheme are accounted for in the period during which they were received.

Ticket sales and related expenditure in respect of the season starting after 31 August are carried forward to the following accounting period.

#### **2.3 Donations by waived charges**

The orchestra receives the benefit of much unpaid assistance, reduced charging rates and other benefits in kind. These benefits are not reflected in the accounts.

### **3. Taxation**

No charge to direct taxation arises, because Music Illuminated is a registered charity and therefore exempt from corporation tax.

## **Report**

### **Principal activities and review of activities**

The principal activity of Music Illuminated is the provision of concerts and to provide a training orchestra of a high standard.

A summary of the results for the year is given on page 13 of the accounts.

### **Directors**

Matthew Saunders, Fiona Cairney and Pui Wah Poon served as directors throughout the year.

### **Audit**

Due to Music Illuminated's status as a small company, exemption from audit is requested. Voluntary audit may be sought in future years.

### **Independent Review**

These accounts have been reviewed by Kathryn Ellis, ACA.

Director's signature



Matthew J Saunders

## Income and expenditure for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

	£
<u>Turnover</u>	
Income from musical activities	3,549.91
Direct expenses	-1,266.50
Concert-related expenses	-26,059.00
Net deficit from musical activities	<u>-23,775.59</u>
Bank charges	-
Deficit before other income	<u>-23,775.59</u>
<u>Other income</u>	
Donations	27,850.15
Gift Aid	572.27
	<u>28,422.42</u>
Profit for year	<u><u>4,646.83</u></u>

## Balance sheet as at 31 August 2024

	£
<u>Current assets</u>	
Cash at bank	41,674.54
Cash/cheques in hand	-
Receivables: loans to MIP due within one year	22,500.00
Debt reduction	-26,059.00
Opening balance at MIP	22,814.24
Debtors	<u>19,255.24</u>
	<u>60,929.78</u>
<u>Fixed assets</u>	
Tangible assets	-
<u>Current liabilities</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	-
Donations and grants received in advance	-
<u>Net assets</u>	<u><u>60,929.78</u></u>
Funded by: accumulated funds	56,282.95
Profit for period	<u>4,646.83</u>
	<u><u>60,929.78</u></u>

#### Audit Exemption Statement

For the period ending 31 August 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

#### Directors' responsibilities:

- The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476;
- The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts;
- These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the micro-entity provisions and delivered in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Director's signature



Matthew J Saunders