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Lichfield Gospel Choir Annual Report 2023 - 2024



On Reflection - Gerbo Huisman



It's a privilege to be allowed to write the introduction to our Annual Report 2023-2024, a report which reflects another successful and inspirational year of singing (and dancing), either amongst ourselves in universally enjoyable rehearsals (a weekly highlight for many), or in front of an always enthusiastic audience.

I am intending to keep things short this time (I know I can go on a bit sometimes), specially as significant contributions to this annual report by Kate (all you need to know about social media, our website and surveys), Andy (reflecting on wonderful events in exciting locations), Mike (as always ensuring our financial health) and Themba tell you all you need to know (and feel; i.e. an enormous amount of justified personal and collective pride in being part of something special)

It's great to work with a group of talented people in our committee who clearly just love everything choir related and put an awful lot of time and effort in making it possible for the choir to function as it does, and this makes life as chair very easy and enjoyable.

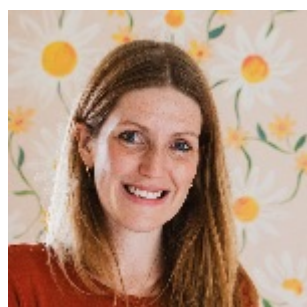


So many people outside the committee also contribute what they can when needed, (transport, storage, stage building, making photos, baking cakes etc), whilst the contributions of all members (through your voices, through friendships, through your enthusiasm) are essential in making the choir as successful and meaningful and a source of inspiration and support for many as it is.

sharing the recognition and appreciation of the incredible dedication, energy and inspiration provided by our two Music Directors. Having an extended period without the “distraction” of performances in the first part of 2024 with plenty of time to learn exciting new repertoire has been good for the choir. The continuous improvement in what we manage to achieve is evident, if only through what have now become customary affirmative and encouraging comments by Themba during our rehearsals. How lucky are we to have Gabriella and Themba making their way from (and back to) London on a weekly basis, not because it is a job, but just because they love being part of our wonderful choir, believe in us, and enjoy sharing their unique talents with us.

Whilst singing and performing within LGC remains a source of great joy and inspiration also for me, I remain very grateful to be able to serve it as its chair.

Favourite Things - Kate Slater



One of my favourite things about running our social media is getting to share the wonderful things people post after a concert. Instagram is probably where this happens most, but there's sometimes great feedback on Facebook too! As always, it's lovely to have your photos and snippets of videos so please do keep them coming!

In the run up to a concert, alongside promoting it on our website, socials and mailing list, I usually design a new printed flyer or poster to spread the word to friends, colleagues, family and wherever we can distribute them. Selling tickets online via our own website has proved successful and we now offer this as an option to our hosts. This year I also tried printing tickets for one of the concerts so we could take cash alongside online payments, but it's an evolving process and trying to keep the sales system streamlined can be a challenge!



Our newer members should already have discovered the treasure trove of resources in the website Members' Area. The diary is usually as up-to-date as it can be (we rarely plan very far ahead!) and the Members' Gallery is handy if you're trying to remember new names. It's worth highlighting that the learning tracks are a relatively recent addition; although there are now about 20, the library certainly doesn't contain our full repertoire. Pre-pandemic we didn't have anything like this — in fact you can work out which are the very first 'virtual choir' performance tracks because Themba sings all the parts and they still have the "1,2, 3, clap..." instruction at the start for synching sound to video!

Zoom rehearsals began for the same reason; a lifeline when we were all stuck at home, they continued to support those who weren't yet ready to return in-person. It wasn't long til everyone became so used to being able to join on Zoom or catch up on YouTube that we decided to keep it going, but, as I'm sure you're all aware, it's not without its hiccups! Sound quality is never going to be perfect, although I understand it's usually better live on Zoom before it's compressed by YouTube. Also, because my phone is the one set up in front doing the recording (we usually use Emily's as a co-host 'monitor' to let people into the meeting) it means that if you are having any issues you need to contact someone else you know is at rehearsal rather than me, as I obviously can't access my phone until it's over.

I'm grateful for your patience with all the surveys! With over 100 members they're a necessary piece of the admin puzzle, especially when we're trying to plan concerts. The good news is that I've just discovered (albeit rather belatedly) that I can set them up to send a confirmation email when you've completed the form, which should make things clearer in future.



Finally, a huge thank you to Phil Barnes for all his wonderful photos! Phil regularly puts up with my *many* impossible requests ("I'd really love a photo where everyone is singing AND smiling. And dancing. And maybe with a dark background so I can overlay text? And could you hide that giant crucifix... and in fact perhaps just ask them all to form a human pyramid because I think that would look best on the poster..."). Phil also takes photos for the members' gallery, if yours is missing or you'd like an update, do let us know!

You can find us:

www.lichfieldgospelchoir.co.uk/members (password: gospelchoir)

Instagram: [@lichfieldgospel](https://www.instagram.com/lichfieldgospel)

Facebook: [Lichfield Gospel Choir](https://www.facebook.com/LichfieldGospelChoir)

And please do encourage your friends to sign up to our mailing list online [here](#).

Events Review - Andy Paterson



It's been a thrilling year so far! However, for this Annual Report, much of our recent high-profile excitement falls outside the period in question, so let's just remind ourselves what we achieved and enjoyed in the year up to March 2024!

First off, Themba & Gabriella turned in a successful musical workshop at St Michael's Primary School, resulting in our concert at Ss Peter & Pauls church (SSPP) on 14 July, where we were joined by pupils from the school, singing their confident hearts out and proving that you need neither age or experience to sing well!

On 23rd July, we again formed a significant part of Community Spirit on the prestigious stage at Symphony Hall, adding our collective voice to an all-embracing collection of Midland community choirs.



In August, we took to a less familiar outdoor stage at The National Memorial Arboretum for the Windrush celebration. Here we sang alongside a gathering of other choirs, bands and troupes of dancers, all performing to an invited and appreciative audience of Windrush VIP veterans from around the UK.

September saw us again singing outdoors, in the slightly more relaxed and bucolic surroundings of Woodhouse Farm for our own Summer picnic. Despite the informality of the occasion, Themba & Gabriella didn't stint in their musical leadership, gathering us for a delightful medley of our favourites, sung with gusto beneath an exceptionally blue summer sky.



October saw us back at SSPP, for what has become an almost traditional autumn concert, this time in aid of local charity, Pathway Project. Between us – and thanks to Kate Slater's tireless web skills on the ticketing front - we managed to fill the pews to capacity and raised both our voices and funds for a worthy cause.

An early festive concert in November for The Thomas Project in Aldridge saw us again filling the hall with Christmas spirit – where dancing in the aisles also seems to be the natural reaction to our uplifting spirituals in this particular location!

A busy December had us singing alongside our formative patrons, Black Voices, for a Christmas Extravaganza in the acoustic splendour of Birmingham Town Hall. This was followed almost immediately with our 'Very Gospel Christmas' performance at St Martin in The Bullring in aid of Mary's Meals and then – with little breathing space between - onwards to a 'Families Together' concert back in the Town Hall.

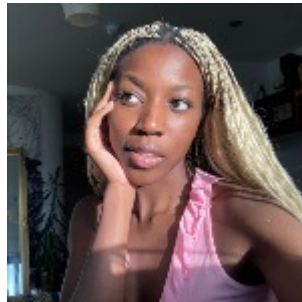
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Early 2024 was thankfully a little quieter, allowing us an uninterrupted run of Tuesday evening rehearsals at SSPP – with Themba & Gabriella coaxing the best out of us with their inimitable and wholly enjoyable energy and direction, thank you both, as ever!

And finally, thanks must also again be extended to Soprano Janet Gibson, in whose garage we store all our staging – and to Ian Weetman, whose manoeuvring skill with a trailer full of the stuff needs to be seen to be believed. Long may it all continue, thank you!

Music Directors' Review

Themba Mvula & Gabriella Liandu



It's really wonderful to look back over the past year and remember each of the concerts and projects we've been a part of. Every year seems to bring something new and exciting for us. One particular highlight was performing at St. Martin's in the Bull Ring in Birmingham—a brilliant and

entirely new venue for us, with a new audience - and we went down a storm!

Another special moment was when the children from St. Michael's joined us for a concert at SSPP. It worked so well and was memorable for entirely different reasons. Supporting Black Voices at Birmingham Town Hall was also a fantastic experience, and particularly meaningful, given their importance to us as a choir and how much they've supported and championed us over the years.

However, the real standout from this past year isn't any one concert or event—it's the remarkable growth of the choir itself. The uplift in musicality, vocal development (each section has improved in its own way and has never sounded so good!), and the overall quality of our performances have been incredible. We've tackled a range of new material, some of which was quite tricky, and we've risen to the challenge every time.

This progress is down to the enthusiasm and willingness of our members to throw themselves into everything we do. Whether it's getting to grips with a new rhythm, learning a song in a new language, or launching into whatever new exercises we come up with each week, our members are the driving force that makes Lichfield Gospel Choir so unique.

You, our members, are the reason we keep moving forward to bigger and better things every year.

Financial Report - Michael Jones



The opening balance carried forward was £3,639.90. The total income received in the year 2023/24 was £27,891.71 and the total expenditure was £27,228.05. This gave a surplus of £4,303.56 as at the 31st March 2024.

The money received from subscriptions was slightly higher than in 2022/23 (up from £14,124.00 to £14,940.00 - an increase of just under 6%) The monies paid out for Music Directors and the hire of the venue for rehearsals increased from £15,243.08 to £22,314.06. (an increase of 46%)

This figure includes covering the costs of two Music Directors, travel for Themba and Gabriella, plus the hire of St Peters and St Pauls church for rehearsals. In addition to the above an amount of £1,707.10 was paid to Ray and Ian for accompanying the choir at four concerts.

As highlighted in last year's Financial Report, income was not covering expenditure and this has continued to be the case in 2023/24. This gap has widened during the last 12-month period.

The choir received a payment of £7,099.02 from our Gift Aid claim during this period which - as you can see from the accounts - covered much of the increased expenditure. However, that was backdated over a four-year period, so moving forward any further claims would only be for one year.

The choir has been fortunate to keep subscription rates at £12.00 for a number of years but as mentioned in last year's financial report it looks very likely that monthly subscriptions will have to rise to cover the monthly shortfall of income against expenditure which is currently not sustainable.

Once again we are grateful to Kate Farrington who kindly agreed yet again to act as Honorary Independent Examiner for the choir's accounts this year.

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		£		£	
BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD					
Opening Cash		0.00			
Opening Bank		3,639.90			
Subs		14,940.00	Musical Directors Expenses	20,154.06	
Gift Aid Relaimed		7,099.02	Accompanists Fees for Concerts	1,707.10	
Ticket Sales		3,499.50	Room hire	2,160.00	
Concert Fees		1,900.00	Donation	34.89	
Coach Fares		337.00	Coach Hire	395.00	
Miscellaneous		80.00	Sundry	181.29	
Bank Interest		36.19	Equipment	1,521.54	
			Printing, advertising & website	445.89	
			Zoom subscription & data	305.28	
			Making Music Subscription	323.00	
			Closing Cash & Bank from reconciliation	4,303.56	
		31,531.61		31,531.61	0.00
I approve these Accounts as correct and accepted by the Committee					
	M Jones				
I certify these Accounts as examined by me.					
	C Farrington				

Committee & Charity Trustees



Above (l to r): Gerbo Huisman, Chair. Emily Bacon, Secretary. Michael Jones, Treasurer. Kate Slater, Digital Media Officer.

Below (l to r): Cat Ghaffoori, Charity Commission Officer. Andy Paterson, Events Officer, Kate Courage, Social Events Officer. Hilary Ford, General Officer. Henry Drake, General Officer.



2024 Election Schedule

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Name	Position	Elected in	To serve until	Available for re-election	Post open for elections
Gerbo Huisman	Chair	2021	2024	yes	yes
Emily Bacon	Secretary	2021	2024	yes	yes
Michael Jones *	Treasurer	2022	2025	n/a	n/a
Andy Paterson	Events	2022	2025	n/a	no
Kate Slater	Digital Media	2023	2026	n/a	no
Kate Courage	Social Events	2023	2026	n/a	no
Cat Ghaffoori	Charity Commission	2021	2024	no	yes
Hilary Ford	Member Rep	2022	2025	n/a	no
Henry Drake	Member Rep	2023	2026	n/a	no

**Note: Michael Jones has given notice to retire in 2024 but has agreed to stay on until new candidate is available.*

Secretary:

112 Gaia Lane
Lichfield
WS13 7LS

Treasurer:

38 Bracken Close
Lichfield
WS14 9RU

Bank:

Lloyds TSB Bank plc
Burton-on-Trent branch
PO Box 1000
BX1 1LT

Registered Charity No:

1153553

If you would prefer a hard-copy of this Annual Report, please request one from any member of the Committee or by e-mailing lichfieldgospelchoir@gmail.com

Lichfield Gospel Choir is a Registered Charity No: 1153553

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