

Introduction

This report covers the most significant aspects of the administration of Opera Viva from 22nd January 2025 when the new management team took office. A separate financial report will be tabled by the treasurer and therefore this report does not cover any financial matters in any detail.

The number of trustees is small and this presents profound difficulties – it has been a problem for a number of years and puts an undue burden on those individuals who serve as trustees and are also performing members of the society.

1. Governance

- 1.1 The last AGM held in January was finally concluded, after the first AGM of 2023/24 held in September 2024 was not able to proceed due to issues raised by members.
- 1.2 Through an unfortunate oversight, all three of the current trustees had served for more than 3 consecutive terms of office and according to the constitution should have retired and sought re-election the following year. This left the organisation in a very difficult position which was resolved by 3 new trustees being elected. There was also an amendment proposed to the governing document which was approved by the members to allow the 3 trustees who were required to retire to be co-opted back as trustees at the next meeting of the new management team.
- 1.3 All 3 former trustees were invited back to serve as co-opted trustees, but in the event and for completely understandable personal reasons only one agreed to serve again.
- 1.4 The new trustees invited members to become trustees, but no members came forward.
- 1.5 The new trustees (of which Philomena Golding was appointed Chair) also dissolved 'The Committee' as there seemed to be confusion around the roles and responsibilities of non trustee members meaning that the power to make decisions was once again fully vested in the trustees.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the new management team did find it difficult to obtain information as part of the 'handover' and this did impede progress. This problem seemed to be largely due to the fact that there had been no one fulfilling the secretarial role to the committee for a considerable time, however Ros Purcell agreed to take on the function of 'Committee Secretary' in an attempt to both improve communication between committee members and in the dissemination of information to members. WhatsApp and direct emails to members have been the regular methods of communication, as well as announcements at rehearsals.
- 1.7 Similarly, there was no designated 'Membership Secretary' and this provided problems with obtaining an up-to-date 'Register of Members', something that is a requirement as part of our charitable status. In time the 'Committee Secretary' also took on the role of the 'Membership Secretary' and full records are now in place.
- 1.8 The Charity Commission were informed of relevant changes to the constitution and the change of trustees. During the year four trustees were appointed and one resigned.
- 1.9 The Trustees Annual Report (TAR) and annual accounts were showing as being well overdue when the new management team came into office and were filed as soon as possible by the new team. The TAR and annual accounts for the year 203/24 were uploaded well ahead of the deadline and we are completely up-to-date with compliance as a charity.

2. **Membership**

- 2.1 According to records provided by the treasurer and incorporating these with the membership forms provided by both the outgoing chair and the treasurer there were 23 members. However, 2 were non fee paying and there were others who were technically 'lapsed', as in the absence of a secretary, no annual fees reminder had been sent out.
- 2.2 Six members withdrew from the company during the year for the following reasons:
- 2 members withdrew for personal reasons (1 non performing)
 - 1 due to work commitments
 - 2 due to a combination of other activities and distance *and*
 - 1 no response received
- 2.3 Four new members were recruited during 2025 and joined us for our 2 spring / summer concerts.
- 2.4 All members from 2024/25 received an invitation to renew their membership of the company for 2025/26.
- 2.5 A recruitment drive during the summer break resulted in 5 former members rejoining and 2 new members coming forward.
- 2.6 Going into the 2025/26 season there are currently 23 members, plus 1 expected to join.
- 2.7 There appeared to be a historical issue of some singers performing at concerts, but there being no record of their membership, nor did they pay any subs. Now that the role of 'membership secretary' has been re-established, this situation should no longer arise.

3. **Productions**

- 3.1 The trustees sought relevant information in considering the ability of the company to stage a programme of concerts for the remainder of 2025 and took into account the following:
- Due to the difficulties around holding a properly constituted AGM, the situation became unsettling for everyone and partly as a consequence of this there was no firm concert programme in place and singer availability hadn't been confirmed
 - The Artistic Director did not wish to continue in the role and made this clear before the first attempt at holding an AGM in September – there was no one willing to fill this role
 - The musical director had indicated that he was moving on to undertake a further course of study in London
 - There was a lack of vital paperwork available
 - The financial situation was unclear
- In these circumstances the trustees in conjunction with the MD's agreed that the 2 concerts at the Neston Festival and Crosby Choir Festival would be honoured, but no other concerts could be held until the organisation was in a more stable situation and plans could be put in place for the 2025/26 season.
- 3.2 Alison Davies was appointed as Interim Musical Director in March, taking over from Ben Draper. We are grateful to Ali for taking on this role and for all of the work that she has undertaken in preparing the repertoire and supporting the singers. Her appointment was confirmed by the trustees in July 2025 under an initial 1 year agreement.

- 3.3 Robert Chesters has continued as rehearsal and concert accompanist and we are most grateful to him for both his diligence and expertise.
- 3.4 Rehearsals continued to take place at The Mormon Church on Wednesday evenings.
- 3.5 Auditions were re-introduced to provide fairness to all members.
- 3.6 Briefing Notes were introduced to help performers know what to expect at venues, the dress code required etc.
- 3.7 Light 'staging' was arranged for both of the concerts at Neston and Crosby together with trying to incorporate a more 'professional' approach to the chorus numbers when entering and leaving the stage.
- 3.8 Risk assessments were carried out for the concerts at Neston and Crosby.
- 3.9 Under the previous management team an Opera Supper was held at St. Mary's College on 26/10/24. The 2 concerts that took place at Neston and Crosby produced extremely positive feedback and an invitation to appear again in the coming years.
- 3.10 We have now compiled a list of current venues and contact details for potential productions.

4. Publicity Profile - Social Media, Website and Other Digital Platforms

- 4.1 It proved very difficult to obtain log in details for accounts held in the name of Opera Viva and it is only very recently that it has been possible to do so. All log ins are now held by 2 trustees and the Committee Secretary.
- 4.2 Website – whilst OV pay a modest amount for 'hosting', this does not cover regular postings to the site. Again, only recently have log in details been acquired and it should now be possible to post notices, change content etc.
- 4.3 We are grateful to Maria Guidera for continuing to support the company by taking photographs and videos of our performances. All performing members are now asked to sign a permission form to use any photographic images taken of them and used for publicity purposes.

5. Membership of Outside Bodies

- 5.1 NODA – once again, it was very difficult to obtain details of log ins etc. Whilst it was relatively easy to make contact with our local representative (once the information was provided by the outgoing trustees), accessing the national site proved more problematic. After considerable effort new log ins were obtained and records updated accordingly.
- 5.2 Sefton CVS, Performers Network – the Committee Secretary made contact with Sefton CVS (Peter McColgan was the previous contact person) and these details were updated accordingly.
- 5.3 The Committee Secretary met with a former trustee who handed over various historical log in details etc of various accounts, a number of which are now no longer relevant.

In conclusion, it has been a year to try to consolidate, regroup and move forward, but there will be a significant financial loss this year (greater than in the past 2 years) and this is not sustainable.

There is an excellent programme devised by the MD for 2025/26, but we are now a much smaller company than we were, we need everyone to help at some level, or we will not be in a position to survive in the long term.

OPERA VIVA
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2025

INCOME

Ticket sales	871.96	
Neston concert	500.00	
Crosby concert	200.00	
Raffles	79.00	
Bar profits	<u>112.87</u>	
		- 1763.83
Subscriptions		1817.00
Donations		1325.00
Bonus ball		107.00
Subscriptions 2025/26		<u>320.00</u>
		<u>£5332.83</u>

EXPENDITURE

Singers	150.00
Pianists	1900.00
Singing master/mistress	2304.00
Caretaker St Marys	100.00
NODA subscriptions	90.00
Insurances	533.90
Sundries	16.20
Storage	480.00
Catering	379.76
Web hosting	<u>120.00</u>
	<u>£6073.86</u>

<u>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</u>	<u>£(741.03)</u>
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