

ECHO VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Registered Charity number 1186162

TRUSTEE ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Registered Address

2 Ellesmere Close
Caversham
Reading
RG4 5HG

Trustees

Sarah Ralphs	(chair)	From 5 November 2019
Nick Jackman		From 5 November 2019
Matthew Neudegg	(treasurer)	From 5 November 2019
Daniel Sargeant		From 5 November 2019
Naomi Taylor		From 5 November 2019
Thomas Hansell		From 8 June 2023
Jonty Dawson		From 7 September 2023

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

For the period ending 31st March 2023

Our Objectives

Echo is a professional vocal ensemble that aims for both excellence and accessibility, presenting the highest quality music in the least pretentious way possible. We aim to inform, entertain, and inspire audiences across the UK, while getting every audience singing. We want to explore the full range of what ensemble singing can achieve, including improvisation and multi-disciplinary collaborations, while aiming for musical excellence at all times, and are committed to reaching a varied and extensive demographic with our work.

Our aims are to:

1. Innovate within the sector of ensemble singing
2. Reach a diverse audience and break down barriers within this art form
3. Achieve artistic and musical excellence

In particular, we are keen to challenge the preconceptions and traditions that can sometimes be associated with choral music in the UK - the fixed association with the church, the 'seriousness' of western classical repertoire and its presentation, and a critical approach to the idea of a 'fixed' historical canon. By doing so, we aim to reach the widest possible audience and allow them to engage in a meaningful way with music through inclusive experiences.

Our measure of success is gauged by the audience, participant and artist reaction to each event, and the number of new audiences and participants we can reach each year.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

For the period ending 31st March 2023

Review of Performance

Premiering new creative practices and collaborations

Music and Words

At the very beginning of the year (April 1st), we celebrated our 5th Birthday with a programme celebrating music and spoken word. We performed alongside two wonderful artists who we have collaborated previously: firstly, acclaimed poet Roger McGough, whom we initially worked with at Ryedale Festival in 2018, and secondly, vocalist and spoken word artist Aminita Francis, who we joined forces with in 2021 for the Listening to Lassus project. We intend for these long term artistic collaborations to continue (see Education section, below).

Bats and Echolocation

Over the course of 22/23 Echo collaborated with artist Hermione Spriggs on a project based around research into bats, inspired by echolocation (in which bats use sound and the way it echoes off surrounding surfaces to map a space). This took on a number of forms, including:

- A number of days improvising with Echo singers, developing experimental vocal techniques to “echolocate” as humans, to map the surrounding space without the use of sight.
- A recording of some of those sounds, which were used as part of a piece of public art (a sculpture) on Jesus Green in Cambridge
- In February 2023, we hosted a public workshop at the Grant Museum in London as an extension of this work. This was well received, and fully sold out.
- A day of workshops and performances brought together vocalists, artists blind/visually impaired researchers and audiences to engage with artworks at the Behold exhibition through the mediums of sound and touch. We ran this session with Hermione Spriggs and researcher Harsha - Balasubramanian and invited audience members for a daytime workshop.
- A free gallery performance at Hypha studio in March 2023. A good proportion (c. 60%) of audience under 30 in one of our most representative shows to date in terms of audience; particularly in reference to protected characteristics of age, and disability (the performance was targeted at visually impaired and blind artists and audience members).

Ikon Gallery / Ragnar Kjartansson

We produced this in collaboration with Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, showcasing a site-specific artwork by the Icelandic performance artist Ragnar Kjartansson. ‘A Sky in a Room’, which spanned 10 days from 25th June-3rd July.

Broken Chord at Sadlers Wells

In March 2023, Echo made their Sadlers Wells debut in collaboration with choreographer Gregory Maqoma and composer Thuthuka Sibisi - a performance called Broken Chord, inspired by a South African Choir who visited Britain and the USA in 1891.

The project was a wonderful and inspiring performing experience, in which sixteen of our singers collaborated on stage throughout the show with Maqoma and an incredible quartet of performers from his company. The production offered an opportunity for artistic development for our singers, featuring vocal improvisation, acting, and dance. It was also our biggest external contract yet, employing 17 freelancers over 6 days. Audience data is held by Sadlers Wells, but the show reached audiences of 1000+ both nights.

Education

A collaboration between Echo Vocal Ensemble and the Royal College of Music Junior Department. It was designed to inspire the 15 young composers at the RCMJD (aged 12-18), giving them crucial access to professional performers and feedback, alongside a platform to create and share new work. We also involved poet Roger McGough to work with the students on writing their own poetry for the project.

After an introductory workshop with our conductor Sarah on Writing for Voices, the young composers were set a challenge to write a short piece for SATB choir. Once the pieces were at a draft stage, we worked with students for a full day, giving them crucial feedback on their compositions in progress, and enabling them to experiment with new ideas in person ahead of the final concert.

The final concert took place on Saturday 26th November, and featured 10 of the compositions from the project. The project was a chance for vital links to be made between aspiring young people with those in the industry.

Touring

Chasing the night

In December, Echo put together a new programme called 'Chasing the Night', which celebrated the winter solstice. Following one midwinter night as it fell across the world, the programme featured music from Poulenc, Britten and Rachmaninov alongside contemporary pieces by Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Shruthi Rajasekar and Shivani Rattan.

The performance toured to Kings Place, London (15 December), Birdsall House, Yorkshire (19 December) and included a BBC In Tune Christmas Special (20 December) - both live and broadcast. At Kings Place, we collaborated with vocal duo Ganda Boys, pianist Chris Glynn and tabla player Shri Gadhvi, exploring the unique blend of folklore, religion, magic and tradition that midwinter brings.

We reached 750 audience members live across the tour alongside many more as part of the radio broadcast. We also received some good media coverage for the project, including a five star review of the Kings Place concert from The Arts Desk and a Video of the Day from Gramophone Magazine.

Online content / recording

Over the course of the year, we created several filmed videos in collaboration with Danny Sewagudde and Denis Muggaga, the Ganda Boys. Following this, the Ganda Boys featured as special guests for our Kings Place gig in December.

In November, we spent a day recording new music by Bristol-based composer John Barber. This was our second time working with John, having recorded a number of his pieces earlier this year in March, and the two days together make up an album worth of music which will be released commercially in 2024.

Financial Review

Over the course of the period, the charity had a surplus of £2,215.

At the end of the period, the charity has unrestricted funds of £18,363, and zero restricted funds.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

For the period ending 31st March 2023

Governance

Echo Vocal Ensemble is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered on 5th November 2019. The Trustees approved the Echo Vocal Ensemble Constitution, which serves as the governing document of the charity.

Trustees

Trustees are appointed to the board of the charity to manage the affairs of the CIO. The board must comprise no fewer than three trustees.

New trustees must be appointed by a resolution of the existing trustees for a term of two years. Any new trustee will be judged on the basis of their skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the charity.

Management

Responsibility for the day-to-day management of the charity is held by two co-artistic directors, who report on performance to the board.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF ECHO VOCAL ENSEMBLE

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Echo Vocal Ensemble (the charity) for the 12 months ended 31 March 2023.

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 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 Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.



Stephen Rennison

January 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the 12 months ending 31st March 2023

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2022
	Notes	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:							
Donations	2	6,286	-	6,286	12,578	-	12,578
Charitable activities	2	38,473	-	38,473	50,319	-	50,319
Other		-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Income		44,759	-	44,759	62,897	-	62,897
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities		(42,250)	-	(42,250)	(56,856)	-	(56,856)
Administration expenses		(295)	-	(295)	(423)	-	(423)
Other		-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure		(42,544)	-	(42,544)	(57,279)	-	(57,279)
Net surplus/(deficit) for the period		2,215	-	2,215	5,618	-	5,618
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		16,148	-	16,148	10,530	-	10,530
Total funds carried forward		18,363	-	18,363	16,148	-	16,148

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 31st March 2023

	Notes	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		24,119	16,750
Debtors	3	6,161	7,366
Total Assets		30,280	24,116
Current liabilities			
Creditors	4	(11,917)	(7,679)
Deferred income	5	-	(288)
Total Liabilities		(11,917)	(7,967)
Funds of the Charity			
Unrestricted Funds		18,363	16,149
Restricted Funds		-	-
Total Funds		18,363	16,149

APPROVED BY


Sarah Ralphs

Chair of Trustees

On behalf of all of the trustees

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the 12 months ending 31st March 2023

1 Accounting policies

Basis for preparation

These accounts are prepared on an accruals basis in compliance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), and with the Charities Act 2011. We consider the charity to be a going concern and the accounts have been presented accordingly.

2 Recognition of income

Income is recognised when the charity becomes entitled to the resource and it is likely that the charity will receive the income.

Echo Vocal Ensemble recognises two main types of income:

Charity Activities	Income related to specific events, performances or services (for example ticket sales)
Donations	Income related to general support for the charity and its operations, including 'Friends' memberships.

Any income outside of these parameters is considered 'Other Income'.

Restricted funds are income committed to the performance of a particular event or series of events. Currently Echo does not have any restricted income.

3 Debtors

At 31st March 2022, Echo Vocal Ensemble had £6,161 (2022: £7,366) of debtors related to charitable activities.

4 Creditors

At 31st March 2022, Echo Vocal Ensemble had £11,917 (2022: £7,679) of creditors related to day-to-day expenses.

5 Deferred Income

The 'Friends' membership scheme switch from being an annual membership to a regular donation scheme in 2022 and therefore no new deferred income was accrued (2022: £288).