

Choral Evensong

Choral Evensong Trust Annual Report *Charitable Activities and Accounts – 1 January 2022 – 31 Dec 2022*

Introduction

The Choral Evensong Trust promotes the traditional Church of England service of choral evensong. Choral evensong is a unique British tradition and an important part of our cultural heritage, dating back to 1549 as set out in Archbishop Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*. We formed the charity during the Covid pandemic, as it had silenced many of our cathedral and church choirs. It is of utmost importance to promote, preserve and re-generate this valuable tradition by encouraging and enabling attendance.



*St Wulfram's Church Choir in Westminster Abbey.
Used with kind permission of the choir.*

Evensong is important for four main reasons:

- Encourages engagement with our heritage: Evensong provides an ideal gateway for experiencing our church heritage and an appreciation of our historic religious buildings, introducing congregations to the beautiful 16th-century words of Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* and the many uplifting and beautiful musical settings of the Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis and Psalms.
- Provides a spiritual and musical experience for free: Evensong provides a high quality, free, musical and spiritual experience, inviting people of any and no religion to enter our magnificent cathedrals, chapels and churches (without an entry fee!) and spend a moment of reflection and calm.

- Maintains our strong choral tradition: Its popularity and perpetuation benefit young choristers across the UK who learn its musical requirements and develop a life-long relationship with this part of our heritage, as well as becoming many of our leading professional musicians.
- Improves wellbeing: many studies show that choral singing has a positive impact on our personal wellbeing. The combination of beautiful music and language within inspiring surroundings away from our daily worries serves as a meditation and respite for many.

“Choral Evensong gladdens the heart, ravishes the ear, and restores the soul – my favourite way of spending an hour with glorious music in a glorious building.” John Rutter, composer and conductor.

Our primary aim is to increase the number of people attending choral evensong and to this end we have set ourselves the aim of increasing attendance to choral evensong across Britain and Ireland.

Need

There are over 750 cathedrals, churches and college chapels in the UK that regularly sing evensong. These services are free to attend, even those that take place in major tourist attractions such as King’s College, Cambridge, or Westminster Abbey. However, information about each institution’s services is not always easy to find or necessarily top-of-mind to those unfamiliar with evensong.

Around 37,000 people attend a cathedral service each week (Church of England Research & Statistics, 2019), roughly half of those attending a midweek service (generally Evensong). Attendance to cathedral services has remained relatively stable over the last decade but we would like to see an increase. A further 1.1m people regularly attend a church service each week (Church of England Research & Statistics, 2019). However, this represents a fall of an average of 3% between 2014-19, and by between 15% and 20% between 2009 and 2019.

We would argue that high quality choral music, especially evensong, is a significant draw for many to attend a service who might not otherwise, because its music and poetic language appeals to those of any and no faith. Needless to say, attendance across the 2020-21 period was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and choral music silenced for long periods. This important cultural tradition is endangered, and the beauty of the music and language will be lost if we do not do all we can to educate the public and encourage engagement and thereby increase demand. In addition, the service of Evensong can be an appealing entry point for people unfamiliar with what happens in churches, due to its greater emphasis on poetic words and music than other services.

“Choral Evensong” has been broadcast by the BBC for nearly 90 years and claims to be the longest running radio outside broadcast in the world. 250,000 people listen to the two transmissions each week and invariably we receive many messages of appreciation for the beauty of the music and the timeless quality of the words.”

Stephen Shipley, BBC Senior Producer

Our Work

Searchable Listings Website

Much of our work through this period has been around updating and building resilience for our core output: *choralevensong.org*. The maintenance of information to ensure that service times, links to resources, and information about churches and choirs is accurate is key to ensuring that the website retains relevance and continues to aid its users.

To this end, the Choral Evensong Trust's Website Director, Joseph Priestley worked with Beachshore Design Ltd, the Trust's web developer, to enable a full audit of every church on the site. New functionality allowing the website's events to be exported has created an independent backup of event data, hosted on Google Sheets, which then allowed data to be checked line by line. The end result was that over 900 events were checked by rigorously trawling church's websites, A Church Near You (The Church of England's web presence for its churches), and social media sites to update our central database of events.

The result allowed the CET to build a picture of how the service of Choral Evensong had 'bounced back' after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 724 services audited, 98 were untraceable online and were thus made inactive on *choralevensong.org*. Happily, we were able to chart the reemergence of several services that had been in abeyance through the pandemic, and we are beginning to see the number of services slowly returning to their pre-pandemic levels.

This work has been vital to ensuring the viability of the Trust going forwards.

Alongside updating the existing website, significant investment was made in developing a new site, built on the open-source Content Management System, WordPress. Efforts were made to duplicate the functionality of the existing site whilst modernising the design and allowing future improvements at a reduced cost. However, we reverted to the existing site, first developed in 2015, as it has stood the test of time and shall continue as our primary platform until such a time as an open-source replacement, such as WordPress, can match it in functionality.

Live streaming of choral services

The Choral Evensong Trust's database of streamed services continues to drive growth in audiences for regular online worship. Whilst most of the livestreams of Choral Evensong were established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of churches for worship, many have continued beyond this period and continue to grow their audience numbers. This was noted in the Cathedral Music Trust's *Cathedral Music Review*.¹

Alongside work to audit physical services of Choral Evensong, the livestreamed offer has also been audited and updated on *choralevensong.org*. We will continue to monitor changes to the offer of livestreams as churches, chapels and cathedrals continue to adapt to post-pandemic realities and a return to in-person worship. This makes it easy for people around the world who might not be able to attend in person to instantly watch and listen to Evensong from their desk.

¹ Cathedral Music Review 2022. Retried 29th October 2023

(<https://www.cathedralmusictrust.org.uk/Common/Uploaded%20files/Uploads/Cathedral%20Music%20Review%20June%202022%20FINAL.pdf>)

Fundraising

We were granted £2000 by the Prayer Book Society, and £900 by our founding trustee Rupert Sheldrake.

Choral Evensong Receptions

One drinks reception at St Mary Magdalene Parish Church, Newark, after a well-publicised evensong, was made possible by a £200 donation from our Trust, which resulted in a full church and many more locals experiencing evensong, many for the first time.

Contact

Contact info@choralevensong.org (email) / [@choralevensong](#) (social media)



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
THE CHORAL EVENSONG TRUST

No (if any)
1190208

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date
1/1/2022

To

Period end date
12/31/2022

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	2,905	-	-	2,905	12,775
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	2,905	-	-	2,905	12,775
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	2,905	-	-	2,905	12,775
A3 Payments					
Fundraising costs	-	-	-	-	790
Advertising & Marketing	329	-	-	329	3,615
Website costs	2,720	-	-	2,720	2,499
Accountancy fees	120	-	-	120	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	3,169	-	-	3,169	6,904
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	3,169	-	-	3,169	6,904
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 264	-	-	- 264	5,871
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	5,871	-	-	5,871	-
Cash funds this year end	5,607	-	-	5,607	5,871

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at Bank	5,607	-	5,871
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	5,607	-	5,871
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	Agreement Error
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Guy Hayward	10/31/2023	