



# Association of Teachers of Singing

Trustees Annual Report 2024

For the year ending 31 December 2024

## **Introduction**

2024 has been a full year for AOTOS, punctuated by two successful national conferences, in July and November. We made significant modernisations both to the way we look and the way we operate with the launch of our new brand and website, backed up by a change to our Customer Relations Management system to the industry standard platform Hubspot. The year was rounded off by the transition to using the QuickBooks Online accounting platform, allowing all our systems to align. These changes, taken together enable us to be ready to look forward and innovate as we move into 2025, our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

## **1. Objectives**

The objective of the charity is to advance, facilitate and promote education in the teaching of singing and connected subjects for the public benefit.

In the furtherance of the above objective, the Association will act by:

- (1) bringing together teachers of singing and other interested persons at annual national conferences and regional events;
- (2) providing, or assisting in the provision of, teacher training initiatives and courses; and
- (3) disseminating knowledge of the practice and theory of the teaching of singing

## **2. Activities**

Professional development lies at the heart of our organisation with two main streams of activities: early career training and continuing professional development (CPD).

Early career training is offered through our Essentials teacher training course, which continues to be popular with member and non-members.

CPD offerings are focused on a combination of national conferences, regional professional development days, an online series of webinars for members and a range of publications including regular newsletters, our annual review magazine and our new Voices of AOTOS publication.

Additional information regarding each of these can be found in the relevant sections below.

### 3. Administration

Trustees (CIO Charity Commission number 1190787)

Edwin Pitt Mansfield	Chair and Past Chair (from 21 July 2024)
Pamela Sharp	Chair Elect and Chair (from 21 July 2024)
Nicola Jane Kemp	Past Chair (until 21 July 2024) and Councillor at Large – Chair Elect Liaison (from 18 August 2024)
Carrie Birmingham	Conference Director and Chair Elect (from 21 July 2024)
Jan Spooner Swabey	Secretary (until 21 July 2024) and Councillor at Large – 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Liaison (from 18 August 2024)
Sarah Taylor	Central Area Representative (until 21 July 2024) and Secretary (from 21 July 2024)
Charlotte Mendly	Central Area Representative (from 21 July 2024)
Julie Thompson	North Area Representative
Jenna Brown	South West Area Representative
Louisa Barry	South East Area Representative (resigned 1 November 2024)
Emily Gray	South East Area Representative (from 1 November 2024)
Kathleen Coubrough	Scotland Area Representative (until 21 July 2024)
Fiona Shelfer	Scotland Area Representative (from 21 July 2024)
Janet Shell	Communications Director (until 21 July 2024)
Robert Lines	Councillor at Large – Online Events (until 21 July 2024) and Communications Director (from 21 July 2024)
Joy Turner	Teacher Development Director
Louisa Morgan	Editor
Zoe Turner	Councillor at Large – Pods and Singers (until 21 July 2024)
Laura Thomas	Councillor at Large – Corporate Partnerships (from 21 July 2024)
Nicola Bowley	Councillor at Large – EVTA and NYC (resigned 1 November 2024)

#### Support Team

Georgia Barrington	Administrator
Stephanie Blake	Accountant
Ian Anderson Gray (Select Performers)	Webmaster (until 28 June 2024)

#### Principal address

The Gateway, 85-101 Sankey Street, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 1SR

#### Independent examiner

Caladine Limited, Chantry House, 22 Upperton Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1BF

#### Structure, governance and management

The Association of Teachers of Singing is a CIO, formed on 1 November 2020. The governing document is available on our website [www.aotos.org.uk](http://www.aotos.org.uk).

The trustees are listed above and are normally elected by members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to form the council of trustees which manages the Association. There were four meetings in total during 2024; two online (14 January and 13 April) and two held in person (19 July and 1 November). The Association is primarily based in England and Wales, but runs occasional events in Scotland and has strong links to the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA). We welcome any singing teacher who wish to join, regardless of geographical boundaries.

Trustees are elected for a term of office, which is three years in all cases apart from the Chairs who occupy a six-year cycle, as defined in the constitution.

## **Training**

The main training offering is currently our online Essentials course which continued to run successfully throughout the year. Courses are usually well subscribed and we offer bursaries for those that wish to attend but require additional financial support.

During 2024 as well as running the standard format course (weekly sessions online over 5 weeks) in both the Spring and Autumn terms, we also trialled an online intensive course in the first quarter as well as an in-person training day in June. Both were well received.

Efforts have been made to recruit additional course leaders to enable the course to continue to be run on a regular basis to keep up with demand.

Discussions regarding the development of further training courses are ongoing.

## **Continuing professional development**

Our Continuing Professional Development offering for members and non-members remains a core activity of the Association and during 2024 we held a number of face to face and online events.

Online training events were offered free to members. These events covered a wide range of topics including intentional practice, voice therapy, high performance coaching, conducting for singing teachers, ageing voices, and emotion in singing.

Three in person regional professional development area days were held across the country. The North area hosted an event on teaching authentic pop improvisation and harmony with BexX. The South West area hosted a day on practical approaches to teaching contemporary singers with Heather Baker. In Scotland, Kathleen Cronie lead a day focused on breaking down barriers to inclusion for singers.

Unfortunately, due to lack of take-up, planned area days in the Central and South East areas were cancelled.

Attendance at regional area days continues to be well below pre-pandemic levels. Engagement with membership suggests that these events are still valued, but this has not translated into bookings. Discussions are ongoing as to how we best serve members and non-members across the regions with appropriate events.

A residential summer conference was held at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July. The conference was well attended and the increased networking opportunities created by a residential conference were well received and appreciated by members. Bookings for the conference exceeded expectations meaning income from the event covered costs by a significant margin.

Our one-day Autumn Conference was again held at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, with a focus on Breathing. We trialled moving the conference from the Sunday to the Saturday due to issues with Sunday public transport in recent years. This proved successful and the conference was well attended.

Both conferences included abstract presentations to continue supporting links with the latest developments in voice and vocal pedagogy research. This initiative is proving very successful and we plan to continue this as part of our ongoing conference programmes.

We continue to produce a number of publications for members throughout the year, including regular newsletters and an Annual Review magazine. In June, we published the first Voices of AOTOS, an online and print compilation of the abstracts presented at our national conferences.

The launch of our new website includes a new resources area where all publications and online event recordings can be made available to members, as part of their membership benefits. The new site allows us greater control over the content of this section, and is an area we plan to continue to develop over the coming months and years.

An online survey of members was conducted over the summer to understand the wants and needs of the membership. The outcome of the survey has fed into our planning for future events.

## **Networking**

Our online members only Facebook group continues to be an active source of networking and support for the membership. Area Representatives also continue to engage with members in their local areas. It has become increasingly clear that the pod system of smaller groups of local members has not been utilised in recent times and therefore the decision was taken to stop supporting these groups from an administrative perspective for the time being. Discussions are ongoing as to how we can best provide networking opportunities for members which are accessible to them, be that online or in person.

## **Partnerships**

2024 was a big year for turning AOTOS' operations to face increasingly outwards. Our work began with more talks with our closest partners. Discussions were held with the British Voice

Association (BVA) to consider ways our organisations can support each other, including the possibility of joint events. This led to conversations with the Mark Allen Group publications about ways to raise AOTOS's profile including for AOTOS to be one of the featured organisations for Music Teacher Magazine's 2025 Health and Wellbeing column.

Contacts were solidified with St Paul's Girls' School through their newly appointed Director of Partnerships whereby this long-standing relationship was strengthened and extended through discussion of shared interests.

A new relationship was also developed with the Royal Ballet and Opera (formerly Royal Opera House) as the venue for the Association's 50th Anniversary Summer Conference and also to find common interests for future closer relationships between the two organisations including in the areas of healthy singing, music education, and outreach to include better pedagogy and research.

Connections were also made with Making Music to discuss the expansion of AOTOS's operations, as well as renew our commitment to Making Music's Singing Network.

These partnership changes have proved to be vital in a post-lockdown climate, where singing teachers are losing income - exacerbated by the adding of VAT to Independent School fees - and in which they are less able to pay for CPD and other events. AOTOS hopes that these partnerships will provide more numerous and more economical ways to serve our community.

With the appointment of a new Trustee with responsibility for Corporate Partnerships, we are looking again to build relationships with these and other organisations within the sector. To this end, we will be exhibiting at the Music and Drama Expo in Jan 2025.

### **European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA)**

The spring 2024 EVTA meeting was attended online by two members of the AOTOS council, with the stimulating discussion focused on the direction of the next Eurovox conference. This relationship was further strengthened through in person attendance at the EVTA Council meeting, held in September alongside PEVOC in Santander, Spain. The cost to have two in person attendees at this meeting was outweighed by the benefits of raising the profile of AOTOS within our international community. Cultivating more face-to-face relationships, enables us to bring our organisations ever closer as we seek to pursue common goals across borders.

### **Support team**

Our support team is vital to the smooth running of the organisation.

Our accountant oversees our fiscal position, advising on how best we can use the resources at our disposal. This allows us to create activities that benefit the members, whilst being financially responsible.

Our administrator manages our membership database, supports our trustees, liaises with the membership, creates content for our website and print publications and helps to manage online events.

2024 saw some significant changes in our operation, with the launch of the new brand and website, supported by a move to the new Customer Relations Management (CRM) system (Hubspot) for our membership database and finally a transition to QuickBooks Online for our accounting.

The transition to these new, industry standard platforms gives us confidence in both the data security and longevity of the technologies we are using to support our operation. Thanks must be made to Granite 5, who built our new website and supported our transition to Hubspot. They continue to provide web hosting and support. Additionally our thanks to GeminiBlue for their consultancy support in setting up and effectively using our new hubspot CRM. As we move forward with these new platforms we would like to express our huge thanks to Ian Anderson Gray of Select Performers who developed and hosted our original website and have provided much support to AOTOS over the past 15 or more years not least by driving us to embrace the opportunities created by engaging online with our membership and beyond. Thanks also to Caladine for setting up and supporting our transition to QuickBooks online. Final thanks go to our Administrator and Accountant for their work in making these transitions possible.

## **Membership**

At 31 December 2024, we had 663 standard paying members and 16 corporate members.

We also had non-paying members as follows:

67 students, 6 reciprocal corporates, 5 honorary presidents, 8 honorary life members, 22 emeritus members and 8 associate members.

## **Financial review**

The receipts and payments account for the year is listed on pages 7 and 8. The result is an excess of payments over receipts of £12,853, largely due to costs associated with the new website. The Association's total reserves (all unrestricted) stood at £88,444 at 31st December 2024.


## **Reserves**

It is the policy of the Association always to have one year's running costs in reserve. We also have a bursary fund which allows members who may be undergoing financial difficulties to apply for bursaries covering membership and events.

## **Public benefit**

The trustees believe that the activities outlined above meet the Commission's requirements.

Signed by order of the trustees



Pamela Sharp, Chair.

Approved by the Trustees - 23 June 2025

## Receipts and Payments Account for the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2024

Funds:		Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 Total	2023 Total
		£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
	Notes				
Legacies		45.33		45.33	7,268.44
Operating Activities					
	Subscriptions	38,984.00		38,984.00	41,293.33
	Gift Aid Tax Repaid	-		-	4,635.81
	Summer (Annual) Conference	20,106.50		20,106.50	12,483.14
	Autumn Conference	3,965.00		3,965.00	3,970.00
	Online Events / Area Development Days	1,490.00		1,490.00	4,025.00
	Teacher Training (Essentials)	5,345.00		5,345.00	5,705.00
	Publications (Magazine) Income	-		-	-
	Designated Funds Income	-		-	-
	Miscellaneous (advertising and donations)	620.75		620.75	478.30
Interest Received		1,701.13		1,701.13	2,391.54
Total Receipts		<u>72,257.71</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>72,257.71</u>	<u>82,250.56</u>
<b>Payments</b>					
Costs: Activities					
	Summer (Annual) Conference	15,519.64		15,519.64	7,902.01
	Autumn Conference	2,115.86		2,115.86	3,537.26
	Magazine and Publications	3,514.00		3,514.00	7,960.00
	Online Events / Area Development Days	2,206.60		2,206.60	4,880.48
	Teacher Training (Essentials)	4,676.04		4,676.04	3,469.00
		<u>28,032.14</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>28,032.14</u>	<u>27,748.75</u>
Support					
	Advertising and PR	4,793.16		4,793.16	2,453.85
	Subscriptions	2,450.22		2,450.22	2,796.78
	Sundry	698.80		698.80	811.61
		<u>7,942.18</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,942.18</u>	<u>6,062.24</u>
Management					
	Meetings Expenses	2,097.77		2,097.77	1,323.28
	Travel	3,797.03		3,797.03	3,306.84
	Printing, Stationery and Telephone	286.97		286.97	172.58
	Postage and Carriage	153.05		153.05	182.69
	Administration	19,442.91		19,442.91	16,237.57
	Book-keeping	5,411.99		5,411.99	5,761.86
	Independent Examination	1,008.00		1,008.00	792.00
	Website and Database	13,826.48		13,826.48	19,395.00
	Legal and Professional fees	419.00		419.00	35.00
	Bank Charges	1,039.22		1,039.22	1,052.50
	Insurance	1,023.26		1,023.26	987.07
	Sundry	631.58		631.58	124.40
		<u>49,137.26</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49,137.26</u>	<u>49,370.79</u>
Total Payments		<u>85,111.58</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>85,111.58</u>	<u>83,181.78</u>
Net Receipts/Payments		(12,853.87)	-	(12,853.87)	(931.22)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net monetary assets at start of period		101,298.82		101,298.82	102,230.04
Net monetary assets at end of period		<u>88,444.95</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>88,444.95</u>	<u>101,298.82</u>

## Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2024

Cash funds	31/12/2024	31/12/2023	31/12/2022
Current accounts	1,097.44	651.56	1,045.63
Deposit accounts	86,439.02	99,761.60	100,166.61
Bursary account	907.71	381.09	765.87
PayPal account	0.78	504.57	207.67
Stripe account	-	-	44.26
Total cash funds	<u>88,444.95</u>	<u>101,298.82</u>	<u>102,230.04</u>
This is split into:			
Unrestricted funds	88,444.95	101,298.82	102,230.04
Restricted funds	-	-	-
	<u>88,444.95</u>	<u>101,298.82</u>	<u>102,230.04</u>

## Debtors and prepayments

Prepayments

- - -

## Liabilities

Independent examination accrual

850.00

828.00

Other creditors (SPGS)


1,240.00

-

## Receipts &amp; Payments Clarifications: [a] Archive storage and bursaries

Trustee Expenses - Note 1: During the period, 15 Trustees were reimbursed a total of £4,229.97 for out of pocket expenses

Approved:


  
Pamela Sharp

Chair

23/06/25


  
Stephanie Blake

Accountant

Date: 2/7/2025



## **Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of the Association of Teachers of Singing**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Association of Teachers of Singing ("the Charity") for the period ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 7 to 8.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the trustees of the Charity 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 Charity'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:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with those records

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.



**Colin Dadswell FCA FCCA DChA**

Caladine Limited  
Chartered Certified Accountants  
Chantry House, 22 Upperton Road  
Eastbourne, BN21 1BF

Date: 03/07/2025