

THE HIGHTGATE CHORAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES' REPORT 2022/23

Charitable Objects

The objects of the Charity are the advancement of arts and culture, in particular the art and culture of music, by the presentation of concerts and other ancillary activities. The Charity pursues its objects principally through holding public concerts, but also undertakes additional activities to support the local community and engage with other charities and schools in our area. The Trustees of the Charity are aware of the general guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. They have regard to this guidance in deciding what activities the Charity should undertake.

Constitution

Highgate Choral Society, originally founded in 1878, has been registered in its current form as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commissioners under charity registration number 1191240 since 11th September 2020.

Musical Activities

After a somewhat nerve-racking 2021/22 season – thanks to the continuing presence of Covid, I am delighted to report that Highgate Choral Society's 2022/23 season ran smoothly. As well as our usual five concerts, we held a successful international singing tour to Leiden and Delft in the Netherlands, we sang in several concerts in central London for commercial promoter Raymond Gubbay and we joined the North London Symphony Orchestra as guest choir for a performance of Beethoven's Ninth in June.

As usual, our repertoire over the season included a mix of popular choral works and lesser-known pieces – including Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Garden of Proserpine*, a rarely performed work which we sang in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. We also premièred two pieces, both composed by our musical director and conductor, Ronald Corp OBE. The first was the world première of his *Symphony No 3*: the second, a first performance for HCS of *Music*, a short piece with words taken from a poem by Walter de la Mare.

We are particularly grateful to Ron for his boundless patience, enthusiasm and inspirational musical direction over the year. He challenges us with his varied programme selections and we benefit so much from his extraordinary musical knowledge and the insights he gives us, both in rehearsals and in his pre-concert talks, into the works we perform. We are also grateful to Alexander Wells, our accompanist, not just for his piano-playing talents, but for rising above the inadequacies of the piano he has to play on.

Our first concert of the 2022/23 season was held on Saturday 12th November 2022 at All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak. In honour of the 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams' birth, we sang *The Garden of Proserpine*, a rarely performed piece in which the composer sets Swinburne's tragic pre-Raphaelite poem to music. We are deeply grateful to the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust for their generosity in supporting our performance.

HCS musical director Ron Corp then conducted the world première of his *Symphony No 3*. The piece, which is dedicated to the memory of his late friend and long-time HCS member Naomi Lobbenberg, deals with the darkness and grief he experienced at her passing.

The final piece, sung by the choir, was Mozart's *Requiem in D minor* (K626). The composer was writing this beautiful piece of music as he lay dying and, although it was commissioned by Count Franz von Walsegg to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of his young wife, Mozart came to believe that the music was for his own funeral. Indeed, the opening *Requiem aeternam* and *Kyrie* movements were virtually complete at the time of Mozart's death, and it is thought they were performed at his own requiem in Vienna. Mozart's wife, Constanze, then commissioned Mozart's pupil Franz Süssmayr to complete the work.

For the concert, we were joined by the New London Orchestra and talented soloists Eleanor Pennell-Briggs (soprano), Emma Jüngling (mezzo soprano), Henry Ross (tenor) and Sam Evans (bass).

Our second concert, on Saturday 3rd December 2022, was our ever-popular, sell-out Family Carols where we sing together with the choir of St Michael's Church of England Primary School. They brought a particularly joyous and enthusiastic element to the concert and their contribution was enjoyed by one and all. At the end of the concert, we held a bucket collection for two local charities nominated by choir members, Food Bank Aid and Highgate Newtown Community Centre. Thanks to the generosity of choir members and our audience, they managed to raise an astonishing £1,410 – a record for us – and each went home with £705 for their coffers.

For our March concert, which took place on Saturday 11th March 2023, we sang Johann Sebastian Bach's magnificent choral work, the *St John Passion*.

In 1723 Bach moved to Leipzig where his duties as newly appointed Kantor included composing the music for the city's two principal Lutheran churches. Written probably during Lent in 1724, his *St John Passion* was first performed in the church of St Nicholas on Good Friday, 7th April 1724. It was heard four times during Bach's lifetime, each time with substantial alterations.

The *St John Passion* sets the dramatic Passion story of Christ's trial and crucifixion as told in the Gospel of St John. The Biblical text at its core is drawn from the Lutheran translation and is sung by the tenor taking the role of the Evangelist.

Scored for mixed choir, soloists and orchestra, the rich structure of this 'oratorio-Passion' includes: two monumental choruses that open and close the work; the Gospel narrative describing scenes in the Kidron Valley, Caiaphas' palace, the Garden of Gethsemane, Pilate's quarters, Golgotha and the burial site; solo arias that contemplate and comment on the unfolding events; and simpler chorales representing the response of ordinary congregations hearing the Passion story.

The choir was joined by the New London Orchestra, soprano Lucy Hall, mezzo soprano Catherine Hopper, tenor William Morgan, baritone Timothy Nelson and bass Dingle Yandell.

Moving on to our Spring concert, we sang a mix of French, German and English music, including the ever-popular Duruflé Requiem, on Saturday 20th May at St Michael's Church, Highgate. The choral work, dedicated to the memory of Duruflé's father, is an adaptation of

the Gregorian *Missa pro defunctis* (Mass for the Dead) that draws its musical themes from the original Gregorian chant. It was completed in September 1947 and was first heard two months later on French Radio. Modelled to some extent on Fauré's *Requiem*, the work is in nine movements and is distinguished by its calm, meditative atmosphere and subtle, richly expressive modal harmonies. With its emphasis on 'the idea of peace, of faith and of hope', Duruflé omitted most of the liturgical *Dies irae*, but included part of the *Pie Jesu*, as well as the *Libera me* and *In paradisum* from the burial service. Duruflé's sensuous harmonies suffuse every note with feeling; and while the fluid rhythm of plainsong is essentially incompatible with modern bar-lines, the composer instinctively overcame this obstacle to create a work of unimpeachable integrity, a miraculous synthesis of old and new. 'This Requiem is not an ethereal work which sings of detachment from human concerns,' he said. 'It reflects, in the unchanging form of Christian prayer, the anguish of man faced with the mystery of his final end.'

Like the Mozart *Requiem*, Duruflé's version was performed at his own memorial service in 1986 as a tribute to his life and work.

The choir also sang *God is Gone Up* by Gerald Finzi, Duruflé's *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, and Brahms' *Geistliches Lied*.

Our two young soloists, mezzo soprano Carolyn Holt and baritone Mark Nathan, both sang solos: Carolyn performed *Softly and Gently* from Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* while Mark sang *Lord God of Israel* from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Edward Batting, our organist for the concert, also played two organ solos: *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* by Brahms and *Chorale prelude St Ann's* by Parry.

Our last concert, on Saturday 9th July 2023 at All Hallows, was an eclectic mix of comparatively recent music. As a choir, we sang that beautifully engaging jazz mass – Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* – accompanied by the outstanding vocals of soprano Sarah Gabriel, and backed by double bass, drums and piano. We also sang – for the first time – *Music*, our musical director, Ron Corp's lovely setting of a Walter de la Mare poem. We were also treated to an opportunity to hear Simon Blendis, leader of the London Mozart Players and one of the UK's most sought-after violinists, accompanied by his wife Saoko on piano, introducing and playing a selection of Max Jaffa Favourites on Max's own violin made in 1704.

The concert was dedicated to Father David Houlding who was retiring as vicar of All Hallows', Gospel Oak, after nearly forty years in the parish.

Summing up the concert, Ron Corp said: "This was a wonderfully joyous finish to our busy year. We are very lucky to have been able to include Simon and Saoko's unique insight into the world of Max Jaffa and have them perform six of his greatest numbers, that many people will remember from the days of the Palm Court Orchestra broadcast on the BBC.

"We are also delighted to be performing Will Todd's *Mass in Blue* which is a particular favourite of the choir and to be celebrating with Father Houlding who will be sadly missed by all who have worked with him in the All Hallows' area."

Another highlight of the 2022/23 season was the HCS tour to Leiden and Delft where we sang in three stunning churches – the Hooglandeskerk and Hartebrugkerk in Leiden, and the Maria van Jessekerk in Delft. The trip was a huge success, thanks to a team of very hard-working

choir members led by trustees Ursula Taylor and Emily Finch, and in fact our soloist on the trip, mezzo soprano Emma Brown, who lives in Leiden, came to the UK and sang the alto part in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at our November 2023 concert.

HCS members also sang in various Gubbay events, including *The Messiah* at the Royal Festival Hall and Beethoven's Ninth at the Barbican.

Overall, audience attendance was similar to the previous year but perhaps had not continued to revive quite as fulsomely as we had hoped post-Covid.

Governance

The administration of the Charity is the responsibility of the Trustees who are all unpaid members of the Charity elected by its members in accordance with the constitution.

During the year Charlotte Goss had resigned as a Trustee and at the AGM on Monday 15th May five others resigned and did not choose to stand for re-election – Julia Irvine, Andrea Sylvester, Siobhan D'Gama, Andrea Sabbadini and Cindy Walters. Four new Trustees were elected – Michael Church, Michaela Drapes, Felicity Dirmeik and Janet Floyd. This brings the current number of Trustees to thirteen.

The Trustees meet regularly amongst themselves, and also with our Musical Director who is not a Trustee, but is invited to attend our meetings. The Trustees have met throughout the year both in person and virtually.

The Trustees met six times during the year to consider and make decisions on future musical plans, the financial position of the charity, the membership, operational matters and key policies appropriate to the running of the choir.

Membership

Membership numbers ended up at a very healthy 197, slightly ahead of the previous year. It seems that any uncertainty born of Covid has largely been left behind. Of these 155 were full paying members for the whole year, the balance comprising those who joined part way through the year or took advantage of our under 35 and unwaged subscription rates.

Finance

The result for the year was a very satisfactory surplus of £3,381, allowing us to carry forward a cumulative reserve of £48,702 and a Commissioning Fund balance of £13,881. Ticket prices remained the same, whilst subscription rates rose by 4%. As ever, the Trustees are mindful of the inexorable rise of costs and the limitations on being able to increase income commensurately.

Independent Examiner

We are very grateful to chartered accountant Richard Morris, our independent examiner, for all the support and advice he has given us over the year.

Acknowledgements

At the end of my first year as Chair, I would like to express my grateful thanks to the many Trustees and other choir members whose voluntary labours keep us running to such high levels

of achievement. But above all may I thank Andrea Sylvester for her 13 long years of service to the choir in many roles and as Trustee and, in particular, Julia Irvine of equal longevity in as many roles and latterly as Chair overseeing our transition from unincorporated to incorporated charity and steering us through the vicissitudes of Covid so seamlessly. I am also most grateful to Julia for agreeing to and continuing to write the weekly newsletter which is the highlight of our week.

Last but not least I would like to thank all of our members who have given me such encouragement and welcome as Chair. My thanks to all of you for helping to make this such a lovely and rewarding choir to belong to.

Conclusion

This has been a good year for the choir. We have sung some great music, and we have had a successful and enjoyable tour to the Netherlands. We look forward to continuing our efforts to reach the highest standards in musicality, and to bring our music to as wide and diverse an audience as possible.

Ashitey Ollennu
Chair
Highgate Choral Society
10th March 2024



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Highgate Choral Society	Charity N ^o	1191240
Annual accounts for the period		
1st September 2022	to	31st August 2023

Section A Statement of financial activities

	General Funds	Designated Commissioning Fund	Total Funds	Total Funds Last Year
Income				
Concert Ticket Sales	24,731		24,731	25,220
Programme Sales	1,654		1,654	535
Programme Advertising	2,030		2,030	200
Membership Subscriptions	44,074		44,074	40,828
Friends	2,160		2,160	2,415
Donations/Bequests	100		100	110
Sponsorship	3,100		3,100	2,250
Gift Aid Tax Recovery	8,840		8,840	8,945
Bar Sales	3,767		3,767	2,707
Refreshments Net Income	800		800	305
Music Hire Income	3,265		3,265	1,438
External Concert Promoters Income	2,920		2,920	4,570
Benslow Weekend Income			0	13,364
Tour Income	43,244		43,244	0
Commissioning Fund Income			0	0
Sundry Income	520		520	275
Total Income	141,205	0	141,205	103,162
Expenditure				
Concert Costs	58,113		58,113	64,189
Programme Costs	4,072		4,072	1,966
Rehearsal Costs	23,513		23,513	22,840
Bar Costs	972		972	1,837
Music Hire Costs	2,852		2,852	847
Bank & Card Charges less Interest	123		123	249
PRS Royalties	388		388	299
Insurances	323		323	307
Making Music Annual Subscription	365		365	365
External Concert Promoters Costs	1,536		1,536	2,227
Benslow Weekend Costs			0	12,653
Tour Costs	42,870		42,870	0
Commissioning Fund Costs			0	2,250
Depreciation	514		514	475
Sundry Costs	2,183		2,183	1,019
Total Expenditure	137,824	0	137,824	111,523
Income less Expenditure	3,381	0	3,381	(8,361)
Transfers between funds	0	0	0	0
Net movement in funds	3,381	0	3,381	(8,361)
Funds brought forward	45,321	13,881	59,202	67,563
Funds carried forward	48,702	13,881	62,583	59,202

Section B

Balance sheet

	General Funds £	Designated Commissioning Fund £	Total Funds	Total Funds Last Year £
Fixed Assets	1,583		1,583	2,097
Current assets				
Debtors (Note 19)	50		50	170
Cash at bank and in hand (Note 24)	56,420	13,881	70,301	63,849
Total current assets	56,470	13,881	70,351	64,019
Creditors (Note 20)	9,351		9,351	6,914
Total net current assets	47,119	13,881	61,000	57,105
Total net assets	48,702	13,881	62,583	59,202
General Funds	48,702		48,702	45,321
Commissioning Fund		13,881	13,881	13,881
Total funds	48,702	13,881	62,583	59,202

Signed by two trustees on
behalf of all the trustees

Ashitey Ollennu, Chair

Luke Randolph, Treasurer

Signature	Date of approval dd/mm/yyyy
	25/1/2024
	25/1/2024



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees	The Highgate Choral Society		
On accounts for the year ended	31st August 2023	Charity no (if any)	1191240
Set out on pages			

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/08/2023.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

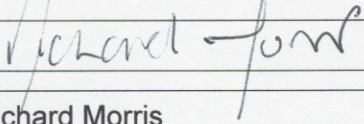
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did 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..

Signed:  Date: 23 December 2023

Name: Richard Morris

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Associate member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Address:

8 Holt Close
London
N10 3HW