

## **THE HIGHGATE CHORAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES' REPORT 2023/2024**

### **Charitable Objects**

The objects of the CIO 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 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **Musical Activities**

I am delighted to report that Highgate Choral Society's 2023/24 season was a great success. As well as our usual five concerts, we held a sold-out weekend choral workshop at Benslow Music Trust in Hertfordshire, and we sang in concerts in Central London for commercial promoter Raymond Gubbay.

As one of the choir's objectives is educational – both for us and the local community, we like to ensure that our repertoire over the season includes a mix of popular choral works and some lesser-known pieces. For instance, over the year we sang pieces by Bizet, Boulanger, Hadyn and Salieri that do not get as much airing in concerts as they deserve.

We are hugely grateful to our musical director, Ronald Corp OBE, for his inspirational musical direction and his patience and enthusiasm in teaching us. He challenges us with his varied programme selections, and we benefit so much from his extraordinary musical knowledge and his insights into the works we perform – which he shares with us, both in rehearsals and in his free pre-concert talks to which members of our audience are invited.

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. For much of the season, he was forced to use a gadget of his own devising to prop up the broken music stand on the rehearsal piano so he could actually play the music.

We held our first concert of the 2023/24 season on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak. We performed the great Romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn's last major work, the monumental and dramatic oratorio, *Elijah* (Opus 70).

Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847) had long aspired to build on the success in 1837 of his first oratorio, *St Paul*, with a work recounting the Old Testament story of the prophet Elijah. The impetus he needed came in 1845 with an invitation from the committee of the Birmingham

Music Festival to provide music for the next year's event. With the assistance of his friend Julius Schubring, Mendelssohn prepared a libretto in German, and then worked in close collaboration with his chosen translator, William Bartholomew, to create the English version. The first performance, conducted by the composer, took place in August 1846 in Birmingham Town Hall. The oratorio was an immediate and overwhelming success.

*Elijah* is organised in two parts and contains exquisite recitatives, arias and choruses assembled into a series of tableaux portraying various dramatic episodes in the prophet's life. In Part One, Elijah calls down a drought on the land, mocks the people who worship the god Baal, and prays to God to alleviate the drought. Fire descends from heaven and rain falls. In Part Two, after confronting King Ahab, Elijah flees into the desert and is comforted by angels. God appears, Elijah is swept up into heaven in a whirlwind by a fiery chariot and horses, and the work closes with general rejoicing and praise to God.

For the concert, we were joined by the New London Orchestra and soloists Gweneth Ann Rand (Soprano), Emma Brown (Alto), Ruairi Bowen (Tenor) and Felix Kemp (Bass).

Our second concert, which took place on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 at St Michael's Parish Church, was our ever popular, sell-out Family Carols concert. For this event, which is locally regarded as the start of the Christmas season, we sing together with the choir of St Michael's Church of England Primary School. The children always add a particularly joyous and enthusiastic element to the concert and their contribution is enjoyed by one and all.

At the end of the concert, we held a bucket collection for two local charities nominated and chosen by choir members. This time, it was the turn of The Soup Kitchen and The Hive Food Bank. Thanks to the generosity of choir members and our audience, we raised a record amount of £1,750 which meant that both received an amazing £875 each towards their extraordinarily important and necessary work with the poor and homeless.

On Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, we held our third concert of the season and this time we sang pieces from three French composers: Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*; Bizet's *Te Deum*; and Boulanger's *Vieille Prière Bouddhique*.

Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963) composed *Stabat Mater* in honour of his friend, the artist and designer Christian Bérard, who died suddenly of a heart attack on stage at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris in 1949. After initially considering a Requiem Mass in tribute, Poulenc settled on a medieval *Stabat Mater* text – a 13th-century hymn to the Virgin Mary, evoking her suffering at the crucifixion – after returning from the shrine of the Black Virgin of Rocamadour, in southern France. Poulenc's setting, scored for soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra, premiered at the Strasbourg Festival in 1951 and was immediately well received, later winning the New York Critic's Circle Award for Best Choral Work of the year.

George Bizet (1838 - 1875) composed *Te Deum* – a Latin hymn of praise – in his late teens, as a submission to the Rodrigues Prize for a new religious work, open to winners of the prestigious Prix de Rome composition prize, which he had won in 1857. Though Bizet was unsuccessful (resolving never again to compose religious music), happily, *Te Deum*, scored

for soprano and tenor, a mixed chorus and orchestra, survived and is now considered an important part of the composer's catalogue.

Lili Boulanger (1893 - 1918), the first female winner of the Prix de Rome, composed *Vieille Prière Bouddhique* (Old Buddhist prayer) between 1914 and 1917. However, because of the First World War, the piece, which is scored for tenor, mixed chorus and orchestra, was not performed until 1921, three years after her untimely death from tuberculosis at the age of 24.

At the concert, the choir was joined by the New London Orchestra and soloists Iúnó Connolly (Soprano) and Thomas Elwin (Tenor).

For our May concert, held on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at St Michael's Church, Highgate, we focused on more recent and popular music. We sang two choral suites, Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man – a Mass for Peace* and Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, as well as *Sing!* By David Willcocks, *Sure on This Shining Night* by Samuel Barber and *The Seal Lullaby* by Eric Whitacre.

*The Armed Man* was commissioned by the Royal Armouries Museum and premièred in April 2000. It is dedicated to the victims of the Kosovo war which ended the year before.

Based on the Catholic Mass, the work incorporates other religious and historical sources including the Islamic call to prayer, the Psalms and the *Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu text. Interspersed with moments of reflection, it charts the growing menace of descent into war and its associated horrors before ending with hope for peace, a time when "sorrow, pain and death can be overcome".

The mass is one of Jenkins' most popular works and the composer recently conducted its 3,000<sup>th</sup> performance at the Royal Albert Hall to mark his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*West Side Story*, premièred on Broadway in 1957, sets Shakespeare's tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, in the Upper West Side of 1950s Manhattan, New York. Associated with rival teenage gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, Tony and Maria meet and fall in love, sparking ominous hostilities. The music, composed by Bernstein (1918 - 1990) with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, runs the full range of human emotion and includes such love songs like *Maria*, *I Feel Pretty* and *America*.

*Sing!* by David Willcocks (1919 - 2015) is a joyful hymn of praise accompanied by the rousing *Toccata* from *Symphony No 5* by Charles-Marie Widor (1844 - 1937), while *Sure on This Shining Night* from Samuel Barber's 1938 song cycle *Four Songs*, is one of the composer's most frequently performed works.

Our final song was *The Seal Lullaby* by Eric Whitacre, which was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's "beautiful, dark and rich" children's story.

Our soloist in this concert was Baritone Stephen Whitford and our Organist was Edward Batting.

To wrap up our 2023/24 season, we returned to All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024, and to the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) and

his contemporaries. We performed three Mozart religious works, including *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* (Solemn Vespers for a Confessor), written in 1780 for St Rupert's Cathedral in Salzburg where the young composer was baptised.

Scored for soloists and choir, the *Vesperae Solennes* are divided into six parts: *Dixit Dominus* (Psalm 110); *Confitebor Tibi Domine* (Psalm 111), *Beatus Vir* (Psalm 112), *Laudate Pueri* (Psalm 113), *Laudate Dominum* (Psalm 117) and *Magnificat* (Canticle for Vespers).

Almost a decade earlier, in 1771, having returned from his first Italian tour, the 15-year-old Mozart took up the post of *Konzertmeister* to the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg. During his tenure there he set four litanies (prayers used in services and processions) to music. The choir sang his *Litaniae Laurentanae* (the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary), an extended work for choir, orchestra and soloists, which is still performed at Salzburg Cathedral to this day.

Our last work by Mozart was his *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come Holy Spirit) which he wrote in 1768 when he was 12 years old. A Pentecost antiphon, it invokes the Holy Spirit and was influenced by the work of his father, Leopold Mozart.

The choir also performed pieces by Mozart's teacher Michael Haydn (younger brother of the more famous Josef) and by Antonio Salieri whose rivalry with Mozart was made famous in *Amadeus*, a play by Peter Schaffer.

At the concert, the choir was joined by the New London Orchestra and soloists Fflur Wyn (Soprano), Richard Decker (Alto) Nick Allen (Tenor) and Alistair Sutherland (Baritone).

Another highlight of our 2023/24 season was our weekend Choral Workshop at Benslow ably run by our musical director, Ron Corp, with support from accompanist Richard Wilkins and vocal coach Charles MacDougall. During the weekend, the 50 participants learnt a rich and varied selection of music which they performed in a closing concert on the Sunday afternoon.

HCS runs a Benslow choral workshop every two years, alternating with our international choral tour.

HCS also sang in various Gubbay events, including *Carmina Burana* at the Royal Albert Hall and Beethoven's Ninth at the Barbican.

Audiences were finally back to their pre-Covid levels with attendance on a par with the last 10 years.

## **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.

At the 2024 AGM on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Rachel Ambrose, Michael Church and Robyn Conway resigned voluntarily and, in accordance with the Constitution, Ursula Taylor retired by rotation and was re-elected for a second term of 3 years along with Ali Brodie our new General Manager. Subsequently, during the year Caroline Dove was co-opted as a Trustee in July and Michaela Drapes resigned in August.

The Trustees meet regularly, usually 6 times, during the year. Our Musical Director is not a Trustee, but is invited to our meetings which he attends. The Trustees have met throughout the year both in person and virtually.

## **Membership**

Membership was a very healthy 192 at the end of the year, up from 173 at the end of the previous year.

## **Finance**

The result for the year was a small surplus of £1,619, enabling us to carry forward a cumulative reserve of £50,321 and a Commissioning Fund balance of £13,581. Ticket prices rose by an average of just under 12%, having remained static for the last 3 years, whilst subscription rates rose by 4%.

## **Independent Examiner**

We are very grateful to Richard Morris, our independent examiner, for his continuing support and advice. We intend to re-appoint him for the following year.

## **Acknowledgements**

In my recital of the musical activities I have thanked our Musical Director **Ron**, and our accompanist **Alex**. I would also like to thank a number of people who have given their valuable time and expertise in the advancement of the Choir:

**Ursula Taylor** who has organised and kept the minutes of our Trustees' Meetings, and setting out the timing for each item so as to assist all of us to stay relevant and on point. She has also worked together with **Emily Finch** on the organisation of the forthcoming tour to Berlin in the spring.

**Luke Randolph** our Treasurer who has worked tirelessly to keep our finances in good shape without which none of the activities would be possible.

**Emily Finch** who has organised all the Gubbay concerts and also worked with **Ursula Taylor** on the forthcoming tour to Berlin.

**Ali Brodie** who has taken on the position of General Manager with great aplomb.

Everyone at the **Box Office** and the **Publicity**, and the **Librarian**.

**John Hammond** for organising Benslow.

All Trustees for their invaluable input and advice over the year, and a special thanks to **Michaela Drapes** and **Debby Burman** who have retired from the Board.

I would also like to thank **Julia Irvine** for continuing to produce the weekly News Letters which we all enjoy reading, also **Andrea Sylvester** for work on the seating plans for each concert.

**Richard Gourlay** our Concert Manager for his continued hard work.

**Margaret Pitt** our Subscription Secretary for her discretion and eagle eye in keeping our subscriptions coming.

Thanks also to **Fabienne Lassagne** and **Sheila Pusinelli** for their invaluable contributions.

My apologies if I have left anyone out, but my heartfelt thanks to all of you who continue to make contributions towards the advancement of our Choir.

### **Publicity**

Upon the retirement of Michaela Drapes who had been responsible for the website management a replacement was needed and this has now been put in hand and arrangements will be made for this duty to move to another member of the Choir in the New Year. Meanwhile we are still in need of a volunteer to take on the Press and Publicity role.

### **Conclusion**

This has been a fairly successful year, and I hope that HCS will continue to flourish and be a place where Members can find enjoyment in singing and socialising together.

Ashitey Ollennu  
Chair  
Highgate Choral Society  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Highgate Choral Society

Charity N<sup>o</sup>

1191240

Annual accounts for the period

1st September 2023

to

31st August 2024

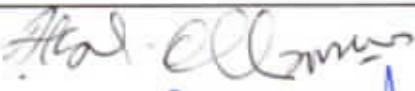

## Section A

## Statement of financial activities

	General Funds	Designated Commissioning Fund	Total Funds	Total Funds Last Year
<b>Income</b>				
Concert Ticket Sales	28,410		28,410	24,731
Programme Sales	2,096		2,096	1,654
Programme Advertising	1,625		1,625	2,030
Membership Subscriptions	46,415		46,415	44,074
Friends	2,010		2,010	2,160
Donations/Bequests	0		0	100
Sponsorship	3,150		3,150	3,100
Gift Aid Tax Recovery	9,829		9,829	8,840
Bar Sales	4,241		4,241	3,767
Refreshments Net Income	1,019		1,019	800
Music Hire Income	4,432		4,432	3,265
External Concert Promoters Income	1,670		1,670	2,920
Benslow Weekend Income	16,283		16,283	
Tour Income	0		0	43,244
Commissioning Fund Income	0		0	
Sundry Income	350		350	520
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>121,530</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>121,530</b>	<b>141,205</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Concert Costs	67,918		67,918	58,113
Programme Costs	4,065		4,065	4,072
Rehearsal Costs	23,870		23,870	23,513
Bar Costs	1,267		1,267	972
Music Hire Costs	3,722		3,722	2,852
Bank & Card Charges less Interest	214		214	123
PRS Royalties	631		631	388
Insurances	339		339	323
Making Music Annual Subscription	496		496	365
External Concert Promoters Costs	949		949	1,536
Benslow Weekend Costs	14,523		14,523	
Tour Costs	0		0	42,870
Commissioning Fund Costs	0	300	300	
Depreciation	514		514	514
Sundry Costs	1,403		1,403	2,183
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>119,911</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>120,211</b>	<b>137,824</b>
<b>Income less Expenditure</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>(300)</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>3,381</b>
Transfers between funds	0	0	0	0
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>(300)</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>3,381</b>
Funds brought forward	48,702	13,881	62,583	59,202
<b>Funds carried forward</b>	<b>50,321</b>	<b>13,581</b>	<b>63,902</b>	<b>62,583</b>

## Section B

## Balance sheet

	General Funds	Designated Commissioning Fund	Total Funds	Total Funds Last Year
	£	£		£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	1,068		1,068	1,583
<b>Current assets</b>				
Debtors (Note 19)	3,591		3,591	50
Cash at bank and in hand (Note 24)	52,942	13,581	66,523	70,301
<b>Total current assets</b>	56,533	13,581	70,114	70,351
Creditors (Note 20)	7,280		7,280	9,351
<b>Total net current assets</b>	49,253	13,581	62,834	61,000
<b>Total net assets</b>	50,321	13,581	63,902	62,583
General Funds	50,321		50,321	48,702
Commissioning Fund		13,581	13,581	13,881
<b>Total funds</b>	50,321	13,581	63,902	62,583
Signed by two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature		Date of approval dd/mm/yyyy	
Ashley Ollennu, Chair			4th 24th April 2024	
Luke Randolph, Treasurer			4/12/24	





Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

The Highgate Choral Society

On accounts for the year  
ended

31st August 2024

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 31/08/2024.

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:

12 January 2025

Name:

Richard Morris

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

Address:

8 Holt Close

London

N10 3HW