

Chester Festival Chorus Chairman's Report 2023

After the hurly burly of three concerts last year, and all the overlying complication of Covid, in 2023 we have reverted to being that choir that pops up in the summer, delivers one concert and then merges back into all the other choirs for a year.

It was a bit touch and go but huge thanks to Ellie for putting together the deal with Northern Chamber Orchestra. Hopefully this arrangement will be mutually beneficial. NCO would like to attract audiences in Chester and feel that they can have a wider appeal by combining with a choir. We would like to be back in Storyhouse, with an orchestra and it suits us very well not to have the financial risk of hiring either of those. We are performing free for NCO, and they are taking the financial risk with Storyhouse. In the modern world concerts must be financially viable and this is a good way to be in a great venue, with a great orchestra, at minimum risk to a small organisation like ourselves.

We are still holding true to our themes and values by performing pieces which lie outside the mainstream repertoire, including some modern composers such as the very much alive Sally Beamish. We also continue with our theme of being a choir who can perform alone or with someone who wants to make music with a choir, be it ETO last year, the Lichfield choral society or the NCO; flexible but always excellent quality. This variety makes life interesting for us hopefully, for Ellie as well and most importantly our audience. There's no point singing if nobody comes.

This year we have worked harder than ever before at our marketing. We have great flyers courtesy of NCO, and thank you to all of you have distributed them far and wide. Our PR company Curtain Up has made a press release to local radio stations and newspapers and we are plugging away on Facebook and Twitter. (Please keep sharing) If anyone fancies doing Instagram and Tik Tok for us, please volunteer! It is my personal ambition that we should be able to attract people who have never been to a classical music concert, and for them to find enjoyment in what we do.

I would like to thank all those people who have done so much work to make Chester Festival Chorus the living entity it is: Jon Saunby, for his tireless work on the accounts and CIO submissions, and our new Committee member Caroline Thorne. Our very hardworking membership secretary Margaret Newman, who communicates so effectively with you all, and reminds me what needs to be done, Chris Green for the website and the minutes of the meetings, as well as the Storyhouse inside track, and Rhiannon for her epic librarian work, especially this year for assembling such a diverse range of music. It takes a special kind of person to be as good at this as you are Rhiannon, and you are that special person. I want to take a moment to think of David Pawson who has been very active on the committee in the early part of the year but now has had to withdraw in order to spend time with his wife who is very ill. Life is not fair, sometimes. I think we would all want to wish him well.

Finally, I say thank you to Ellie, our musical director, for putting together this arrangement with NCO, and for the amazing programme. But more so for being our musical inspiration and guide. It is really amazing to work with someone with such patience and with such positivity and enthusiasm. I hope you are all finding the rehearsals as inspiring as I do. Even at the end of a long and busy day, taking the notes and turning them into music is what this choir is all about. Someone said to me once, "There's something very good about being part of something excellent". I think we are excellent, that under Ellie's guidance we are able to excel, and long may it continue. I think you are a really talented person and I hope that we remain interesting for you to work and sing with for as long as we can. Making music is joyous and it is important that we continue to turn out, find new members, find new audiences and spread our love for what we do far and wide. So let's go forward to a great concert this year and for many more years to come. Sell tickets!

Andy Ashton

Chair

June 2023

Chester Festival Chorus - Treasurer's Report, period ending 31 March 2023

In February 2022 our status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was confirmed, and as this is our first formal reporting period as a CIO, the accounts presented in this report cover the period from February 2022 to March 2023. This neatly coincides with the financial activity in relation to last season – covering our 3 concerts in 2022.

But – and quoting (almost) from the Schicksalslied – “whilst high up above the celestial seraphim play their golden lyre, down here on earth some poor individual lurches from one set of accounts to another...”, and so we must briefly abandon our contemplations of destiny and look at some numbers!

Over the course of the period, we made a small net surplus of £393, a breakdown of which follows. We retain a healthy bank balance of just under £6000, ignoring the element of 2023 subs received in late March (which will form part of the 2023 accounts). When setting the budget - on which the subscriptions are based - it is our aim to ensure that, as a minimum, we cover our costs. Given that there is always some inherent uncertainty in the final number of singers and other variables including ticket sales for the summer concert at St Werburghs, I think it's fair to say that the subscription prices were spot-on, and that the combined subs of £100 covering the three concerts represented outstanding value for money.

I am conscious that in last year's report I covered the financial summary for the St Johns, but I will repeat myself briefly for the sake of completeness. As I reported last year, we made a surplus of just under £600 on the St John Passion concert, largely due to an unexpected and generous discount from our rehearsal venues. We made a loss of just over £200 on the Verdi concert due to the number of singers (and as such, total subs) being slightly lower than anticipated, and due to us giving a discount on the cost of the coach to Lichfield. Finally, we made a small surplus on the summer concert.

I'm delighted to report that we were able to make a charitable donation to CATH of £433, being half of the ticket sales for the summer concert – this amount is reflected in the above surplus.

I'm also happy to be able to report that we are now registered with HMRC for Gift aid and we are expecting to be able to make a small retrospective claim for last year, for members who have filled in their gift aid forms and sang in the concerts. Any financial amount we receive from this claim has not been reflected in the above figures, but will be reflected in the March 2024 accounts. I would encourage all members who pay tax to fill in a gift aid form – the more gift aid we are able to claim, the more we can pass on to the in our subs.

Jonathan Saunby – Treasurer

30 May 2023

Chester Festival Chorus
Statement of Financial Activities
(incorporating an income and expenditure account)
Period ended 31 March 2023

		2023
		£
INCOME FROM:	Note	
Donations and legacies	1	1,002
Charitable activities	2	6,686
Investment income		-
Total Income		7,688
EXPENDITURE ON:		
Charitable activities	3	6,294
Total expenditure		6,294
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		1,395
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS		
Total funds brought forward		4,405
Surplus on 2022 concerts		393
Transfers from legacy CFL account		1,002
Total funds carried forward	4	5,800

Chester Festival Chorus
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2023

		31/03/23
	Note	£
FIXED ASSETS		-
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stock		-
Debtors & Prepayments		-
Cash at bank and in hand		6,950
Total assets		6,950
Creditors & accruals		-
Deferred Income	5	1,150
Total liabilities		1,150
NET ASSETS		5,800
TOTAL FUNDS		5,800

Notes to the accounts

	14 months to 31/3/23
	£
1 DONATIONS AND LEGACIES	
Transfers from Chester Festival Ltd	1,002
Gift Aid	-
	<u>1,002</u>
2 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	
Subscriptions	5,680
Music hire / purchase	141
Ticket / programme sales	865
	-
	<u>6,686</u>
3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	
Payments to Music Director and accompanists	4,231
Rehearsal venue costs	710
Music Purchase, hire and printing costs	265
Additional artists / royalties	360
Charitable donation (CATH)	433
Net cost of coach to Lichfield	155
Support costs (Making Music subscription, Insurance, and 2020-21 website)	141
	<u>6,294</u>
	393
4 Funds carried forward	
Total funds as at 1 Feb 2022	4,405
Gift aid claim for cancelled St Johns concert	402
Transfer of remaining legacy funds from CFL to CFC	600
Surplus from 2022 concerts	393
Total funds as at 31 March 2023	<u><u>5,800</u></u>
5 Prepayments and Accruals	£
Subscriptions for Summer 2023 concert received in March '23	1,150