

## Chester Festival Chorus Chairman's report 2024 for AGM 9/6/24

It seems a long time ago in 2023 that we performed "Songs of Destiny" in Storyhouse with the Northern Chamber Orchestra. This fulfilled so many of the things that make us what we are. We were working with an existing orchestra as their pop-up Choir. We were singing music not necessarily from the mainstream repertoire and including living composers as well as traditional ones and we were singing in Storyhouse, a venue with whom would like to continue to have links. I think we managed to create a very special moment of live musical performance not only in the individual pieces but in the way that they fitted together and the transitions between them

The structure of this financially was that we did not take any financial risk and this was lucky for us because not quite enough tickets were sold to cover the costs and NCO made a small loss on the concert. They were prepared to do this but this is not obviously something they can continue to do on an ongoing basis.

Earlier this year, for the first time since Ellie began, we have had auditions for the choir. Our dog has never welcomed so many visitors to the house! It was great to meet you all one by one, and I hope the experience for all was not too daunting. Ellie told me that she found it a profitable experience to hear you sing individually and it gives her a better idea of how you might be placed physically in order to best sing together.

I write this as I progress across Europe by bicycle on my retirement project to cycle to Istanbul. However in this modern world my administrative life goes on through the dodgy Wi-Fi of budget hotels and Airbnb's along the Danube. I have left the run up to this years concert in the capable hands of Chris Green, to whom I am incredibly grateful for stepping into the role of Chair in my absence. Unfortunately Chris has suffered an injury so now we have an acting acting chair.

This year the four handed piano accompanied Brahms Requiem is also very "us", taking a well known piece and delivering it in a less well known way, stripped back to a four handed piano accompaniment and the voices. It is also very much within our aims that we have paired the Brahms requiem with Rory Wainwright-Jones' "A glimpse of the light" to feature a new composer. Performing in a church and without an orchestra reduces considerably our cost base and so this should enable us to build up a surplus that we can carry over to next year to enable us to embark on a project that does involve an orchestra.

I strongly believe that making live performances of music is such a valuable thing and we need to work hard to make sure that we do not lose this. In a live performance there is no rewind, no repeat, no box set. We hear a lot about mindfulness and "being present in the moment". We know all about this. Having emerged from the shock of Covid when audiences plummeted, we need to make sure that we make our audience and potential audiences are aware of our presence and what we are offering so that the fantastic moments we create are available for the maximum number of people to come and experience. This year I hope we can reach out to people who have not yet experienced this type of performance, and have the confidence in ourselves to invite them to come and hear what we have on offer.

Our happiness at having Ellie as our music director knows no bounds. We've known for a long time how fantastic she is and it's great that other people are cottoning onto this too. Her talents have been recognised particularly this year by the BBC who have asked her to conduct the Ten Pieces which will go into key stage three and four across the educational system and also to conduct a concert at the BBC proms. What I would like to highlight is how hard she works for us outside rehearsals, in committee meetings and in negotiations with other music makers to put together potential performances. We are so lucky to be able to work with her, and I hope we remain an interesting and a challenging outlet for her talents for many years to come.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee for the immense amount of work they have put in leading up to this concert.

Chris who had so kindly agreed to be acting Chair before his accident, and for his ongoing work with minutes

Margaret who always knows when the next meeting is and who manages the membership so incredibly efficiently

John for his number crunching and his so very patient dealings with HMRC and the charities commission

Rhiannon for her ability to rustle up copies of any music ever written

Caroline for all the venue bookings and Diane for leaping from being a new member to being an essential part of the committee. I am incredibly lucky to work with such a great group of people

And finally I would like to thank you all, for being who you are: organised, committed, talented, kind. What we do is so very special, I hope it can go on for ever.

Did I mention to sell lots of tickets?

Andy Ashton  
Apostag, Hungary

## **Chester Festival Chorus - Treasurer's Report, year ending 31 March 2024**

The fact that the year to March 2024 saw just the single concert, as opposed to the 3 concerts the previous year, has made the accounts and annual report slightly more straight forward this year!

The summer concert, "Songs of Destiny" was essentially 'owned' by the Northern Chamber Orchestra and it was they who took on the financial risk, essentially being the cost of the orchestra and the Storyhouse and the income from the ticket sales.

As such, the vast majority of our costs were known in advance and it was therefore relatively straight forward to budget and set our subs accordingly. When we take into account the subsequent gift aid claim in respect of the concert, we made a small surplus of £96.

At the time of writing the Treasurer's report for 2023 we had just completed our registration for gift aid with HMRC but had not at that point made any claims. I am happy to report that since then, we have claimed and received gift aid of £550 in respect of the summer 2024 concert, and £469 in respect of the Verdi Requiem and Summer 2023 concert. In applying the accounting concept of prudence we had not previously accounted for the 'retrospective' gift aid claim, so this has been reflected as income in the year to March 2024.

The other financial activity in the year were the auditions held in January, where we had the benefit of 2 full days of support from our MD and from our talented accompanist. This was, of course, a 'one-off' expense that we had not taken into account when setting the subs for the previous concert, but more than 50% of this cost was off-set by the retrospective gift aid claim.

Taking all of the above into account, we incurred a small deficit for the financial year of £295 and our overall funds are relatively stable at £5,505.

Whilst this remains a healthy balance, it was the unanimous view of the committee that we do not have sufficient capital to warrant taking the financial risk of the cost of a venue such as the Storyhouse and the cost of an orchestra, especially given the current challenges many music societies are facing with audience numbers. Whilst the subs for the 2024 summer concert have been set largely based on our costs, we are hopeful that – if we sell a large enough number of tickets – we can build a little extra buffer in our funds to support a more adventurous program in future years.

I am speaking both as a musician and an accountant when I say that singing in front of a larger audience is immeasurably more satisfying! I am sure we will all do our part in selling tickets and marketing the forthcoming concert.

Jonathan Saunby – Treasurer

20 May 2024

**Chester Festival Chorus**  
**Balance Sheet as at 31 March**

		31/03/24	31/03/23
	Note	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		-	-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Stock		-	-
Debtors & Prepayments	5	263	-
Cash at bank and in hand		8,150	6,950
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>8,413</b>	<b>6,950</b>
Creditors & accruals	5	-	-
Deferred Income	5	2,908	1,150
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<b>2,908</b>	<b>1,150</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>5,505</b>	<b>5,800</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>5,505</b>	<b>5,800</b>

**Chester Festival Chorus**  
**Statement of Financial Activities**  
**(incorporating an income and expenditure account)**  
**12 months ended 31 March**

		2024	2023
	Note	£	£
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>			
Donations and legacies	1	1,299	-
Charitable activities	2	3,200	4,351
Investment income		-	-
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>4,499</b>	<b>4,351</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>			
Charitable activities	3	4,793	4,531
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>4,793</b>	<b>4,531</b>
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>		<b>(295)</b>	<b>(179)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>			
Total funds brought forward		5,800	5,979
Net surplus / (deficit) from charitable activities and donations	4	(295)	(179)
Total funds carried forward	4	5,505	5,800

## Notes to the accounts

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>1 DONATIONS AND LEGACIES</b>		
Gift Aid	1,019	-
Sponsorship from chorus members	280	
	<u>1,299</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>2 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>		
Subscriptions	3,200	3,420
Music hire / purchase	-	66
Ticket / programme sales	-	865
	<u>3,200</u>	<u>4,351</u>
<b>3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payments to Music Director and accompanists (concerts / rehearsals)	2,386	2,664
Payments to Music Director and accompanists (auditions)	860	-
Rehearsal venue costs	218	590
Music Purchase, hire and printing costs	729	236
Additional artists / royalties	327	360
Charitable donation (CATH)	-	433
Net cost of coach to Lichfield	-	155
Support costs (Making Music subscription, Insurance, and website)	273	94
	<u>4,793</u>	<u>4,531</u>
<b>4 Funds carried forward</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Total funds as at 31 March 2023</b>	5,800	5,979
Surplus / (Deficit) from concerts	(454)	(179)
Gift aid for Summer 2023 concert	550	-
Gift aid for 2022 concerts	469	-
Audition costs	(860)	-
<b>Total funds as at 31 March 2024</b>	<u><b>5,505</b></u>	<u><b>5,800</b></u>
<b>5 Prepayments and Accruals</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Subscriptions / sponsorship for Summer concert received in Feb / March (prior financial year)	2,908	1,150
Costs paid in Jan / Feb relating to 2024 summer concert (Making music subscription and deposit for rehearsal venue)	263	-