

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO AUGUST 2024

Chair's Report

This is my second report as Chair. Firstly many thanks to Jane, Eric, Julie, Victoria and Lis as Trustees and Committee members, also to Sandra, Elizabeth and the many other volunteers without whom running the choir would not be possible.

As Music Director and Assistant, David and Jan are a pleasure to work with and we appreciate how week by week their high-quality skills and efforts are helping us become a better choir. In a full and varied concert programme, a personal favourite was our twin performance of Mozart's Requiem and Bach's Magnificat at HTSS, with the youthful orchestra and our choral scholars past and present to the fore. Reflections on the concert season are in David's section below, and he has programmed an exciting 2024-25 season for us.

We said farewell to choral scholars Ellie Blewett and Kristian Thorkildsen after their beautiful contributions to the summer concert, which also featured solos from Joni Foster and Matt Gilchrist. Joni had joined us for the summer term when Hannah Hughes needed to stop singing for a while. We are very pleased to learn Hannah is now back in excellent voice and enjoying her singing. Just as pleased to have Matt back with us, alongside Lingling Bao-Smith, Maria Kolpaktchi and Quito Clothier to make a full complement of scholars for next year. A big thankyou both to David for their recruitment over the summer and to the very generous benefactors that make the scheme possible.

With great sadness we learnt in July of the death of Jill Traynor, who had been ill with cancer for some time. Jill was a much-loved member who sang with the choir for many years alongside her husband Neil, who survives her; she also served as Secretary. The Vaughan Williams motet *Valiant for Truth*, at one time a feature of the Esterhazy repertoire and a particular favourite of Jill's, was sung at her funeral.

Rehearsals continued at St Margaret Pattens Church on Eastcheap/Rood Lane, and we are grateful for SMP's continuing support.

Not the Valentine's Party chez Coupes was a very enjoyable social and musical highlight. Linda Kiernan hosted a summer *Picnic in the City* for us in the secluded, private garden at the Barbican, which was delightful. Thank you to all involved.

Our number one priority is of course to continue to make and enjoy good music. But last year we recognised the need at the same time to improve the choir's finances, in various ways. As the Accounts and the Treasurer's report below confirm, we have made good progress in this direction, though work still to be done.

The aim for our concert programme therefore continues to be to meet all the following objectives:

- *Embracing Tradition, Expanding Horizons;*
- developing the choir's musicianship and enjoyment of singing;
- attracting new and retaining existing choir members;
- building the choir's audience;
- providing performance and development opportunities for choral scholars and other young musicians;
- breaking even or making a modest surplus across each season.

More broadly, our priorities remain to:

- grow our membership – leading to a better, and a better-balanced choir; but also the single best way to improve our finances (each new member, with subscription, gift aid and additional ticket sales, may be worth up to £500 a year);
- grow our audience – because we want to put on better events, but also for the financial impact;
- encourage more choir members to volunteer some of their time and skills;
- look after our choral scholars and put the scheme on a solid financial footing.

Ross Newby

Membership Report

We have welcomed several new members in the past year, in part due to the success of Come & Sing events; also some of us have encouraged friends and colleagues to join, which has given numbers a real boost. By the end of the summer we had built our membership to 34 which, with four choral scholars, is a good medium-sized chamber choir. There remains scope to increase members in all parts, particularly the tenor section, to a comfortable 40 or more voices. Strength in numbers, as they say, no more so than in the collective goodwill of our keen and loyal members.

Welcome therefore to Katharine Jones, William Longland and Ingrid Lucas; and welcome back to Juliet West. Thank you, Singers, for your continued involvement. Let's keep up the fun, singing, performing and socialising together.

Julie Harrison

Music Director's Report

In September 2023, we welcomed a complete SATB set (for the first time in my tenure!) of choral scholars: Hannah Hughes, soprano; Ellie Blewitt, alto; Kristian Thorkildsen, tenor; and Matt Gilchrist, bass. Their valued contribution immediately gave the choir a boost, with a notable increase in confidence for singers across the choir. This sense in many ways came to define our year, where each project, whilst feeling ambitious at first, quickly moved to a position where performances were not only convincing and enjoyable, but showed a genuine sense of passion as well as attention to detail.

Our first event of the year was a 'Come and Sing', working together with many guests on Bach's *Magnificat in D major (BWV 243)*. This day was enjoyed by all who attended, with the newly appointed scholars stepping up to solo roles for our informal performance. Such was the success of the day, we opted to programme the Bach within our Spring concert, and subsequently enjoyed the company of several new singers across the year from this event.

In November 2024, we performed for the first time in a new venue: St Gabriel's Pimlico. This concert focussed on themes of Remembrance, featuring Duruflé's *Requiem* as the principal work. We were joined on the organ by Christopher Hughes (studying at the Royal College of Music, and no relation to Hannah). The choir's performances were heartfelt and intimate, with the choir successfully bringing out details in the music often overlooked when this work is performed liturgically with little rehearsal time – it is a joy to spend an extended time with this repertoire and commit to giving a good performance. The concert featured a suitably solemn organ solo by Chris, and a beautiful solo piece from choral scholar Hannah Hughes.

Our Christmas concert followed the format of the previous year, combining the familiar with the less familiar as well as the relatively new. Movements of Handel's *Messiah* complemented works by Morten Lauridsen and Cheryl Frances-Hoad, alongside a selection of favourites and opportunities for audience participation. A splendid time was had by everyone!

In March 2024, we presented an epic programme consisting of two great works at Holy Trinity Sloane Square: Bach's *Magnificat in D major (BWV 243)*, and Mozart's *Requiem (K626)*, with our choral scholars featuring as soloists (including the returning Ellen Griffiths to complete the soloist line up for the Bach) alongside an orchestra consisting principally of conservatoire students from across London. I was overwhelmed by the amount of positivity that we received on this performance: from audience members; from the orchestral players, who all really enjoyed the experience of playing for us; and from the many choir members shared their experience. It is a special thing to bring these works to life in the way we did and as I have said before, I am not always sure where the choir finds it, but in the performance an extra level to the singing came about, resulting in an engaging and emotive performance, and also one with good technical detail. The choral scholars elegantly filled the dual role of supporting their sections and as soloists - some excellent and special singing. The Mozart offered a particularly special chance for them to sing as a quartet, and they carried themselves and worked together to give a great performance.

For our final project of the year, performed in July 2024, we presented a programme of substantial *a cappella* works by 20th century English composers: Britten's *Choral dances from 'Gloriana'* and Tippett's *Five Spirituals from 'A Child of Our Time'* were performed alongside partsongs written by Frank Bridge. It was possibly one of the most ambitious programmes we have undertaken, but the choir ended up giving one of its most polished performances. I confess in our previous two summer programmes there were individual pieces where things were a little rosey even up to the performance, but I honestly did not feel that about anything in this concert - we were consistent, and provided an engaging performance, doing justice to all of the broad repertoire, and the feedback I received from audience members was nothing but congratulatory.

Also in this performance, our choral scholars were featured as soloists, and each contributed some solo items to the programme. We missed Hannah Hughes greatly, who had been unable to join us for the term due to illness, but were grateful to Joni Foster to joining us for the last few weeks of term in her stead. They each brought a part of themselves in their solo works, which were a joy to hear, were superb in the Tippett; it felt like a fitting end to their year with us, supporting the choir well. We look forward to any opportunity to invite them all back (which, as I write, I can confirm they have, which Matt Gilchrist continuing as a scholar in 2024-5, and Joni and Ellie joining us for future performances).

Through this year the choir has successfully pushed itself, singing more demanding works and bringing itself to a position on performance days where confidence is high, the repertoire is secure, and the choir is able to engage very well with audiences (whose feedback on our concerts has been effusive); these qualities are what define excellence in choral singing, and with increasing consistency the Esterhazy Singers are showing themselves to be an excellent choir.

As ever, I am indebted to Jan Rautio, whose musicianship, support and counsel contribute greatly to my work with the choir, as well as the choir's general success. I am also grateful to Ross and the Committee who have helped drive a greater sense of direction and longer-term strategy for the choir. I have every confidence that the Esterhazy Singers will continue to grow, not only in membership, but also in capability and in excellence, over our exciting 2024-25 season and beyond.

David Halstead

Treasurer's Report

I report on the Esterhazy Singers Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2024, which our Hon. Auditor has examined and approved (see Annex A below).

The year finished with a deficit of £673.48 which roughly equated with the overall loss made on our concert activities (£641.76). Compared to the previous year our concert income (donations from ticket sales mainly) had risen by nearly £1,000, as well as our subscription income by £1,000. Our performance costs decreased considerably (c.£1300), while some other costs increased somewhat.

On the positive side, we have been able to carry over £1148 of donations to the 2024/25 year to our choral scholars' account. The committee would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to our generous donors to this scheme which is already full funded for this year. Further donations from others would be welcome, to put the scheme on a firm footing for the future.

I would also like to record my thanks to our Hon. Auditor, Peter Watson, for his work and assistance over the years.

Jane Coupe

Annex A – Annual Accounts

ESTERHAZY SINGERS

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year to 31st August 2024

	2023/24	2022/23
INCOME		
Subscriptions	9234.54	8127.50
Friends scheme	657.00	735.50
Tax rebate on covenants and Gift Aid	2670.97	2425.70
Self help	230.09	583.38
Donations	8617.29	7653.47
Bank interest	166.86	106.11
Choral Scholar scheme	3900.00	2300.00
Folders & Music	110.71	47.04
	25587.46	21978.70
EXPENDITURE		
Conductor	5732.00	5788.00
Performance costs	9240.39	10625.97
Rehearsal room	2878.00	2280.00
Accompanist	3235.00	3065.00
Choral Scholar scheme	3900.00	2300.00
Administration	907.55	523.62
Folders & Music	368.00	0.00
	26260.94	24582.59
Excess / (deficit) of income over expenditure	-673.48	-2603.89

BALANCE SHEET

As at 31st August, 2024

	31/08/2024	31/08/2023
Accumulated fund brought forward	8891.87	11495.76
	-673.48	-2603.89
	8218.39	8891.87
Represented by:		
Cash at bank	9005.52	9474.74
Debtors (due within one year) Gift aid claims due	142.13	510.25
Prepayment (deposit for Autumn 2024 concert venue)	218.34	133.34
Creditors (due within one year)	-1147.60	-1226.46
	8218.39	8891.87

Notes to the accounts

Note 1: Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared on an accruals basis. There have been no changes to the accounting policies this year.

Note 2: Restriction of funds

All of the funds are unrestricted with the exception of the Scholarship Fund, which is fully spent or accrued in year.

Notes to the accounts (continued)

Note 3: Main concerts

	Autumn 2023 concert	Christmas 2023 concert	Come & Sing 2023 & 24	Spring Concert 2024	Summer Concert 2024	Total
Costs						
Musical Director fees	300.00	300.00	200.00	500.00	300.00	1,600.00
Orchestra and organ	200.00	0.00	120.00	2,862.00	0.00	3,182.00
Professional fees	320.00	120.00	0.00	370.00	330.00	1,140.00
Venue	450.00	140.00	150.00	1,320.00	250.00	2,310.00
Other	251.00	186.00	36.00	330.90	204.50	1,008.40
	<u>1,521.00</u>	<u>746.00</u>	<u>506.00</u>	<u>5,382.90</u>	<u>1,084.50</u>	<u>9,240.40</u>
Income						
Box office	524.01	693.52	217.15	1,090.36	572.77	3,097.81
Choir tickets	428.04	310.93	0.00	552.21	179.75	1,470.93
Sponsorship	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00	0.00	400.00
On-line sales	400.11	246.79	177.85	1,368.15	248.22	2,441.12
misc	235.78	165.63	0.00	268.85	176.56	846.82
Programmes	81.29	0.00	0.00	230.26	30.41	341.96
	<u>1,669.23</u>	<u>1,416.87</u>	<u>395.00</u>	<u>3,909.83</u>	<u>1,207.71</u>	<u>8,598.64</u>
Net surplus / deficit	<u>148.23</u>	<u>670.87</u>	<u>-111.00</u>	<u>-1,473.07</u>	<u>123.21</u>	<u>-641.76</u>

Jane Coupe
Honorary Treasurer

Honorary Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Esterhazy Singers

I report on the accounts of the Esterhazy Singers for the year ended 31 August 2024, set out above.

Basic of Honorary Auditor's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners for Independent Examiners of Charity Accounts. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given in the accounts.

Honorary Auditor's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements (a) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act and (b) to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting records of the Act, have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Peter Watson

Peter B Watson ACA, Honorary Auditor
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