

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE AGM 23 November 2024

The committee presents this report and the financial statements for the University of Essex Choir (Registered Charity No. 285079) for the period **July 2023 to July 2024**

Objects

The object of the Society shall be to educate the public in the arts and sciences, and in particular the art and science of music, by the presentation of concerts and other such lawful activities as are necessary for the furtherance for the above objects.

Structure, Governance and Management

The society is governed by its constitution and is managed by the committee consisting of elected officers and other members. The officers are elected at the AGM. The committee meets regularly during the concert season. The conductor Ben Vonberg-Clark attends the committee on an ex-officio basis.

Chairman's Report

This has been another very successful year for choir. On 9 December we performed a Baroque Christmas Spectacular in the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall. The first part of the programme was: *Magnificat in B flat major* by Francesco Durante, *Das Neugeborne Kindelein*, *In Dulci Jubilo* by Dietrich Buxtehude and *Laudate Pueri Dominum* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. After the interval we sang *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem* by Henry Purcell followed by *On Christmas Night* by Bob Chilcott. We concluded the concert with Community Carols which included the Twelve days of Christmas and We wish You a Merry Christmas.

On 4 May we performed the *St. John Passion* by JS Bach. We were accompanied by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

During the summer we continued to do the summer singing and it was well supported. It is an opportunity for new people to check us out, and for us to raise some revenue. This makes Andrew very happy.

The committee continues to work well together for the choir. Sarah Greateorex who held the secretary role for about 25 years has decided to step back from the committee. Sarah is the sort of person who volunteers for any task, just to support the choir and it has been much appreciated. She has always been very unobtrusive and so most people would not be aware of just how much she was doing behind the scenes. Pauline and Anna agreed to take on some of Sarah's roles in her absence and I am pleased to say that, now we have Catherine Price as our new Secretary. All of our committee are very generous with their time and expertise and are willing to help out if any difficulties arise. Thank you all so very much.

We also have others, who are not on the committee but who also continue to support the choir: Alex Bartholomew our librarian who does such a brilliant job, Tim Parker silently running the website and helping Alex out too, Thalia Vog and Angela Lait producing posters and programmes, Chris Holmes sorting out the Folders and set-up, and Lesley Scordellis searching out rehearsal tracks and suggesting fund raising ideas.

A huge thank you of course, goes to Ben and to Caroline for making our Thursday evenings such fun! We are so lucky to have both of them. Thank you very much.

Jan Cullum Nasta 21 November 2024.

University of Essex Choir Charity Number 285079– Financial Report for Season 2023-24

This report covers the 23-24 season which included the two main concerts, and the continuation of the Summer Singing sessions post the May concert.

At the start of the season the committee approved a budget predicted deficit of just £4.7k for the two concerts originally planned. Due to geopolitical events in the Middle East in October we were required by Snape to change our programme for the concert in May from Israel in Egypt to Bach St John Passion. As a result, costs were higher than expected for soloists but as will be covered later in the report due to a number of factors the financial results were far better than expected.

The financial highlights are that we had a surplus of £4,556 at the end of the season which means that we enter 24-25 with an opening cash balance of £38,187 in the bank.

Income includes a number of “one off” items

- We received a legacy from the estate of Ian Cook relating to royalties on his book - £638
- Following a request by Ben for sponsorship of the soloists, choir members donated £1,095,
- Julia put the choir in touch with a grant giving trust and following a submission by Sarah the choir was awarded a grant of £1,500 to be used for promotion of singing amongst younger people as part of our outreach. This will primarily be used to fund the teaching time of the young choirs who will be joining for Carmina Burana in December 2024.

Shown below is a table showing the sources of income and expenditure.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS					
Subscriptions	19,094.72	37.1%	Orchestra costs	18619.98	39.8%
Ticket sales net of Box Office fees	16,870.66	32.8%	Professional fees	14194.09	30.3%
Grants	5,000.00	9.7%	Soloists	4640.30	9.9%
Tax Refunds	3,898.13	7.6%	Concert halls, lighting, staging	4473.04	9.6%
Music sale and rental	1,912.12	3.7%	Music purchase (for sale)	1279.48	2.7%
Specific Donations	1,095.00	2.1%	Other non orchestral, prof.costs	830.00	1.8%
Programme sales	1,054.86	2.1%	Advertising (incl Web-site and Recruitment)	586.60	1.3%
Transport	850.00	1.7%	Transport costs (choir)	560.00	1.2%
Legacies	637.92	1.2%	Music hire	491.60	1.0%
Interest	316.37	0.6%	Subscriptions and Fees	392.00	0.8%
Sponsorship	300.00	0.6%	Programme and ticket costs	315.52	0.7%
Donations, Patrons	200.00	0.4%	Insurance	283.00	0.6%
Misc	120.00	0.2%	Presentations	83.30	0.2%
Music hire	95.00	0.2%	Misc	78.89	0.2%
	51,444.78			46827.80	

Compared to the prior year, Receipts increased by just under £1k from £50k to £51k, one off legacies from the previous year being compensated for primarily by the 3 items mentioned above and increased ticket sales, up by £2,500.

Expenditure increased from £44k to £47k, mainly due to increased orchestral and soloist costs offset by reductions in advertising and programme printing as new and cheaper ways were found to promote the choir.

Ticket sales for both concerts were higher than in 2022-23 with just over £4k of ticket sales in Ivor Crewe matching the prior year while net receipts at Snape were £12.6k. Thanks goes to Pauline Skerrett for continuing to mastermind this part of the choir's activities. We did take the decision to sell directly through Snape this year which did cost approximately £1,400 in fees but we did get marketing via Britten Pears Arts.

The committee has tried to keep ticket prices at a sensible level but is something we have reviewed for Snape for 2025 as comparing to other choirs our tickets are relatively cheap for the standard of performance we put on.

Subscriptions were slightly down compared to the prior year. As previously announced, we have taken the decision after many years to increase the subscription levels for 24-25 season to reflect growing cost pressures if we wish to main the standard of concerts at both the University and external venues. Note student rate is maintained at 10% of the main rate.

Gift Aid was higher due to a number of new choir members being able to Gift Aid and also being able to claim Gift Aid on the specific donations. Gift Aid continues to be a useful source of income, and we hope it continues into the future.

We continue to be thankful that the University provide a grant to the choir of £3,500 in addition to the other support such as the rehearsal space.

On advertising and marketing, we did spend less this year but still produced excellent material, thanks particularly to Angela who produced the programmes and sourced a much-reduced printing cost and to Thalia for the posters, again produced at a much-reduced cost. With excellent sales of programmes particularly at Snape total income was on a par with last year even though we took the decision not to seek adverts this time.

Alex Bartholomew, with help from Tim Parker and from Chris Holmes (Folders) have also helped generate a surplus on the sale & rental of music. This varies from year to year depending on whether Chris has had to purchase folders, otherwise we aim to cover the costs of the buying in or renting of the music.

Other income streams which aren't doing so well include: -

Our Patrons/Friends income stream had dried up, we no longer have any, this is an area which we must look at with more vigour. Julia has suggested a type of scheme comparable with another local choir society, but as we need a volunteer to pick this up and run with it.

Sponsorship is an area which we have continued to struggle with in recent years like many other organisations, despite the efforts of a few people,

Turning to Expenses you can see that as usual the largest cost is for the orchestra, as with 22-23 we had the OAE at Snape, in December we had the organ hired in with wonderful Ed Picton-Turbervill as the organist.

On Venue Hire, costs at the Ivor Crewe were lower than last year as Louise from Event Essex did manage to get this cost down by having the event classified as a prime University event – there is no guarantee this will happen again so we must budget for higher costs in Dec 2024 but it is still a cheap venue compared to other which we have looked at.

For this year Snape maintained their previous rates, we discovered after all the years of going to Snape that hiring the hall from 1pm onwards rather than all day saves money and had no impact on our rehearsal time.

Other expenses were in line with expectations, Ben negotiated some good rates with the orchestras and soloists especially for the St John. Professional fees were slightly higher due to Ed coming to act as accompanist during the rehearsals for the St John Passion during Caroline's enforced absence but as a choir this was really worthwhile.

For the Independent Audit thanks to Pauline for approaching Nick Skinner (CPFA) who has conducted the Independent Review and found no issues and I thank him for this. It was important that we found an examiner not directly connected to the choir, and while we are small enough not to require an audit it is still best practice especially when we receive money from the University and Grant giving bodies.

Looking forward to 24-25 season, with Snape being available after all, the committee have agreed a budget which will allow us to perform a programme which we haven't done before. The expected deficit will be approximately £10k but this still leaves us entering 25-26 with a cash balance around £28k.

I am grateful to Nick Taylor for agreeing to take over as Treasurer from 1st September next year which will allow me to close the 24-25 Accounts and arrange the audit before handing over.

Andrew Dickerson
Treasurer

Notes

The two attached documents are what we submit to the Charity Commissioners along with this report once they have been approved at the AGM.

The Income & Expenditure details where we have received and spent our money during the year. The Balance Sheet shows how much cash we have in the bank and any money owing to the choir(debtors) or money the choir owes to other people (creditors) – for the current year we have neither of these. They also show a comparison to the prior year. If anyone wishes to have copies, please let me know.

From: Chrisnick Skinner chrisnickskinner@googlemail.com
Subject: Re: University Choir Independent Audit
Date: 20 August 2024 at 15:12
To: Andrew Dickerson apdickerson@me.com

CS

Hello Andrew

I have completed the examination of the University Choir accounts for the year ended 31st July 2024 and I am happy for you to add my name to the declaration of examination of the accounts. The wording is fine by me.

The name for you to add is N.A.Skinner CPFA.

The only information missing was a copy of each of the bank statements showing the balances held at 31st July 2024 so if you could send these through that would be great.

King Regards

Nick

On 5 Aug 2024, at 10:24, Andrew Dickerson <apdickerson@me.com> wrote:

Thanks Nick
Regards
Andrew

On 5 Aug 2024, at 10:16, Chrisnick Skinner <chrisnickskinner@googlemail.com> wrote:

Thanks Andrew

I am not feeling too bad. I am sure having the vaccinations helps.

Good to know that I'm not under pressure to do the examination but I expect to do it in the next couple of weeks.

Best wishes

Nick

On 5 Aug 2024, at 09:27, Andrew Dickerson <apdickerson@me.com> wrote:

Nick

Oh dear sorry to hear about Covid, seems to be on the rise again, hope it's not too bad

In terms of the audit the AGM of the choir is usually in November but be good to have them signed off by October when we recommence choir so I can give an update to members in advance of the AGM.

Thanks, in advance

Regards

Andrew

On 5 Aug 2024, at 07:57, Chrisnick Skinner <chrisnickskinner@googlemail.com> wrote:

Dear Andrew

All information relating to the examination of the University Choir accounts received thanks.

I will do the examination of these accounts as soon as possible but I have just tested positive for Covid which may delay matters.

Could you please give me an indication of your deadline for completing the examination.

Best wishes

Nick

On 2 Aug 2024, at 10:27, Andrew Dickerson <apdickerson@me.com> wrote:

Dear Nick,

I understand from Pauline that you are willing to perform the independent audit on the University Choir Accounts this year. I very much appreciate that you are willing to do this as it's always difficult to find someone outside of the choir.

I closed the accounts on 31st July and will send across on separate emails the following for review - hopefully all the Excel in one email and the PDF file of the invoices received in another

Excel Files

A valued version of the Excel file which is the accounts package designed by a previous treasurer, you can see the input sheets (the bank accounts and petty cash plus the sheets the data feeds into plus the final Balance Sheet and I&E report), there is also a forecast sheet which I use with the committee showing agreed budget, forecast and two future years' estimates with information as we know today to show that the choir is a going concern. There are some hidden sheets which we don't use anymore but I haven't removed from the file just in case it does something unforeseen.

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX CHOIR Registered Charity No. 285079

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

As at 31/07/2024

LIABILITIES	31/07/2024	31/07/2023	ASSETS	31/07/2024	31/07/2023
	£	£		£	£
Accumulated fund			Bank & cash		
110 Balance brought forward	33,631.05	27,367.62	315 Bank accounts	38,140.04	33,613.56
120 Surplus/(deficit) for year	4,555.98	6,263.43	350 Petty cash	46.99	17.49
100 Total accumulated fund	<u>38,187.03</u>	<u>33,631.05</u>	310 Total Bank & Cash	<u>38,187.03</u>	<u>33,631.05</u>
Sundry creditors			Sundry debtors		
220 Accruals	0.00	0.00	367 Other monies receivable	0.00	0.00
250 Account adjustments	0.00	0.00	365 Income tax repayments due	0.00	0.00
257 Deposits for music	0.00	0.00	369 Prepayments	0.00	0.00
878 PRS from previous year	0.00	0.00			
210 Total Sundry Creditors	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	360 Total Sundry debtors	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
	<u>38,187.03</u>	<u>33,631.05</u>		<u>38,187.03</u>	<u>33,631.05</u>

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ACCOUNTS UNDERTAKEN

I am satisfied that this Statement represents a fair and accurate view of the Assets and Liabilities of Charity 285079 for the year ended 31 July 2024.

N A Skinner CPFA

20th August 2024

