

ST ALBANS CHORAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 287882

Report and Accounts for the year ended 15 July 2024

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OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

The objects of the Society are:

- to promote the study of and public education in the art and science of choral music by the presentation of public concerts and recitals and by such other ways as the Society shall from time to time determine; and
- to support such charitable purpose or purposes, or such charitable institution or institutions as the Society shall from time to time determine.

REPORT FOR THE 2023/24 SEASON

The Committee

The Society is managed by a committee in accordance with the Society's Rules. In season 2023/24, the members of the committee were:

Alison Shipperlee: Chair
Sally Ripley: Vice-chair
Frances Lightowler: General Secretary
Peter Aubusson: Treasurer
Pam Firth: Alto Representative
Sarah Gooden: Friends/Benefactors Secretary (from 8/2/24)
Sam Hensman: Membership Secretary
Jonathan Humphries: Concert Manager
David Lee: Bass Representative
Helen Pitman: Soprano Representative
Julia Rouse: Ticket Secretary
Amy Sherman: Publicity Officer
Gareth Truran: Tenor Representative

All committee members were trustees of the Society. The Society's Music Director, George Vass, also attends committee meetings by invitation.

Ken Young, who had been Chair since September 2020, stood down from the role at the September 2023 AGM. The Society greatly appreciates Ken's leadership of the Society through the very challenging period when activities were restricted by Covid regulations, safety protocols and the effects of the pandemic on membership and concert audiences.

Season Overview

The Society had another successful year performing a varied programme of music to a high standard. The choir's membership remained strong with 107 singers, including 14 new members who joined during the 2023/24 season.

Our four concerts featured a wide range of choral music, the details of which are on page 3. The programme included choral works from the last four centuries: established classics of the repertoire, less familiar works by leading composers and several contemporary pieces. The Autumn 2023 concert of Handel's Messiah in St Albans Cathedral attracted a very substantial audience. Our Christmas concert comprised a varied selection of seasonal music, including contemporary works by James MacMillan and James Francis Brown. We had to make a late change of venue for the April 2024 concert due to a major failure of the heating system at the original venue. We appreciated the opportunity to perform Vivaldi's Gloria and works by Finzi, James Francis Brown and Cecilia McDowall at St George's School, Harpenden. Our summer concert of music was conducted by our Music Director's assistant and chorus master, Naomi

Jones; it featured various choral works including Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* and the organ work, Franck's *Chorale in A minor*, performed by our accompanist, Richard Harvey.

The choir maintained a high standard of concert performance, benefitting from the strength of its team of professional musicians. George Vass has been Music Director of the Society since 1994 and over that time his leadership and inspiration has raised the musical quality of the choir considerably and driven the Society's continued development. George has notified the committee that he wishes to relinquish the role of Music Director in summer 2025. Consequently, the committee is undertaking a recruitment process with a view to appointing a successor to take over the role for the 2025/26 season. Richard Harvey, who has been our accompanist for over 20 years, retired from this role at the end of the 2023/24 season. Richard has provided skilful support during rehearsals and featured as an accomplished organist in many of our concerts. The choir greatly appreciates his considerable contribution to the choir. Naomi Jones, who took up the position of assistant conductor in autumn 2022, has benefitted the choir's performances through her coaching and conducting. The committee thanks all three of the team for their services and dedication to the choir. We also greatly appreciate the excellent professional soloists and orchestral players who perform with us and enhance the quality of our concerts.

2023/24 Concert Programme

Four concerts were held during the season:

November 2023: *The Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, St Albans*
with Orchestra Nova
George Frederick Handel *Messiah*

December 2023: *Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Albans*
A Celebration of Christmas, including: *O Radiant Dawn* **James MacMillan**; Hertfordshire Carols **James Francis Brown**; *Jesu Dormi* **Mark David Boden**; traditional and contemporary carols; and seasonal readings by members of St Albans Choral Society.

April 2024: *The Chapel of St George's School, Harpenden*
with Orchestra Nova
Gerald Finzi *In Terra Pax*
James Francis Brown *The Heavens and the Heart*
Cecilia McDowall *Bird of Time*
Antonio Vivaldi *Gloria in D, RV589*

June 2024: *St Peter's Church, St Albans*
with organ accompaniment and solo played by Richard Harvey
Edvard Grieg *Ave maris stella*
Giaochino Rossini *O Salutaris Hostia*
Sarah Frances Jenkins *Ave verum corpus* (World premiere)
César Franck *Chorale in A minor*
Felix Mendelssohn *Hear my Prayer*
Morten Lauridsen *Lux Aeterna*

Community Activities

The Society endeavours to make a positive contribution to the local community. £2,948 was raised during the season for our two chosen charitable causes: £1,557 for the Hospice of St Francis and £1,391 for Centre 33, a local drop-in centre for homeless and socially or materially disadvantaged people.

Financial Review

The Society's Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are on page 7. The financial result for season 2023/24 was a surplus of £2,219 (2022/23: a deficit of £2,660). The result for the season was better than budgeted principally due to increased membership and subscription income, and healthy concert ticket income. The outcome also benefitted from a grant of £2,000 received from The Williams Church Music Trust towards the cost of our programme for the 2024/25 season. The Society greatly appreciates the support provided by the Trust over many years.

The year-end balance was £34,015 (2023: £31,796). Our strategy over previous seasons to build and maintain a solid level of assets, as a safeguard against possible challenging circumstances, has placed us in a relatively resilient position to withstand occasional seasons with adverse results.

As reported previously, in early 2020 we planned to build up a designated Future Fund of reserves, to underpin the choir's continued development. A key objective of this fund was to help ensure that we can continue to perform high-quality concerts in St Albans Cathedral as part of each season's programme. The full launch of this initiative was postponed due to the pandemic. However, some donations to establish the fund were received; these are retained within the Society's overall assets. No further donations were received during 2023/24. The fund stands at £1,445 (including the associated gift aid which has been reclaimed on donations to the fund).

FINANCIAL OUTLOOK FOR THE 2024/25 SEASON

Our activities and concert programme for the coming season have been planned with a view to maintaining our solid financial position. We expect to incur further increases to our operating costs, most notably for professional fees and the hire charges for our rehearsal and concert venues. We also expect to incur some one-off costs associated with the recruitment of a new Music Director. Consequently, we forecast to incur a moderate deficit during 2024/25. We will therefore be looking to enhance our income from subscriptions and concert ticket sales.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The principal risk to the Society is promoting a programme of rehearsals and concerts which might produce a financial result that is substantially worse than expected. We endeavour to manage this risk through considered planning of our concert programme, detailed budgeting, closely controlling our costs and actively publicising our concerts and selling tickets.

The policy of the Committee for many years has been that we should retain a prudent level of reserves sufficient to meet the Society's contractual liabilities based on conservative assumptions about our commitments for rehearsal and concert costs for the next two seasons and possible situations in which we might receive no revenue or insurance payments. This policy and our supporting practices stood us in good stead in recent years. We will continue to manage the financial risks and uncertainties through the same well-established process.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The trustees have complied with the duty in section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

In pursuing the objects of the Society, the trustees believe that the choir conforms to the requirements of the Charity Commission to provide public benefit through:

- welcoming members of all adult ages and from a wide range of backgrounds and musical capabilities;
- enabling its members to participate in a creative, fulfilling, educational and sociable activity and providing opportunities for them to develop their singing technique, musical skills and knowledge of the choral repertoire;
- promoting public concerts which provide its audiences with enjoyable and stimulating cultural experiences through the high quality of the performances and the interesting range of music featured;
- commissioning and performing new choral works which extend the musical repertoire available for choirs;
- providing opportunities for school children to participate in choral singing at some of its concerts, thus broadening the musical experience of the pupils; and
- performing on certain occasions to raise funds for other charitable causes.

OTHER INFORMATION

The Society is affiliated to Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies, which represents and supports amateur vocal, instrumental and promoting societies throughout the United Kingdom.

St Albans Choral Society is grateful for the support of The Williams Church Music Trust.

Further information about St Albans Choral Society may be found at our website:

www.stalbanschoralsociety.org

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
TO THE TRUSTEES OF ST ALBANS CHORAL SOCIETY (CHARITY NO. 287882)**

I report on the accounts of the Society for the year ended 15 July 2024, which are set out on pages 7 and 8.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Society's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Society's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Society 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 the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner'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 respects, the requirements:
- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities 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.

Independent Examiner

Date

Ruth Falkus ACMA
6 Walnut Drive,
Wendover
Bucks
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19 August 2024

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 15 JULY 2024

	2023/24		2022/23	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Members' subscriptions	23,205		19,685	
Friends, Benefactors and other donations	1,005		555	
HMRC gift aid tax repayment	4,606		4,190	
Concert tickets and other concert revenue (see page 8)	17,440		14,126	
Grants from The Williams Church Music Trust	2,000		2,500	
Music and folders hire/purchase	3,103		2,500	
Singing lesson room hire – participants' payments	636		1,301	
Social events	1,228		1,192	
Sundries	420		660	
Bank interest – COIF deposit account	1,445		787	
		55,088		47,496
Expenditure				
Accompanist's rehearsal fees	(5,530)		(5,049)	
Répétiteur's rehearsal fees	(405)		(375)	
Music Director's and Assistant Conductor's rehearsal fees	(7,295)		(6,720)	
Concert expenditure (see page 8):				
Music Director's and Assistant Conductor's fees	(2,900)		(3,275)	
Other concert costs	(25,990)		(23,421)	
Rehearsal venue hire	(3,444)		(2,792)	
Singing lesson room hire	(672)		(1,407)	
Music and folders hire/purchase	(3,350)		(2,668)	
Making Music subscription, insurance and PRS payment	(776)		(705)	
Music commission fees	(400)		(2,000)	
Website	(248)		(0)	
Social events	(1,354)		(1,238)	
Sundries	(505)		(506)	
		(52,869)		(50,156)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		2,219		(2,660)

BALANCE SHEET

As at:	15 July 2024		15 July 2023	
Assets	£	£	£	£
NatWest Bank current account	4,147		11,373	
COIF Charities Deposit Fund	29,868		20,423	
Year-end balance		34,015		31,796
Represented by:				
Accumulated funds				
Opening balance	31,796		34,456	
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	2,219		(2,660)	
Year-end balance		34,015		31,796
of which:				
Grant received for the subsequent season	2,000		2,500	
Future Fund (see page 4)	1,445		1,445	
Other funds	30,570		27,851	

CONCERT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	2023/24		2022/23	
	£	£	£	£
Autumn				
Income (a)	9,839		0	
Expenditure (a)	(14,797)		(1,606)	
(Deficit)		(4,958)		(1,606)
Christmas				
Income	2,349		2,570	
Expenditure	(2,057)		(2,312)	
Surplus		292		258
February 2023				
Income			1,201	
Expenditure			(1,598)	
(Deficit)				(397)
Spring				
Income	2,440		8,707	
Expenditure	(9,757)		(16,054)	
(Deficit)		(7,317)		(7,347)
Summer				
Income	2,812		1,648	
Expenditure	(2,279)		(5,126)	
Surplus/(Deficit)		533		(3,478)
Total				
Income	17,440		14,126	
Expenditure (b)	(28,890)		(26,696)	
(Deficit)		(11,450)		(12,570)

Notes:

- the Autumn 2022 concert was held in conjunction with Bushey Symphony Orchestra (BSO), who administered the income and expenditure for the concert. Consequently, St Albans Choral Society (SACS) received no income for this concert but the overall deficit on the concert was shared equally between BSO and SACS; 50% of the deficit was paid by SACS to BSO and is shown as expenditure.
- of which Music Director's and Assistant Conductor's fees were £2,900 in 2023/24 and £3,275 in 2022/23.