

**Minutes of the 51st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 7.30  
at Benslow Music Trust**

**1. Apologies:**

Nic Garner, Sue Covington, Anne Blackman, Sue Trost, Angela Gould, Alice Goodman, Mia Matheson, Rosemary Wilson, Penny Lazenby, Chris Blackman, Sheena Atkinson, Frances Chamberlain, Jill Butler, Heather MacMillan, Tracey Plenty, Rosemary Ryden, Allyson Pascoe, Gillian Hawkins, Daphne Warren, Richard Dean, Wendy Hazelwood, Katie Thompson, Bob Beasley, Peter Williams, Andrew Wilkins

**Number in attendance:** 79 members (plus 2 non-members)

**2. Minutes of the 50th AGM held on Thursday 29 September 2022.**

The minutes were unanimously approved and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters Arising**

None arising.

**4. Vice Chair's Report**

After the chaos and uncertainty of the Covid years, overall, this year has been a much more successful year in terms of the choir's main aims of producing music of a high quality for the North Hertfordshire area. By Christmas 2022 Zooming of the rehearsals was stopped as only a very small handful of people were following it. This had been a very useful way of keeping people involved with the choir during the dark days of the pandemic so thank you to Harry for providing this service. Although there was no general Covid interference, other health issues and rail strikes did their best to interrupt the concert and rehearsal schedules but did not prevent the choir from performing four concerts during this season.

Our first concert of the season saw the choir performing Mozart's Requiem and Solemn Vespers with the Beaufoy Players at St Mary's on 5<sup>th</sup> November. A £2000 grant towards the costs of the orchestra was received from the Trustees of the Williams Church Music Trust and a £1000 legacy from Maureen Lewinsky helped to offset the costs of this concert. Refreshments were provided by Supported Activities who raised £320.

The Christmas concert with traditional carols and Britten's Ceremony of Carols took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> December at Walsworth Road Baptist Church to the accompaniment of the Garden House Hospice Christmas Tractor procession and snow on the ground. This was a concert affected by health issues, with Harry unable to conduct due to catching flu. Luckily Colin stepped in to conduct. The original harpist was also ill but a replacement harpist performed at the last moment. It was also at this concert that I began to feel unwell, which took me out of circulation for some weeks. I have to express my thanks to the rest of the committee who maintained the proceedings of the choir at this time.

In February a very successful workshop on Samson was held at Christchurch. The workshop was attended by 91 including 10 members of other choirs and a music sale disposed of more music than

had been donated to the choir by past members. Overall, the workshop made £390 for the choir's coffers.

Musica Donum Dei accompanied our performance of Samson at Easter in St Mary's, Hitchin to a good audience, who perhaps wondered when they might get home! Herts Welcomes Refugees provided the refreshments at this concert.

The final concert of the year, on 8<sup>th</sup> July, was a "Slice of Jazz", held again at Walsworth Road Baptist Church with accompaniment by the Harry Baker Trio. The music, some by well-known composers such as George Shearing and John Rutter, presented the choir with some new styles and rhythms, all much appreciated by an audience of more than 150 people. Refreshments were provided by WRBC, as they had done at the Christmas concert.

At the Easter concert in St Mary's, the lighting, especially for those in the back rows of the choir, was found to be poor as the Chancel lights had to be switched off as they were flickering. As it was unlikely that the church would fix the problem before our next concert at St Mary's this coming November, the committee decided to purchase some new lights and stands. A contribution of £250 towards this cost has been received from the Community budget of Keith Hoskins, a local councillor.

The year was rounded off with a social event at Benslow after the rehearsal on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Here the weather did its best to interfere but the evening turned out to be a pleasant one with about 70 members attending for Pimms and soft drinks on the lawn.

It had been hoped to run a week-long choir tour to Normandy this September, but, unfortunately, this had to be abandoned as the required numbers to make the tour viable were not reached. Undoubtedly, another tour will be attempted as they provide members with a chance to sing in new locations and to meet socially.

Changes in the committee saw Hannah Shaw joining and leaving, Katharine Rowe joined and produced the Choir's Safeguarding Policy. Jenny Squires took on the role of Concert Manager and Penny Lazenby also joined. But as usual we are always happy to see new faces on the committee. Kate Evans, who took on the onerous task of being the Librarian, has decided to resign from the post as her work commitments and her small flat have made it difficult for her to perform the role as best as she could.

After a dip in the Covid years, membership has grown, bringing new members with, especially, a number of younger faces. Please encourage anyone you know who may be interested in singing with us as we have room for more members.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped with the running of the choir this year. A thankyou to those people who have stepped in at the last moment to help and also to those people who carry out the work that goes on behind the scenes. I am not going to list everyone as they know who they are and the tasks they carry out. However, I will mention two vital roles, the work of our Secretary Christine Goodwin and that of our Treasurer Diane Richards, and without their meticulous attention to detail and support, the running of the choir would be very difficult. I have already mentioned the grants we have received this year so a huge thankyou to Debbie Dean, our former Chair, for securing these grants and who continues to pursue external funding sources.

The last thing to say is a massive thank you to our two very talented professionals, Harry and Colin, who transmit their love of music to the choir in such an enthusiastic and enjoyable way.

I wish the choir another successful season as the North Herts Guild of Singers moves into its 56<sup>th</sup> year.

**Dave Tinney (Vice Chair NHGS)**

## **5. Music Director's report.**

It's somewhat bizarre to think that last season was our first full season of music-making without any Covid scares or worries and what a season it was. We began with a real audience and choir favourite, Mozart Requiem along with his Solemn Vespers which went down a real treat. With such a well-known piece it was great to really get into the articulation and really characterise the text. We were joined by the excellent Beaufoy Sinfonia and soloists, Danni O'Neill, Mercè Bruguera Abelló, Matthew McKinney and Alex Bower-Brown who certainly aided us in a dramatic rendering. The Christmas term saw us do battle with Britten's Ceremony of Carols which required a lot of 'shower practice' to ensure that all the words of the medieval English were both correct and sung at the right time. The piece was an excellent challenge for us with its interesting harmonic language, fast rhythmic sections and long sostenuto phrases. Alas, I was attacked by the plague just before concert day but I hear that the wonderful team of Colin along with James Orford on the organ, harpist Elin Samuel and soloists Emily Beech and Maya Wheeler Colwell made it a suitably festive affair.

The new year saw us tackling one of Handel's best but tragically under-appreciated oratorios, Samson. Colin remarked – almost every one of these choruses is excellent, and he was right – we had a fantastic deep dive into baroque phrasing and articulation in the February workshop and were fired up for an extremely dramatic and rousing concert in April. We had a record number of singers and unfortunately a record length of concert (blame the MD) but I hope you'll all agree it was worth it. We were joined by the wonderful period instrumentalists of Musica Donum Dei along with James Micklethwaite as our tenor hero, Samson, Johannes Moore who played both the father figure and the brutish bad guy with aplomb, Helena Moore as Delilah and Christopher Mitchell as Micah. It was a truly triumphant evening and I will remember the final chorus 'Let their celestial concerts' with the rousing trumpet fanfares intermingled in the choral writing for many years to come.

Summer saw us go in a completely different direction – and it's a direction that I'm so pleased we took. Choral jazz, something slightly new for all the Guild Members, possibly because a certain MD never lets them relax in rehearsals, but the music by Chilcott, Shearing, Rutter and others was a fantastic way for us to kick our shoes off, feel the groove, enjoy the funky rhythms and smooth harmony. I could feel at the beginning there was a lot of 'ooh I'm not sure about this' and 'are we really going to do this' but by the concert I got the sense that we were absolutely loving this music, were able to let go and have a really fun time with it. We were joined by the inimitable Harry Baker and his trio who wowed us with their improvised licks and easy grooves – their solo pieces transporting us immediately to a smokey jazz club that we could have stayed at all night.

All in all a top season and I'm extremely proud of all the concerts and events we put on. As always I'd like to say a big thank you to our wonderful accompanist Colin – who has not only been a stalwart at the piano but has covered rehearsals and concerts this year with aplomb, we are so lucky to have him.

A thank you to Dave and our wonderful committee for all their support. They are fabulous and have to put up with me which is easier said than done – and are always one step ahead. We are so lucky to have such a committed group of individuals who do jobs for the choir on a regular basis, from putting the chairs out to giving orchestral players lifts to sourcing music stands to social media publicity – it all makes a huge difference and all these little cogs really make the NHGS machine work in the way it does. Thank you.

Lastly a thank you to you all for your continued support – it has always been an absolute joy working with the choir and I look forward to this season immensely which will bring up 5 years since my very first concert. We're doing Bach next year...what could go wrong?

Thank you

**Harry Bradford (MD NHGS)**

## **6. Treasurer's report for the year 2021-2022**

The Treasurer presented her report, as follows, together with the financial statement for the year. I attach the NHGS accounts for the year 2022-23 which are presented in the format expected by the Charity Commission

Thanks to the continued financial support of the Members and the hard work of our professionals we were able to hold four successful concerts, (two with a small orchestra), and a workshop this year. A surplus of £2813 was acquired due to receiving £2,250 in grants, a £1,000 legacy and increased concert revenue. My thanks go to Deborah Dean, former Chair who obtained the grants for us.

The key differences in income and expenditure between the financial year 2022-23 and the previous year are:

1. This year we have received a £250 in grant from the Herts County Council's Locality Budget Scheme towards the cost of new stage lights, £2000 from the Williams Church Music Trust towards the cost of the orchestra at the Autumn concert and £1000 legacy from a former member, Maureen Lewinsky. These are shown in Note 5: Grants, legacies and general donations.
2. Equipment: New LED stage lights and two 4 metre stands were purchased at a total cost of £673.99, Staging consumables £103.02, plus a new advertising banner, music stand lights for orchestral players and storage boxes for music.
3. Concert income has increased to £9,440, more than double the previous year's income of £4,561.
4. Music hire income: A £247 loss was made this year due to subsidising the purchase of the Jazz Motets which could not be hired and the purchase of additional good quality second hand copies of carol books.
5. Accruals – Creditors comprising £60 of advertising income is carried forward to 2023-4. Debtors and payments in advance consist of £275 venue deposits for concerts in future years.
6. The total reserves has increased to £53,905. These are made up of three components, namely the unrestricted (free) reserves of £46,540, the tour reserve of £240, and £7125 set aside to cover the cost of depreciation of our staging. The readily available (cash) reserve is currently £46,565.

Thanks to the generous support from Members and cost savings made by the Committee and the Music Director we are fortunate to be in a financially good position at the moment. However, we still have approximately 25 fewer members than before the start of the pandemic. This loss in revenue equates to nearly the budget for one orchestra. We have been fortunate that many of our suppliers have either held their prices or increased them by less than inflation this year. We are therefore expecting costs to rise steeply during 2023-4. However, we have acquired nearly a £21k surplus over these past 4 years which will be used to subsidise orchestra costs during the next few years. Thank you to our extremely talented professionals and to all Members, friends and relatives who have continued to support the Guild. You can be assured that the Trustees will endeavour to manage the finances as best we can to ensure the long-term future of the Guild.

**Diane Richards (Treasurer NHGS)**

Ruth Garrod proposed that the financial report should be accepted, and this was seconded by Jenny Squires. All were in favour.

**7. Annual subscription for the 2022-2023 season**

The Committee proposed that the subscription should be increased by £12 to £210 per annum.

Prior to the meeting, notice of the proposed increase had been circulated to members. It was noted that the proposed increase of 6% was below the current rate of inflation.

The Treasurer explained that our current membership levels and concert attendance does not generate quite enough income to cover the cost of two orchestras for our Autumn and Spring concerts. However, we do have some reserves that can subsidise these costs if necessary.

The Treasurer suggested ways in which members could help to improve the choir's finances; encouraging friends to join the choir, publicising our concerts, selling more concert tickets, getting involved with fundraising. At this point, special thanks were given to Rita & Dave Beasley, who have done a marvellous job in selling concert tickets over many years, generating £6-7,000 per annum in cash sales.

The motion was put to the meeting that the annual subscription should be increased to £210 per annum.

Proposed by Deborah Dean and Seconded by Judy Bigley

The motion was carried unanimously.

**8. Appointment of an Independent Examiner**

Our current Independent Examiner is Mark Hjertzen BA FCA of HW Associates Limited, an accountancy firm experienced in handling Independent Examinations for small charities. Since taking over as our IE, Mark has been very helpful, carried out the work efficiently and, most importantly, has been able to meet our tight deadlines which involve work during August. The Treasurer therefore recommended that, subject to a satisfactory quote, we should appoint HW Associates to carry out our Independent Examination for the year 2023 – 2024.

Georgie Bennett proposed that the Treasurer’s recommendation should be accepted. This was seconded by Ed Twomey. Approval was unanimous.

**9. Election of Officers of NHGS.**

**Chair:** No nominations

**Hon. Secretary:** Christine Goodwin  
Proposed by Peter Todd and seconded by Ros Thick  
Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**Hon. Treasurer:** Diane Richards:  
  
Proposed by Ann Hunter and seconded by Ruth Garrod  
Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**Election of members to serve on the Committee from 29 September 2022**

The following Members were elected to serve on the Committee:

Anne Blackman, Jane Kirk, Penny Lazenby, Pat Salmon, Jenny Squires, Katharine Rowe, Dave Tinney

Proposed by Marcus Vere and seconded by Ed Twomey.  
Although all were standing unopposed, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**10. Any other business**

None  
The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Signed ..... (Vice Chair)

Date.....

# North Herts Guild of Singers

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 July 2023

2021/22 (£)		2022/23 (£)
20,061	Members' Subscriptions	23,724
2,211	Gift Aid recoverable	3,209
22,272		<i>Sub-total</i> 26,933
453	Fund-raising activities ( Note 1)	378
4,561	Concert income (Note 2)	9,440
646	Hire of music/folders to Members	1,803
133	Administration and Other Income (Note 3)	364
1,156	Choral Workshop (Note 4)	928
675	Grants, legacies and donations (Note 5)	3,287
11	Sundry Income (Bank Interest)	462
<b>29,907</b>	<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>43,595</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		
0	Costs of fundraising (Note 1)	0
8,273	Concert costs (Note 2)	19,540
11,766	Rehearsal costs	13,974
1,108	Music & folders hired/purchased	2,066
3,555	Administration and Other Expenses (Note 3)	4,571
1,544	Choral Workshop (Note 4)	538
44	Bank Charges	93
<b>26,290</b>		<b>40,782</b>
<b>3,617</b>	<b>Surplus/(Excess) of resources expended</b>	<b>2,813</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2023

<b>Fixed assets</b>		
8,550	Staging (Note 6)	7,125
<b>Current assets</b>		
0	Refunds for cancelled 2023 Tour (Note 7)	4,720
200	Debtors and other payments in advance (venue deposi	275
97	Cash in hand	97
44,557	Bank Deposit Account balance	46,369
88	Bank Current Account balance	99
53,492		58,685
<b>Less: Current liabilities</b>		
0	2023 Tour deposits received in advance (Note7)	4,720
0	Creditors and accrued expenses (adverts)	60
<b>53,492</b>	<b>Net current assets and net assets</b>	<b>53,905</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>		
47,235	General reserves at 1 August 2022	50,852
3,617	Surplus / (Excess) of resources expended in the year	2,813
<b>50,852</b>	<b>General reserve at 31 July 2023</b>	<b>53,665</b>
2,640	Tour Reserve (Note 7)	240
<b>53,492</b>	<b>Total reserves at 31 July 2023</b>	<b>53,905</b>

David Tinney (Vice Chair)

Diane Richards (Treasurer)

# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2022/23 - Page 1

### Note 1: Fund raising activities

	£	£	£	£
	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
Raffles	0	0	0	0
Sale of Music	111	0	111	133
Easyfundraising	112	0	112	147
Amazon Smile	70	0	70	43
Competitions	0	0	0	0
Advertising	60	0	60	90
Other	25	0	25	40
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>453</b>

### Note 2: Concerts

	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
Prior year concerts -2021/2	40	0	40	84
Autumn (2022)	2,623	7,226	(4,603)	(1,382)
Christmas (2022)	2,051	1,964	87	(488)
Spring (2023)	2,448	8,481	(6,033)	(1,048)
Summer (2023)	2,278	1,869	409	(878)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9,440</b>	<b>19,540</b>	<b>(10,100)</b>	<b>(3,712)</b>

### Note 3: Admin & Other Expenses

	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
Making Music Subscription	0	275	(275)	(275)
Insurance	0	143	(143)	(137)
Performing Rights fees	0	150	(150)	0
Website maintenance and operation	0	103	(103)	(103)
Equipment	0	886	(886)	(75)
Concert scarves	81	0	81	133
Staging storage rental	0	936	(936)	(936)
Staging Depreciation	0	1,425	(1,425)	(1,425)
Social Events- Pimms on Lawn	283	283	(0)	0
General Administration expenses	0	370	(370)	(604)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>4,571</b>	<b>(4,207)</b>	<b>(3,422)</b>

### Note 4 Workshop February 2023

	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
Venue	0	85	(85)	(165)
Professionals	0	450	(450)	(1,100)
Entry charges for participants	928	0	928	1,156
Music hire	0	0	0	(229)
Gifts and hospitality	0	3	(3)	(50)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>(388)</b>

### Note 5 Grants, legacies and other donations

	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
General Donations	37	0	37	175
Legacy	1,000	0	1,000	0
Grant - Williams MT for Mozart concert	2,000	0	2,000	0
Grant - Herts CC	250	0	250	500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3,287</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,287</b>	<b>675</b>



# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2022/23 - Page 2

### Note 6: Fixed Assets (Staging)

	Cost	Depre'cn 10% strt line	Net Book Value
Balance @ 1 August 2022	14,250	5,700	8,550
Charge for the year 22/23		1,425	(1,425)
Additions	0	0	0
Less disposals	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14,250</b>	<b>7,125</b>	<b>7,125</b>

### Note 7: September 2023 tour to Normandy (Cancelled)

	Income	Costs	Net	21/22
Deposits received from Members 21/22	2,400	0	2,400	5,200
Deposits received from Members 22/23	2,320	0	2,320	0
Deposits refunded to Members		4,720	(4,720)	(2,800)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4,720</b>	<b>4,720</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,400</b>
<b>Tour reserve</b>				
Balance @1 August 2022	2,640	0	2,640	240
2023 Tour deposits passed to Tour reserve	0	0	0	2,400
2023 Tour deposits refunded to Members	0	2,400	(2,400)	
<b>Balance@ 31 July 2023</b>	<b>2,640</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>2,640</b>

## **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of the North Herts Guild of Singers**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the North Herts Guild of Singers (the Trust) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mark Hjertzen BA FCA  
HW Associates Limited  
Portmill House  
Portmill Lane  
Hitchin  
Herts  
SG5 1DJ

Dated ...12<sup>th</sup> October 2023.....