



## **North Herts Guild of Singers**

# **(FINAL) Minutes of the 52nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held on Thursday 26 September 2024 at 7.30 at Benslow Music Trust**

### **1. Apologies:**

Evelyn Marsh, Carol Lacey, Jenny Squires, Sarah Martinelli, Rosemary Wilson, Ed Twomey, Anne Blackman, Chris Blackman, Marcia Taylor, Sue Rowley Jones, Janet Coldstream, Margaret Wallace, Pam Hunter, Angela Fielding, Marcus Vere, Ella-Kate Whitehead, Catherine Biller, Diane Biller, Daphne Warren, Angela Walter, Gwen Pidgeon, Astrid Browne, Greg Gould, David Box, Peter Williams, Andrew Cowley, Malcolm Lucas, Phil Rowe, Jill Butler, Ann Foxwell, Frances Chamberlain

**Number in attendance:** 71 members

### **2. Minutes of the 51st AGM held on Thursday 28 September 2023.**

The minutes were unanimously approved and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Matters Arising**

None arising.

### **4. Vice Chair's Report**

Thankfully, this year has been a more normal year in terms of the choir's activities and production of high-quality concerts for the local area. There were four concerts and a workshop, with the first concert being held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at St Mary's Hitchin. The Beaufoy Sinfonia accompanied the choir in a performance of Mendelsohn's oratorio Elijah with five excellent soloists. Herts Young Carers provided the refreshments, raising £333 for their funds. The next concert featured the music of Janáček's Otče Náš with traditional carols on the 16<sup>th</sup> December at Walsworth Road Baptist Church, yet again to the accompaniment of the Garden House Hospice Christmas Tractor procession. I missed this concert as I was in the Lister hospital where I heard choir members singing

on the wards on Christmas Eve! On 10<sup>th</sup> February 2024 another very successful workshop was held at Christchurch when Bach's B Minor Mass was revisited as part of the preparations for its forthcoming performance. The workshop was attended by 83 including 19 members of other choirs. A cake and a music sale raised £270 for the choir's funds. At St Mary's Hitchin, on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024, Musica Donum Dei accompanied the long-awaited performance of Bach's B minor Mass to a very full audience. This performance was four years late as it was due to be sung in March 2020 until the pandemic lockdown caused its cancellation. Although its length had been reduced with an early start at 7pm, it was still a long and tiring sing and thoroughly appreciated. Thanks to Katharine Rowe of our committee who organised the refreshments, raising £241 for the choir. The year ended with a performance of Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle with four soloists at Walsworth Road Baptist Church on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2024, where a very full church was treated to a not particularly small or solemn mass! This concert will be remembered by some of us for the saga of getting the harmonium there!

This year's social event of Pimms on the Lawn took place after the rehearsal on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Luckily, the weather behaved this year and about 70 members enjoyed a pleasant warm evening.

Fortunately, the vacant post on the Committee of Librarian was filled early in the year with Susan Clark and Ed Twomey taking the work on as a job share. This is not an easy role but they have successfully transitioned into it so thanks to them for their hard work. But as usual we are always happy to see new faces on the committee.

Current membership is about 120 and we have had a number of new members this year. However, we could take more so please keep spreading the word. More members help to improve the choir's finances!

On a personal note, the year did not turn out the way I expected. Following my participation in a local amateur dramatics production in late November, I went into hospital and had hoped to be back at choir in the New Year. However, recovery from the operation

meant I was not back to rehearsals until the summer term. Although I was eventually able to take part in the Committee meetings held by Zoom, I am very grateful to the committee members, especially Chris Goodwin, Secretary, and Diane Richards, Treasurer, and everyone else involved in the weekly running of the choir and concert preparations in my absence and throughout the year.

We are grateful for the continued work of our two excellent professionals, Harry and Colin, and bringing their love of music to the choir. How time flies as Harry celebrated five years as Musical Director of the choir at the beginning of the summer term.

Let's hope we have another successful season as the North Herts Guild of Singers moves into its 57th year.

## **Dave Tinney (Vice Chair NHGS)**

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

First of all, I'd like to thank everybody for another excellent choir year. I thoroughly enjoyed last season and thought there were some excellent concerts given.

We began the season with Mendelssohn's epic oratorio Elijah, one of the great staples of the oratorio choir repertoire. A piece of great magnitude and great musical moments, the musical fire descended from heaven to St Mary's church Hitchin for a spirited display alongside the epic Johannes Moore, our Elijah, soloists Sophie Benfield, Maya Colwell and Philippe Durrant and the Beaufoy Sinfonia.

Christmas saw us join forces with the then Royal Harpist, the wonderful Alis Huws who charmed us with a variety of solo pieces and joined us for Janacek's unjustly neglected Otče Náš. Apparently, our Czech language was very good in this concert - obviously I couldn't tell you either way but it proves that good work was done. The usual fare of Christmas carols accompanied by the dulcet tones of the tractors made sure that Christmas came in the most traditional of Guild ways.

March saw us summoning up old demons as we took on Bach's B Minor Mass having had our exploits so rudely interrupted in 2020. Some would say that programming Elijah and the B Minor mass within 4 months of each other is completely crazy, and I, of course, agree with them, and yet the choir approached it with a verve and commitment one only sees with unfinished business. There was so much hard work put in over the weeks but it was so worth it for a fabulous performance in St Mary's Church alongside the incredible Musica Donum Dei, soloists Emilia Bertolini, Hera Protopapas, Simon Carter and Daniel Vening. The rousing sound of the final Dona Nobis will live long in the memory. Demons of 2020 put to bed - bravo all.

Summer saw us tackling Rossini's attempt at the least serious serious mass going. The writing of Petite Messe Solennelle at points had this MD flabbergasted and lost for words at its frivolity but the choir got into the spirit of the piece with ease and after some gruelling sessions on those two pesky fugues gave a thrilling performance at WRBC. Accompanied by Colin on piano, more on him later, George Inscoe on the world's most difficult instrument to source and courier (the harmonium) and soloists Daisy Livesey, Louise Wood, Matt Sotillo Cooke and James Bartlett the evening was a bombastic bonkers success. The smiles of everyone afterwards showed me that a good time was very much had by all and thus recognising, certainly in my view, Mr Rossini's intention.

A couple of thank yous. Firstly to Colin, our totally exceptional accompanist, organist, continuo player, transposer, tenor and everything in between. This is your annual reminder that we are so lucky to have a musician of his quality working alongside us week after week and I am always so grateful for his wise counsel (and termly curries).

To our tireless committee, Dave, Diane, Chris, Jenny, our Concert Manager, Librarians, Section Leaders, publicity team and everyone that takes jobs for the Guild - firstly thank you for putting up with me and secondly thank you for everything that you do to make sure that the cogs in this wonderful musical machine keep oiled and turning as they should. I always count

myself very lucky to be supported so ably by a wonderful team around me that allow me to focus on making the best music possible with you all.

Another fantastic season everyone and looking forward to the next.

## **Harry Bradford (MD NHGS)**

### **6.Treasurer's report for the year 2023-2024**

The Treasurer presented her report, as follows, together with the financial statement for the year. Before doing so, Diane took the opportunity to thank those people responsible for securing additional income during the year from grants and fundraising: Deborah Dean for obtaining grants from the Williams Church Music Trust towards the Bach concert and the Herts CC Locality Budget for a contribution towards the new lighting; Harry Bradford for a grant from the Josephine Baker Trust for the soloists for the Bach concert; Katharine Rowe and her family for organising the refreshments at the Bach concert and Sue and Greg Covington for organising a cake sale at the February workshop and at Christchurch the following morning. Both of these events, together with the grants, raised c £1200 for the choir. In addition, Diane also thanked Rita and Dave Beasley for all their work and time selling concert tickets and the Front of House work at the concerts.

I attach the NHGS accounts for the year 2023-24 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 concerts, (two with a small orchestra), and a workshop this year. Unfortunately, a loss of £640 was incurred at the Christmas concert due to the lack of parking in the town centre during the tractor parade. This contributed significantly to the overall annual deficit of £34.

The key differences in income and expenditure between the financial year 2023-24 and the previous year are:

1. **Grants:** This year we have received an additional £250 in grants from the Herts County Council's Locality Budget Scheme towards the cost of new stage lights purchased in July 2023, £500 from the Williams Church Music Trust towards the cost of the orchestra at the Spring concert and £320 from the Josephine Baker Trust to subsidise the cost of two young soloists at the Spring concert. These are shown in Note 5: Grants, legacies and general donations. My thanks go to Deborah Dean, former Chair and Harry Bradford, Music Director for obtaining these grants.
2. **Concert** income has increased by 6% to £10,036, but costs rose this year by 17% to £22,870
3. **Accruals** -Debtors and payments in advance consist of £275 venue deposits for concerts in future years, £50 search fees for 2024/5 music and £121.50 Summer concert ticket income from Hitchin Festival.
4. The total **reserves** has decreased to £53,871. These are made up of three components, namely the unrestricted (free) reserves of £45,081, the tour reserve of £240, and £8550 set aside to cover the cost of depreciation of our staging. The readily available (cash) reserve is currently £47,724

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. Our costs have started to rise this year, some above inflation and we are expecting that this will continue during 2024-5. Membership fees and ticket sales do not cover the entire cost of the music programmes planned for future years and we rely heavily on fundraising, grants and recently, bank interest to meet the shortfall. In addition we need to plan finances so that within 4 years we will have the resources to renew our staging whenever this becomes necessary. (See updated reserves policy). 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)**

Bob Beasley proposed that the financial report should be accepted, and this was seconded by Deborah Dean. All were in favour.

### **7. Annual subscription for the 2024-2025 season**

The Committee proposed that the subscription should be increased by £24 to £234 per annum.

Prior to the meeting, notice of the proposed increase had been circulated to members. It was noted that current membership levels (currently c 20-25 members fewer than pre-pandemic levels) and concert attendance do not generate enough income to cover the proposed programme and rehearsals for 2024 – 25.

There was some discussion concerning whether the level of the subscription would be responsible for people not joining or leaving the choir. As far as we know, people leave the choir for many reasons, none of them financial, and, of those who come to explore joining the choir, the reason for not applying is invariably the standard of singing required. The main methods of attracting new members have been via concert attendance, workshops, our website and word of mouth. Recruitment may be an area for the Committee to consider in the coming year.

In response to a question from the meeting, the Treasurer explained that, because of the number of people paying monthly, cash flow in the Spring term could be problematic and that, if possible, payment in full at the beginning of each season would be preferred.

There was also a query from the floor as to whether the increase to the subscription should be higher than the rate proposed. However, the Treasurer felt that the rate proposed was sufficient at this time.

The motion was put to the meeting that the annual subscription should be increased to £234 per annum.

Proposed by Sue Trost and Seconded by Marion Bradbury.

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 2024 – 2025.

Georgie Bennet proposed that the Treasurer's recommendation should be accepted. This was seconded by Ruth Garrod. Approval was unanimous.

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

**Hon. Chair:** Dave Tinney

Proposed by Peter Todd and seconded by Barry Goodman  
Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**Hon. Secretary:** Christine Goodwin

Proposed by Liz Sillars and seconded by Ruth Garrod  
Although there were no other nominations, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**Hon. Treasurer:** Diane Richards:

Proposed by Grace Gillions and seconded by Sue Covington  
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  
26 September 2024**



The following Members were elected to serve on the Committee:

Anne Blackman, Susan Clark, Deborah Dean, Jane Kirk, Pat Salmon, Jenny Squires, Katharine Rowe,

Proposed by Eve Bedell and seconded by Ros Thick.

Although all were standing unopposed, the approval of the meeting was sought. Approval was unanimous.

**10. Any other business**

None

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

Signed ..... (Chair)

Date.....

# North Herts Guild of Singers

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 July 2024

2022/23 (£)		2023/24 (£)
23,724	Members' Subscriptions	25,121
3,209	Gift Aid recoverable - for this year	3,585
26,933		<i>Sub-total</i> 28,706
378	Fund-raising activities ( Note 1)	492
9,440	Concert income (Note 2)	10,036
1,803	Hire of music/folders to Members	702
364	Administration and Other Income (Note 3)	416
928	Choral Workshop (Note 4)	1,086
3,287	Grants, legacies and donations (Note 5)	1,113
462	Bank Interest	1,016
<b>43,595</b>	<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>43,567</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		
0	Costs of fundraising (Note 1)	0
19,540	Concert costs (Note 2)	22,870
13,974	Rehearsal costs	14,873
2,066	Music & folders hired/purchased	711
4,571	Administration and Other Expenses (Note 3)	4,366
538	Choral Workshop (Note 4)	687
93	Bank Charges	94
<b>40,782</b>		<b>43,601</b>
<b>2,813</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit of resources expended</b>	<b>(34)</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2024

<b>Fixed assets</b>		
7,125	Staging (Note 6)	5,700
<b>Current assets</b>		
4,720	Refunds for cancelled 2023 Tour	0
275	Debtors and other payments in advance	447
97	Cash in hand	97
46,369	Bank Deposit Account balance	47,525
99	Bank Current Account balance	102
58,685		53,871
<b>Less: Current liabilities</b>		
4,720	2023 Tour deposits received in advance (Note7)	0
60	Creditors and accrued expenses	0
<b>53,905</b>	<b>Net current assets and net assets</b>	<b>53,871</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>		
50,852	General reserves at 1 August 2023	53,665
2,813	Surplus /Deficit of resources expended in the year	(34)
<b>53,665</b>	<b>General reserve at 31 July 2024</b>	<b>53,631</b>
240	Tour Reserve (Note 7)	240
<b>53,905</b>	<b>Total reserves at 31 July 2024</b>	<b>53,871</b>

David Tinney (Vice Chair)

Diane Richards (Treasurer)

# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2023/24 - Page 1

### Note 1: Fund raising activities

	£	£	£	£
	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
Sale of Music	80	0	80	111
Easyfundraising	146	0	146	112
Amazon Smile	0	0	0	70
Advertising	60	0	60	60
Other	206	0	206	25
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>378</b>

### Note 2: Concerts

	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
Prior year concerts -2022/3	0	0	0	40
Autumn (2023)	3,028	7,588	(4,560)	(4,603)
Christmas (2023)	1,538	2,178	(640)	87
Spring (2024)	3,175	9,010	(5,835)	(6,033)
Summer (2024)	2,295	4,094	(1,799)	409
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>10,036</b>	<b>22,870</b>	<b>(12,834)</b>	<b>(10,100)</b>

### Note 3: Admin & Other Expenses

	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
Making Music Subscription	0	392	(392)	(275)
Insurance	0	151	(151)	(143)
Performing Rights fees	0	236	(236)	(150)
Website maintenance and operation	0	103	(103)	(103)
Equipment	0	13	(13)	(886)
Concert scarves	50	238	(188)	81
Staging storage rental	0	1,028	(1,028)	(936)
Staging Depreciation	0	1,425	(1,425)	(1,425)
Social Events- Pimms on Lawn	366	367	(1)	0
General Administration expenses	0	413	(413)	(370)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>4,366</b>	<b>(3,950)</b>	<b>(4,207)</b>

### Note 4 Workshop

	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
Venue	0	185	(185)	(85)
Professionals	0	490	(490)	(450)
Entry charges for participants	947	0	947	928
Tickets	0	3	(3)	0
Refreshments	139	9	130	0
Gifts and hospitality	0	0	0	(3)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>390</b>

### Note 5 Grants, legacies and other donations

	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
JBT grant for Bach concert soloists	330	0	330	0
Williams CMT grant for Bach concert	500	0	500	2,000
Legacy	0	0	0	1,000
Herts CC locality budget (lighting)	250	0	250	250
General donations	33	0	33	37
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>3,287</b>

# North Herts Guild Of Singers

## Notes to the Accounts 2023/24 - Page 2

### Note 6: Fixed Assets (Staging)

	Cost	Depre'cn 10% strt line	Net Book Value
Balance @ 1 August 2023	14,250	7,125	7,125
Charge for the year 23/24		1,425	(1,425)
Additions	0	0	0
Less disposals	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14,250</b>	<b>8,550</b>	<b>5,700</b>

### Note 7: Tour

	Income	Costs	Net	22/23
<b>Tour reserve</b>				
Balance brought forward @1 August 2023	240	0	240	240
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	
<b>Balance brought forward @ 31 July 24</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>240</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 2024.

### **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: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024