



Chairperson's Report Annual General Meeting Tuesday 18th June 2024

Chairperson: Gail Prentice.

The report below aims to give an overview of the 2023-24 season, focusing on its content, management, funding and issues that arose. Much of the contents of this report will have been aired and discussed previously, at quarterly meetings, however a summary is provided below.

The Season

The 23/24 season comprised a total of 9 concerts:

A NEW BEGINNING opening concert at Harty Room, QUB, Belfast
Thursday 26th October 2023

UNDER THE SKY concert at Sonic Lab, QUB, Belfast
Friday 1st December 2023

INK STILL WET VII Exclusive world premieres at Sonic Lab, QUB, Belfast
Saturday 27th January 2024

HRSE FEATURED YOUNG ARTISTS at Harty Room, QUB, Belfast
Thursday 8th February 2024

PLUGGED IN International Women's Day Concert at Sonic Lab, QUB, Belfast
Friday 8th March 2024

Ulster Youth Orchestra Joint concert at Harty Room, Belfast
Sunday 7th April 2024

Classical:NEXT Showcase Concert at Holzmarkt, Berlin
Wednesday 15th May 2024

GALLERY MUSIC Concerts
Ulster Museum - Saturday 1st June 2024
Hugh Lane Gallery - Sunday 2nd June 2024

Performances:

All scheduled concerts took place as planned, except for some expected personnel changes due to illness.

In addition, members of HRSE gave the following 8 workshops at QUB:

QUB Clarinet Workshop for Undergraduate Student work
Fri 27th Oct 2023

QUB Duo Workshop for Undergraduate Student work (Violin & Cello)
Mon 4th Dec 2023

QUB Flute Workshop for Undergraduate Student work (Composition 2)
Tues 5th Dec 2023

QUB PhD Composition Workshop (Lara Weaver) with Full Ensemble
Thurs 25th Jan 2024

QUB Introduction to Solo Flute Workshop for Undergraduate Student work (Composition 1)
31st Jan 2024

QUB Ensemble Audio Engineering Workshop
Sonic Lab, QUB, Belfast - Saturday 9th March 2024

QUB Flute & Piano Duo Workshop 1 (Composition 1)
McMordie Hall, QUB, Belfast - Wednesday 13th March 2024

QUB Flute & Piano Duo Workshop 2 (Composition 1)
McMordie Hall, QUB, Belfast - Wednesday 24th April 2024

And we have one more to complete:

QUB PhD Composition Workshop (Robert Coleman) with Full Ensemble
7th July 2024

Recording:

This year the ensemble has continued to build up their library of online recordings with multiple live recordings from concerts throughout the season. This is a very valuable resource, not only to HRSE in terms of promotion and cataloguing performances, but also a lifeline for the composers represented who use these videos for crucial development opportunities.

Commissions:

Commissions for this season included two commissions for Raymond Deane and Stephen Gardner from Arts Council Ireland. We also had the usual three PRSf funded works from early career composers and this year they were from Rebecca Doherty, Sarah Colgan and Orly Watson. The Peter Rosser competition yielded three finalists and the premiere of works by Sam Chambers (winner), Laura Heneghan and Kevin Free. We received funding in January from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Commissions award for which Gareth Williams and Deirdre Gribbin are currently writing for our 24/25 season. Unfortunately, our application to Arts Council Ireland was unsuccessful. However other new works are in process for premiere by HRSE and we have recently received pieces by Dominique Lemaitre and Geoff Hannan. Next year's call for proposals for our PRSf commissions will open next Friday 28th June 2024 and close on Friday 16th August. Selection will be made by 1st September 2024.

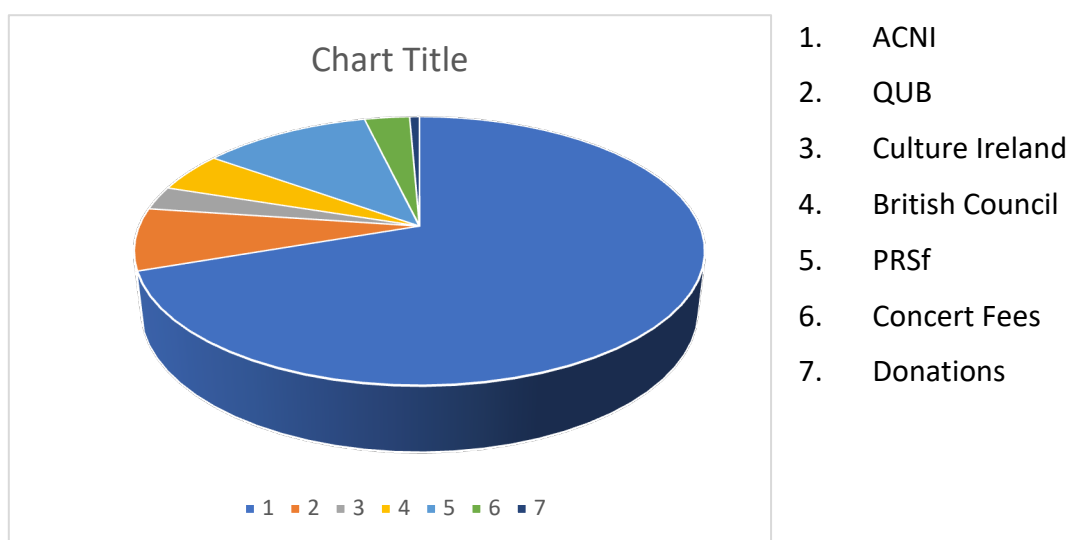
Funding:

The season's activities were supported through successful funding applications which included the **ACNI Project Funding for Organisations**, **PRSF Talent Development Partnership** and funds accessed through QUB's **Hamilton Harty Bursary**. Additional funding was awarded by **British Council** for the purpose of participating in their UK/Poland projects in 2025 for which plans are progressing. HRSE also accessed funds from **Culture Ireland** and **Belfast City Council** (both awaiting payment) in order to participate in a high-profile Showcase concert at Classical:NEXT in Berlin in May.

The remainder of HRSE's income came from earned income and profits from workshop fees after performers had been paid.

HRSE heard recently that whilst it will again be supported through the **PRSF Talent Development Partnership** for 2024/25, PRSF have altered and widened their scheme and HRSE will unfortunately not be supported during 2025-27. It was suggested that HRSE must demonstrate more diversity in the composers supported (or efforts towards such) but that we had made a very strong application and will be retained in terms of the talent development network and able to gain from continued association.

A breakdown of how HRSE was funded in 2023-24 is illustrated in the pie chart below.



Next Season's funding:

The annual application for **ACNI Project Funding** (Lottery Funds) was submitted on 6th May 2024 and decision is due in early-July. The Project Funding ceiling had been raised to £75K for 2023/24 and our application asked for an uplift on last year.

PRSF funding of £10k towards early career composer commissions, showcase and admin has been approved, though payments are still outstanding (final payment of last year's grant and first payment of this years).

Our **Industry Professional** budget remains at a maximum of £8k, and £6650 of funding was accessed this year (slightly less than normal due to the vacant Head of Composition post in Semester 2).

Our application to the **Hamilton Harty Bursary** is pending at this stage.

British Council has awarded us £10k for the UK/Poland project in 2025.

External bookings for upcoming concerts in 24/25 include Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Sheffield University, AzTak Festival, New Music Week St Andrews and a concert in Limerick for RTE Lyric FM.

Concert Income – Current Season:

Concert income for the season stands at **£3,624** and is itemised as follows:

- QUB Lunchtime Recital - £1000
- Hugh Lane Gallery (Dublin) - £1,864 (awaiting payment)
- Box Office - £760

Financial:

Draft annual accounts have recently been drawn up for the organisation by **Donald Minshull Chartered Accountants**, up to the end of March 2024. The accounts show an annual turnover of **£109,825** for the tax year 2023/24.

Partner Organisations:

HRSE's partnership with **QUB** has been maintained and we are currently confirming support for the coming season.

New partnerships this season were forged with **Ulster Touring Opera, Dumbworld** and **University of Ulster** and existing partnerships have been built upon with **Contemporary Music Centre, Ulster Youth Orchestra, Ulster Museum** and **Maiden Voyage Dance**.

Staffing:

The appointment of Aisling Agnew as Interim Artistic Director (taking up post in Sep 2023) has been a significant development in the organisation. As a founder member of the ensemble, Aisling's extended role at the organisation's helm brings renewed insight, direction, and enthusiasm to HRSE. Sinead Hayes has acted as Interim Concert Manager for the season and has also brought many skills, enthusiasm and in-depth knowledge to the organisation.

Press and Marketing:

This Season's brochure was a 25-page publication and was distributed in print extensively around the city. A PDF version was also distributed electronically and was made available to download on our website. We also printed season postcards with the artwork and concert details which were a great addition in advertising events.

The Ensemble's website was updated at the start of the season, and throughout, and has been used in conjunction with social media (twitter, Facebook and Instagram) to promote the organisation.

In addition, regular publicity campaigns using Mail Chimp were mounted in the run up to events. Other means of publicity, including our partner organisation's websites and mailing lists, have also been used extensively.

All our publicity and design work above was carried out by **Paula Caffrey**, an arrangement that has allowed the administrators time to focus on other matters. Their bespoke design led publicity and

social media work, in conjunction with their brochure design, ensures a corporate feel across all materials. This is an arrangement that works extremely well and the strong branding of the group is well-noted.

Audiences:

Our events have been very well attended this season, almost to capacity at some events. Only one concert had less than 50 audience members and most were close to 100. Though we still feel we would like to generate increased student attendance, we noticed new audiences this season and sense the group is reaching outside of its core regular audience. Wider media attention (and additional PR around the Classical:NEXT event) also helped to reach new listeners, and our pop-up events at Ulster Museum and the upcoming Make Music Day event on 21st June are all helping to increase HRSE's audience engagement.

Succession Planning:

Greg Caffrey finished his 10-year tenure last season and having shadowed this role, Aisling Agnew has been acting as Artistic Director throughout the current season. Following discussions with Music Officer Ciaran Scullion at Arts Council the role is currently being advertised and applicants for the position will be shortlisted by Gail Prentice and Greg Caffrey for interview on 24th June. The Concert Manager role will subsequently be advertised in July once the AD post has been finalized.