

LARNE CHORAL SOCIETY AGM May 23rd. 2025.

Hon.Sec. Report.

The choir has enjoyed another year of singing, and friendship, under the much appreciated Direction of our Conductor, Andrea Blain.

We have been delighted to welcome another two member to the ranks – one Alto, and one Soprano, bringing the number on the role to 32, with potentially more in a few years' time; a first baby “Matthew” and a grandchild “Chloe” making their appearance in January and April respectively!

Practices began again in earnest in August 2024 and ran through until early May 2025 in our “home” at Sandy Bay Pavilion, Tower Road, Larne. There were a few breaks to allow for bad weather, and Andrea's many other commitments, but we were very fortunate to have our Accompanist Georgina McChesney or Alto, Gwen, to step in and play the piano to take the occasional practice in Andrea's absence.

In September 2024, we were to agree with Anne McCambridge's decision to manage the future of the Youth Choir independently from Larne Choral Society, to enable both choirs to flourish better, separately. It was hoped, however, that we would still collaborate to perform together at some future concerts, and support each other on our separate paths. Anne was very grateful to Larne Choral Society for enabling her goal to establish a Youth Choir in Larne - now renamed as Larne Community Youth Choir- in the first place.

Our first performance of the season was our Christmas concert “And The Glory” on Friday December 6th, 2024 in St. Cedma's Church of Ireland, Larne. The weather was wild and stormy, so we were very surprised when the church filled up with a packed audience! We were entertained with guest soloist Amy Ogilby's beautiful flute playing, and by several young solo singers from The Music Yard, Larne, to complement Andrea's programme of lovely Christmas pieces, accompanied by Georgina's expert and sympathetic clavichord playing. Subsequently, in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, some of us were able to join, first of all, singers from St. Patrick's C of I, Cairncastle, in carol singing at the Moyle Hospital and Lisgarel Care Centre, and then a further invitation to Broadways Nursing Home, by ourselves. Patients, residents, and staff joined in the singing in all venues, which was lovely.

In late September 2024, thirteen members of the choir had attended a “Come and learn to sing opera choruses” event run by Northern Ireland Opera Chorus, in the Grand Opera House, Belfast. We struggled to follow most of the pieces, but were able to burst into a hearty rendition of “Va Pensiero”! We certainly learned what hard work it is being a chorus member, and having to sing in a multitude of different languages.

In October 2024 we applied to the organisation Making Music, to their “Adopt a Composer” scheme, with a view to the impending anniversary of our inauguration year (yet to be confirmed - 1867, or 1876, or beyond...). Unfortunately there was no “match” for a composer in Northern Ireland, but we were encouraged by Making Music to continue to pursue the idea.

Following a break over the Christmas period after the concert, and snowfall in early January 2025, practices started again on January 14th to prepare for our Spring concert planned for May 16th. Prior to this, Andrea entered us for Larne and Carrickfergus music festivals. As it turned out, both were on the same day, Sat. April 5th, for our Adult classes. We eagerly applied, but after the event, everyone agreed it was rather exhausting! A convoy of ourselves, Whitehead Ladies' Choir, and the PSNI Male Choir could be seen driving to Carrickfergus in the evening, straight after our performance in Larne... We really enjoyed taking part in both festivals, however, and received a shield award at Carrick. Only 1st and 2nd places were awarded at the Larne festival....

The date for our Spring concert 2025 in First Larne Church Memorial Hall on May 16th, soon came around. It was a wonderful evening of singing the beautiful - and in so many cases, moving - songs which Andrea had put so much work into preparing us for - even Van Morrison's dreaded Da Doos seemed to float out effortlessly on the night! Her very informative introduction to each piece was appreciated by all. The audience was not so large (some potential ticket holders with prior

engagements or last minute illness etc.) but we received much positive feedback from those present. The programme covered music from the decades of the choir's existence, and this was also reflected in the pieces beautifully played by our guest soloists Robin Clinton on Brass, and Amy Ogilby again on Flute.

To conclude our year we look forward to singing to the residents of Larne Care Centre tomorrow., 24th.May 2025.

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