

North Belfast Youth Choir

Trustees Annual Report

2023



NB
Y:C

The year began with a cancelled rehearsal on Wednesday 11th January, due to heavy snow fall, but it was a busy and productive year thereafter, with some exceptional performances.

The main events are outlined below:

February 26

Look North Festival, Ulster University

March 3

Opening of European Conference as part of the Young at Art Festival in the Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast.

April 7

NBYC appearance on RTÉ's Late, Late Show with Cairde and Brian Kennedy

May 4th

Guests at Hazelwood Integrated College Spring Concert

August 29/30

NBYC London preparation with current members + alumni + members of Codetta Youth Choir

October 22

City of Derry International Choir Festival

October 23-26

NBYC in London, with performances in Mansion House and the Irish Embassy.

December 18

Carol Service in Belfast Boys' Model School.





Preparation for all these events comprised regular rehearsals in each of the participating North Belfast post primary schools – Belfast Boys’ Model School, Hazelwood Integrated College and Mercy College – as well as individual practice by the singers using on-line audio files.

This year’s most significant outcome was the successful return to regular, well attended rehearsals by so many young singers from the three participating schools. The Covid pandemic had been a very difficult time for all choirs and it has been a very gradual and carefully negotiated period of recovery ever since. However, we can now reflect on the considerable achievements of the past year and state with some confidence that NBYC is, once again, flourishing.

This could not have been achieved without the support of the senior management within the schools, the extraordinary dedication of the volunteer music teachers and the enthusiastic commitment of the young people themselves.

There were many outstanding performances during the year – including the Late, Late Show with Brian Kennedy, the European conference in the Oh Yeah Music Centre and the City of Derry International Choir Festival. However, the undoubted highlight for all involved with NBYC was the trip to London in October, which was an outstanding success in every way.

A group of 32 singers, accompanied by five members of staff, spent an extremely busy, exceptionally productive and hugely enjoyable four days in London. The visit included workshops in the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, an educational visit to The Plaisterer's Hall, an attendance at a performance of Hamilton and two exceptionally fine performances in London's Mansion House and the Irish Embassy.

These performances, which featured the world premiere of a new composition by Neil Martin, with words taken from a poem by Frank Ormsby, were received rapturously by packed audiences in both venues. In addition to the very high quality of the singing, worthy of special mention is the impressive manner in which all of the young singers in the choir conducted themselves in the social situations in both of these prestigious venues. This was an eloquent manifestation of the important added value benefits of being a member of NBYC, to be considered in a much wider context than a purely musical focus.

The young people were true ambassadors for themselves, their schools, and the wider community in which they live.





The challenge now facing NBYC is to continue to provide the valuable and much needed opportunities for social interaction, the development of strong, enduring relationships across all the divides of North Belfast and the growth of confidence and aspiration in our members, whilst developing the musical skills of all the young people involved through the medium of singing.

The experience of the exceptional standards achieved when some alumni joined with current members of NBYC and representatives from Codetta Youth Choir has provided a glimpse of what might be possible with further collaborative projects.

It is encouraging to note the enthusiastic response of past members of NBYC to return to the choir if circumstances allow. We should actively seek to provide such opportunities in the future, as it represents a goal to which current members can aspire, as well as a reward for past pupils for their previous years of dedication to the choir.

In moving forward, the trustees and volunteers will also seek ways to encourage young people from beyond the participating schools to avail of the benefits and enjoyment that membership of NBYC brings.

Some discussions and planning have already taken place within NBYC to explore the possibility of future collaborations with Codetta Youth Choir in Derry and the Irish Institute of Music and Song in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. This will be an important next step in the ambition of NBYC to provide exceptional opportunities for all the young people involved at local, national and international level, as the choir continues to act as proud ambassadors for the whole community of North Belfast.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to Dónal Doherty for his inspirational leadership of the choir, to the extraordinarily dedicated team of music teachers who believe so passionately in this project and of course, to the amazing group of young singers who give so much of themselves to ensure that the vision of NBYC continues to manifest itself through their personal journeys.

The Trustees also extend their thanks and appreciation to the Principals of all the schools involved for their generosity in providing rehearsal and meeting spaces. Also to Mrs Pascale Bailie, Bursar at Belfast Boys' Model School, for her support over many years in managing the choir's finances. We wish her well in her retirement and extend our appreciation to her successor, Mrs Suzanne Seaton who has generously undertaken to continue this support. We thank also, Mr Richie Livingston for his support in sourcing professional accountancy oversight for NBYC.

The choir's journey could not continue without the generosity of our funders. The trustees wish to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to the following funding bodies for their much valued support during 2023:

The ARN Foundation

The Flax Trust

Belfast Charitable Society

The Honourable The Irish Society

Hamilton Pharmacy

European Parliament Office

Mansion House



Alan Logan, Chair of Trustees