



North Belfast Youth Choir

# TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Esmé  
Mitchell  
Trust

NI Charities Commission  
108587

Having taken regard of the NI Charities Commission guidance on public benefit, we, the trustees of North Belfast Youth Choir present the annual report for the year 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

North Belfast Youth Choir continues to provide life enhancing opportunities for, at present, approximately seventy young people aged 11 - 18 drawn from post primary schools in North Belfast which reflect the religious, and cultural diversity within the community.

The main focus of all involved with the North Belfast Youth Choir during 2024 was to build on the exceptional experiences and performance standards achieved in 2023. As the list of highlights outlined below clearly demonstrates, this ambition was realised and, in many ways, surpassed.





Significant performances occurred on a regular basis throughout the year:

- March – Belfast Charitable Society AGM



- April – Official opening of York Street Train Station

- May – Mercy College Annual Spring Concert



- May – Guest performance at the Fourth Annual Mediation Partners Retreat at Stormont, at the invitation of the Speaker of the NI Assembly.

- September – Peace Plus Initiative Launch, Belfast City Hall



- October – Performance with international choral group, SLIXS, at the City of Derry International Choir Festival

- October – Awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Youth Choir category of the CoDICF



- October – Baroness May Blood Bursary Dinner

- December – HM Lord Lieutenant of Belfast Carol Service

- December – Mercy College Annual Carol Service



One of the main purposes of the choir is to develop the musical appreciation and knowledge of the young people along with providing enjoyable and rewarding experiences through the shared joy of singing.

The singers are currently drawn from North Belfast schools, mainly at present; Belfast Boys' Model School, Hazelwood Integrated College and Mercy College. The volunteer music teachers from these schools, with the generous support of their Principals, provide the energy, commitment and enthusiasm for the continued growth and development of the choir.

As can be seen from the impressive list of highlights, 2024 was an extremely busy and exciting twelve months in the history of NBYC. It should be recognised that in preparation for each of these performances, hours of collective rehearsal, which take place at the end of school days, at weekends and sometimes during school holidays, as well as an element of individual learning and detailed logistical planning by the team of teachers, are all essential elements that contribute to the growing reputation of the choir and a reflection of the high standards being achieved.



To demonstrate the ongoing development of the choir and the impact it is making in the wider community, it is worth noting some comments from two of the above events.

The Chairman of the International panel of adjudicators at the City of Derry International Choir Festival complimented the choir on its *'wonderful energy', 'lively performance', and 'beautiful sound'*.

The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Edwin Poots MLA, thanked the choir for their *'impactful contribution to the Mediation dinner'*, with *'many of the attendees sharing their appreciation and delight at the talent of the young people'*.

He explained that *'The event hosted senior non-governmental figures from across the globe who share a driving commitment to support peace activities across many regional areas of conflict. It was therefore significant that the cross-community choir of young people from North Belfast, an area which suffered significant incidence of violence during the Troubles, to provide a symbol of how the peace process in our society has made a difference.'*



Apart from the joy, shared by so many, in the music-making of the choir, perhaps the outstanding observation is the manner in which each and every member of NBYC acted as an outstanding ambassador for the choir, their schools and their community. This is testament to the positive impact NBYC membership has on the personal development and self-confidence of these young people.

The practice of bringing the choir members together for rehearsals and performances across the variety of participating schools, along with residential experiences at e.g., The City of Derry International Choir Festival, facilitated the development of strong positive relationships and opportunities for the young people to see beyond the divisions which are still sadly present in North Belfast and fostered a strong ethos of respect for self and others.

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 further 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. We will 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. Also, the more experienced and mature individuals can be excellent role models for the less experienced choir members.



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. This is reflected in our three year development plan, as is creating future collaborations with eg, The Irish Institute of Music and Song in Balbriggan, Co Dublin.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to Dónal Doherty for his inspirational leadership of the choir, to the extraordinarily dedicated team of volunteer music teachers who believe so passionately in this project, to Mr Thomas Brown for his generous commitment to providing piano accompaniment to the choir 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 for example, providing rehearsal and meeting spaces. Also to Mrs Suzanne Seaton and Mr Richie Livingston for their support in managing the finances of 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 2024:



Esmé  
Mitchell  
Trust

The ARN Foundation.      Belfast Charitable Society.      Esme Mitchell Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R A Logan'.

R A Logan, Chair