

Trustee Annual Report

Charity Name: The Ulster Consort Foundation

Charity no. 110098

This report relates to financial year: ended 31 August 2025

The principal address of the charity is 21 Marine Parade, Whitehead, BT38 9QP

The following individuals were the charity trustees on the date the report was approved:

Trustee 1: Elizabeth Aiken

Trustee 2: Derek Browne

Trustee 3: Michael Callender

Trustee 4: Jonathan Cubitt

Trustee 5: Jonathan Ireland

Trustee 6: Cameron Marshall

The Charity was formed on 22 August 2024. The Charity is governed by a Constitution. The Charity is constituted as an unincorporated association.

The purposes of the charity are to help make high quality choral performances more accessible to the public Northern Ireland-wide, through supporting an accessible, ambitious and imaginative programme of performances and providing information and awareness about, and access to, high quality choral singing. The Foundation supports high-quality choral singing while promoting the finest local talent and using iconic spaces across Northern Ireland. By keeping ticket prices affordable and through the regular use of print and social media, the Ulster Consort Foundation aims to broaden the audience for the performing arts. It aims to promote the arts in Northern Ireland and connect to the wider community by engaging in a wide range of education and outreach activities, and collaborating with other choral and arts organisations.

To further these purposes for the public benefit, we carried out the following activities designed to widen participation, nurture emerging talent and support musical development across Northern Ireland.

Ulster Consort Foundation activities 2024/2025

Children's Summer Music School, August 2025, Stranmillis College

This was a multi-day programme for 5-15 year olds, offering high-quality musical training, ensemble experience, and creative development. Over 60 children took part in a singing course based on John Rutter's *The Reluctant Dragon*. It was evident to see how this helped children from all socio-economic backgrounds, build confidence, skills, and early engagement with the arts.

Easter Singing Course, April 2026, St Mary's Church, Belfast

This Easter Course saw around 50 children, also aged 5-15, join together for a 3-day intensive experience themed around *Jonah Man Jazz* - the children's cantata by Michael

Hurd. This seasonal training opportunity for developing young singers, focused on vocal technique, ensemble skills, and sacred repertoire. Children from all religious backgrounds, and none, attended this course.

Talent Development Programme

In early 2025, The Ulster Consort Foundation launched a new pilot scheme to nurture Ulster's next generation of talented singers. It has provided a great opportunity to learn and develop their work with top professional musicians. It also allows participants to get hands-on experience working with the Ulster Consort and its conductor, Matthew Owens, while continuing on their own musical journeys and enables them to realise their aspirations of joining the classical sector as professionals.

During the course of the year, participants received individual mentoring tailored to the individual and the opportunity to perform alongside the Ulster Consort. Performing with any professional group is testing at the best of times, but when you are young, and at the very start of your career, it can certainly feel overwhelming and somewhat daunting. Having access to individuals and organisations who can welcome, help mentor, support and shape these first experiences in a professional environment can be a real game-changer. We were very pleased to announce ten singers as our Ulster Consort Training Scheme cohort for 2024-25.

Choral Workshop Days

We held a choral workshop in July based on *Masterpieces of the Baroque*. These open-access workshops led by Music Director Matthew Owens, provided high-quality choral training to adult singers of all abilities from right across the region. The workshop showed great community participation and helped to support the wider choral ecosystem.

New Music Development

Through the *New Sounds* project, the Ulster Consort Foundation has helped to support the creation and performance of new music. Energies have gone towards engaging both emerging and established composers in the creation of new choral repertoire. Being at the cutting edge of new music contributes in a major way to the cultural vibrancy of Northern Ireland.

Christmas celebration

The Ulster Consort Foundation's Christmas celebration *Have yourself a merry little Christmas* saw over 110 pupils representing sixteen schools from all backgrounds across Northern Ireland perform in a sell-out performance in the iconic Ulster Hall. The children joined the professional Ulster Consort & Players, and compères Pamela Ballantine MBE and Fr Eugene O'Hagan MBE, in aid of Bowel Cancer UK.

Music included traditional festive favourites and that of Ulster Consort Patron, Bob Chilcott, as well Sir John Rutter, Eric Whitacre, John Williams, and a world premiere by American composer, Gary Davison. This concert brought many families to the Ulster Hall for the first time and introduced them to many new styles of classical music in an approachable and very accessible way.

Conclusion

All these programmes demonstrate the Foundation's commitment to access, inclusion, and long-term artistic development in Northern Ireland.

Ulster Consort Foundation

The main achievements of the Ulster Consort Foundation in the year were significant growth in the number of and contributions by our Friends of the Ulster Consort. This group provides essential support that enables the ensemble's artistic and educational work. Their contributions of time, talents and financial resources help fund educational programmes and community workshops; support new music commissions and contemporary programming; enable the engagement of specialist musicians and period-instrument performers; maintain accessible ticket pricing and broaden audience reach; and, strengthen the long-term sustainability of the Ulster Consort Foundation.

The trustees have read the Commission's Public Benefit requirement statutory guidance and have had regard to this when running the charity.

A review of the charity's financial position at the end of the year: in the financial 2024 to 2025, the Charity had an income of £133,684 and an expenditure of £111,948.

There are no funds held by the charity that are materially in deficit.

Signature –



Print Name –

Elizabeth Aiken

Date –

3rd June 2026