

Con Anima

Scotland · Charity number SC040598

Details

Status	Active
Legal form	Unincorporated association
Registered	2009-06-23
Register	View on the OSCR register

Contact

Address	Woodhead Midmar Inverurie AB51 7QB
Website	www.conanima.org.uk

Activities

Activities: 'It makes grants, donations or gifts to organisations','It carries out activities or services itself'

Purposes: 'the advancement of citizenship or community development','the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science'

What the charity does: Charitable Purpose The objectives of Con Anima are: 1. to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of public concerts and recitals. 2. to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the Trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations. Con Anima Chamber Choir has a purpose for both its members and its audiences. Its activities should be enjoyable and of a high musical standard. The key feature of the “amateur” approach (especially for members) is “how much we love it” and the key feature of the “professional” approach (especially for audiences) is “how good does it sound”. It is proposed that the purpose of Con Anima Chamber Choir can be defined as: “Learning and sharing while singing. During rehearsals, choir members share the process of learning music to sing together. during performances we share our work with the audience and we hope that they learn something in their turn.

Beneficiaries: 'No specific group, or for the benefit of the community','Other charities or voluntary bodies'

Objectives: 1. to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals. 2. to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

Geography

- **Main operating location:** Aberdeen
- **Geographical spread:** One or a few bases or facilities serving people who come from a broad area

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-12-31	-	-	-	-
2025-08-31	£4,532	£6,383	-	0
2024-08-31	£7,437	£7,617	-	0
2023-08-31	£5,085	£5,494	-	0
2022-08-31	£4,409	£4,743	-	0
2021-08-31	£1,455	£3,981	-	0
2020-08-31	£3,932	£1,579	-	0

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TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

Overview

Con Anima has again delivered enjoyable concerts to a high standard. This is due to the commitment of choir members, but also to the hard work behind the scenes of the committee. I would like to thank all my fellow committee members for their support during an eventful year.

Current membership

At present, there are 21 active members (4 altos, 5 basses, 8 sopranos, 4 tenors).

We are not yet achieving the ideal number (26) and distribution of singers (8 sopranos, 6 altos, 6 tenors, 6 basses). We continue to seek new members as the current numbers leave the choir particularly vulnerable to illness and competing commitments. For example, only 13 singers took part in the recent Sound concert.

Musical Director

At last year's AGM, the choir agreed to recruit a new Musical Director, to take up the role from January 2025. The Committee are grateful to Anne Hingston for agreeing to rehearse the choir as we prepared for our performance as part of *soundfestival* in October 2025, and to Dr. Roger Williams for rehearsing and conducting our concert in December 2025 while we sought a new Musical Director.

Ralph Jamieson, Musical Director of Stonehaven Chorus, was suggested as a possible candidate. We approached him in September and after discussions, engaged him for the March concert. Following review, we appointed him as Musical Director. Despite mutual respect and enjoyment throughout rehearsal and performances since January, Ralph announced in early summer that, for personal reasons, he would be resigning from all conducting commitments with effect from the end of December 2025.

The choir agreed that a new Musical Director should be sought and advertisements were placed online during the summer, with a deadline of 1 September, for the person appointed to start in January 2026. Two candidates applied, both were interviewed, and on the unanimous recommendation of the selection panel, the Committee offered the position to Allen Quinn, subject to a probationary period up to and including the planned concert on 14 March 2026. Allen accepted and will take up the post from January 2026.

2024-25 Concert Season

27 October 2024: *Soundfestival* collaboration: a development of the emerging composers project, with the composers writing for choir and marimba. Following the Spotlight Gig in the Sculpture Gallery, premiering the new pieces, we repeated the performance in the Cowdray Hall with the addition of the Concerto for Choir and Marimba by Koshinski.

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25 Concert Season (continued)

The Spotlight Gig was recorded and can be viewed on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_PNud5R630&list=RDH_PNud5R630&start_radio=1

21 December 2024, St. Andrew's Cathedral: Christmas with Con Anima, a concert of festive music from Iceland and Scotland. The programme featured works by John Hearne, Judith Weir, Sarah Rimkus, John Purser, Bob Chilcott, Phillip Cooke, Hildigunnar Rúnarsdóttir, Paul Sandagerdi and John Gardner. The organist was Kamil Mika, and the baritone soloist, Gordon Jack. Various members of the choir took solo parts in the pieces by Hearne, Purser and Cooke.

15 March 2025, St. Andrew's Cathedral: The first concert conducted by Ralph Jamieson featured Cherubini's requiem in C minor, and works by Holst, Arvo Part and Mendelssohn. Organ accompaniment was provided by Colin Stuart.

24 May 2025, Banchory East Church, Songs of Love: the choir presented Fünf Gesänge, Opus 104, by Brahms and "Songs and Sonnets", George Shearing's setting of words by Shakespeare.

Concert Plans for the 2025-6 season

Sunday 26 October, Aberdeen Art Gallery: The culmination of *soundfestival's* emerging composers project, when we will give the first performance of the new pieces. We had a workshop in September with the three composers and their mentor, James Weeks.

Thursday 18 December, Cowdray Hall: We will give a short version of our Christmas programme as part of Aberdeen Art Gallery's Lunchbreak Concert season.

Saturday 20 December, St. Andrew's Cathedral: Our Christmas concert will present Bob Chilcott's "On Christmas Night" with other Christmas music and congregational carols.

Saturday 14 March, Fountainhall Church at the Stocket: A programme provisionally entitled "Night is Light" to include Howell's Requiem and music by Dove, Meallor and Finzi among others.

We will also look to present a concert in May, potentially at an out of town venue.

I am grateful to Pablo Carnicero for his initiative in seeking and obtaining a grant from his employers, Ithaca, which will enable us to contract a rehearsal pianist for the spring and summer terms.

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

Committee

Since the AGM on 29 August 2024, the membership of the Committee has been: Cathy Guthrie (Chair), Helen Chisholm (Secretary), Sam Paul (Treasurer), Gareth Brown (Webmaster and IT support, Librarian), Richard Coleman (Choir Member), Mandy MacDonald (Choir Member) and Baylee Schutte (Choir Member). Aileen Hart volunteered to join the committee and was co-opted at the 27 March meeting. Since his appointment as Musical Director, Ralph Jamieson has attended Committee meetings ex officio. There have been 8 regular and one ad hoc committee meetings, each lasting about 90 minutes.

Two Committee members resigned during the year: Baylee resigned on 19 August 2025 as she was leaving Aberdeen to take up a research post in Germany; Richard resigned on 30 August. I would like to thank them both for their commitment, especially Richard who chaired us through the pandemic and was key to Con Anima moving to appointing a Musical Director.



Cathy Guthrie
Chair
Con Anima Chamber Choir SC040598

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Statement of Board Members' responsibilities as Trustees

Law applicable to charities in Scotland requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the Trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Independent Examiner's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2025 to the Trustees of Con Anima

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2025 which are set out on pages 7 to 10.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and examiner

The charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity Trustees consider that the audit requirements of Regulation 10(1)(d) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section (44)(1)(c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1)(a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Regulations, and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Regulations.

have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Kenny Hall C.A.
Independent Examiner
272 Broomhill Road, Aberdeen

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Statement of Receipts & Payments For the year to 31 August 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Receipts (note 5)		
Donations & subscriptions	3,102	3,463
Gross receipts from charitable activities	1,430	3,974
Total receipts	4,532	7,437
Payments (note 6)		
Payments relating directly to charitable activities	(6,027)	(7,309)
Governance costs	(356)	(308)
Total payments	(6,383)	(7,617)
Net (payments)	(1,851)	(180)
Transfer (from) funds	-	-
(Deficit) for the year	(1,851)	(180)

Statement of Balances

	2025	2024
	£	£
Bank	5,556	7,407
Represented by Unrestricted Funds		
At start of the year	7,407	7,587
Movement on receipts and payments account	(1,851)	(180)
At end of the year	5,556	7,407

Signed:



Samuel Paul (Treasurer)

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Notes to the Accounts

1. Basis of Accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the cash receipts basis in accordance with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

2. Nature and Purpose of Funds

Unrestricted funds are those that may be used at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the charity. The Trustees maintain a single unrestricted fund for the day-to-day running of the association.

3. Related Party Transaction

The association's insurance policy includes Trustee indemnity insurance for all its Trustees. No other remuneration was paid to the Trustees or to any connected persons during the year (2024: Nil).

Direct reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the association amount to Nil to C. Guthrie (2023-24: £50), £793 to G. Brown (2023-24: £131), £18 to R. Coleman (2023-24: Nil) and Nil to S. Paul (2023-24: £283).

Other than these, no expense transactions between the charity and Trustees or their interests took place.

4. Reserves Policy

The charity has only a single unrestricted fund at present. The Trustees do not consider it necessary to maintain any specific reserves

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

5. Receipts

	2025	2024
	£	£
Donations		
Subscriptions	3,102	3,463
Sponsorship	-	-
	3,102	3,463
 Income from other charitable activities		
Concert income (ticket sales, donations for entry, donations for programmes)	1,419	3,959
CD sales and track downloads	11	15
	1,430	3,974
 Total receipts	4,532	7,437

6. Payments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Payments relating to charitable activities		
Concert fees and expenses	(2,014)	(4,192)
Donations	-	-
Musical Directors	(2,405)	(1,250)
Rehearsal venue hire	(1,440)	(1,560)
Website	(168)	(307)
	(6,027)	(7,309)
 Governance costs		
Performing Rights Society/Making Music subscription	(188)	(158)
General Expenses	(168)	(150)
	(356)	(308)
 Total payments	(6,383)	(7,617)

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Governance

Con Anima is an unincorporated association governed by a Constitution. Originally formed in 2001 it was recognised as a charity in 2009. The association is a member of an umbrella group “Making Music”, a federation of amateur music societies in Great Britain. The main activity of the association is the running of a chamber choir.

Charitable Purpose

The objectives of Con Anima are:

1. to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of public concerts and recitals;
2. to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the Trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

Registered Office

Woodhead,
Midmar
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 7QB

Trustees

The Trustees are elected annually at an AGM by the membership of the choir. There is no fixed number beyond the three main office bearers: Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The following Trustees were in office during the year.

Trustee

Cathy Guthrie
Sam Paul
Helen Chisholm
Gareth Brown
Mandy Macdonald
Aileen Hart (co-opted 27 March 2025)
Baylee Schutte (resigned 19 Aug 2025)
Richard Coleman (resigned 30 Aug 2025)

Office

Chair
Treasurer
Secretary

Website: www.conanima.org.uk

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

THE PURPOSE AND VALUES OF CON ANIMA CHAMBER CHOIR, AS REVIEWED IN 2021-22, AND AGREED AT THE AGM ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021.

Background.

Con Anima Chamber Choir has an evolving identity and reputation, based on its history, residing at any one time in the hands of its members.

Con Anima could make its future different to its past if desired. Like any organisation, Con Anima can look at (a) WHAT we do; (b) HOW we do it; and (c) WHY we do it. The most successful organisations and teams have members who focus on purpose, vision, values and beliefs, so that when they're doing something they know exactly why they're doing it.

Process.

The ideas expressed here are based on consultation with Con Anima members during 2020-21, by means of on-line discussion groups, some additional one-to-one conversations and review by members of the Con Anima committee. This document was presented, discussed and ratified at the Con Anima AGM on 30 September 2021.

Purpose

Choirs exist to sing choral music together. Con Anima Chamber Choir has a purpose for both its members and its audiences. For both these groups, its activities should be enjoyable and of a high musical standard. The key feature of the "amateur" approach (especially for members) is "how much we love it" and the key feature of the "professional" approach (especially for audiences) is "how good does it sound". These two approaches should not be mutually exclusive. The needs of choir members and audience members are both important and must be balanced.

It is proposed that the purpose of Con Anima Chamber Choir can be defined as: *"Learning and sharing high quality choral music in the North-East of Scotland"*. Our underpinning values are **learning** and **sharing** while singing. During rehearsals, choir members share the process of learning music to sing together; during performances we share our work with the audience and we hope that they learn something in their turn.

A commitment to learning and sharing fits with our ability to offer opportunities to local emerging professional musicians (e.g. composers, singers, conductors), often from the University of Aberdeen.

This redefinition of our purpose and values is consistent with our existing constitution.

Vocal and choral standards

The standard required of singers is that each member should be able to hold their own part, as if we were performing one-to-a-part chamber music. Without a Musical Director (see below) it is not possible to establish a consistent view in relation to vocal quality, singing style and choral blend.

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Vocal and choral standards (continued)

The optimal size of Con Anima should be large enough to cover double choir (8 part) repertoire with enough spare capacity so that any unforeseen drop-out can be covered internally. For example, 26 members (8-6-6-6) might be considered ideal.

For learning and improvement, effective feedback needs to be shared. The choir and its sections receive feedback from the conductor during rehearsals. Individual feedback to members would require greater sensitivity, but could lead to higher choral standards.

Some of us are not content with Con Anima's current audition policy; its implementation may be contributing to a feeling of unfriendliness experienced initially by some new members. Our system for auditioning new members functions as an "entry policy" but at present we have no "exit policy". An audition (and perhaps re-audition) policy would require input from a Musical Director if it is to be consistent.

Repertoire

A choir of such a standard and size is particularly suited to repertoire that can be performed a capella or with light accompaniment. On this basis, a lot of our repertoire will be works that could in theory be sung one-to-a-part (even though that is not how we would present them). Concerts with large forces, including guest soloists or instrumentalists, entail more work from choir and committee members, and also carry greater "financial risk"; these would be planned less often. Financial profits from "lower cost" concerts can be used to subsidise projects that are more expensive.

In addition, we should maintain a commitment to new music. The performance of new compositions fits with a wish to provide opportunities for local emerging professional musicians. In addition, "new" music might also include older works that are seldom performed.

Geographical reach

Our "geographical" remit should be "North East Scotland". It has worked well when we have performed the same concert twice, once within and once outside Aberdeen.

Musical Director

For consistency, for planning and to standardise auditions, the need to appoint a Musical Director (MD) is already agreed. This process, started nearly 2 years ago, was paused during the pandemic. It is our intention that having a regular MD would not preclude the option of working from time to time with guest conductors as well. Once appointed, a Musical Director may suggest further changes to be considered by the Committee and then adopted by the Choir.

Organisational relationships

Links to other local organisations (e.g. University of Aberdeen Music Department) have been valuable in the past. Such links could be created, strengthened or formalised in the future. As a registered charity ourselves, we wish to support other local charities, and help raise funds for good causes.

Richard Coleman
Chair of Con Anima September 2021

Con Anima

Scotland - Charity number SC040598

Accounts

CON ANIMA

Annual report and financial statements

Year ended 31 August 2025

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Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

Overview

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2024-25 Concert Season

27 October 2024: *Soundfestival* collaboration: a development of the emerging composers project, with the composers writing for choir and marimba. Following the Spotlight Gig in the Sculpture Gallery, premiering the new pieces, we repeated the performance in the Cowdray Hall with the addition of the Concerto for Choir and Marimba by Koshinski.

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

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Cathy Guthrie
Chair
Con Anima Chamber Choir SC040598

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Statement of Board Members' responsibilities as Trustees

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Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Independent Examiner's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2025 to the Trustees of Con Anima

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 August 2025 which are set out on pages 7 to 10.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and examiner

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Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1)(a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Regulations, and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Regulations.

have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Kenny Hall C.A.
Independent Examiner
272 Broomhill Road, Aberdeen

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Statement of Receipts & Payments For the year to 31 August 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Receipts (note 5)		
Donations & subscriptions	3,102	3,463
Gross receipts from charitable activities	1,430	3,974
Total receipts	4,532	7,437
Payments (note 6)		
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Transfer (from) funds	-	-
(Deficit) for the year	(1,851)	(180)

Statement of Balances

	2025	2024
	£	£
Bank	5,556	7,407
Represented by Unrestricted Funds		
At start of the year	7,407	7,587
Movement on receipts and payments account	(1,851)	(180)
At end of the year	5,556	7,407

Signed:



Samuel Paul (Treasurer)

18 November 2025

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Notes to the Accounts

1. Basis of Accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the cash receipts basis in accordance with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

2. Nature and Purpose of Funds

Unrestricted funds are those that may be used at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the charity. The Trustees maintain a single unrestricted fund for the day-to-day running of the association.

3. Related Party Transaction

The association's insurance policy includes Trustee indemnity insurance for all its Trustees. No other remuneration was paid to the Trustees or to any connected persons during the year (2024: Nil).

Direct reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the association amount to Nil to C. Guthrie (2023-24: £50), £793 to G. Brown (2023-24: £131), £18 to R. Coleman (2023-24: Nil) and Nil to S. Paul (2023-24: £283).

Other than these, no expense transactions between the charity and Trustees or their interests took place.

4. Reserves Policy

The charity has only a single unrestricted fund at present. The Trustees do not consider it necessary to maintain any specific reserves

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

5. Receipts

	2025	2024
	£	£
Donations		
Subscriptions	3,102	3,463
Sponsorship	-	-
	3,102	3,463
Income from other charitable activities		
Concert income (ticket sales, donations for entry, donations for programmes)	1,419	3,959
CD sales and track downloads	11	15
	1,430	3,974
Total receipts	4,532	7,437

6. Payments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Payments relating to charitable activities		
Concert fees and expenses	(2,014)	(4,192)
Donations	-	-
Musical Directors	(2,405)	(1,250)
Rehearsal venue hire	(1,440)	(1,560)
Website	(168)	(307)
	(6,027)	(7,309)
Governance costs		
Performing Rights Society/Making Music subscription	(188)	(158)
General Expenses	(168)	(150)
	(356)	(308)
Total payments	(6,383)	(7,617)

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

Governance

Con Anima is an unincorporated association governed by a Constitution. Originally formed in 2001 it was recognised as a charity in 2009. The association is a member of an umbrella group “Making Music”, a federation of amateur music societies in Great Britain. The main activity of the association is the running of a chamber choir.

Charitable Purpose

The objectives of Con Anima are:

1. to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of public concerts and recitals;
2. to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the Trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

Registered Office

Woodhead,
Midmar
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 7QB

Trustees

The Trustees are elected annually at an AGM by the membership of the choir. There is no fixed number beyond the three main office bearers: Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The following Trustees were in office during the year.

Trustee

Cathy Guthrie
Sam Paul
Helen Chisholm
Gareth Brown
Mandy Macdonald
Aileen Hart (co-opted 27 March 2025)
Baylee Schutte (resigned 19 Aug 2025)
Richard Coleman (resigned 30 Aug 2025)

Office

Chair
Treasurer
Secretary

Website: www.conanima.org.uk

Con Anima Accounts - Year ended 31 August 2025

THE PURPOSE AND VALUES OF CON ANIMA CHAMBER CHOIR, AS REVIEWED IN 2021-22, AND AGREED AT THE AGM ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021.

Background.

Con Anima Chamber Choir has an evolving identity and reputation, based on its history, residing at any one time in the hands of its members.

Con Anima could make its future different to its past if desired. Like any organisation, Con Anima can look at (a) WHAT we do; (b) HOW we do it; and (c) WHY we do it. The most successful organisations and teams have members who focus on purpose, vision, values and beliefs, so that when they're doing something they know exactly why they're doing it.

Process.

The ideas expressed here are based on consultation with Con Anima members during 2020-21, by means of on-line discussion groups, some additional one-to-one conversations and review by members of the Con Anima committee. This document was presented, discussed and ratified at the Con Anima AGM on 30 September 2021.

Purpose

Choirs exist to sing choral music together. Con Anima Chamber Choir has a purpose for both its members and its audiences. For both these groups, its activities should be enjoyable and of a high musical standard. The key feature of the "amateur" approach (especially for members) is "how much we love it" and the key feature of the "professional" approach (especially for audiences) is "how good does it sound". These two approaches should not be mutually exclusive. The needs of choir members and audience members are both important and must be balanced.

It is proposed that the purpose of Con Anima Chamber Choir can be defined as: *"Learning and sharing high quality choral music in the North-East of Scotland"*. Our underpinning values are **learning** and **sharing** while singing. During rehearsals, choir members share the process of learning music to sing together; during performances we share our work with the audience and we hope that they learn something in their turn.

A commitment to learning and sharing fits with our ability to offer opportunities to local emerging professional musicians (e.g. composers, singers, conductors), often from the University of Aberdeen.

This redefinition of our purpose and values is consistent with our existing constitution.

Vocal and choral standards

The standard required of singers is that each member should be able to hold their own part, as if we were performing one-to-a-part chamber music. Without a Musical Director (see below) it is not possible to establish a consistent view in relation to vocal quality, singing style and choral blend.

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Vocal and choral standards (continued)

The optimal size of Con Anima should be large enough to cover double choir (8 part) repertoire with enough spare capacity so that any unforeseen drop-out can be covered internally. For example, 26 members (8-6-6-6) might be considered ideal.

For learning and improvement, effective feedback needs to be shared. The choir and its sections receive feedback from the conductor during rehearsals. Individual feedback to members would require greater sensitivity, but could lead to higher choral standards.

Some of us are not content with Con Anima's current audition policy; its implementation may be contributing to a feeling of unfriendliness experienced initially by some new members. Our system for auditioning new members functions as an "entry policy" but at present we have no "exit policy". An audition (and perhaps re-audition) policy would require input from a Musical Director if it is to be consistent.

Repertoire

A choir of such a standard and size is particularly suited to repertoire that can be performed a capella or with light accompaniment. On this basis, a lot of our repertoire will be works that could in theory be sung one-to-a-part (even though that is not how we would present them). Concerts with large forces, including guest soloists or instrumentalists, entail more work from choir and committee members, and also carry greater "financial risk"; these would be planned less often. Financial profits from "lower cost" concerts can be used to subsidise projects that are more expensive.

In addition, we should maintain a commitment to new music. The performance of new compositions fits with a wish to provide opportunities for local emerging professional musicians. In addition, "new" music might also include older works that are seldom performed.

Geographical reach

Our "geographical" remit should be "North East Scotland". It has worked well when we have performed the same concert twice, once within and once outside Aberdeen.

Musical Director

For consistency, for planning and to standardise auditions, the need to appoint a Musical Director (MD) is already agreed. This process, started nearly 2 years ago, was paused during the pandemic. It is our intention that having a regular MD would not preclude the option of working from time to time with guest conductors as well. Once appointed, a Musical Director may suggest further changes to be considered by the Committee and then adopted by the Choir.

Organisational relationships

Links to other local organisations (e.g. University of Aberdeen Music Department) have been valuable in the past. Such links could be created, strengthened or formalised in the future. As a registered charity ourselves, we wish to support other local charities, and help raise funds for good causes.

Richard Coleman
Chair of Con Anima September 2021