

ST. GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON

Registered Charity No. 508686

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE THIRTEEN MONTHS TO 31 JULY 2020

Approval

This Report and the annexed Accounts were approved by the Trustees as a body at the AGM on 3rd November 2020 and are signed on their behalf by the Hon. Chair and the Hon. Treasurer who are authorised by the Trustees to do so.

.....

John Smith

Hon. Chair

.....

Laura Shaw

Hon. Treasurer

ST. GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON

Registered Charity No. 508686

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES FOR THE THIRTEEN MONTHS TO 31 JULY 2020

I report on the Account of the Trust for the thirteen months to 31 July 2020.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Independent Examiner

The charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the Accounts. The charity's Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act).

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the Accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions give to the Charity Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act; and
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the Accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the Accounts and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the Accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the Report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

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 respects, the requirements:
To keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act; and
To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met or;
- (2) To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the Accounts to be reached.

Steven Bluck FCA

63 Longley Lane, Northenden, Manchester, M22 4JD

ST. GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON

Registered Charity No. 508686

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE THIRTEEN MONTHS TO 31 JULY 2020

The Trustees present their Annual Report and Accounts of the choir for the thirteen months to 31st July 2020.

Reference and Administrative Details

The full name of the charity is St. George's Singers, Poynton.

The Charity Commission registration no. is 508686.

The principal office address is: The Hon. Secretary, St.George's Singers Poynton, 2 Bosley Drive, Poynton, SK12 1UX

During the year the Committee members/ Trustees were:

Name	Trustee	Position held	Date effective
John Smith	Yes	Hon. Chair	All year
Joanna Bluck	Yes	Hon. Deputy Chair	All yaer
Jacqueline Smith	Yes	Hon. Secretary	All year
Laura Shaw	Yes	Hon. Treasurer	All year
Paul Goss	No	Concert Secretary	All year
Gillian Banks	No	Soprano section representative	All year
Felicity Tucker	No	Alto section representative	All year
John Slater	Yes	Tenor section representative	To 21 st July 2019
Mark Warrington	No	Tenor section representative	From 22 nd October 2019
Paul Burfitt	No	Bass section representative	All year
David Francis	Yes	Hon. Ticket Secretary	All year
Jean Egerton	No	Hon. Publicity Officer	All year
Gwyneth Pailin	Yes	Hon. Librarian	All year
Anne Francis	Yes	Co-opted	All year

Susan Hodgson	No	Co-opted	All year
---------------	----	----------	----------

Committee members are subject to re-election at the Annual Members Meeting.

The choir's Musical Director is Neil Taylor.

The choir's Assistant Musical Director is Roberts Brooks.

The choir's Accompanist is Peter Durrant (deputy Accompanist:- Julia Mayall)

Structure, Governance and Management

The charity is constituted as an unincorporated association. Its governing document is a Constitution unanimously adopted at a Special General Meeting held on 29th April 2014 and is capable of alteration by a two-thirds majority of Members present at the Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting, provided that fourteen days' notice of the proposed amendment has been sent to all Members.

The persons legally responsible for the control and management of the charity as Trustees are all members of the Committee and are nominated from permanent Committee members.

Objectives

The Objectives of the charity are:-

Enjoyment and Advocacy – To strive to instil and foster a love for the choral arts and a passion for singing in our members and audience through high-quality performances, varied and innovative programming, and each member's full engagement in the rehearsal process. To help achieve this, the Choir is led by a professional Director of Music and supported by a professional Accompanist and a professional Assistant Director of Music.

Friendliness and Sociability – To seek to achieve high standards of performance within an enjoyable, inclusive and friendly organisation. Members attend rehearsals for the challenges and rewards of singing as part of an ensemble, the enjoyment of the music and the support and friendship of those they sing with.

Education and Development – To maintain our reputation as an organisation dedicated to high choral and performance standards. To support this, we hold auditions for prospective members and regular re-auditions for existing members, and support members' individual musical education and development with vocal coaching sessions. Through partnerships with local school groups and music educators and colleges, we provide opportunities for young musicians' career development in performance as singers and instrumentalists and in choral training as assistant musical directors.

Community Engagement – To strive to raise community awareness of a wide range of choral music and to engage with other organisations in support of choral performance within both the local (Poynton and South Manchester) and the wider community.

Financial Stability - To maintain financial viability, as a registered charity, with fundraising activities and expenditure appropriate to achieving our objectives.

Well Being and Reputation - To contribute to the well-being of individual members, and the choir as a whole, through our supportive and thoughtful behaviour towards each other, respecting diversity, and maintaining high personal standards. Our reputation as a choir is important to us, and we expect members to be vigilant and mindful of this in all external interactions such as through social media, or through any contact with other organisations.

Supporting other organisations or individuals - 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.

Activities

The choir generally organises a number of concerts each year at venues in Greater Manchester, including regularly at the prestigious Bridgewater Hall, Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) and Gorton Monastery. Ticket pricing is aimed to encourage maximum public attendance, with special family, concessionary, student and children rates. One of these concerts, December's '*Carols and Brass*', is focussed on family participation and young musician participation.

In addition, there are annual Singing Day and Open Evening events to which all singers are invited. The choir also participates in Poynton local community events and, as member of Making Music, in initiatives such as 'Come and Sing' (2014) and special events such as the rehearsal/ performance of the Christopher Wood 'Requiem' (2016).

The choir also undertakes annual tours. In 2016/17 it visited Costa Rica, in 2017/18 North Wales, and in 2018/19 Bruges, with 4-5 public performances on each tour. The charity has also commissioned (and performed) original choral works from both established conductors such as Will Todd (2012 *Footprints*) and Sasha Johnson Manning (2018 *War's Embers*), and emerging conductors such as Matthew Hamilton (2010 *Overhanging Day*).

Achievements and Performance - Hon. Chair's Review

This season has probably been the most unusual and difficult season since St George's Singers started 63 years ago. Along came the Covid19 pandemic, and concerts and rehearsals as we know and love them have had to pause, and at the time of writing are still paused. Note, it is a PAUSE, not a full stop! Instead of us all working hard creating music and preparing for concerts, we have all been working hard to stay sane and optimistic. Your committee has been working with concert venue providers and professionals to ensure that the pause has been handled smoothly, that our finances didn't suffer, and that good relationships with those we will be working with again are maintained. Of course, as we don't know yet when we will be restarting normal activities, we continue to plan and arrange for all eventualities. We WILL be starting rehearsals and concerts again; we just do not yet know when.

At present we do know that we will not be having our normal Christmas activities – although we will have a virtual Christmas social on the 15th December, combining our Christmas music (more anon)

with virtual socialising. We also know we will not be able to hold our normal Spring Singing Day – but again we are working on a virtual version, singing the Faure Requiem as planned earlier. We can envisage a virtual Singing Day (perhaps more accurately a Singing Two Hours!) that can be much more than the sort we would organise in Poynton: perhaps an International Singing <Two Hours> - but we'll have to think of a better title! Perhaps, if we are still not meeting together 'live' in Summer we should have a Summer Singing <Two Hours> as well. Next year's March concert is doubtful at present, as we would have to start rehearsing for it in January, and currently that does not look at all likely – although if the Covid19 situation suddenly improves we will of course quickly make use of the opportunity. There is perhaps much greater hope for the planned pair of concerts of Belshazzar's Feast at the RNCM and Huddersfield Town hall in June, which certainly would be returning to live concert-making with a bang.

Our annual choir tour is still, perhaps, also a possibility, and venues etc are booked in case of opportunity. The planned tour would be a repeat of last May's cancelled tour, to Bristol, Clifton and Gloucester Cathedrals. A tour is different from home concerts in that it doesn't depend upon a lead-in series of live rehearsals. It may work just to have a tour rehearsal day in early May, with virtual rehearsals supporting it. The tour concert venues are in Cathedrals, and again it might be more possible to have concerts in such large venues when they would not be sensible in our smaller home concert venues. We just need the Covid19 situation in May to be propitious. This may be more of a triumph of hope over expectation on my part, but at least we are planning for the possibility.

Meanwhile, as you know, we are holding virtual rehearsals. Neil is doing a wonderful job keeping us together, conducting interesting, challenging and enjoyable music in difficult circumstances. Pete and Robert are keeping things going in the background, with Pete recording accompaniments for our recordings and offering music theory sessions to all those interested, and Robert providing on-line vocal coaching. The committee (and I am sure all of us in the choir) believes it is absolutely essential that we support our professionals through this crisis – it is a very difficult time for all music professionals, and we very much want our three to know they have our appreciation and full support in every way. Lots of other people are also doing excellent work keeping things as normal as possible, and they also deserve a big 'thank you' for getting on with things in difficult circumstances – Barbara in contact with our 'Friends', Jean organising quiz nights, our section reps keeping contact with members, Lorraine sending out our weekly newsletters, Susan producing our 'temporary brochures', Laura keeping our finances in order, Paul G keeping in contact with venues and soloists, Jacqui doing all the choir secretary stuff (admittedly a bit of a 'black box' to me – she just gets things done!). We wouldn't survive without our committee and lots of other members ensuring all the things needed to make our choir prosper get done.

I also want to thank all the singers who have been involved in the recording programme that we use to ensure that our rehearsals are immersive and supportive. If you haven't used headphones or in-ear headphones for rehearsals yet get some! It makes all the difference, having the voice parts in your ears when singing, so much better than just the piano by itself, or even the voices on loudspeaker. Our singers are doing a wonderful job recording the music for you, and without them our rehearsals would not be anything like as enjoyable. I'm just sorry that we cannot use many more singers in this way, but I have to admit that the demands of technology and logistics just don't make it possible. However, our planning for a virtual Singing Day (sorry, Singing Two Hours) is beginning to make us realise that what we are doing could extend our choir's activities and influence very much

further, providing support and resources to other choirs for example, so they can also rehearse with more than just piano accompaniment.

I've reported about what we have done, what we are doing now, and what we are planning. None of this has any meaning without us all, as members of a choir that for 63 years has been a life saver for so many, staying together, singing together and supporting each other. We are all in different situations, all at different points in our lives, and it's horrible that some of us have very difficult problems to overcome, but our common ground is that we love singing together and making music together. We can and will continue to do this together, virtually for the present, but face to face again at some point in the, hopefully not too distant, future. We have had between 70 and 80 members at each rehearsal this season, which is really heartening, and it is a joy to see so many of you each week. Do remember that your section reps really want to do everything they can to support members, so do keep them informed about anything they or any of us on the committee can do. We all want best musical experiences possible during this terrible time, and provide the best support that we can for all our friends and colleagues in, and associated with, the choir. Our mantra must be don't go away, keep in touch, join us whenever you can at rehearsals, quiz nights, socials and, next year, our virtual Singing <Two Hours>.

Financial Review

As the result of a surplus of £2,804 for the thirteen months to 31st July 2020, choir reserves now stand at £21,606 (30th June 2020: £18,803). Due to the goodwill of members and audience, and the early actions of the committee, the financial impact of the Covid19 pandemic was largely mitigated for 2019/20 however the ongoing conditions mean that the forecasting the current year remains extremely difficult. Despite this, the strong brought forward reserves position means that the choir's finances remain healthy.

The financial year end was extended at the prior year AGM to 31st July from 30th June reflecting the fact that choir activities and event often run beyond the month of June. Although the financial period therefore comprises thirteen months, minimal activity occurred in July 2020, due to the current Covid conditions; therefore the change in year end does not have a material impact on the comparison between this year's and last year's accounts.

Statement of Finance Activities

The higher level of subscriptions reflects the increase to £170 for the year. Additional receipts were generated by the Friends of the choir and I would like to thank Barbara Forshaw for her continued work in supporting this aspect of our community. The lower level of fundraising income reflects the cessation of many activities (music lending, refreshments, raffles) due to the lockdown, as does CD sales income. The generous donation from within our membership for the English Church Music: Anthems and Motets books, which we are all now enjoying immensely, is within the donations line (together with associated gift aid), with the cost included in repertoire music.

The timing of the lockdown in March did allow for the singing day to proceed, which, as well as being musically hugely rewarding, generated a strong surplus.

Within costs, general publicity and Hemiola costs were lower than normal in the prior year due to the release of accruals from 2017/18. Expenditure also includes the Covid19 provision (see below).

Balance Sheet

The balance on the bank account at the end of July 2020 was £13.3k, up £3.7k from the previous year. Tangible assets consist of the publicity display and the choir folders. Prepayments comprise the deposit for the deferred performance at Gorton Monastery, while deferred income mainly consists of the tour reserve and the remaining proportion of the Round Table contribution to the cost of coaches to concerts. Creditors and accruals include the Covid19 provision (see below).

Summary of concerts

In line with forecast, the Autumn concert generated a deficit, however this was significantly less than budget due to higher levels of ticket income than expected. The Christmas concert also delivered a higher surplus than expected, due to a number of factors.

Minimal refunds of the ticket income already received were requested for the Spring concert and the venue kindly waived all but the deposit. Due to the firm stance taken by the Chair with Gorton on the deposit for the Summer concert, this £2,000 cost was avoided, a very significant factor in the strength of the financial position going into 2020/21.

Covid19 impact and actions

At the point of lockdown in March 2020 and the cessation of choir rehearsals and concerts, the committee took the decision that our commitments to our own professional musicians would be fully honoured for both 2019/20 and ongoing, and that commitments to external venues and professionals would be honoured to the contractual requirement. This could have led to a significant use of our accumulated reserves.

However the goodwill of the vast majority of our choir members and many of our audience members meant that the impact on subscriptions and ticket income for the Spring concert was significantly lower than it could have been. I would like to express my thanks to all for this understanding and generosity which has continued into the current year and which has meant that despite the Spring and Summer concerts not proceeding, the choir has to date managed to maintain a strong financial position, leaving us well placed to meet the continued challenge and extremely uncertain conditions.

Given that there remains no indication of when rehearsals and concerts may restart, a provision was made in the accounts to 31st July 2020, for costs and reduced levels of income arising direct as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. This has been partly utilised in the current year to invest in IT provision to support the online rehearsals, and to offset the reduction in subscriptions from members leaving the choir as the result of the pandemic. At present the provision is sufficient to cover this lost income; however at the time of writing, there is a higher proportion than normal of the membership yet to pay subs for the current year.

As the result of the above, and the impossibility of predicting whether the Spring and Summer concerts may proceed, or what format these might take, it remains extremely difficult to forecast

the financial position of the choir at the end of this season. This is precisely why it was such good judgement on the part of the committee for the choir to have built up a solid reserve in easier times, and means that we are financially as well placed as possible to weather the current storm.

Statement on Reserves

After due consideration of the requirements of the Charity Commission's 'Charities and Reserves' (CC19), the Trustees decided in 2015/16 to set target normal reserve levels within the range minimum three months' to maximum nine months' average expenditure.

The six months' mid-point of this range would reflect the choir's normal public performance programme; the higher nine months' level could enable the subsequent inclusion of higher-risk events e.g. Bridgewater Hall concert for which designated Reserves/fund-raising initiatives would probably be appropriate; the minimum three months' level would initiate remedial action, possibly including fund-raising and/or additional member contributions.

On the basis of 2018/19 actual expenditure (2019/20 being an unusual year), the 'scale midpoint' would amount to £19,315 and, on the corresponding basis for 2018/19 budget, £19,728. £20,000 is therefore considered by the trustees to remain an acceptable target for the Policy 'scale mid-point'.

In approving the above Reserve Policy the Trustees considered:-

1. Less than half of total income i.e. member subscriptions is effectively 'fixed' i.e. predictable in nature.
2. The remainder of our income derives principally from audience receipts at choir public performances and events. There are two main pressures i.e. uncertainties in relation to this income:
 - audience numbers, with increasing competition from other regional choirs etc
 - ticket prices, with a perceived inability to raise these for the foreseeable future

Both these factors reflect the difficult economic situation for large parts of our target audiences.

3. Compounding the above, many of the costs associated with the choir's public performance and events, particularly venue hire costs, soloist and orchestra fees are fixed well in advance of performance and continue to increase, the choir having an aim to hire such venues (and employ such soloists/musicians) compatible with its overall quality of public performance. As an illustration, the Spring 2019 concert, a highly-acclaimed performance of the Bach *B Minor Mass* at Gorton Monastery resulted in a deficit of £4,379.

4. In addition, the choir engages in community and other public engagements e.g. Poynton-based music festival and national choral-singing participation initiatives, for which no remuneration is received.

Strategic planning

During the 2018/19 season, the Committee began a strategic review with the aim of developing a 5 year strategic plan to formalise and clarify the choir mission and objectives, its core values and purpose, and to set short and long term strategic and musical goals over the planning horizon. One

of the key values adopted by the Committee is that the Choir should maintain financial viability, with fundraising activities and expenditure aligned to regulations and appropriate to achieving our objectives. Once the Covid19 pandemic is over and normal choir activities can resume, the financial parameters, including subscriptions, ticket prices, fundraising activities and other sources of income, together with the range of performances and associated costs, will be modelled and tested, to form the basis of a detailed five year financial forecast, sufficient to maintain an appropriate level of reserves while accommodating the strategic and musical values and objectives agreed by the choir.

Statement of Financial control

Financial control continues to be exercised by the inclusion of a Treasurer's Report agenda item within each of the regular Committee meetings held throughout the year. These reports include comparisons of actual concert and non-concert financial performance against respective approved budgets. They also include the actual and forecast choir fund levels against budgets and forecasts to ensure proper control and full Committee/ Trustee financial accountability.

Financial control is also exercised via the requirement of two authorised signatories for all online payments in excess of £100, and for all cheque payments. Finally the accounts are kept up to date via monthly bank account reconciliations.

Laura Shaw, Hon. Treasurer

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2020

	31/07/2020		30/06/2019	
	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Subscriptions	21,280		18,778	
Fundraising	1,090		1,947	
Donations	2,092		91	
Interest receivable	75		69	
CD Sales income	50		290	
Concert Income	8,398		16,038	
Mahler	-		57	
Singing Day profit	2,262		1,625	
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		35,247		38,782
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Rehearsal/ related activity fees	13,508		12,908	
Rehearsal hall	1,863		2,433	
Making Music	497		497	
Piano tuning	45		45	
Repertoire music	1,578		-	
EDO	160		-	
General publicity/Hemiola	1,024		371	
Concert expenditure	11,757		21,686	
Depreciation	122		122	
Administration expenditure:-				
Administration & stationery/ other items	264		482	
Provision for costs/(reduced income) arising from Covid19	1,609		-	
Postage (unallocated)	16		85	
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		32,443		38,629
NET (OUTGOING)/ INCOMING RESOURCES		2,804		152
TOTAL FUNDS AT 30 JUNE 2019 (2018)		18,803		18,650
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 JULY 2020 (30 JUNE 2019)		21,606		18,803

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 JULY 2020

	31-Jul-20		30-Jun-19	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets		105		227
CURRENT ASSETS				
Prepayments/Sundry debtors	500		1,465	
Cash at Bank	13,253		9,550	
Charity Deposit account	10,000		10,000	
PayPal balance	124		995	
Cash Float	130		130	
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	24,007		22,140	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Creditors and accruals	1,932		2,447	
Deferred income	575		1,117	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		21,501		18,576
TOTAL NET ASSETS		21,606		18,803

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON
SUMMARY OF CONCERTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2020

	RNCM	Xmas	Spring	Summer	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
TOTAL INCOME					
Tickets etc	4,357	3,258	778	4	8,398
EXPENDITURE					
Professional Musicians					
Musical Director	662	662	662	497	2,483
Orchestra/Band	2,000	300	0	0	2,300
Accompanist	0	374	549	0	923
Vocal Soloists	750	0	0	0	750
Instrumentalists	0	0	0	225	225
Hire Charges					
Venue	1,406	495	20	0	1,921
Music-choir/band	369	140	285	349	1,142
Lighting	0	47	0	0	47
Marketing					
Tickets/postage	63	104	33	99	299
Publicity			13		13
Programmes	185	135	285	0	605
Leaflets/flyers	245	270	12	0	527
Posters	95	0	0	0	95
Other costs					
Refreshments	0	196	0	0	196
PRS/other	340	32	(60)	(80)	232
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	6,115	2,755	1,799	1,089	11,757
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(1,757)	504	(1,021)	(1,085)	(3,359)