

ST. GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON


Registered Charity No. 508686

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019


Approval

This Report and the annexed Accounts were approved by the Trustees as a body on 16th October 2019 (AGM 22nd October 2019) 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 YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

I report on the Account of the Trust for the year ended 30 June 2019.

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 YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

The Trustees present their Annual Report and Accounts of the choir for the year ended 30 June 2019.

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
Catherine Bryant	Yes	Hon. Deputy Chair	To 23/10/18
Joanna Bluck	Yes	Hon. Deputy Chair	From 23/10/18
Jacqueline Smith	Yes	Hon. Secretary	All year
Laura Shaw	Yes	Hon. Treasurer	All year
Andrea Millington	No	Concert Secretary	To 23/10/18
Paul Goss	No	Concert Secretary	From 17/04/19
Gillian Banks	No	Soprano section representative	All year
Felicity Tucker	No	Alto section representative	All year
John Slater	Yes	Tenor section representative	All year
David Morris	No	Bass section representative	To 23/10/18
Paul Burfitt	No	Bass section representative	From 23/10/18
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*).

Full detail on the 2017/18 activities are included in following sections.

Achievements and Performance - Hon. Chair's Review

Our last season, our 62nd, was amazing! It was topped and tailed by the two great Mahler choral symphonies and two excellent collaborations. The filling – our own season concerts – saw us welcome Sasha Johnson Manning as a Vice President of the choir when we sung her latest composition, Wars Embers (the product of another collaboration) at the RNCM; another thoroughly enjoyable Christmas concert with a repeat collaboration with Bradshaw School and Chetham's brass students; the lovely St Cecilia Mass by Gounod for our annual Singing Day, the seminal Bach b minor

Mass at Gorton in March to a full house; and a very local concert here at Poynton to sing music from our choir tours.

We sang the Mahler 2 concert at Gorton Monastery as guests of the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra – they wanted to perform in Manchester, a first for them, and we had been recommended to them as a choir that can rise to any musical challenge, a choir they could work with. The concert was great musical success, the orchestra and their conductor Ben Ellin impressed us and the audience, and I'm pleased to say that, in spite of a smaller audience than they or we would have wished for, we impressed the orchestra and Ben Ellin. This was a collaboration that will bear future fruit – more of which later. The Mahler 8 at the end of the season was in collaboration with Chetham's School, and was a special event not just for us but very much so for our Vice President Stephen Threlfall – his swansong for Chetham's. The invitation from Chetham's again gave us an opportunity to sing a work far beyond our financial scope, in a venue, the Bridgewater Hall, which would normally be out of our reach either to afford or to fill. It was a very special event in every sense, a one off perhaps.

Collaborations do seem to give us opportunities that otherwise would be beyond our reach, and they seem to be coming our way because of our excellent reputation as a choir, the excellent work and reputation of our Musical Director, Neil, and our ability to rise to any occasion both musically and organisationally. Admittedly, two such collaborations in one season was rather over the top – one a season would be more appropriate, and easier to accommodate, but opportunities arise as they do. We also benefit from collaborations in other ways as well – notably by gaining new members, excellent singers from other choirs who we invited to boost our numbers for these demanding works, and then they having been part of the rehearsals with Neil and sung with us in concert, deciding to stay. A huge welcome to our new members.

My report to the last AGM quite rightly highlighted all the members who work so hard to make us what we are, and I could easily, and perhaps should, list them all again – it's probably about half the choir! However this year I want to bring four particularly important members of the committee to your attention. They are the Section Reps. They are the committee's eyes and ears, they advise us on what members want, what members feel about what we are doing and planning, what's being said and what is happening. However, they and we rely on you all to talk to them, to include them in your conversations, to respond to their questions, to be able to do their job properly and to help the committee do its job properly. So, use them!

There are two more members I would like to give particular thanks to – Rhona and Jo, for organising an absolutely delightful tour to Bruges, Ghent and Brussels. It was a particular masterstroke to arrange that we be the choir for the church of the Holy Blood in Bruges for their opening service for the festival of the Holy Blood. Singing for that packed and appreciative congregation, clergy and the officers of the Holy Blood (in their regalia) was a hugely memorable occasion. Everything on the tour operated like clockwork, of course, and raised the bar yet again for those who follow.

I particularly want to thank our wonderful Musical Director Neil. If our reputation at home and abroad is so high that orchestras, schools, soloists, excellent accompanists (looking towards Pete) and choirs want to work with us – well that is all down to his musical leadership, expertise and close involvement with all the choir's activities and aspirations. I should mention that not all MDs willingly attend committee meetings, end of year socials, and train their choir for other conductors and even

sing with the basses. I think other choirs look at us with great envy, in our good fortune to have Neil as our MD.

For the second year running we have had a concert before our AGM – this year's collaboration singing the Brahms Song of Destiny with the European Doctors Orchestra, at the Bridgewater Hall last weekend. We ended last season at the Bridgewater Hall, and began this season in it - a first for St George's Singers. The conductor, Peter Stark, was delighted with our singing, and sends his thanks to all those who were able to take part. The whole concert was hugely enjoyable, and our performance excellent in every way. This season proper has many delights and different venues: Mozart Requiem at the RNCM, Brahms 'Love-Song Waltzes' at Bramhall (our first concert at St Michael and All Angels, part of our drive to broaden the reach of our local concerts), Gretchaninov and RVW at Gorton Monastery. At the last AGM we launched our choir survey, and later our audience survey, and much of what the committee is planning, looking years ahead, is informed by the results of those surveys. We are very grateful to all those who took part, and a summary of the results is published on the members web site.

You will have noticed some themes in this report – about the very real benefits of collaborations that we have been involved in over the last two years, about broadening our range of venues, about listening to our members and audiences and planning further ahead. More of these later in the meeting. For now I would like to recommend the members web site to you all. It may seem an obvious thing, but I think many members are not really aware of how much information is on it: for example, on the members home page at present there are links that open ... the rehearsal schedule, the newly revised choir handbook, copies of the weekly notices that Lorraine sends out, the current constitution (pre today's proposed revisions), the concert schedule, the summaries of the choir and audience surveys, the next choir tour information and registration forms and much more. Do please use it.

Financial Review

The choir's reported net assets (prepared on an accruals/prepayments basis) increased by £152 during 2018/19 to a total of £18,803 at 30 June 2019.

As in recent years, there was an overall deficit of £(5,649) on the four concerts of the season: *100 Years' On* (November: RNCM); *Carols & Brass by Candlelight* (December: St George's Church, Stockport); *Bach B Minor Mass* (March: Gorton Monastery), and *The Well Conducted Tour* (June: St George's Poynton). It should be noted however that the original expectation for the season was that of a larger deficit, which did not materialise to the extent anticipated, due in the main part to the higher than anticipated ticket revenue on the *Bach B Minor Mass* concert. Hence, overall reserves, which had been expected to reduce, actually increased, albeit modestly. As with the previous year, the *Carols and Brass by Candlelight* concert generated a solid surplus of £389.

The choir continues to follow its policy of presenting original and challenging concerts in prestigious venues. Despite the recent deficits on concerts, the choir remains adequately funded at present to continue this policy whilst also pursuing its other objectives. Throughout 2018/19 and beyond, the potential impact of concert commitments on the charity's reserves will be actively and frequently reviewed by Committee/Trustees (see Statement on Reserves below).

As in previous years, the £1,625 surplus on our very successful Gounod *St Cecilia Mass* Singing Day reflected maximum capacity participation and valuable fundraising from refreshments and associated activities.

The charity's £18,803 available net assets (including £10,000 in a charitable deposit account) leaves it adequately funded to continue to pursue its objectives, as stated above. Our budgeting process incorporates discussion of planned income and expenditure projections/affordability. In addition, the choir's ongoing fundraising programme continued throughout 2018/19. 'Cheshire Consort' which, comprising 20+ choir members, performs at weddings and other functions, continued to perform at a number of events and contributed £450 to choir funds.

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, 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'.

While the available closing 2018/19 reserves at £18,803 are therefore below the Policy 'scale mid-point', the difference is marginal. Any further deterioration of the financial position would allow prompt the trustees to trigger remedial action (referred to above) in 2019/20 and beyond.

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. (2018/19 = £15,390 i.e. 40% of incoming resources)
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 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. In support of the strategic and musical aspects of the five year plan, 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
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

	2019		2018	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets		227		348
CURRENT ASSETS				
Prepayments/Sundry debtors	1,465		1,349	
Cash at Bank	9,550		10,741	
Charity Deposit account	10,000		10,000	
PayPal balance	995		793	
Cash Float	130		130	
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>22,140</u>		<u>23,013</u>	
LIABILITIES amounts falling due within one year				
Creditors and accruals	2,447		2,385	
Deferred income	1,117		2,326	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>18,576</u>		<u>18,302</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u><u>18,803</u></u>		<u><u>18,650</u></u>

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

INCOMING RESOURCES	2019		2018	
	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions		18,778		17,221
Fundraising		1,947		2,816
Donations		91		261
Interest receivable		69		50
CD Sales income		290		341
Concert Income		16,038		14,068
Mahler	-	57	-	
RPO		-		850
Singing Day profit		1,625		2,188
Tour fund: surplus/(deficit)		0		-
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		38,782		37,795
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Rehearsal/ related activity fees	12,908		13,970	
Rehearsal hall	2,433		2,655	
Making Music	497		482	
Piano tuning	45		100	
Repertoire music	-		-	
General publicity/Hemiola	371		1,212	
Concert expenditure	21,686		15,084	
Depreciation	122		154	
Administration expenditure:-				
Administration & stationery/ other items	482		384	
Postage (unallocated)	85		40	
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	38,629		34,080	
NET (OUTGOING)/ INCOMING RESOURCES		152		3,715
TOTAL FUNDS AT 30 JUNE 2018 (2017)		18,650		14,936
TOTAL FUNDS AT 30 JUNE 2019 (2018)		18,803		18,650

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS, POYNTON
STATEMENT OF CONCERT ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	Mahler 2	Bernstein	Xmas	Bach	Summer	TOTALS
	£	£	£	£	£	£
TOTAL INCOME	175	3,300	3,238	7,650	1,674	16,038
Tickets etc						
EXPENDITURE						
Musical Director	80	649	697	649	649	2,724
Orchestra/Band	0	0	338	4,823	0	5,161
Accompanist	0	500	367	367	367	1,601
Vocal Soloists	0	500	0	1,975	0	2,475
Instrumentalists	0	350	0	290	0	640
Hire Charges						
Venue	0	1,375	495	1,990	263	4,123
Box office	0	0				0
Music-choir/band	0	263	112	40	50	464
Organ hire	0	312	0	0	0	312
Van hire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lighting	0	0	45	637	0	682
Marketing						
Tickets/postage	79	39	81	88	77	364
Publicity	0			76		76
Programmes	17	200	150	495	135	997
Leaflets/flyers	0	300	230	205	234	969
Posters	0	60	60	65	70	255
Advertising	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other costs						
Piano tuning	0					
Refreshments	0	0	222	0	0	222
Flowers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	186	51	161	54	452
				169		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	175	4,734	2,849	12,029	1,898	21,686
PROFIT / LOSS (-)	(1)	(1,434)	389	(4,379)	(225)	(5,649)

