

The Stondon Singers

CIO 1154435

Trustees' Report

1.11.13 – 31.12.14

Trustees' Report

The Trustees present the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the period 1 November 2013 to 31 December 2014. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies and comply with the charity's constitution and applicable law.

Administration details

The principal address of the charity is currently 16 Coombe Rise, Shenfield, Essex CM15 8JJ

The Trustees - Elected at AGM 9 September 2014

Michelle Arthur	Chairman
Marjolein Hillman	Secretary
Josephine Gordon	Treasurer
Annabel Malton	Concert Manager
Matthew Butt	PR and Deputy Conductor
Mavis Brown	Librarian
Phil Holmes	Website
David Schacht	Advertising
Jill Evans	Ticket Sales

The management committee

The Trustees and Christopher Tinker (Conductor)

Adviser

Richard Eason, 11 Rainsford Avenue, Chelmsford, CM1 2PJ

Structure, governance and management

The Stondon Singers was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 1 November 2013. The assets from Registered Charity The Stondon Singers 296340 were transferred to The Stondon Singers CIO 1154435 on 21 January 2014. The Stondon Singers Registered Charity 296340 was wound up on 14 July 2014.

The Stondon Singers is governed by a constitution adopted with amendments on 9 September 2014. Trustees are elected at each Annual General Meeting to serve until the close of the next Annual General Meeting and are eligible for re-election.

Objectives

The objectives of The Stondon Singers are to promote, improve, develop and maintain public education in the appreciation of the art and science of choral music in all its aspects by the presentation of public choral concerts and by such other ways as the members, through the Trustees, shall determine from time to time.

Activities

The Stondon Singers is a mixed Chamber Choir, currently resident at the Priory Church of St Laurence, Blackmore. The choir enjoys considerable critical acclaim and performs several concerts a year. Although initially formed to sing the music of William Byrd, the choir of about 25 singers now performs a wide-ranging repertoire, whilst remaining committed to choral music of the Renaissance. The requirements for prospective new members are:

- Members are expected to have good sight reading skills.
- Members must be confident enough to hold a line with only a small number of singers.
- In order to make the best use of rehearsal time, individual members are expected to do some work on the music at home.

There is an informal audition for all new members, and voice reviews may be conducted from time to time for the whole choir.

Weekly rehearsals take place in The Priory Church of St Laurence, Blackmore, Essex CM4 0RN, on Tuesday evenings 7.45-10.00 pm.

The success of The Stondon Singers is underpinned by:

- a committed membership with good sight reading ability and a range of musical expertise
- a professional Director of Music who is also a composer
- a dedicated concert manager
- a highly efficient secretary
- sound financial management
- an enterprising approach to publicity and advertising
- an extensive library of music built up over some forty years
- the support of 45 patrons and friends.

The choir is accordingly able to undertake exciting and ambitious choral programmes.

Achievements and Performance

During the period covered by this report The Stondon Singers performed seven concerts.

(i) Concerts

12 November 2013 St Laurence's Church Blackmore 'Watercolours' was based on works inspired by nature. The concert covered a wide repertoire ranging from choruses from Haydn's 'Creation' to Eric Whitacre's 'Water Night'. Organist Michael Frith was the accompanist.

17 December 2013 St Laurence's Church Blackmore 'Christmas at Blackmore' This concert included a mixture of carols old and new, accompanied by organist Michael Frith, as well as Britten's 'Ceremony of Carols' accompanied by Lynne Creasey on the harp.

22 March 2014 Brentwood Cathedral 'Faire is the Heaven' Ticket sales for this event were rather disappointing, especially as it is a large venue. There were further complications to do with a power cut which had taken out the lighting to the choir stalls. The resourcefulness of the choir in finding safe and adequate lighting saved the day. The cleverly arranged programme cross-referenced Purcell's versions of 'Hear my Prayer' and 'I was Glad' with those of Mendelssohn and Parry. The choir was accompanied by the cathedral organist Stephen King.

1 July 2014 Church of SS Peter and Paul Stondon Massey 'William Byrd Anniversary Concert' The annual concert at Stondon Massey, where William Byrd spent the later years of his life always focusses on his work and that of his contemporaries. This year's offering included 'Quomodo Cantabimus', the result of a motet exchange between Byrd and Phillippe de Monte, director of music to The Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II.

8 July 2014 Ingatestone Hall 'War and Peace' This concert took place at the home of Byrd's patrons, the Petre family, and was part of the Brentwood Arts Festival. The concert featured works from Byrd, Tallis and Victoria as well as Jannequin's rousing depiction of a battle 'La Guerre' which required the singers to cope with Medieval French and a range of battle noises.

11 November 2014 St Laurence's Church Blackmore 'For the Fallen' The autumn concert which featured the beautiful 'Lux Aeterna' by Morten Lauridsen and the popular Rutter 'Requiem', accompanied by organist Michael Frith, attracted a larger audience than in recent years. The performance of the Rutter was enhanced by instrumentalists from the Meridian Sinfonia, generously sponsored by one of our patrons, Gerald Malton.

16 December 2014 St Laurence's Church Blackmore 'Christmas at Blackmore' This concert offered a variety of traditional and modern carols, including 'I saw a Maiden' composed by the choir's conductor Christopher Tinker, with Finzi's 'In Terra Pax', forming the centrepiece. Michael Frith was the organist.

(ii) Additional performances and choral opportunities

The Stondon Singers supports charities and local organisations in a number of ways.

9 December 2013 Members of the choir sang at the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity's service at Galleywood.

17 May 2014 A highly successful workshop was organised by the choir. It was led by Paul Brough, who teaches conducting and academic studies at the Royal Academy of Music and is Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers. The focus of the workshop, which attracted a good number of singers ranging in age from 17 to 80, was Palestrina's 'Missa Papae Marcelli'. It was an educational and enjoyable experience for the participants judging from the very positive feedback received. The small profit made was a welcome boost to choir funds.

8 June 2014 Members of the choir joined with the church choir of St Laurence's in a special Pentecost service to celebrate the church's 900th Anniversary.

8 July 2014 Brentwood Arts Council concert at Ingatestone Hall (see above)

20 September 2014 Wedding at St Bartholomew's Church Wickham Bishops.

3 December 2014 The choir supported the City of Chelmsford Mencap Annual Carol Concert at Chelmsford Cathedral, with a mixture of choir and audience carols accompanied by the cathedral's Assistant Organist Laurence Lyndon-Jones.

Public benefit

The Trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance in deciding on the activities the choir undertakes. Activities for the public benefit can be demonstrated by:

- maintenance of a website
- the provision of detailed programme notes for each concert and / or an explanation of the works during the concert by the conductor
- discounted subscriptions for under 25s and tickets at reduced prices for children
- lending of music to other choirs
- participation in concerts for the benefit of charities e.g. Helen Rollason Cancer Foundation and Mencap
- participation in events associated with St Laurence's Church Blackmore, e.g. singing at the service to mark the 900th anniversary of the church
- participation in Brentwood Arts Week
- organising workshops for singers
- providing a choir for weddings as requested.

Financial review

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the choir. Finances are discussed at all meetings. This enables the Trustees to ascertain the financial position of the choir and to ensure that the accounts comply with the Charities legislation. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The choir finances itself by two main methods:

- membership contributions agreed at an annual general meeting and paid either termly or annually as the member prefers.
- concert proceeds from sales of tickets.

Other sources of income include:

- gift aid from donations and member's contributions
- contributions from patrons
- one off donations from individuals to sponsor a particular event or commission a work for the choir
- advertising revenue

- any profit from workshops run by the choir
- revenue from hiring our music to other choirs
- revenue from weddings.

The choir's direct income funds the full cost of running the choir and makes a contribution towards covering the net cost of concerts in the event of a loss.

Income for the period from 1 November 2013 to 31 December 2014 totalled £13,002.03

Expenditure amounted to £ 9,609.79

Other sources of income:

On 31 December 2014 The Stondon Singers had a cash balance of £14,189.04 held in the following accounts:

National Westminster Bank £6,470.15

COIF Account £579.53

Virgin Charity Account £7,139.36

A summary of the accounts is shown in Appendix 1.

Reserves policy

Reserves are built up to fund major concerts and to acquire and maintain assets.

Risk management

The Trustees have a responsibility to identify, assess and manage risks. They keep abreast of legislation which may affect charities through the Charities Commission website and through the 'Making Music' organisation to which the choir is affiliated. They ensure that the choir complies with copyright and performing rights law. The choir's insurance is arranged through 'Making Music'.

(i) Financial risks

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the accounting have been stated above. The concert manager makes detailed financial projections for forthcoming events. The Trustees ensure that concerts which may make a loss, such as those involving orchestras and soloists, can be financed from choir funds.

(ii) Health and Safety

For rehearsals at St Laurence's Blackmore the choir complies with the Health and Safety policy and the policy in the event of a fire as laid down by the church. For concerts, the concert manager checks venues beforehand to assess risks. On the day of the concert the concert manager does a visual check for hazards, assesses Health and Safety risks and fire risks and secures cables or other insecure items.

A member of the choir (usually the chairman) or an official from the venue makes a Health and Safety announcement at the start of each concert.

Future Plans

The following concerts and events are planned for 2015

7 March St Mary and St Lawrence's Church Great Waltham Classical concert with Meridian Sinfonia

29 March St Margaret's Church Ipswich Fauré Requiem with the choir of St Margaret's

25 April St Paul's Cathedral Sung Eucharist

9 May St Laurence's Church Blackmore Wedding

7 July Church of SS Peter and Paul Stondon Massey The William Byrd Anniversary concert

Financial and programme planning is underway for the 2015-2016 season.

Approved by the Trustees 17th March 2015