



Phoenixsingers

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2022-23

The season on which we are reflecting now has seen things returning to something more like normal after the COVID hiatus, but the norm has moved somewhat, presenting the Society with challenges to face. They are not insurmountable, but they must be tackled. In his report, Geoff has referred to costs, driven up by inflation. In response to that we took the decision to apply an increase to the annual subscription for the year we are beginning now; that is the first increase for over ten years.

The new norm that is more challenging than finance, but which impacts money is the problem of commitment; all organisations are noticing it and what we are seeing is not necessarily wrong, but nevertheless different. Audiences no longer turn up through habit or duty and we must work harder to sell tickets for concerts. You did an incredible job, responding to the '4 for 3' offer but the noticeable change was that whilst we welcomed back many familiar faces, there were also new ones in our audiences. That work must go on relentlessly this year.

Singer commitment is the greater problem. Geoff and the committee all understand why people are away from time to time and cannot be at all rehearsals. There is no shame in that, but we must be realistic about not missing the last three rehearsals before a concert in which we intend to sing (including the one on concert day). The Section Leaders do a good job of keeping abreast of attendance and informing Geoff although we could do with more discipline from the tenors and basses in this respect.

The challenge for discussion later in the agenda is what to do next summer after the Snape Concert in May. There will not be time to prepare for a full concert in July and if we planned it there is doubt that we would have the singers to put on such a concert. Geoff has written about the issue too.

Whilst on the subject of running the Society, I must pay tribute to the effort expended by your committee, especially the Treasurer, who does not have the easiest of jobs. During the year we have made some clear decisions about roles and responsibilities which have made the Chair's position clearer and less onerous. We are conscious that both Chair and Treasurer have only two years before the constitution requires us, rightly, to stand down.

The support for singing in the primary school has been reviewed and a trial situation is pertaining for this year pending a further review in the summer of 2024. This is another of the many repercussions of the 'locust years' of intermittent and interrupted education. The Friends' Programme supports the initiative and while many of those who support it are enthusiastic givers, all need to be sure that the



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money is used wisely. The Vice Chairman is to be thanked for his efforts in running the Friends' Programme and for bringing his imagination to the next phase in our work with the youngsters who are the future of singing.

The Society is its people. Last year we said goodbye to several long serving singers who felt it was time to retire; we were saddened and shocked by the sudden death after Christmas of John Francis. John was a former Chair of Phoenix Singers and a very generous supporter financially. He was a dear friend to many of us. Several more of you have joined the Singers recently too and you are very welcome. You have brought new energy and initiatives, especially our presence on social media; thank you.

I hope you are all looking forward to this season. It will be exciting to perform at Snape Maltings again in May with the joy of a Christmas concert to come first.

Sweet singing!

William Glasse
Chairman

September 2023