



Phoenixsingers

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2023-24

In summary, the 2023-24 Season was good for Phoenix for several reasons, all of which deserve additional comment:

- Membership
- Leadership
- Outreach
- Involvement

The Music Director and Treasurer have reported separately, and I will not repeat their material other than to thank them both, on your behalf, for all they do for us.

Membership

A society like Phoenix Singers cannot survive without the commitment of the members who pay subscriptions to underpin the activities of The Society. Over the last two seasons we have seen people move away, retire, leave due to overwhelming commitments and more. However, in the same period we have welcomed a similar number of new singers who have found us by attendance at concerts, by browsing the internet or because friends have invited them. Usually, once people join us, they stay with us unless their personal circumstances change.

Reflecting on this I realise that the sense of 'family' that we have sought to foster is thriving, not just across the choir but within the different sections. There is mutual support, banter, and sheer friendship, which is all part of what we are about. As a relatively 'non-musician' I have a peculiar view that we sing well together because we know and like each other. This family spirit was obvious at the beginning of year barbecue and quiz, throughout the hard work for our two main concerts and then in the way people from other choirs and none came and joined in the four summer singing evenings in June.

The stability of our membership has made it possible to maintain the subscription level this year without the need for a further increase.

Leadership

The Society is run musically by the Music Director supported by the Accompanist. Dominic Nunn served us well in the latter role since before the pandemic but has stepped down because of his own workload and health. We are delighted to welcome Carloyn Gibley as our Accompanist this year; Carolyn has provided ad



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hoc support in the past and is liked and respected by Members for her musicianship and energy.

We are grateful as always to Geoff Lavery for his energy and drive; his conducting at the Vaughan Williams concert in May at Snape Maltings was inspired and inspiring.

The more mundane leadership of the choir is the responsibility of the Main Committee. During the year we have co-opted two new people to the group. Penny Cook, if elected tonight, becomes a full member, and she is willing and well qualified to become Treasurer in 2025 when Keith Barton completes his second term of office. Similarly, I hope that Esther Mower will also be voted on to the Committee as a full member since she is willing to co-ordinate the music sub-committee, which we have reinstated. The role of the sub-committee is to advise the Main Committee on repertoire and make recommendations about future musical direction.

Other Committee members continue to work hard and deserve your thanks, in particularly our Treasurer Keith Barton and Librarians, Miranda Barclay and Liz Barton. Liz is not a Committee Member, but her input is valued.

Two main positions do need to be filled. Our constitution requires us to appoint a new Chair in 2025. Giles Pebody has generously offered to serve as Vice Chair but has been Chair previously. The Society must fill these positions if it is to operate beyond this Season.

Outreach

Several years ago, the Friends programme was developed, initially to help restore our funding after a few bad years. Once the core problem was addressed the resources were diverted to support the formation of a boys' choir at the Primary School and the 'Firebirds' were born. In time a girls' choir was started too but both were victims of Covid. The funding continued and a dedicated group of Friends give generously to invest in children. The aim is that from this term a school choir will be restarted. Funding by the Friends will pay for the resources of County Music to staff this new development. We owe thanks to Miranda Barclay for overseeing this since Peter Moorhouse stepped aside last year.

Otherwise, the Summer of Song Workshops were partly designed to broaden our base. Only time will tell if that succeeded but whether it did or not, we welcomed some fifty visitors over the four weeks and had some good times. Thanks to Giles Pebody for making all the arrangements to enable the evenings to happen.



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In the coming year we are planning another 'open to all' quiz night in November and anticipate being tied in mental knots by Linda Sherman's questions, whilst having an enjoyable time socially. In January, Gill Clare is planning another charity fundraising choral workshop day. The dual aim of the day is to raise money for another charity and to give people the opportunity to come to join us and, perhaps, become members later. Some of our present Members have previous days like that to thank for being here now.

We must also record the thanks of the entire membership to Giles Pebody, Marie Smith for their production of publicity material and its dissemination in print and digitally through Facebook. Marie has developed a growing following on Facebook and on X which drives ticket sales and membership enquiries, thank you. Giles' posters and programmes are legendary and must be acknowledged once again. Thank you, too.

Our website is our least favourable asset and is next in line for a revamp, this year we hope if time allows.

Involvement

I have mentioned a few people by name. That is dangerous as so many more of you fulfil vital roles in running the choir. The Section Leaders (Marie Smith, Susie Stark, Jo Rogers and Brian Goodge) and other Committee members (Barbara Howard, Caroline Foster, Claire Heard, and Marion Kirton are obvious contenders for thanks but so too are all of you who made significant efforts to distribute posters for concerts, sell tickets, help put out and pack away chairs for rehearsals and make the after-concert reception happen at Christmas.

You are all a great team of wonderful people. The Society cannot function without you because it is you. It will be a privilege to be your Chair for one last year.

William Glasse
Chairman

September 2024