

Scottish Chamber Choir
2025 AGM Report
Iain McLarty

Thank you to everyone who sang in any of the three concerts last year for continuing our high standard of singing from recent years. It feels as if this consistent level of performance is being increasingly recognised by audiences and by interest from potential new choir members. I very much appreciate the hard work which everyone puts in to make this possible, both during rehearsals and at home.

Our autumn concert was Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne* accompanied by Michal Gajzler (piano) and Sofia Ros (accordion). This was one of the pieces which many in the choir had been keen to perform and gave an opportunity to focus on a style of repertoire that we rarely get to sing as a chamber choir. As well as some excellent choral singing, some highlights from this concert were the energy and artistry brought by our accompanists and the opportunity for singers from the choir to perform the solo movements.

The *Northern Lights* programme in the spring presented lots of challenges both musically and linguistically but showcased a high level of precision and character across a diverse range of repertoire. The most enthusiastic response from the audience was for the Edinburgh premiere of *The Lost Lights*, our commission from Ailie Robertson. It has been wonderful to see such a positive reception from both choir and audience for a new work and it is also great that this has been recognised by being shortlisted for the "Best music creator" award at the Making Music Awards.

Finally, we had a potpourri of repertoire for our concert in Kelso. Again, the adaptability to different styles within the same concert was excellent. Finzi's *Seven Poems of Robert Bridges* was another piece which had been requested by many in the choir and it took us a lot of time to unpick the complex word-painting and layering of lines but this paid off in the end with a real responsiveness to the text.

Looking ahead to this season, we have some of the most substantial works a chamber choir can tackle (Mozart's *Mass in C minor* and Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*) alongside our continued commitment to expanding our repertoire with a Christmas concert exploring choral works from around the world and a spring programme which pairs Britten and Leighton with two contemporary black American composers who are little known in the UK, Adolphus Hailstork and Zanaida Stewart Robles.

We also have an outline plan for the next four seasons leading up to our 60th anniversary in 2029. Thank you to everyone who contributed ideas and feedback to this through our consultation. I strongly believe that this forward planning is vital to allowing us to sing a wide and diverse range of repertoire and to maximise input from the choir. Please do continue to engage whenever there are opportunities to contribute to our artistic planning and I hope it is clear from our programming in recent years that this input makes a difference to the repertoire we sing, even if every suggestion can't be included.

Our membership has been extremely healthy in recent years and we have reached the point where we have had to stop taking new sopranos and altos in order to maintain our status as a chamber choir. We would still be able to take more tenors and basses though so please continue to spread the word among singers you know as it is only through continuous recruitment that we have reached this healthy point.

Finally, a huge thanks to everyone who works so hard to run the choir and in particular the committee who are always a pleasure to work with. A particular thanks to those who are stepping back for all your hard work over the last few years.