



www.teesvalleyvoices.org.uk
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Annual Report

1 August 2010 – 31 July 2011

This report covers the second full year of the choir's independence – a time in which the number of singers increased, a full programme of performances of a good standard took place, a challenging new project was embarked upon, and the organisation was strengthened in several ways.

Activities

The Opera Project. The year started with the disappointing news that our grant application to the Arts Council for a 2010 opera performance with Darlington Youth Choir, and the writing of a new opera for 2011, had failed, but useful feedback was obtained. The project was rapidly reworked to match the criteria for funding from Youth Music's Open Programme, involving children in the creation and performance of a new opera in 2011. We just met the early September deadline! We heard in December that the application 'Making an Opera' had succeeded, but conditions attached required work which delayed the start of the project, and a schools mailing inviting participation, by about six weeks. A steady flow of new members resulted, with numbers exceeding 30 for the first time. Leaders worked hard to integrate them whilst maintaining the choir's singing standards.

The composer, John Forsyth MBE, has worked with children on words, tunes, and plot for the opera in four visits, and by the end of the year 'A Kingfisher's Tale' was finished. Some of the process was filmed for a documentary by Middlesbrough College students for promotion and monitoring purposes. The grant funded a paid traineeship in which 18-year-old Stephanie Ross learned to lead the choir, mentored by Katie Hibbard. She finished by conducting one item in two public concerts. Seven singers have begun work on Trinity Guildhall Arts Awards centred on the opera project.

There have been some setbacks: A Young Volunteers project in which some older singers would learn to film was not possible because a key person moved out of the area. Middlesbrough College was reorganised and our contact there was made redundant. The partnership was renegotiated, with the college only able to offer a minimum of staff time to assist with sets and stage management. The composer's wife needed an operation which meant that the performances have been postponed until January 2012.

However, introduction to a student working in youth theatre has resulted in much voluntary help with designing and making costumes for birds, and the running of a workshop on this for children and parents at the RSPB reserve at Saltholme.

Public performances. During the year, the choir has participated in seven public performances. As an opera with Darlington Youth Choir was not possible, a combined concert was arranged in October 2010, entitled 'Journey to Africa'. Fundraising on the night enabled two DYC members to assist with a school project in Africa. A Christmas Concert with VOX (the 18-30 choir), took place in December, with two songs specially arranged for the choirs to sing together.

TVV participated as a guest choir in the annual Christmas Cracker charity concert and joined the massed adult choirs and orchestra in challenging carol arrangements. The singers rapidly learned how to sing from a 4-part score, and had the opportunity to hear Tees Valley Youth Choir, the natural next step in their choral development.

A lunchtime Christmas concert for sponsors and supporters was held at The Wilton Centre, home of our main sponsor. Press coverage and photographs were arranged by their PR company.

March brought a concert with ensembles from Ian Ramsey School.

'The Rhythm of Life' was the title of a well-attended summer concert with Middlesbrough Community Choir, which introduced the singers to a new partner and a new venue – The Trinity Centre.

A 'Summer Cocktail' concert with Vox at St Peter's Church, Stockton, concluded the performing year.

These public performances, essential for the choir's development, also provide an important source of income.





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Development of the organisation

The committee was pleased with the attendance and participation of members at the first TVV Annual General Meeting on 21 October 2010. Reports had been prepared for parents and sponsors, with an extra illustrated one for the children. Children participated in half the meeting. An additional member was elected on to the committee, bringing the number to five. During the year, the Treasurer, Jan Currie, retired after two hard-working and committed years because of pressure of other work, and a new Treasurer was co-opted and inducted.

The committee has met monthly, and additional planning meetings with Music Directors have taken place. I would like to thank committee members – all busy people - for giving their time voluntarily and for sharing the responsibility of running the choir.

The choir became a registered charity in December 2010, and as such must have public benefit, through singing opportunities offered and in performances to the public, as a cornerstone of its existence.

After work over many months, a Health and Safety Policy was agreed in March 2011 and an Equal Opportunities Policy in May 2011.

Sponsorships from Foster Wheeler and Sabic have continued into a second year, and The Wilton Centre increased its sponsorship to £500. Concert income has subsidised subscriptions to pay running costs, and the financial position of the choir is satisfactory, though with a slightly lower balance of unrestricted funds than this time last year. There are three restricted funds – two grants for music and one for the opera project.

The committee thanks all the parents who have supported the choir by their interest and communication, and by transporting singers and attending concerts. We would like to express special appreciation for those who have given time to act as chaperones and to Mona Jinadu who has taken care of the choir's red shirts.

Leadership

The choir benefited from having the same two excellent and committed Music Directors, Katie Hibbard and Kate Robinson, throughout the year. They both attended a workshop on vocal technique in September 2010. Katie began maternity leave in September 2011, and the committee would like to express warmest thanks to her for her invaluable musicianship and leadership since Tees Valley Voices began, and her ability to create just the right atmosphere in rehearsals and concerts. She hopes to return in Easter 2012. We are pleased that Kate will continue as a Music Director. Negotiations to appoint a second leader were not finalised at the end of the reporting period.

Summary

This has been a year of intense activity, both musically and administratively. Encouraged by supportive parents, many existing singers have stayed with the choir and new children have joined. However, energetic recruitment must continue to achieve long-term viability, to replace older singers who move on to other choirs and to ensure that the few unavoidable absences at concerts do not seriously weaken the choir's performances.

The choir is perceived by independent musicians as having a good sound and audiences are appreciative. The opera project offers a continuing opportunity for singing development and for raising the choir's profile. The committee will seek to arrange programmes of activity which present new challenges to take the choir forward musically, whilst ensuring lots of enjoyment for singers and audiences alike.

Joan Carter
Chair, Tees Valley Voices
October 2011

