**Cumbria Singers Chair’s Report 16th November 2024**

The 2023-24 Season was another successful one for Cumbria Singers. Andrew Padmore’s charismatic leadership enabled us to overcome the challenges of Elgar’s ‘The Music Makers’ which we found very daunting when we first began to rehearse it. Faure’s ever popular ‘Requiem’ and ‘Cantique de Jean Racine’ gave us the opportunity to sing with confidence and feeling and were good antidotes to the demands of the Elgar! Overall the programme felt well balanced from both the perspective of the choir and those of the audience. Singing with the professional musicians and soloists and led by such an inspirational conductor in the beautiful, historical setting of the Cathedral provided an unforgettable evening for all of us! This was also reflected in the feedback of the concert reviewer and the members of the audience who responded to our invitation in the programme to contact us via e mail the following week.

Throughout the season we were grateful for the skills of **David Shingler** who amazed us with the quality and professionalism of his accompaniment at the rehearsals and his involvement as ‘page turner’ at the concert. Long may this association continue.

During the season the choir’s membership increased to 117 of which 100 sung in the concert. This has made us once again, the largest amateur choir in north Cumbria. Once again the format of the four full day rehearsals and the opportunity to access the online training sessions in between, enabled more singers to join us from a wider geographical area. Travelling from as far afield as Scarborough is no longer unmanageable!

We were extremely grateful for the services that **Peter Normington** gave us over the years as our web site manager. He worked closely with Andrew on devising the systems to enable the online sessions to be developed and following his decision to retire from this role after the last concert, Peter worked diligently with Mark Dasey the current web site manager over the summer to ensure that this transition of responsibilities took place without a hitch.

**‘Becoming a Friend to Cumbria Singers ‘**which had been launched the previous season gained more members, particularly in the weeks immediately prior to the concert when these supporters were able to book seats during our ‘priority booking ‘ period. It was also a pleasure to have them join us and other VIPs for refreshments during the interval.

Our fund raising initiatives, raised considerable amounts of money through both the efforts of choir members to support the activities during our rehearsals raised over £1,000.

We were also grateful to the thoughtfulness of **Audrey Partington’s** family who suggested that donations from those attending her funeral should be made to Cumbria Singers in memory of the 40+ years that Audrey had enjoyed singing with Cumbria Rural Choirs. **Janet Hall**, Audrey’s daughter has continued the family tradition as one of our singers – so we can personally thank her today for this support.

The sponsorship of Ullswater Steamers who loaned us the use of the ‘Raven’ for a cruise on Lake Ullswater in May, led to over 60 people enjoying an enchanting evening of idyllic sunshine serenaded by the Jackie Knox and the Good Time Boys, the Morland Ukele Group and our very own clarinettist Jackie Wright. The event raised £1,000 for Cumbria Singers through ticket sales and £200 for Sunbeams Music Trust through an onboard collection. I would particularly like to thank Viv West for all the time and support she provided in helping us to plan and prepare for the evening. A good time was had by all!

Another initiative which was launched at around the time of the concert, was our registration with the **Penrith Community Lottery Fund**. We were able to advertise it in the concert programme but this is the first opportunity that there has been to make you aware of how this works. The original Penrith Lottery has now linked with a national community enterprise group, Gatherwell, which runs local lotteries for good causes across the country. They raise the funds for the substantial draw prizes and run the administration of the web site etc. By buying lottery tickets @ £3 each, paid by direct debit, 60% of the proceeds is paid directly to the charity which has been chosen by the ticket purchaser. If you visit the web site, you can find the page about Cumbria Singers. Please consider supporting this by buying lottery tickets yourself and also raising awareness about it through your social media links. There are fabulous prizes to win including a regular £25k!

We welcomed our current conductor Matthew Owens at the **Come and Sing Day** in June. As well as being attended by previous choir members, others also opted to share the day with us. As a result of this ‘taster’ some have gone on to join us this season.

So overall another successful year. Thank you to all of you who continue to give us your support by joining us as members and persuading your loved ones to come to the concert and even take on roles such as ushers, programme sellers etc! I would also particularly like to thank my fellow trustees for all the work that they do behind the scenes to keep this particular ‘show’ on the road!

FUTURE PLANS

**Local initiatives : Board Game afternoon M&C + Tim Hirst**

**Spring Fever Quiz: suggestions for questions**

**Adverts for the concert programme**

**Sponsorship / prizes**

**Seating plans for the concert**