



Chairperson Report 2022

Introduction

I am pleased to present my report for 2022.

2022 began with more navigating COVID-19 restrictions and planning based on uncertainty as a constant. Despite this, the choir continued to grow in numbers with over 100 singing members, our concerts saw record online sales of nearly 750 tickets sold, and our end of year survey showed improvement in satisfaction with choristers' musical, social and overall experience at AYC. It's clearer than ever that the need for a group like AYC is strong in the Auckland Youth Arts community.

The report is split into five sections:

- Performances
- Personnel
- Funders and supporters
- Development and Mentoring Project
- Future

Performances

Nearly all performances went ahead as planned this choir year and continued the growth we've seen in recent years.

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and scaled back commemorations, the choir was unable to perform at Auckland War Memorial Museum on ANZAC Day.

Breath of Life – Saturday 14 May, St Matthew-in-the-City

This concert featured a collection of Celtic choral arrangements by Michael McGlynn, interwoven with taonga pūoro played by Horomona Horo. The choir performed masked in this concert.

Auckland University Distinguished Alumni Awards – Saturday 11 June, ASB Waterfront Theatre

The Chamber Singers were invited to sing at this prestigious event and performed a medley of classic kiwi pop songs.

The Hope of Loving – Saturday 20 August, St Matthew-in-the-City

Joined by the Jade String Quartet, soprano Dr Morag Atchison, baritone James Harrison, and organist Nick Forbes, this concert featured a collection of contemporary choral music by Nico Muhly and Jake Runestad including his song cycle "The Hope of Loving". Works by AYC members Jessie Leov and Blake Scanlen were performed and commissions from AYC Young Composers in Residence Kitty Milner and Reuben Rameka were premiered.

Choral Eucharist – Sunday 7 August, St Matthew-in-the-City

The Chamber Singers continued our collaboration with St Matthew-in-the-City, singing music by Nico Muhly, Tallis and Byrd in a Choral Eucharist.

The Great Gatsby – Saturday 15 October, St Matthew-in-the-City

This concert featured a collection of jazz standards from the 20s and 30s, showing off the impressive improvisations and musicianship of our music team and the large choir's range in performing complex rhythms. Juan Kim on piano was joined by bassist David Squire and drummer Jacob Moore.

Ganda Boys Recording – Monday 17 October, Roundhead Studios



The Chamber Singers were invited to participate in a project where choirs from every continent joined the group “The Ganda Boys” in recording the anthem of the Kingdom of Buganda, Uganda. The final video product will be released in mid-2023.

Christmas Carolling

Throughout November and December, small ensembles from the choir performed Christmas carols at various venues in the city including MOTAT, the Northern Club, University of Auckland, and the Royal Oak Mall. All the income went to those who sang. Sam Nicholson coordinated the singers.

Personnel

AYC was extremely fortunate to have a superb leadership trio who made sure that both the musical and administrative aspects of the choir met the expectations of singers, audiences, and funders in 2022. They have been well supported by an excellent committee of current and immediate past choir members.

Director of Music

Once again Rowan Johnston was faced with a year when rehearsals and performances were seriously impacted by Covid. The performances demonstrated the progress that the choir has made under his direction. The range and diversity of the choir’s performances were a testament to the growth Rowan has worked hard at for the previous few years. Performances continued to attract larger crowds of both young people and prominent members of the Auckland classical music community.

At the end of 2022, Rowan resigned from Auckland Youth Choir due to his family moving to Wellington. Rowan expressed regret that he couldn’t continue however we support this significant move for his whānau and were grateful for his support in recruiting applicants for his succession. We thank Rowan for steering us through some of Auckland Youth Choir’s greatest challenges, but also sustained growth in the pandemic years.

In December 2022, the committee appointed David Squire, Music Director of the New Zealand Youth Choir as our new Director of Music.

Accompanist / Assistant Director of Music

Juan Kim made an important contribution not only through his valuable support to the Director of Music, but also through his helpful mentorship of the choir’s emerging artists. His measured and candid approach has contributed significantly to the growth of our members and emerging artists. Juan’s extensive piano skills were on display accompanying the choir in its varied concert programme spanning a range of styles.

At the end of 2022, Juan resigned from Auckland Youth Choir due to availability clashes. Juan has been a long-standing servant of Auckland Youth Choir and we thank him for his valued contribution.

In January 2023, the committee appointed Claire Caldwell, Chorus Director at NZ Opera, as our new Pianist / Assistant Director of Music.

Choir Manager

Sam Nicholson has made a huge contribution to the choir during the year. He ensured that funding grant opportunities were explored with considerable success, continued to improve the efficiency and communication of the administrative aspects of the choir, and demonstrated the unique strengths a singing member can bring to the role.

Committee

As in 2021, the committee had some significant decisions and projects to work through.



During the year Leilani Walker, Maggie Zhang, Jamie Hofer, Ellie Buttle, Michell Hageman, Kate Wong She and Alex Meyer each played important roles ensuring the choir operated effectively.

I want to acknowledge this group for their dedication and their considered, kind approach to recruiting and appointing our new music team for 2023. The committee needed to band together at the end of the choir year to recruit a new Director of Music and Pianist / Assistant Director of Music, and successfully brought on board David Squire and Claire Caldwell as our music team, having attracted several highly capable candidates for the roles.

I would like to thank each of them for the contribution they made in 2022. The choir is fortunate to have such an outstanding group as their committee.

Funders and supporters

It is important that the role of funders and supporters of the choir is acknowledged. Without their contribution of money and/or resources, the choir would be unable to function.

On behalf of the choir, I would like to acknowledge and thank the following 2022 funders:

- Lottery Grants Board
- Community Organisation Grants
- Pub Charity
- Four Winds Foundation
- Lion Foundation
- Auckland Council & Creative NZ – Creative Communities scheme

We also appreciate the support from Dmitry Rusakov who makes performing at St Matthew-in-the-City so easy from an operational perspective.

We continued at our rehearsal venue – Kohia Terrace School in Epsom. This proved to be an excellent venue, particularly because of its central location and the baby grand piano which the choir was able to use, as well as ample outdoor space for rehearsals under social distancing restrictions.

Development and Mentoring Project

AYC's emerging artists all made significant contributions to the musical and community aspects of the choir. It was a privilege to experience so many new commissions and debut performances this year.

- Emerging Conductor – Blake Scanlen
- Emerging Collaborative Pianist – Michelle Xu
- Young Composer in Residence – Kitty Milner & Reuben Rameka

We were able to continue our Impact and Engagement Project aimed at ensuring that AYC better reflects and responds to the aspirations and challenges of Auckland's youth choral singing community. Our workshops continued mid-year and as an outcome we have 9 clear action-plans that reflect aspirations drafted and approved via survey by the choir's membership. These will be shared in an upcoming report on our Impact and Engagement Project.

The Future

Like all New Zealand choirs, AYC will face ongoing COVID-19 and funding challenges. Thanks to previous years' funding and sensible spending, we do have a short-term financial buffer. However, long-term sustainability needs to remain top of mind.



An aspect of this sustainability will be ensuring that the choir retains a large and inclusive membership and provides meaningful and significant experiences for its community. The work begun in the 2021 Impact and Engagement Project and continued in 2022 plays a key part in achieving this goal. This will be supported by the more active marketing and promotional plan that has been prepared.

Our 2022 year-end survey identified the need to increase opportunities to connect socially through choir, although it was encouraging to see progress in this area year on year. We as the committee think that an intentional, pragmatic approach to these social opportunities has proven successful and will help develop a sense of belonging to the choir - for example providing frequent, low-pressure social opportunities like meals as sections, whilst smaller in number, provide a greater range and quantity of opportunities to connect and build real relationships with other members in a fast-growing group.

Growth in membership, ticket sales, and improved outcomes in our 2022 survey demonstrate that AYC is still very much a needed part of Auckland's musical and youth wellbeing landscape.

Chris Winder
Chairperson
May 2022