

Aeolian Singers (Hemel Hempstead) Charity Number 281612

Statement of Public Benefit

Objects as set out in the constitution of the Aeolian Singers

The objects of the Aeolian Singers, as laid down in our constitution, are “to promote, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of choral music in all its aspects by the presentation of public choral concerts and by other such ways as the Singers, through its Committee, shall determine from time to time”.

Statement of Public Benefit derived from the activities of the charity

In setting our objectives and planning our activities, our trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission’s general guidance on public benefit and, in particular, its supplementary benefit guidance on advancing education and on fee-charging.

The Aeolian Singers charity is committed to enabling as many people as possible to benefit through choir membership, participation in workshops, our ‘Friends’ network and concert attendance. To this end a varied programme of music is undertaken to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Concerts

We draw our musical programmes from a wide range of choral styles and music, ranging from large-scale oratorios such as Verdi’s Requiem and Vaughan Williams’ Sea Symphony to smaller more intimate works such as Schubert and Haydn Masses and Faure’s Requiem. As well as mainstream and well-known classical works, we also perform modern and less well-known works such as Peter Skellern’s ‘Nativity’ cantata, written especially for the choir, Schumann’s ‘Requiem Fur Mignon’ and modern music with a popular appeal such as pieces by the Beatles, Mamas and Papas and Simon and Garfunkel, music from the shows and madrigals.

Membership

The choir provides free assessment of potential new members to ascertain whether they meet the required standard for membership. This assessment is to ensure that members have the necessary level of ability and knowledge to benefit fully from the tuition offered at our weekly rehearsals.

There are concessionary membership subscription rates for beneficiaries unable to meet the full membership fee. These include low rates for young people (under 26), all full time students and also holders of the local borough’s benefits card (Dacorum Card). Pensioners also enjoy a reduced rate. All new comers are allowed to attend up to six rehearsals free before deciding to apply for membership and all young people get the whole of their first term free. In addition all members have the option to pay their fees on a staggered basis (eg termly or monthly) instead of as a single payment.

There are no restrictions on membership in terms of ethnic or religious groupings but much of our repertoire is centred around Christian sacred music. Anyone from the age of 16 may apply for membership. At our Christmas concerts we normally perform together with a young people’s choir for example from a local primary or middle school.

Promoting music to members and the public

One of the main benefits of membership is the provision of training for public performance, which takes place typically at a local church or secondary school. Occasionally concerts are given at the Abbey (St Albans) or in Central London (typically in combination with other similar choirs).

Non-members of the Association are invited to participate in some concerts where the resources required are greater than can be provided by Aeolian Singers members alone. For some large scale concerts the choir also joins with other choirs to defray the not inconsiderable costs.

Every year we hold an open evening to which all interested members of the general public are invited with no audition requirements and at no charge. This enables those attending to sing through one or more complete works in an evening. Occasionally we promote public workshops which are open to all for a full day at a charge which covers the administration and music hire costs. These are not only beneficial in themselves, but are also beneficial in introducing people to singing, choral works and the choir. Many of our existing members came initially to one of these workshops.

At our concerts there are concessions for young people, and children are often admitted free if accompanied by an adult.

We hold an annual carol concert (sometimes two) which is largely of well-known Christmas music to appeal to a wider public audience. This includes carols in which the audience can participate.

For our major concerts detailed notes are provided in the printed programme which give information about the composers and the works being performed, to increase the audience's knowledge and musical appreciation.

Other activities and funding

In a typical year the total cost of all the concerts we put on exceeds the receipts from ticket sales for those concerts and we therefore undertake our own fundraising activities to meet the shortfall. Many of these are social events at which members' friends and relatives, colleagues and neighbours are persuaded to join us in an evening of entertainment and good food and company.

We also undertake exchange visits with other choirs in Europe.

6 October 2009