



SING
IRELAND

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023**



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON & CEO

2023 has been a transformative year for Sing Ireland, marking significant progress in the advancement of group singing across the country. As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to present this annual report, which highlights the breadth of our activities, achievements, and growth. Sing Ireland continues to strengthen its role in communities, bringing people together through the powerful medium of collective singing. Our core programmes flourished in 2023, whether through our work with young people, the expansion of our conductor training initiatives, or our outreach to new and diverse communities.

With the introduction of a new strategic plan in 2024, Sing Ireland is well-positioned to build on the foundation laid in recent years. We remain committed to fostering participation in group singing, enhancing creativity, and supporting well-being across Ireland.

As we move forward, we look ahead with excitement and optimism, confident in Sing Ireland's ability to continue its mission of strengthening communities through the power of shared singing experiences.



Virginia Kerr
Chairperson



Dermot O'Callaghan
CEO

COMPANY INFORMATION

Honorary President

Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness

Patron of the Irish Youth Choir Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

Directors

Virginia Kerr, Chairperson

Jim Fitzsimmons (Term ended 2023)

Conor Dooley, Company Secretary

Mark Armstrong (Term ended 2023)

Sophie Lee

Lisa McGrath

Eva O'Toole

Amy Ryan

Executive Team

Dermot O' Callaghan, Chief Executive Officer

Jenny O'Connor-Madsen, General Manager

Cecelia Molumby, Development Manager

Kate Daly, Engagement Officer

Daniel Clements, Financial Officer

Artistic Team

Orla Flanagan, Artistic Director of the International Choral Conducting Summer School

Bernie Sherlock, Artistic Director of the Irish Youth Choirs

Patrick Barrett, Conductor of the Irish Youth Training Choir

Registered Office: Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, Limerick

Bankers: Allied Irish Banks, p.l.c., Patrick St., Cork

Auditors: Crowleys DFK, 5 Lapps Quay, Cork

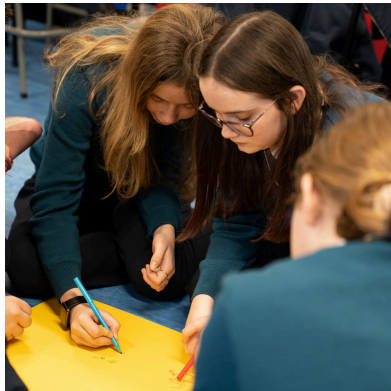


2023

2023 *at a glance!*



Held
51 events
online and in-person



Worked with over
80
professional
artists



Reached
274,583
people

from 32 counties
and 18 countries



Partnered with over
40
organisations



Welcomed
33 new
members



OPERATIONAL REPORT

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2023

Sing Ireland's financial year 2023 was one of significant growth in our operations and financial outturn as strategic change plans continued to show in the Company's accounts. The organisation experienced further significant growth in income from other funding sources and there was a return to greater earned income as in-person courses and events continued to attract ever-growing numbers of participants.

The organisation ran a deficit that was budgeted for at year end (-15,120), which represents 1.7% of total income. In 2023, Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór (t/a Sing Ireland) had an income of €880,662 and spent €895,813 on services for its stakeholders, supporting their needs and those of the sector. The organisation saw a 38% increase in its income in 2023, and our outturn for 2024 is set to continue to be made up of a mixed-income portfolio of stakeholders.

Our primary core funding was received via Strategic Funding from the Arts Council of Ireland. Income was also drawn from support by local authorities, trusts and foundations and other sponsorship.

Sing Ireland expenditure is centred on the provision of services, events, and resources for the group singing sector and to enrich the musical and cultural lives of people living on the island of Ireland. Staffing at the Company enables us to maximise our reach and impact, and the organisation's executive staff grew in 2023.



Governance

Virginia Kerr served as Chairperson of Sing Ireland throughout 2023 and Jim Fitzsimons continued in the role of Company Secretary. The board led the organisation in continuing best practice in Governance. Sing Ireland registered its renewed compliance with the requirements of the Charities Governance Code in 2023, and the board and executive concentrated on expanding core services whilst looking to the myriad of measures needed to achieve objective 4 of Sing Ireland's strategic plan to 'Ensure a Strong Organisation'.

Board Meeting Dates 2023:

- Thursday, 23rd February
- Sunday, 7th May
- Sunday, 20th August
- Friday 29th September
- Sunday, 3rd December





33

NEW
MEMBERS



SING IRELAND STRATEGY

2018-2023

1. Strengthening Our Collective Voice

The group singing sector in Ireland is thriving and characterised by exceptional levels of engagement and passion that require support to be sustained and to grow. Training, supports and networking opportunities is central to the work of the organisation during the lifetime of the strategic plan. Community engagement and voluntary structures must be developed in order to enable a more vibrant and active sector.

2. Youth Singing Development

Youth singing development is a policy priority for the foreseeable future. We are taking significant action to further this objective and see meaningful and developmental impact made on the number of young people that are engaged in youth singing and the quality of that engagement. We will lead a multi-stakeholder partnership to design and develop the most sustainable and effective models, infrastructure and approaches to transform youth singing in Ireland in range of opportunities, scale, access and geographic spread.

3. Embracing Collective Singing of All Types

We embrace collective or group singing of all types. There is a recognition that choirs of the 21st century are diverse and that they operate in a variety of styles and settings. We also acknowledges that many collective singing groups do not connect to the word 'choir'. As we look to the future and seek to operate in a diverse and modern society it follows that the organisation will change and adapt to meet new realities.

4. Ensuring a Strong Organisation

Ensure a sustainable and fit.for.purpose organisational structure for SI that will enable growth and development. SI recognises the need for significant and transformative growth of the organisation over the coming years. In order to achieve the high level objectives of the organisation and realise its vision in the medium to long term it must be restructured to meet the demands that the organisation will have placed upon it. Attracting new roles and dynamic people is central to growth.



STRENGTHENING OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE

Prioritising training, education and networking events for the singer, choir/singing group and conductor remained a key component of Sing Ireland's work in 2023.

International Choral Conducting Summer School

The 42nd Sing Ireland International Choral Conducting Summer School took place from 6 – 12 August 2023 at the University of Limerick. We welcomed participants across six levels from beginner to advanced with Orla Flanagan as Artistic Director of the course. Our international team of conducting tutors, all expert choral conductors and teachers were: Zoltán Pad (Hungary); Bianca Tone Dahl (Norway); Anna Furi (Hungary); Sarah Tennant Flowers (UK); and Mark Duley (Ireland). We were also joined by accompanist, Peter Barley, and assistant accompanist, Maryna Moskalyk.

PRESTO

Sing Ireland continued working on a two-year partnership project called 'PRESTO: Practices and Resources for Equipping Schools to Teach Music Online'. The consortium of partners developed multimedia resources and best-practice guidance for remote music teaching in the school sector in the areas of classroom-based music, instrumental music, and choral music. Together with choral, university and entrepreneur partners from Finland (Caprice Oy), Scotland (National Youth Choir of Scotland), and Ireland (Dublin City University), the PRESTO project worked to provide innovative solutions for building resilience and flexibility into the sector. This Erasmus+ programme was led by lead partner, the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Academy in Hungary. Sing Ireland's team further developed resources and content for the PRESTO materials in 2023 and all resources were made available online in 2023 as an important free resource.



STRENGTHENING OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE

Sing a Song of Docklands

Sing Ireland partnered with Dublin City Council for the "Sing a Song of Docklands" project, celebrating the cultural and historical significance of Dublin's Docklands through music. The project culminated in a major performance on 21st May 2023 at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, featuring commissioned songs and performances from established choirs in the Dublin area. This event united the community, showcasing the central role of singing in Dublin's cultural life.

The performance on the 21st May included The Guinness Choir, Cór na nÓg, Maryfield College Choir, and King's Hospital College Choir, and featured a collaboration with electronic musician and DJ Robbie Kitt, and professional a capella vocalists. This was in addition to the Dublin City Council commissions for the project, and a performance by Jerry Fish. The Event was presented by David Brophy.





274,583
PEOPLE
REACHED

FROM **32 COUNTIES**
AND **18 COUNTRIES**



YOUTH SINGING DEVELOPMENT

The Irish Youth Choirs (including the Irish Youth Choir for 18 – 28 year olds and the Irish Youth Training Choir for 14 – 17 year olds) continued to be central to the work of Sing Ireland in 2023. The YouthSing Ireland programme continued in 2023 with engagement with 17 schools across Munster and Leinster and SingSpaces throughout the year.

YouthSing Ireland

YouthSing Ireland, funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland, made significant progress in embedding group singing in DEIS primary schools across Ireland. The programme supported teachers with online training and resources, fostering a culture of group singing and enhancing students' creativity and well-being. Between January and June 2023, Sing Ireland ran weekly programmes in 17 schools across Munster, Leinster and Connaught. The sessions culminated in SingSpaces in each area - an opportunity for children and young people from participating schools to come together in arts venues, concert halls and community spaces, to share their learning, perform, and sing together and to explore improvisation and musical games.

The feedback from the project was extremely positive, with the SingSpaces in particular providing CYPs with the opportunity to explore venues and performance opportunities that were new to them. In a number of settings, the programme was connected to our Song Seeking project and supported the integration of children from migrant communities into school activities. We concluded the programme with a development day for the musicians from around the country involved in the delivery, which enable Sing Ireland to bring that learning forward into our plans for this area.



YOUTH SINGING DEVELOPMENT

Irish Youth Choir

The Irish Youth Choir (IYC) began its 2023 season with monthly rehearsals in January 2023 in preparation for their trip to The 13th European Festival Of Youth Choirs in Basel, Switzerland. 32 singers, along with Artistic Director and Conductor Bernie Sherlock, travelled to the festival in May 2023. Ahead of the festival, the choir also performed in Cork International Choral Festival and for an audience of family and friends in Dublin. In the summer, the IYC welcomed 44 singers to its residential course which began on the 11 July and ran until the 20 July 2023, with performances in St Mary's Cathedral in Limerick and the TUD Concert Hall in Dublin. The Conductor-in-Training for the IYC for 2023 was Mary Walsh. The choir finished the year with an invitation to perform at the International Children's and Youth Choir Festival in Hannover in 2024.

Irish Youth Training Choir

The Irish Youth Training Choir's (IYTC) completed two courses in 2023. The Easter course took place in Clongowes College, in Kildare from the 12-15 April 2023 with 38 singers and concluded with a concert for family and friends in the college chapel. The summer residential course ran from 25-30 June 2023 and included 75 singers from all over Ireland. The choir completed the week with two performances - the first in the ICO studios in the University of Limerick and the second, in St. Andrew's Church in Dublin on the 22 July 2023. The concerts included 6 commissions by Irish composers, including the performance of *Unspoken Words*, *Forgotten Voices* - three newly commissioned pieces by Emma O'Halloran, Rohan Harron, and Giovanna Alice de Melo Brito, with funding from the Arts Council CYPE award in 2023. The upper voices of the choir appeared on *Up For The Match* with Women in Harmony singers to perform The Cranberries' *Dreams* on live tv. It was an energetic conclusion to their year!



WORKED WITH OVER

80

PROFESSIONAL
ARTISTS



EMBRACE COLLECTIVE SINGING OF ALL TYPES

In 2023, Sing Ireland continued to embrace collective singing of all types as it pursued programmes for marginalised groups through our Song Seeking project for migrant singers, funded by Rethink Ireland. We also sought to expand our impact through singing for health and well-being programmes that were introduced late in 2023 through the Sing for Life initiative, funded by The Ireland Funds.

Song Seeking

In 2023 Sing Ireland was successful in receiving funding from two sources to develop work with migrant communities that began in 2019 with the pilot programme of Song Seeking. With funding from Rethink Ireland Impact Munster Fund, we delivered Song Seeking across County Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary strengthening our connections with temporary accommodation settings across Munster. This project enabled us to build on the initial research, delivering a development day with facilitators, the Sing Ireland team, and Dr. Ailbhe Kenny, researcher of the Song Seeking project. Through events held in UCH Limerick at the Limerick Sings festival, along with Glór Art Centre in Clare, we brought the singing groups together building connections and developed a sense of belonging for communities through group singing.

Sing for Life

At the end of 2023, with funding received from The Ireland Funds, the Sing for Life project was realised. This innovative programme aimed to bring transformative benefits of group singing to specific marginalised groups in communities. We worked closely with four community groups across the four provinces of Ireland (a community in Connacht, in Leinster, in Munster, and in Ulster.) The funding enabled four Sing Ireland musicians, individually paired with targeted community groups, to deliver six integrated group singing workshops. The project's novel approach used singing as a support for marginalised people in communities across Ireland who may be affected by a range of health issues. The project works to establish a model of social prescribing, replicable in communities nationally/internationally.



51 EVENTS

ONLINE & IN-PERSON



ENSURE A STRONG ORGANISATION

During 2023, Sing Ireland took a strategic approach to diversify its income streams and secure more philanthropic support. Implementing these fundraising and growth developments was with a focus on articulating the transformative impact of Sing Ireland's work to potential supporters.

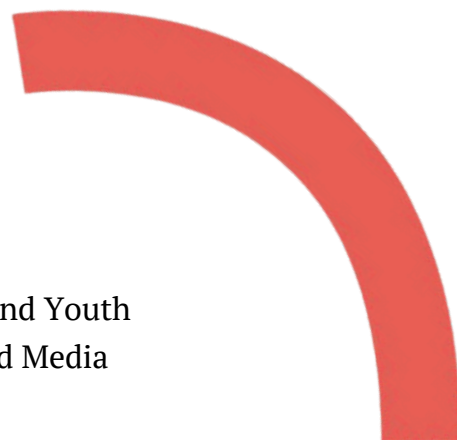
Fundraising Fellowship, Ireland (2022-2024)

2023 saw Sing Ireland continue its journey as part of the Fundraising Fellowship Ireland programme in partnership with *Business to Arts* and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. In its second year of the Fellowship, Sing Ireland significantly enhanced its fundraising efforts, building on the structured training and mentorship provided through the programme. This has included integrating fundraising seamlessly into our organisational culture and operations, and our collective approach is delivering greater impact.

Funding Our Vision in 2023

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the following funders and supporters for enhancing our impact this year:

- A&L Goodbody
- Bank of Ireland in partnership with Business to Arts
- Creative Arts Network Intervention Network
- Creative Europe
- Creative Ireland
- Community Foundation of Ireland
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Dublin City Council
- PM Group
- Rethink Ireland
- The Arts Council of Ireland
- The Ireland Funds



A young man with short dark hair and black-rimmed glasses is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark sweater with a colorful geometric pattern in red, blue, and green. The background is dark with out-of-focus lights, including a bright green rectangular light and several yellow circular bokeh lights. A purple curved line is in the top right corner, and a yellow curved line is in the bottom right corner.

PARTNERED WITH OVER

40

ORGANISATIONS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029

Through group singing, values, the following values underpin this plan:

BELONGING

We believe in the power of singing together. It's not just about music; it's about feeling like we're part of a community and connecting with our shared humanity.

COLLABORATION

We believe in the intrinsic value of group singing and through collaboration we maximise our impact, bringing about meaningful change.

CREATIVITY

We believe that group singing is a powerful conduit to creativity and acknowledge the positive benefits that are achieved for people through singing and creativity.

We are dedicated to uniting voices, empowering young singers, celebrating diversity, and fostering inclusivity. We want to ensure that our work reaches people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, and identities. [Here is a link](#) to our strategy to view in full.



POLICY AND STRATEGY

Vision

After 38 years of successfully promoting and developing the choral singing landscape, our organisation changed its name in 2019 to become our vision - a vision of a SINGing IRELAND - an Ireland where our collective voice resonates and enhances lives through singing.

ENHANCING LIVES THROUGH SINGING

Mission

Sing Ireland is the national organisation that supports all forms of group singing in Ireland. We engage with and inspire our singers, the wider group singing community and the general public to experience the life-enhancing impact of singing.

Developing a new Strategy

During 2023, Sing Ireland developed a new five year strategic plan, to be launched in April 2024. Today, our purpose remains the same, but our commitment goes beyond the notes on the page as we strive to create a sense of belonging, unity, and joy for more people in Ireland, through the transformative power of singing. This development of work is our roadmap towards a future where every voice is heard, valued, and uplifted.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2024-2029

1. Uniting Our Voices

In Ireland, an unprecedented level of enthusiasm and commitment drives the dynamic group singing community. To ensure its continual growth and sustainability, Sing Ireland will focus on providing essential support, fostering engagement, and nurturing passion within the sector. We aim to achieve these goals through targeted training, public engagement events, supports and facilitated networking opportunities.

2. Empowering Young Singers

Empowering Young Singers is our commitment to transform youth singing in Ireland. From 2024 to 2029, we're taking action to elevate both engagement and quality, leading a collaborative effort to design sustainable models and infrastructure. Reshaping the landscape of youth singing, music education policy and resulting action is essential in the longer term. We aim to ensure that every young voice in Ireland can have a meaningful group singing experience that makes an impact upon their lives and creates pathways to a lifelong love of music and a culturally, socially, and musically engaged society in Ireland.

3. Celebrating Diversity in Singing

Sing Ireland commits to fostering belonging, equality, and sustainable communities. People living throughout Ireland have a variety of musical and creative needs. We adapt to this reality, championing inclusivity and sustainability as well as a sweep of musical styles and genres. We envision a future where every voice contributes to a strong and cohesive society.

4. Being a Sustainable Organisation

Sing Ireland is committed to dynamic growth and restructuring to meet future demands while consolidating existing resources responsibly. Our journey prioritises attracting new resources to fortify existing programmes and also seeks to see new roles filled by skilled individuals, fostering inclusivity and sustainability across Sing Ireland's organisation. Sing Ireland will continue to adapt to, and positively transform Ireland's cultural and musical landscape





Spreading the joy of group singing across Ireland and making a lasting impact on our cultural landscape and to people's lives.