

A group of people, mostly young adults, are standing in a church interior. They are all wearing black clothing and black face masks. The church has a large, ornate chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The walls are made of stone and are illuminated with purple and blue lights. In the background, there is a large, colorful stained glass window. The overall atmosphere is solemn and formal.

SING
IRELAND

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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**"We need to
sing again"**

AN TAOISEACH, MICHEÁL MARTIN T.D.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON & CEO

2021 was a remarkable year for the group singing sector and Sing Ireland. Much of the year was dominated by public health restrictions that meant face-to face singing could not continue. However, as the year drew to a close a brighter future emerged.

As we review the extraordinary year that was 2021, a true sense of the resilience and strength of the group singing sector in Ireland is the most prevalent memory that comes to mind. It was a year characterised by masks, social distancing, Covid-19 testing and many other risk mitigation measures. This was a true challenge for all those who know the well proven benefits of singing together. In spite of this, we clearly remember that the wish to belong and the basic human desire to communicate with one another through song came to the fore. Although challenging, Sing Ireland ran many programmes and events during the year and we are so grateful to the

many artists, arts professionals and others who worked tirelessly to ensure that group singing could continue to take place both in person and online. We are also indebted to the board of Sing Ireland for their work during 2021.

2022 sees a return to face-to-face singing and we know that so many will experience the life enhancing ability of singing to positively impact people. It is joyous to celebrate this return and we know that we will not take this much-loved activity for granted as we look toward the future.



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) (Appointed, 25th April 2021)

Alan Kelly (Resigned, 25th April 2021)

Raegnha Zutshi

Mark Armstrong

Jim Fitzsimons (Company Secretary)

Sonia Brody

Eva O'Toole

Chief Executive Officer: Dermot O'Callaghan

Artistic and Operations Manager: Jenny O'Connor-Madsen

Development Officer: Cecelia Molumby

Projects and Membership Manager: Lily Lacey

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

Artistic Director of the Irish Youth Choirs: Bernie Sherlock

Conductor of the Irish Youth Training Choir: Patrick Barrett

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

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

Auditors: Crowley's DFK, 5 Lapp's Quay, Cork



2021



In 2021 Sing Ireland held more than



including workshops, webinars, and courses over 78 days

#keepirelandsinging

Partnering with more than 25 organisations



#keepirelandsinging

Attended by more than
10,000
ranging in ages from
5-90



#keepirelandsinging

with over 60 artists and facilitators, and participants from over 30 countries



#keepirelandsinging

Over the last 12 months we released

60
resources



including guidebooks, videos, statements and playlists

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www.singireland.ie

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SING IRELAND STRATEGY

The organisation has set out the following core objectives in its current Strategic Plan:

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 acknowledge 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.



INTRODUCTION

Through its broad remit to serve singing groups, choirs, individuals in choirs and choral directors, Sing Ireland plays a vital role in the resourcing of the group singing community in Ireland and in the enhancement of the lives of Irish people through their engagement with singing. Our current strategy sees the organisation undergoing significant growth and impact and we are poised for further expansion of our activities' reach and impact. We know the transformative power that singing can have and our vision for the future will see Sing Ireland embed itself as a central cultural player that advocates for and demonstrates the many benefits of group singing.



OPERATIONAL REPORT

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2021

Sing Ireland's financial year 2021 was one of growth in spite of a backdrop of continuing reduced earned income potential due to the pandemic. As well as this, extra expenditure was required to meet COVID-19 risk mitigation measures in order to run face-to-face activities. However, the organisation experienced significant growth in income from other funding sources and so the reduction in earned income was not as significant for overall organisation income in a year-on-year comparison. The organisation ran a deficit that was expected and budgeted for at year end (-€3,040). In 2020, Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór (t/a Sing Ireland) had an income of €393,950 and spent €296,991 on services for its stakeholders, supporting their needs and those of the sector. Having a reduction in earned income from courses, we also had a somewhat corresponding reduction in direct costs from activities.

The Arts Council of Ireland remained the organisation's largest funder and expenditure was made up primarily of expenditure on programmes and administration of the organisation (including staffing).

Arts Council core support stood in 2021 at €260,000 and we are happy to report a significant increase in Arts Council funding in 2022 to €315,000, an increase of 21 percent. In addition to Arts Council funding in 2021, the organisation was supported by the Creative Ireland programme and other project funding awards from the EU through the EuroChoir project and PRESTO.





OPERATIONAL REPORT

Alan Kelly served as Chairperson of Sing Ireland through the first quarter of the year, until Virginia Kerr was appointed as new Chairperson in April 2021. Jim Fitzsimons continued in the role of Company Secretary throughout 2021.

The Board led the organisation in continuing best practice in Governance. Sing Ireland registered its compliance status with the requirements of the Charities Governance Code in 2021.

Board sub-committees continued to operate in 2021 (Business and Audit, Fundraising and Development, Membership, Communications and Artistic)

Board Meeting Dates 2021:

Tuesday, 9th February

Sunday, 25th April

Wednesday, 4th August

Friday 24th September

Friday, 24th September - AGM

Sunday, 14th November



POLICY AND STRATEGY

Sing Ireland has set key strategic objectives with key actions and indicators to monitor the success of its strategic plan over the period to 2024.

International contacts

Sing Ireland maintained its association with a number of international choral music organisations, particularly The European Choral Association (ECA) and the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM)

Dermot O'Callaghan, CEO of Sing Ireland, was elected President of the European Choral Association in November, 2021.

Age and Opportunity / Bealtaine Festival

2021 saw the Dawn Chorus initiative take place online as part of a partnership between Sing Ireland and Age and Opportunity Ireland. The event, which had ordinarily operated in person before the pandemic, was further developed as an online initiative in 2021 with choirs and active retirement groups performing together over zoom.

Sing Ireland's Response to the Pandemic During 2021

SI responded to the new ways of working and advice required by the group singing sector due to COVID-19 and the way that singing groups throughout Ireland (and the world) were affected by the pandemic. SI sought to give singing groups the best advice and skills/tools to aid and inform their activities.

In order to support singing groups and assist them in their learning and development, Sing Ireland held a series of training events and webinars where participants had the opportunity to learn from relevant professionals and each other. The webinars were very well attended, with hundreds of participants from all over Ireland and beyond attending. An extensive resource of COVID-19 supports for choirs and singing groups was also maintained and built on the Sing Ireland website throughout the year.



POLICY AND STRATEGY

Enhancing Lives Through Singing

Vision

A nation that is fully immersed in quality group singing experiences.

People living on the island of Ireland will value, recognise and experience the life changing ability that singing has to impact on their health, creativity and well-being.

Mission

Sing Ireland develops and supports all forms of group singing in Ireland. It does this by providing quality experiences through activities led by Sing Ireland and supporting the work of our members and the wider choral sector.







SINGING FOR HEALTH MAP

During Sing Ireland National Singing Week in October, SI in partnership with the University of Limerick and the Music Therapy Department at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, launched a new map of Singing for Health and Well-Being Groups. This map, which will be adapted and amended over time with the growth of new groups across the country, is now live on the Sing Ireland website.

Dr. Hilary Moss along with researchers at U.L., undertook a detailed study and survey of the singing for health groups. From October 2020 - April of 2021 researchers at UL contacted 2,736 stakeholders with links to singing for health and wellbeing, collecting data on singing groups and choirs across the country. The results form a national and international public resource for singers, referrers, policymakers, carers, and other stakeholders invested in singing for health and wellbeing.

Several gaps in provision have been identified and it is hoped that data contained here will encourage more people to get involved in singing for health and wellbeing, provide compelling evidence for investment in new services and encourage stakeholders to establish groups in areas of low provision. From the perspective of the growth of Sing Ireland programmes, the map will be utilised as a mechanism to encourage funding for new choirs/singing groups and projects which Sing Ireland would be directly and indirectly involved in.



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In 2021 Sing Ireland presented online training for singing groups and choirs on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The training suite, which was delivered with our EDI partner, [PhoenixRize](#), was made possible with funding from the Arts Council. The key focus of Sing Ireland's consultation with [PhoenixRize](#), and the subsequent training for choirs and singing groups, was to support Sing Ireland staff and members to develop and reflect on how they work, as they embark on the journey to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all their processes, activities and procedures.

Sing Ireland is committed to providing choral and group singing opportunities to all members of society in Ireland. We seek to enable choral and singing group activities to be available to all and our goal is to enable the singing community to create an environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging and connection.

Four core learning areas were identified by the Sing Ireland Team and the training suite took place over zoom in November and December 2021. Facilitated by Adaku Okafur, the training sessions were attended by participants from all over Ireland.

The areas addressed were:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Singing sector
- Cultural Competency for the Singing sector
- Unconscious Bias – From Awareness to Action
- Creating an anti-racist and inclusive singing sector

The workshops and consultation led to the development of an Action Plan Toolkit for the Choral and Group singing Community which is available to download on the [Sing Ireland Website](#).



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

"She discovered an ability and confidence in herself - which is priceless."

Parent of a participant in a Sing Ireland Training Course

Education and training is a key component of the work of Sing Ireland. Sing Ireland's strategic objectives prioritise training and education for the singer, choir/singing group and conductor. Flagship events such as the Choral Conducting Summer School for choral conductors and come and sing and networking events for singers are central to the organisation's education work. The Irish Youth Choir (including the Irish Youth Choir for 18 – 28 year olds, the Irish Youth Training Choir for 14 – 17 year olds and the Irish Youth Chamber Choir) and the YouthSing Ireland programme which leads youth singing development nationally are also identified as being central to the education and training work of Sing Ireland. Many training events continued to move online or were curtailed in many ways as a result of the continuing pandemic during 2021.





The IYC was formed in 1982 in Cork under its first conductor, Geoffrey Spratt followed by Greg Beardsell in 2010. In 2020, Bernie Sherlock was appointed Artistic Director of the Irish Youth Choirs. The choir has seen thousands of young people interact with it through auditions, training and performance.

During its history the choir has been a valuable resource for the development of youth choral practice in Ireland. Given the effects of the pandemic, the Irish Youth Choir operated its course under extremely challenging circumstances. A summer residential course took place at the University of Limerick from 14th to 22nd of August 2021. The choir's rehearsals in 2021 were undertaken exclusively outdoors in a specially constructed marquee. The choir members also undertook many risk mitigations to ensure that the course could run safely. These included a PCR test prior to arrival at the course, antigen tests during the course, wearing masks during all singing, and regularly



monitoring the health and wellbeing of each individual singer.

In spite of these difficulties a hugely rewarding and artistically exciting course was achieved where the singers demonstrated the joy and value of choral singing, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Online events also featured for the choir in 2021 to allow for further engagement. The Irish Youth Choir also provided opportunities for young singers to interact with Chamber Choir Ireland as part of Pathways, which is designed to foster the development of aspiring young professional choral singers.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Patrick Barrett was appointed Conductor of the Irish Youth Training choir in March, 2020. The Irish Youth Training Choir was a long-held ambition of Sing Ireland as a means to provide choral training at national level for younger ages, particularly for 14-17 year olds.

As Sing Ireland strategically positions its output to enhance people's lives through their interaction with singing, it is recognised that for the future of the Irish Youth Choir, and more broadly for group singing in Ireland, youth singing development needs investment of funds and resources. This responded to recommendations in the Arts Council of Ireland's policy document Raising Your Voice and a strategic plan for the development of the Irish Youth Choir commissioned by Sing Ireland in 2008. The IYTC was formed for the first time, on a pilot basis in 2014 and since then has gone from strength to strength and has built a committed and engaged following of young singers from almost every county of the Republic of Ireland.





EDUCATION AND TRAINING

JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS

Sing Ireland (SI) in collaboration with Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO), offered an initiative entitled JCT Imagine for music teachers of Junior Cycle Music. This Arts in Junior Cycle initiative aimed to support the integration of the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015), the Arts in Education Charter and the Creative Ireland Programme (2017-2022), Pillar 1 Creative Youth.

Sing Ireland musicians and choral facilitators worked on professional development sessions for teachers designed to enable the creative voice of young people in the classroom.



YOUTH SINGING DEVELOPMENT

During 2021, Sing Ireland worked in partnership with Creative Ireland to further Action Point 9 of the Creative Youth Plan which was published in late 2017. This action point calls for 'a strategy to develop and extend choral singing' for young people in Ireland.

A wide-ranging consultation process was undertaken during 2018/19, which explored interest and support for a national youth singing project and the creative processes grounded in singing. The resulting report by Helen Doyle formed the basis of an agreement with Creative Ireland to develop action research models and development during 2019/2020.

This work aims to show 'proof of model' and give rich group singing experiences to young people. The programme developed newly commissioned repertoire in the Irish language or of Irish cultural heritage, alongside the delivery of online SingSpaces, where young people in classrooms across the country came together to sing. The project will further



develop in 2022 to include SingSpaces in locations nationally.

Music Generation and Sing Ireland

In 2021, Sing Ireland continued to collaborate with Music Generation on various education projects, although many had to be curtailed or postponed due to the pandemic.

Notably projects in Music Generation Offaly Westmeath and Music Generation Louth but whilst also broadening to work with further counties throughout the country.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING





EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Sing Ireland is working on a two-year partnership project called 'PRESTO: Practices and Resources for Equipping Schools to Teach Music Online'. The consortium of partners will develop 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, the owner of Minifiddlers who offers the Colourstrings courses), from Scotland (the National Youth Choir of Scotland), and the School of Theology, Philosophy, and Music of DCU, the PRESTO project will work to provide innovative solutions for building resilience and flexibility into the sector. This Erasmus + programme is led by lead partner the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Academy in Hungary. Sing Ireland's artistic team began the official 'testing' stage of what the project terms 'Intellectual Outputs' in 2021. The first testing events for this were held online and explored the use of the Jamulus software for rehearsals and music lessons. The further development of the intellectual outputs will see how to use videos and guides for teachers and musicians in choral conducting technique, repertoire selection and score preparation.

presto

