

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015



ASSOCIATION  
OF IRISH  
**choirs**  
CUMANN NÁISIÚNTA NA gCÓR

Association of Irish Choirs/  
Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór

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# Company Information

**Honorary President:**

Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness

**Patron of the Irish Youth Choir**

Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

**Directors:**

Gerry Maher, Chairman

Charles Irwin, Company Secretary

Susan Haddon

Jimmy O'Byrne

Stephen Brown

Marion Doherty Hayden

Eugene Mac Carrick

Tim Fouhy

Alan Kelly (from February 2015)

Jane Pilkington (from July 2015)

**Chief Executive Officer:** Dermot O'Callaghan

**Administrative Assistant:** Lily Mc Garry

**Development Officer:** Katie Fitzpatrick

**Artistic Director, Irish Youth Choir:** Greg Beardsell

**Artistic Director, International Choral Conducting Summer School:** Bernie Sherlock

**Registered Office:** University Concert Hall, Foundation Building, University of Limerick

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

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

**Charitable Status:** The Association of Irish Choirs is a registered charity with charity number 20012601 (CHY 6626)





# 2015

ENHANCING LIFE THROUGH CHORAL MUSIC



# Mission and Vision

## **Strategic Plan 2014-17: Mission and Vision**

### **Association of Irish Choirs**

### **Enhancing life through choral music**

#### **Mission**

The mission of the AOIC is to support and represent all forms of choral music in Ireland through a range of programmes and activities which raise awareness of the many benefits of group singing.

##### **1. To be a leading voice for choral music in Ireland**

The AOIC will be a leading voice for Choral Music in Ireland through on-going advocacy and media profiling of the benefits of choral singing for all.

##### **2. To develop and support membership**

The AOIC will develop and support individual and group membership through on-going engagement with members.

##### **3. To provide education and training**

The AOIC will provide education opportunities for choirs, choral singers and conductors in Ireland through training and development programmes towards increasing participation and excellence

The AOIC will continue to support and promote the importance of youth choral music education through the Irish Youth Choirs

##### **4. To achieve sustainability and good governance**

The AOIC will ensure that the organisation has good governance and will promote good governance amongst its members.

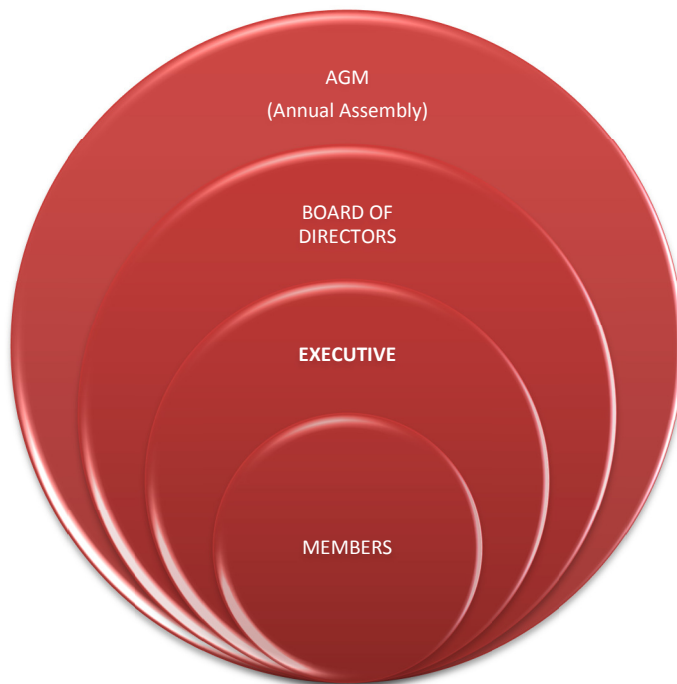
# Operational Report

## Introduction

2015 marked the second operational year of AOIC's 2014-17 strategic plan. Through its broad remit to serve choirs, individuals in choirs and choral directors the Association plays a vital role in the resourcing of the choral community in Ireland and in the enhancement of the lives of Irish people through their engagement with choral music.

## Structures and Functions

The Association's highest decision making gathering is at the Company's AGM annually. The Board of Directors is charged with the governance and stewardship of the organisation, ensuring that policy and activity reflects the strategic aims of the organisation. Management is devolved to the executive. Members are an essential part of the organisation, contributing to the work of the Association and forming the core of choral activity nationwide.



# Operational Report(contd.)

## **2015 Financial Review**

2015 was a busy and productive year for the Association of Irish Choirs (AOIC) with many and varied projects that were monitored from a budgetary perspective on an ongoing basis. The projected deficit at year-end was budgeted for and the year met the budgetary targets set out by the Board and Executive. Arts Council support of the organisation remained constant with extra support provided through touring grants for the Irish Youth Chamber Choir. The overall budget laid out for the Arts Council from the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was disappointing and so the potential gains for an organisation such as AOIC were small. The government retained a status quo budgetary allowance for the Arts Council and this was viewed generally as inadequate given the level of the cuts to the Arts in previous years, which were disproportionate to other areas of Irish society.

## **Board Developments**

Gerry Maher continued in the position of Chairman during, whilst Charles Irwin continued in the role of Secretary. Two new directors were appointed in 2015: Alan Kelly and Jane Pilkington. During 2015 the Board led the organisation through the final stages of the process of adopting the Governance Code ([www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie)). The organisation signed up to full compliance with the Governance Code on 17th April, 2016.

The board met 7 times in the course of 2015. Board sub-committees meet as required ahead of full board meetings as follows: Business and Audit sub-committee, Artistic sub-committee, Fundraising sub-committee, Membership sub-committee and Communications sub-committee.

## **AOIC Board Meeting Dates 2015:**

Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February  
Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March  
Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April  
Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July  
Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August – Board Meeting and AGM  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October  
Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December

# Policy and Strategy

## **Policy and Strategy**

The AOIC has set key strategic objectives with key performance indicators to monitor the success of the strategic plan over the period 2014-17. Central to AOIC's remit is the promotion of choral music and group singing in Ireland, with a commitment to high quality education, training and services for members.

## **International contacts**

AOIC maintained its association with a number of international choral music organisations, including ABCD (Association of British Choral Directors), Europa Cantat, the European Federation of Young Choirs and IFCM (International Federation for Choral Music). Regular contact is maintained with each of these international organisations. In December 2015, AOIC bid to host the IFCM'S World Symposium on Choral Music in 2020 in Dublin.

## **Age and Opportunity / Bealtaine Festival**

2015 again saw the Association's Dawn Chorus initiative take place, a partnership between AOIC and Age and Opportunity Ireland. The initiative saw choirs and active retirement groups throughout Ireland perform at dawn at a waterfront location on the last Sunday in May, as part of the Bealtaine Festival.

## **National Choral Singing Week**

The Annual National Choral Singing Week took place from 4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015 to coincide with World Mental Health Day (10<sup>th</sup> October), demonstrating the link between choral singing and positive mental health. Choirs throughout the country marked National Choral Singing Week through open rehearsals, performances and many other events.

## **BIG SING Events**

The AOIC continued to encourage mass participation in singing and ran events to encourage this during 2015. Furthering its collaboration with the Cork International Choral Festival saw an AOIC BIG SING led by John O'Brien at Cork City Hall during the 2015 Festival. In October 2015, Bernie Sherlock led a mass singing event that focused on Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* at St. Ann's Church, Dawson St, Dublin.



# Education and Training

## Education and Training

Education and training is a key component of the work of AOIC. AOIC's strategic objectives prioritise training and education for the choral singer, choir and choral conductor. The Irish Youth Choir and youth choir development nationally are also identified as being central to the education and training work of AOIC.

### International Choral Conducting Summer School

AOIC's largest scale education programme for choral directors and singers is the Annual Choral Conducting Summer School. Bernie Sherlock was Artistic Director of the 36th International Conducting Summer School which was held at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance in the University of Limerick.

In all, 59 participants took part in the Summer School. The ethos of the Summer School is to have small class sizes to accommodate the greatest individual tuition for participants. Bernie Sherlock, Artistic Director of the Summer School, engaged expert tutors: Volker Hempfling (Germany), Zoltán Pad (Hungary), Sabine Horstmann (Germany), Dónal Doherty (Ireland) and Gabriella Thész (Hungary). Individual tuition was offered by a number of the tutors and Owen Gilhooly offered individual vocal lessons for participants. Margaret O'Shea also offered insight into engaging and inspiring young singers.

**A Musical Journey with a Choir** – Zoltán Pad

**Engaging and Inspiring Young Singers** – Margaret O'Shea

**Good Technique for the Choral Singer** – Owen Gilhooly

**Irish Choral Repertoire Reading Session** – Bernie Sherlock

**Conducting Masterclass** – All Tutors



# Education and Training(contd.)

## Youth Choral Development Nationally – Music Generation Offaly Westmeath

In September 2015, AOIC began a year-long ground breaking choral residency for young musicians in Offaly and Westmeath with Greg Beardsell. *Singfest* builds on the strong foundation of performance music education laid by Music Generation Offaly Westmeath musicians and allied them with the work of the Irish Youth Choir. Through this unique partnership which was made possible by significant financial investment from the Music Generation/Arts Council Partnership, *Singfest* brought together local, national and international professional musicians to create new opportunities and experiences for children and young people, centred on the benefits and joys of learning to sing together.

The team of MGOW musicians worked with Greg Beardsell, Helen Hassett and Eunan McDonald of the Irish Youth Choir to exchange knowledge and approaches and to provide expert guidance in developing good vocal and singing techniques. The project sought to create a homogenised approach to choral pedagogy in participating MGOW schools and saw upwards of 3,000 children and young people take part.



## Irish Youth Choir 2015

The IYC was formed in 1982 in Cork under its first conductor, Geoffrey Spratt. Currently operating in Limerick, under the artistic direction of Greg Beardsell, it has seen thousands of young people interact with it through auditions, training and performance. During its 32 year history the choir has been a valuable resource for the development of youth choral practice in Ireland.

Following national auditions, membership of Irish Youth Choir in 2015 was 64. The choir again undertook its training at the University of Limerick in June/July 2015 resulting in highly successful and sold-out performances at St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick and Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.

# Education and Training(contd.)

The Irish Youth Chamber Choir (IYCC) toured in the Spring of 2015, with the generous support of the Arts Council of Ireland. The touring programme was titled Heavenly Bodies and saw performances in Waterford, Tullamore, Dublin and Cork. The IYCC also released its debut EP recording *Rise Up, My Love* following a successful crowd funding campaign in late 2014.

## **Irish Youth Training Choir 2015**

2015 saw the expansion of the Irish Youth Training Choir course which ran at the end of June 2014 at the University of Limerick and represented young people from 15 counties. It has long been an ambition of the Association of Irish Choirs (AOIC) for younger ages, particularly for 14-17 year olds. As AOIC strategically positions its output to enhance people's lives through their interaction with choral activity, it is recognised that for the future of the Irish Youth Choir, and more broadly for choral singing in Ireland, youth choral development needs investment of funds and resources. This responds 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 AOIC in 2008.

## **AOIC/RTÉ Conductor in Training 2015**

AOIC partnered with RTÉ Orchestras, Quartet and Choirs on the joint Irish Youth Choir/RTÉ Conductor in Training Scholarship which was awarded from October 2014 to September, 2015 to Niall Kinsella. The Conductor in Training programme is an AOIC initiative which aims to develop choral leaders of the future, providing them with a high level internship with Greg Beardsell as Irish Youth Choir conductor with the RTE Philharmonic Choir under Chorus Master, Mark Hindley.



# Membership

## Membership Services

AOIC continued to deliver advisory, information and resource services to member choirs throughout the country.

### Choral Membership Rates

Individuals, Schools, Children & Youth, Special Needs	€30
Choirs of under 50 voices	€50
Choirs of over 50 but under 100 voices	€60
Choirs of over 100 voices	€75
Association & Festival Rates	€75
Corporate Rates for Businesses	€150

### Group Insurance

The group insurance scheme, offered exclusively to AOIC members, saw many member choirs throughout the country avail of this insurance via AOIC's partnership insurance broker, BHP Insurances, for Allianz Insurance.

### Library

AOIC's library resource with over 14,000 pieces of music was offered to members throughout the country. It is a valuable resource for choirs who will often perform pieces from the collection.

### Member Education Courses

Vocal production classes were run in Spring 2015 at the Music Department at Trinity College Dublin with tuition led by tutor Alan Leech and also a vocal production webinar with tenor, Owen Gilhooly. Sight singing classes were also run in the Spring 2015, led by tutor Wendy Stephens.

# Membership (contd.)

## **A Nation's Voice - National Choral Project 2015/16**

With the Arts Council of Ireland (ACI) as Lead Partner, a project grew out of a plan with RTÉ Orchestras, Quartet and Choirs to commission a work for massed choir and orchestra (RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra), to be premiered in 2016. AOIC and Music Generation (MG) were also invited to partner on this initiative, through the participation of 1,000 choral singers (adult choir members of AOIC children and young people participating in Music Generation programmes). This partnership (between the ACI, RTÉ, MG and AOIC), resulted in the NCP being programmed as one of the main national 1916 commemorative events, broadcast live on Easter Sunday 2016 from Collins Barracks. Following a national selection of AOIC member choirs the conductors of the various choirs involved in the project came together in October and November 2015 to work on the repertoire for the event with lead conductor, David Brophy.





# Financial Report

**Accounts for year ending December 31, 2015**

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