

## **CHAIR'S REPORT TO PONITA AGM – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this Annual Chairs report is to outline PONITA's achievements during the year and the challenges created by the continuing national and global crisis caused by the Covid pandemic.

Despite the restrictions placed upon us and the significantly reduced activities this year, it is useful to remind the membership of the Charity's objects that remain and guide our activities. These are *"to promote, maintain, improve and advance education by the encouragement of the arts including, without any limitation, the arts of singing and music, drama, mime and dance through international touring and exchanges, and community events in the Bristol area."* Alongside Ponita's other functions, we do keep in mind this general message of educating through performing.

### **Review of the Year**

This year Sue Morse who was the PONITA Chair moved to Cornwall and stepped down as a Trustee. We would like to thank her for her leadership and all the time and energy she invested into the organisation and wish her well for the future. We would also like to take this opportunity of thanking Nigel Siddall and Jeanie Copland who also stepped down as Trustees, although Nigel is now working tirelessly as the Chair of the PON Working Party. The Working Party was set up at the last AGM in Feb 2021 to find a viable way forward for PON Choir to recommence singing after the pandemic, and recruit a new leader, following the decision of Nickomo and Rasuallah to retire from full time choir leading. The Working Party brought together PON members and PONITA Trustees, and comprised: Nigel Siddall (Chair), Christine Golesworthy, Rhiannon Prys-Owen, Robin McDowell, Eric Lewis, Eric Booth, Philip Barker and John Gulson.

PONITA has continued as a Charity despite a possible dissolution proposed at the last AGM. The current Trustees are Robin McDowell (Treasurer) Rhiannon Prys-Owen (Secretary) and Dorothy Greaves. We have recently co-opted Christine Golesworthy and Eric Booth as Trustees and would like to thank them and the other Trustees for supporting the Charity until its future is more certain.

We would also like to thank Natalie Skidmore for maintaining the PONITA Facebook page and promoting the events organised by the PON Working Party.

This year the PONITA Trustees have worked with members of the PON Working Party to deliver a series of 10 successful evening workshops between September and December 2021 showcasing local guest choir leaders who could be potential new leaders of the PON choir. These were held at St Paul's Church, Southville and All Saints Church, Clifton. Consideration has also been given to us of other potential venues in both North and South Bristol for future choir sessions.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the leaders and the PON members who have participated with such enthusiasm and good will in the series of workshops, despite all the difficulties presented by the pandemic. It is the support of the membership that has created such successful singing events this year.

We would also like to thank Robin for the excellent and efficient way he has overseen and monitored the finances, recording of payments and other transactions for the workshops. The PONITA bank account has provided a financial infrastructure for the PON Working Party alongside the Jon Conway events site. Our thanks go to Jon and Eric Booth for setting up and servicing the on-line workshop booking and payment system, and also to Ceema McDowell for auditing the accounts and providing relevant financial advice.

In September PONITA and the Working Party held an event of thanks and celebration of 20 years of singing and fellowship led by Nickomo and Rasullah to mark their retirement. After the enforced cancellation of PONITA's planned PON 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event at Sharpham Hall due to the pandemic, this was along-awaited opportunity for the membership to sing together again and to be led by Nickomo for one final time. It was a very emotional and memorable occasion attended by around 80 people, including a number of past members. Our thanks go to Rhiannon for her exceptional hard work to organise this special event,

It is our hope that the legacy of Nickomo and Rasullah, and Nick Petts (PON co-leader from 2000-10) will continue for many years and a new Choir leader will carry the PON fellowship and singing spirit into the future.

### **Concluding remarks**

The PON Working Party has undertaken a review of the workshops and consulted with the membership on their preferred choice of leader. The outcome of this process is that Rosie Sleightholme is the strongest leader and when confirmed by the membership will be invited to lead the choir.

In this period of transition, the PONITA charity is willing to provide support to a new leader if this is required. In order to do this, we have invited more PON members to come forward as Trustees who can provide a broad range of skills and experiences that enable us to continue our tradition of delivering a rich mix of events and community activities. These activities will promote the choir and encourage other people to come along and take part in sharing the joy of singing regardless of their experiences.

We look forward to an exciting new year with our PON choir members and their new leader.