

Cambridge Philharmonic Society

Development plan 2024

November 20th 2024

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Introduction

- The Trustees of our newly constituted CIO asked a team to review our current strategy and propose a revised strategy for our future
 - Harry
 - Tom
 - Paula
 - Elaine
 - Chris
 - Mark
- The Trustees started to discuss the strategy at their meeting of Sept 25th
- The Trustees will continue to iterate the strategy and aim to sign it off at their November meeting. Key to this will be resourcing and prioritising our ambition
- We will engage the membership in small groups of the interested led by a member of the strat team starting at the AGM

What we said in 2019

- The Phil has a long and distinguished history

We hold a unique position, for an amateur musical organisation, as it has a chorus and orchestra working with the same professional conductor/musical director (MD). Programming is unique and ambitious. The MD has access to excellent professional soloists at keen rates. The core membership has regular attendance and is committed to the organisation. Concerts are well organised with high performance values and presentation. The committee has a dedicated, elected membership and approaches the role with a professional attitude. A new chairman has recently been appointed. Members have regular auditions which are viewed positively and allow the MD to assess changes in the singing and playing of individuals. Financially, basic costs are met by fees and concerts aim to break even. Some sponsorship helps defray costs.

- Volunteer capacity is a challenge

. The pace of change of membership is slow -balancing consistency and availability in the orchestra is a challenge. The chorus lacks young membership and does not attract and retain new, experienced singers. There is a disparity in experience between the orchestra and chorus. The chorus and orchestra do not work regularly together in rehearsal. Many chorus members are not experienced in working with different directors but too much recent change has hindered chorus development. There is lack of time and space for socialising between orchestra and chorus. Marketing and promotion are not strong or consistent. Who is our audience and where do they come from? There is no other regular earned income via sponsorship or other income streams. Only playing in the concert venue on the day is a difficulty. The Phil does not have a presence in other places, so is limited to Cambridge concerts unless invited or collaborating with others. Cambridge has limitations in performance spaces suitable for the Phil.

- There are opportunities to collaborate more

We have the opportunity to collaborate with other choirs e.g. Saffron Walden Choral Society. This could give the opportunity to repeat concerts in different venues. Being in Cambridge, we could utilise or work with college musicians or courses e.g. Voces 8 MMus. There is the potential/desire to appoint a chorus master and other professionals to work with orchestra sections. We are skilled enough to 'reinvent' our self –we should research professional organisations and learn from them e.g. innovative audience engagement. Commercial concerts are a possibility. The audience is a source of information –how many are linked to members? The development of a Friends Scheme and a support community would make a link between the audience and members.

- We have strong competition

The Phil is one organisation among many, possibly 21, in Cambridge. Other vocal ensembles are more attractive to young, good singers e.g. re branded Cambridge University Symphony Chorus and smaller choirs.. Orchestral players also have a choice of ensembles. Audiences for classical music are in decline nationally and Cambridge has a huge choice of concerts daily. Repeating concerts is a challenge re availability of players and singers. Competition for performance dates in West Road and Ely Cathedral is keen. There are not enough large performance or rehearsal spaces.

Our purpose is set out in our charitable aims.....

....the advancement of public education in the art of science and music in particular by giving performances of choral and instrumental music in Cambridge and its environs to the highest musical standards attainable by its performing members who shall in the main be local amateur or professional musicians not engaged principally in public performance alone

Our vision we set in 2019

“To be recognised as the leading, most exciting and innovative orchestra and chorus in the UK”

What we want to become














Our ambition

How we differentiate ourselves in the Cambridge music market

Something that is worth striving for

Something that excites our communities – audience/members/friends

Lots got in our way, but we have achieved much of what we planned in our first strategy. This what we said we would do

		0 - 6 months	6-24 months	
1	Exciting repertoire, innovatively delivered	Music Director 19/20 season programme Companion programme 1 smaller event 	Companion programme – 2 x per annum 	 Done!
2	Create a compelling brand that engages a growing community/ audience/ membership	Define our brand Define our offer and marketing plan Integrate our message Video clips Digi marketing champion 	Active supporter programme – launch “friends” scheme 	 Good progress!
3	Grow our capability	Chorus master More explicit choral standards Attract and retain the best 	Young talent programme 	 Not done
4	Engage with our communities	Relaunch friends scheme Excite and attract the young 	Engage with schools Explore grant funding 	
5	Build strong finances and a slick operation to support the above	Single ticket platform - Ticketmaster Build audience database, feed from ticketsales Rethink our roles and responsibilities Recognise our volunteers Set up accounts package to track the money 	actions 	

This is the strategy group's summary of where are we now?

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committed core of members• Strong players and singers (Reauditions every 3 years keeps ppl on their toes)• Access to great soloists• Ambition to be great• Professionalism (programming, performance, direction)• Music leadership team• Marketing/ticket sales• Quality and diversity of performances and the joy this brings to members and audiences• The commitment of members, not only to performing but also to the continued success of Cam Phil (note fundraising efforts during 2023/24 season and efforts to sell concert tickets)• Strong and stable artistic leadership team• Strengthening relationships and understanding between members and artistic leadership• Recent recruitment to the chorus (including younger singers) and continued drive to balance improving quality with engagement and enjoyment (a virtual cycle)• Growing reputation• Broadening audience appeal• Stronger administration/CIO• Got thro covid!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer capacity<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rotation of committee members• Turnover of Trustees and committee members – a reflection of unrealistic expectations• Disproportionate effort expended in collecting member subs• Brand recognition<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Profile of Cam Phil across the diverse local population• Communications<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With members• Demonstrating value• Engagement and communication between Trustees, committee and membership• Diversity<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity within the membership• Diversity in audiences – although some evidence this is improving

And.....

Opportunities

- Realise vision
- Collaborations
 - with other local charities / community groups/ business, education etc
- Chamber orchestra /choir performances - fun for players, chance to improve
- Assistant conductor position
- To become champions of young local talent
- Wider geographical scope
- To source corporate, individual donations and further legacies to fund specific concerts, especially those within and close to Cambridge City and with new and exciting repertoire that wouldn't be performed by other orchestras/choirs in the city
- The Bill Parker legacy
- Build the Friends scheme
- To further build respect and relationships between Trustees/committee members, artistic, leadership and members – developing a genuine sense of shared purpose to support the next stage of our development
- To engage members in any future outreach projects
 - opportunity of the Refuge concert in May 2025 as a starting point for better communication and deeper and more meaningful engagement)
- To continue to build our membership, audience and reputation as we continue to recover post-Covid
- Engaging those with less access to our music making

Threats

- Not having a good permanent rehearsal venue for the orchestra
- Losing key orchestral players
- Financial instability (declining reserves)
- Lack of resource (money and people)
- Lack of ambition
- keeping pace with societal change (programming, concert presentation etc.)
- Potential distraction of our already overstretched management capacity from the vision and core business of Cam Phil
- Engagement and retention of members (especially younger, more diverse members of the chorus, especially those with limited resources)
- Perception that one year of making a surplus, plus the recent very generous and welcome legacy, means that we have excess resources to invest in non-core business
- Inability to recruit a new Treasurer with the necessary skills and capacity
- Competition in the Cambridge area

Looking forward to our new strategy

We have now moved to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and have simplified our purpose to:

The object of the CIO is the advancement of music, and to this end it shall give performances of choral and instrumental music in Cambridge and its environs.

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Our refreshed vision

“To be one of the leading, most exciting and innovative orchestras and choruses in the UK”

criteria for our vision

- What we want to become
- Our ambition
- How we differentiate ourselves in the Cambridge music market
- Something that is worth striving for
- Something that excites our communities – audience/members/friends

These are the revised goals for our next drive towards achieving our vision.....

		Core activity	Developmental	lead
1	Exciting repertoire, innovatively delivered	24/5 season programme Deliver programme to fulfil Bill Parker legacy Appoint Assistant conductor Rouzbeh commission	New commissions Companion / charity events Annual high-profile event Build our skills	Harry
2	Build our brand	Review the Friends programme Explore corporate sponsorship Engage with existing sponsors/funders	Active friends/ supporter programme Build PR platform Explore further grant funding	Chris
3	Build our membership	Attract and retain the best Diversity programme – members and audiences Improve member communications Develop member/section teams	Young talent programme Recognise our volunteers Find better ways of unlocking membership talent	Committee
4	Outreach	Develop “Refuge” choir Develop outreach plan for next 2 yrs	Deliver outreach plan Engage with local schools GCSE/A level workshops Work with other community providers UEA/ British Youth Opera/Clare Music	Lucy
5	Build our capacity to manage and organise	Establish explicit information contact and communications responsibilities Explore membership subs SS/DD only Build back our reserves Implement CIO governance	Assess feasibility of paid admin support	Trustees

More detail - Goal 1 Exciting repertoire, innovatively delivered

Core	owner		Development	owner
Deliver 24/5 programme	Harry		Commission 25/26	Harry
Deliver Bill Parker legacy promise over next 2 seasons. (see next chart)	Harry		Major annual event to build our presence	
Appoint Assistant conductor	Harry			
Refuge project – create choir, work with schools, Clare College, Woolf Institute (see spec)	Lucy		Chamber event – with a charity? Small choral event – with a charity?	Paula
Continue to build skills – sectionals/masterclasses	Harry/Tom		Young talent programme	
Build partnerships and collaborations – UAE/Saffron Hall/Clare College/Cam Uni Chorus	Harry			
London concert	Harry			

Fulfilling the Bill Parker Legacy

The Cambridge Philharmonic is delighted to receive this extremely generous support in Bill's will. His executors have accepted our proposal for our use of the funds:

1. Presenting concerts of English music

- We will dedicate our performances of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* (1 st March 2025 at Saffron Hall) and Britten's *Peter Grimes* to the memory of Bill and in recognition of his legacy. We plan to include Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* in the 2025/26 season as another dedication concert.

2. Commissioning works from the next generation of composers.

- This fund gives us a unique opportunity to continue to commission new work from up-and-coming composers. In recent years we have commissioned works from RPS award-winning composer Lucy Armstrong (*The Alchemical Kitchen*, 2023) and a concerto for Kamanchehand orchestra from Iranian refugee composer and virtuoso Rouzbeh Parsa (to be premiered in 2025).

3. Supporting young British talent

- Our 2024-25 season sees the launch of our the Cambridge Philharmonic Conducting Fellowship – an opportunity for an outstanding young conductor to assist on projects with the orchestra and chorus, to benefit from the guidance of our principal conductor, chorus master and principal guest conductor, and to work closely with our growing outreach department in taking music to the wider Cambridge community. This fund will help to support the continuation of this role.
- We are also collaborating with both British Youth Opera and the University of East Anglia, with a mutual aim to support young British singers and provide them with professional experience and concert opportunities. We are hoping these will be ongoing relationships that this fund can contribute to.

With heartfelt thanks for the generosity of this support,

Harry Sever

Music Director, Cambridge Philharmonic

Goal 2 – Build our brand

Core	owner		Development	owner
Build friends programme. Target 50 members in 24/5	Chris		Major annual event to build our presence	
Explore corporate sponsorship	Chris		Explore further grant funding	Mark
			Develop and implement a plan to build diversity throughout our activities- membership, volunteers, professionals, audiences, friends and funders.	
			Build PR programme	Chris /Nikki

Goal 3 – Build our membership

Core	owner		Development	owner
Regular communications at rehearsals	Orch/Chorus Secretaries		Attract young talent Newsletter?	
Regular development discussions with leadership team to ensure we balance our workload	Chair		Identify members who wish to contribute to development of the society	
5 mins comms at all rehearsals	Harry/Tom			
Communication to all members following on from Trustee/ committee meetings	Secretary			
Attract younger members – evaluate reduced sub scheme				
Clarify and share sources of information and lines of communications	Committee			

More detail Goal 4 - outreach

Core	owner		Development	owner
Establish Lucy role as our outreach champion	Harry		GCSE/A level curriculum workshops	
Complete existing schools project – see Refuge project specification	Mark/ Anna			
Refuge project – secure funding			Outreach plan for next 2 years	Lucy
Refuge project – create choir, engage schools	Lucy			

More detail - Goal 5 – Build our capacity to organise and manage

Core	owner		Development	owner
Membership subs SS/DD only for new members. Automate reminders through zero. Transition existing members. Target: all members by Sept 25	Treasurer		Review fund raising capacity/capability	
Chase unpaid subs autumn 24	Orch/ Chorus secs		Friends and family discounts for volunteers	
Separate out company secretarial from secretary role	Mark			
Support our Treasurer with external help as required	Mark			
Support our Secretary with external help as required. CVCS?				
Recognise our volunteers – 2 x socials per annum/ more explicit celebrations				
Train our volunteers -				