

RIVER CITY VOICES

Annual Report
2023





RIVER CITY VOICES LTD

BOARD

Chair

Catherine Dolle-Samuel

Director | Founder

Inara Molinari

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Robert Love, AM (retired October)
William Soper, FCA (UK) (retired July)

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General Manager

Inara Molinari

Marketing Director

Jen Ward

Accountant

William Soper, FCA (UK)

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Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith

Principal Pianist

Su Choung

Casual Conductors

Dr Philip Eames
Natalie Gooneratne

Casual Pianists

Callum Tolhurst-Close
Dr Philip Eames

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Josephine Chan
Louise Corbin
Maria Costello
Tamara Craig
Susan Forss-Clarke
Hadassa Gitau
Lyn Higgs
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Deborah Howitt
Iona Mathias
Christine Pendleton
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Philip Gerber
Cameron Glass
Ivars Karklins
Geoff Kerr
Mark Nguyen
Michael West
Dominic Wong

Cover photo

Super Critical Mass Parramatta, Parramatta Gaol
RCV's BRAVE program series
1 April, 2023
Photo Credit: Grant Leslie

Report Content and Layout: Inara Molinari

Contents

ABOUT RCV	04
CHAIR'S REPORT	06
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT	07
2023 SNAPSHOT	08
ARTISTIC PROGRAMS	09
EXTRA PROJECTS & GIGS	14
OUTREACH/PATHWAY PROGRAMS	18
DEVELOPMENT REPORT	19
DIRECTORS' SUMMARY	23
FINANCIAL SUMMARY	26

ABOUT River City Voices

Western Sydney Choral Excellence

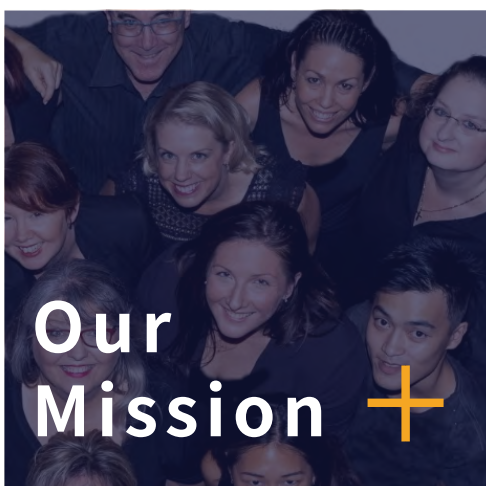


"Lux Aeterna was a piece I had never heard of and I had a lot of reservations about it... but the final result was so utterly beautiful and the perfect learning lesson to having a bit of faith in the leadership and what they are bringing to the table."

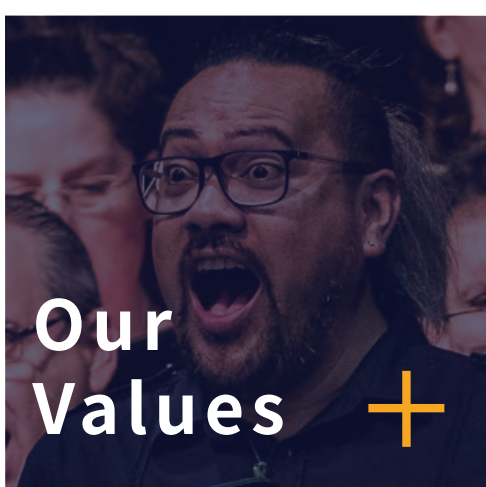
RCV Chorister



To become a permanent, vibrant and relevant player in the artistic and cultural landscape of Western Sydney.



To meet community demand for cultural organisations and performance events that expand horizons closer to home.



- Diversity - we champion equal opportunities for our artists and audience
- Excellence - we create learning environments in which people can excel
- Community - we build our own and contribute to others'
- Synergy - we flourish through collaboration
- Integrity - we act ethically, transparently and consistently

When River City Voices was established in 2018, there was no professionally administered and artistically led symphonic choir in Parramatta. Our first operational year in 2019, thanks to initial funding from Create NSW, was an outstanding success. This was in large part due to our new chorister recruits who had more than matched our original call out for people who "are passionate and committed vocalists who love to be challenged and who strive for excellence."

Navigating the havoc, cancellations and constant changes wreaked by COVID throughout 2020/21, revealed additional attributes of our singers - adaptable, generous and resilient (traits significantly tested again throughout 2022 with the ever present waves of COVID and influenza!).

The loyalty displayed by choristers throughout this time meant that not only did we return with pre-COVID numbers but in fact, the choir grew in size from 32 singers at the end of 2019, to 46 in 2022, and during 2023 numbered 67 choristers.

As we emerged from the pandemic into 2022, with expectations to pick up artistically where we had left off in 2019, River City Voices staff and singers embraced with determination and gusto every opportunity that presented itself exemplifying another recruitment aim, namely, a willingness and ability "to meet the demands of whatever choral works are thrown their way, sometimes in a hurry!".

And whilst River City Voices distinguishes itself as a professional organisation of excellence, we are also proud to be gaining a reputation for our positive, collaborative culture that has created a genuine community of caring, supportive and diverse individuals, linked together by their love of singing.

With now three fully productive years under its belt - 2019, 2022 and 2023 - River City Voices is leading the sector in delivering luscious choral works and intimate and innovative programs that engage a growing number of audience members and community participants.

In 2023, River City Voices took to the Concert Hall stage of the Sydney Opera House, not once, but twice including a national livestream, and added another television commercial to its credits!

In developing our concert themes, Luscious, Brave and Local, the choir aims to deliver blockbuster classic choral favourites and lesser known musically delicious works to western Sydney audiences, as well as give voice to the stories and music of talented local and Australia-wide composers and artists.

CHAIR'S REPORT



Catherine Dolle-Samuel

Photo: Grant Leslie

"2023 marked a year of challenges and growth for River City Voices. Artistically, the organisation matured, delivering three complex and challenging programs: Lux Aeterna, with Ngarra-burria First Peoples Composer program, and an ambitious musical and community engagement project – Super Critical Mass at Parramatta Gaol."

We also performed in *Human Waves*, supporting Sydney Philharmonia Choirs at the Sydney Opera House.

Along the way, River City Voices was selected to perform at the Sydney Opera House's 50th birthday 'Open House Weekend', performing 8 times throughout the day on the Concert Hall stage. Tackling new works, creating new music, travelling and rehearsing in the city – these challenges were met head on by all involved, from our General Manager, our Artistic Director and by our choristers.

As shown in our financial reports, River City Voices faced unexpected windfalls and challenges administratively and financially as well. We have been successful in securing annual funding for the first time for 2023-2024 and have determined to prioritise part time employment of a marketing manager. This is in line with RCV's objectives of growing wider audiences (increasing ticket sales) and securing program and visionary sponsors and partners. Being able to diversify our income beyond box office sales has been important – through both our annual fundraising activities and being agile in delivering commercials, which not many choirs have an opportunity to do.

We asked much of our choristers as commercial opportunities were seized. The strength of choristers' commitment to River City Voices can be seen through the enthusiastic volunteering for the multitude of opportunities in 2023.

The Board experienced upheaval with the resignation of three Directors - one retirement of a long serving Director and two Directors due to competing commitments. In recognition of these gaps River City Voices will prioritise recruitment of Directors in 2024, with a view to strengthening skills, diversity and experiences to further supplement our strategic vision.

Further we seek to re-invigorate the Artistic Advisory Committee to ensure our Artistic Director and programming has a sounding board to sense check against. These two objectives reflect our honest self appraisal and recognition that to truly deliver River City Voices' objectives requires excellence in guidance and support of our Board and Artistic Director. It is fair to say that River City Voices has felt the strain of this year's ambitious program and opportunities that have come our way. We hope in 2024 to find the balance of growth, financial security and artistic vision, with more effective resourcing, and seeking and securing the expertise of new Directors to enhance our strategic objectives.

River City Voices has demonstrated in 2023 its strategic importance in Western Sydney's cultural scene, the choral excellence we are beginning to be recognised for, and our capacity to deliver beyond a traditional choral program, for our choristers and our community.

We look forward to building on the investment of Create NSW as we deliver our mission in 2024.

CATHERINE DOLLE-SAMUEL
Chair and Chorister Representative

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

"2023 marked River City Voices' first full concert performance featuring our ensemble without partner choirs or guest performers."

The magnitude of this step for us shouldn't be understated. Choristers largely rose to the challenge with a double bill of works by one of contemporary choral music's greats, Morten Lauridsen, along with two shorter works by Australian composer Alice Chance. 'Lux Aeterna' proved to be a musically successful event with a warm audience response, which developed RCV's capacity to sing increasingly demanding and exposed music.

Our second concert saw us return to the (now quite familiar) surrounds of the Sydney Opera House concert hall to join Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Festival Chorus in their long-delayed performance of Tamara-Anna Cislowska and Elena Kats-Chernin's *Human Waves*, along with James Henry's 'Murr gumurr gu'. RCV featured in several movements and the event was broadcast on ABC Classic FM. Choristers attended an intensive rehearsal period, sometimes well away from Western Sydney, and received many genuine compliments from their colleagues in Festival Chorus.

Our final concert for 2023 was a collaboration with Ngarra-burria: First Peoples Composer program, led by Dr Chris Sainsbury. Eleven works by Indigenous composers, plus one work with text by an Indigenous poet, many of them premieres in their choral versions, filled the cathedral with glorious, uplifting music that moved audience members to tears. Tackling new works 'hot off the press' is always a bit of a leap of faith for choristers, who are often not quite sure of the effect their performance will have on their friends and family. This was one concert about which no one needed to worry and was a beautiful and important way to finish another big year, as well as a small contribution towards offering the healing abilities of music after the difficulties of the October Voice referendum.

Amongst these major performances, choristers were also involved an impactful and adventurous version of Julian Day's Super Critical Mass project at Parramatta Goal, magnificently recorded by the team from the MAAS Powerhouse; in a commercial for Carlton United Brewery consisting of two long days with very early starts; a jazzy performance for RCV's first fundraiser at PHIVE wonderfully supported by Monica Trapaga, Peter Locke and their band; and 8 performances on the Concert Hall stage of the Sydney Opera House for the building's public 50th birthday celebrations.

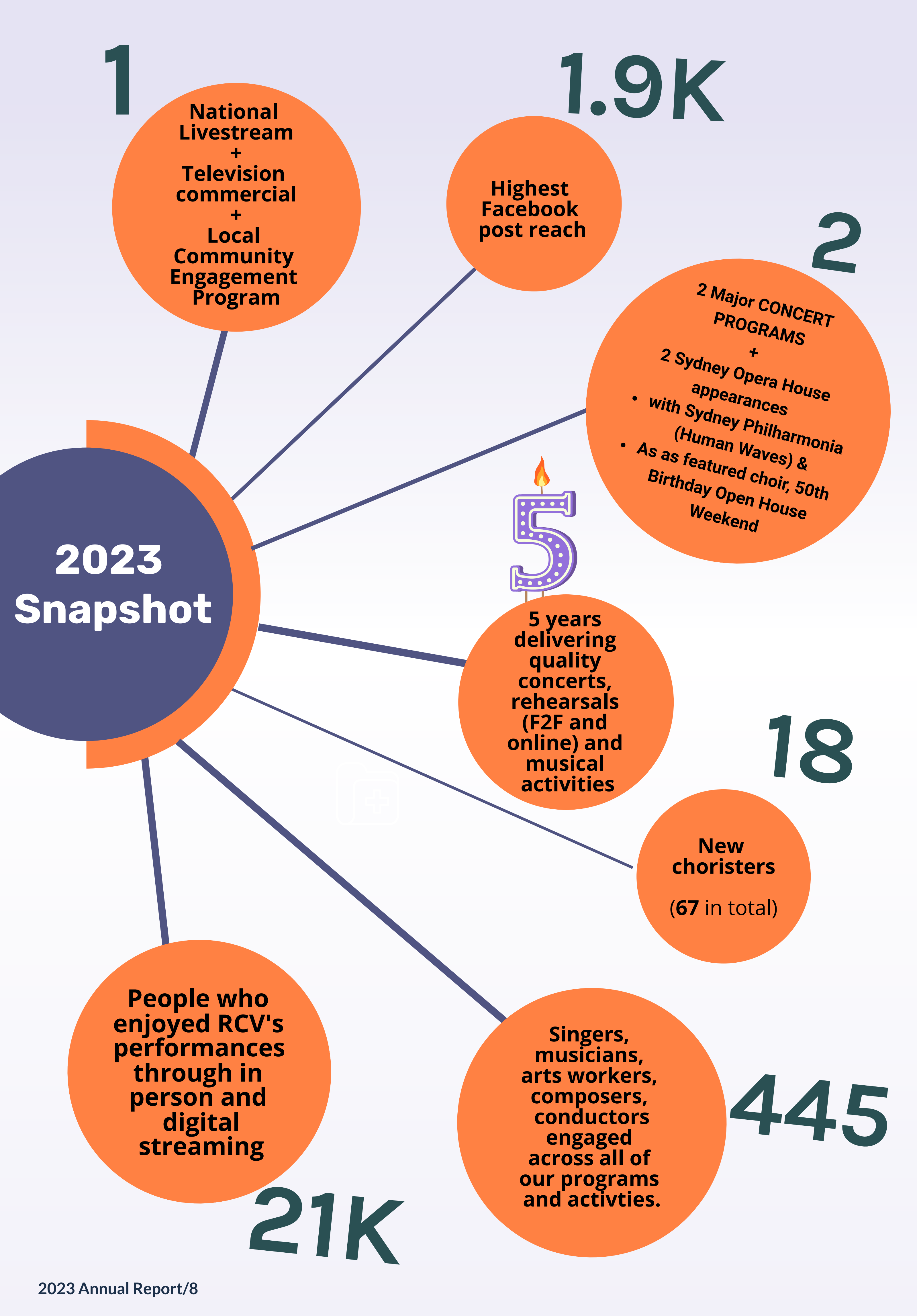
As RCV's profile continues to grow, we should be very confident in our ability to flourish and contribute something of great value to our members and community. While our vision and hard work has largely allowed us to secure funding, 2023 should also be a reminder that such support is not guaranteed to us. I am very grateful to the board, to our exceptional General Manager Inara Molinari, and our membership for making sure we could not just survive, but thrive in a year like this, and also to our broader community, many of whom sent opportunities our way. Our 2023 successes have allowed us to receive funding for 2024 at a time when many organisations are doing it very tough indeed. I know RCV is an organisation that will take this responsibility to keep making really special, high quality, and relevant art for our community seriously.

My thanks as always to all the musicians who have worked with us, choristers especially, and to our wonderful pianist Su Choung, who we were fortunate to have perform with us in two major concerts this year.



Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Blue Sky Country Christmas, St Patrick's Cathedral
8 December, 2023
Photo: Grant Leslie

Dr SARAH PENICKA-SMITH
Artistic Director & Principal Conductor



ARTISTIC PROGRAMS



Super Critical Mass Parramatta/ParraSocial
Parramatta Gaol, Parramatta
March/April 2023

Photo: Grant Leslie



Venue Partner
Deerubbin Aboriginal Land Council

Key Artist
Julian Day

Funding/Sponsorship
City of Parramatta Council - Creative Project
Leveraging Grant
Powerhouse Parramatta
Photo Credit: Grant Leslie



Brave: Super Critical Mass Parramatta

March/April | Parramatta Gaol

"A strong and beautiful voice for the unsung families of victims and the silenced voices of the incarcerated."

"Three of my brothers and the father of my son had all spent time in Parramatta Gaol... I loved being in that space and bringing beauty into it, it was truly joyful for me."

Workshop/Performance Participants

Super Critical Mass (SCM) is a ground-breaking immersive, site-specific, voice and sound performance project first created by Australian artists Julian Day and Luke Jaaniste. Past iterations have taken place in New York, London, Manchester, Edinburgh, The Hague, Prague and throughout Australia.

Participants of all ages and abilities, some with no previous singing or musical experience, come together as a unique vocal and sound collective. Because of its inclusivity and community participatory nature, SCM was originally floated as one of the events for RCV's **Parramatta Global Voices Festival**, unsuccessfully pitched for federal RISE funding at the end of 2021.

With notable audience hesitancy to engage with arts activities during 2022 ("post-COVID"), this project was revisited as a means to not only connect with the community and provide the community with a means to connect with each other, but also to tap into Parramatta's history and unique locations.

We were extremely grateful to receive funding from the City of Parramatta to run the project in September 2022. With key project artist, Julian Day, relocating to New York for advanced study, the project was rescheduled to March/April 2023.

Running alongside RCV's May Luscious performance - *Lux Aeterna* - we were thrilled that Powerhouse Parramatta supported the short-term engagement of young artist Gemma Navarrete, as a project coordinator, enabling and assisting RCV Production Manager, Inara Molinari, to successfully deliver the event. Powerhouse also provided considerable support with a large film/sound crew that created and edited a [short highlight reel of the event](#).

The project ran as a series of three public creative workshops, plus April 1 free public "performance", with many of the **133** participants/audience members citing they were seeing the inside of the gaol and its surrounds for the first time. Julian Day's interview with Simone Whetton on ABC Radio's What's On, saw a flurry of registrations and many participants and audience members stated in the post event survey, that they took the opportunity to explore more of a Parramatta!

Project Impact



Stimulated connection to community, through the development of works and/or activities that explore the identity of the Parramatta region.



Increased participation in arts and creative sectors.
Developed the skills of local creative talent



Fostered innovation and contributed to the growth of the arts and creative sectors.

LUSCIOUS: Lux Aeterna & Nocturnes

4 May 2023 | St Patrick's Cathedral

"..An emotionally overwhelming experience - such beauty, such power, tenderness and love...all channelled through the command of conductor Sarah Penicka-Smith."

Audience Member Feedback

Originally programmed for May 2020 as a "Come & Sing" project with registrations and rehearsals underway when the COVID pandemic hit, it was wonderful to revive this beautifully resonant program three years later.

The concert featured the much lauded *Lux Aeterna* of United States composer and "Choral Master" Morten Lauridsen, (serendipitously celebrating his 80th year), the first movement of Australian composer Alice Chance's *Fiat Lux* and *Rivers of Light*, with all works bringing "light" to life through superbly composed choral music.

Significantly, this was the first series concert in which River City Voices choristers took to the stage as a single bill. Demonstrating their versatility, capability and distinctive sound, this concert recognised Sarah's and choristers' determination and hard work throughout COVID to maintain and build on the choir's early achievements and promise.

River City Voices provided a sneak preview of Lauridsen's song *Sure on This Shining Night* from *Nocturnes* through its virtual choir recording released at the end of 2020 as a special Christmas offering. The "performance" has received 2,000 views via RCV's You Tube channel, but it was gratifying to perform it live finally for a captive audience.

Program Impact



Growth in choir's artistic integrity and reputation
Promotion of next generation Australian artists



Venue Partner
St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

Key Artists
Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Assistant Chorus Master Dr Philip Eames
Principal Pianist Su Choung
Organist Samuel Giddy
River City Voices

Funding/Sponsorship
Self-funded

Photo Credit: Grant Leslie

[Read the Program](#)





Blue Sky Country Christmas
Composers Nicole Smede and Dr Christopher Sainsbury
St Patrick's Cathedral
8 December, 2023



Elizabeth Sheppard and Tim Gray

Collaborator
Ngarra-burria First Peoples Composers Program

Key Artists
Conductor Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith
Principal Pianist Su Choung
Rehearsal Pianists Su Choung | Dr Philip Eames

Composers
Marlene Cummins
Kevin "Gavi" Duncan
Tim Gray
Dr Christopher Sainsbury
Elizabeth Sheppard
Nicole Smede

Funding/Sponsorship
Create NSW Annual Organisation Grant
Walker, Parramatta Square

Gavi Duncan



LOCAL: Blue Sky Country Christmas

6 December 2023 | St Patrick's Cathedral

"Last night was a first in a very controversial year in the history of Australia and I was happy to be part of the experience."

"This concert was so magical, more need to hear it, my family who rarely appreciate classical music really loved it, another friend was blown away with how easy she could listen to the concert, yet it was so complex and deeply moving for her."

Audience Member and Chorister Feedback

Partnership discussions between River City Voices and Ngarra-burria First Peoples Composers Program founder and director, Dr Chris Sainsbury, initially began back in 2021 when programming our thwarted Parramatta Global Voices Festival. Undeterred we knew that this was another program that could stand alone.

But who would have thought back then, that this program would have special significance and poignancy following the defeat of the Voice Referendum held on October 14, 2023. With many First Nations people, including our partner artists feeling profound grief, River City Voices felt so privileged to present an authentic, healing and uplifting Christmas concert that celebrated everything that is good about reconciliation, unity and common bonds.

Being the first time that the Ngarra-burria program had partnered with a choir, the program offered composers the opportunity to compose a new choral work (Smede's *Padla*), hear their song re-arranged for choir (Duncan's *Naiyee Nayawa*, Gray's *Namatjira Haven* and Cummins' *Marloo's Blues*, or choose a work/s that delivered their own personal message.

We encourage you to read the program to get a deeper understanding of the composers' background and stories.

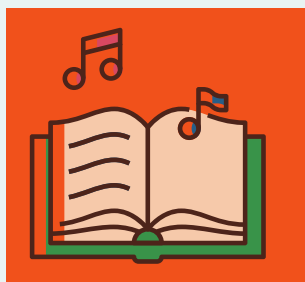


Read the Program

Program Impact



Promotion of First Nations stories, artists and communities



Development of new choral arrangements



Fostered innovation and authenticity, contributing to the growth of the arts and creative sectors.

EXTRA PROJECTS & GIGS



Open House Weekend

RCV choristers perform on rotation to thousands of visitors at the **Sydney Opera House** for its closing 50th Birthday celebratory event. 22/23 October, 2023

SUN & SEA
Sydney Town Hall,
Sydney Festival
6-8 January, 2023

A handful of River City Voices choristers were lucky to join a collective chorus of singers from Sydney Philharmonia choirs, Latvian youth choir Balsis, and Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir for this unique opera performance in the sand for the Sydney Festival program.

In this apocalypse story, written and created by Lithuanian artists Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė, Vaiva Grainytė, and Lina Lapelytė, the world doesn't end with a bang, but with a long, lazy afternoon whiled away at the beach!

Singers were required to "sunbake" and relax over a period of five hours, joining choruses at set cues, with audiences checking in at various time slots throughout the performance!



THE KEG IS DEAD
March, 2023 | CUB Advertisement

Similar to 2022, Artistic Director Sarah Penicka-Smith received an email out of the blue about a possible advertisement appearance. This time for another iconic advertisement for Carlton & United Brewery.

Choristers and staff were required for wardrobe fittings, a two day film shoot at the historic Bell's Hotel in Woolloomooloo, and a separate recording session in Trackdown Studios at the Entertainment Quarter. We were pleased to be joined by young tenor and actor Samwise Holmes for this gig.

The advertisement went live in April on various digitla media outlets and aired for 12 months.



HUMAN WAVES

9 September, 2023 | Concert Hall | Sydney Opera House

"...An audience of over 2,000 wait expectantly for conductor Brett Weymark to enter and introduce yet another exceptional performance by the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Parramatta's River City Voices."

Carol Wimmer, Stage Whispers, September 2023

Commissioned by Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Artistic Director Brett Weymark OAM for the choir's centenary in 2020, this performance marked its World Premiere in full concert format.

River City Voices was thrilled to be invited to join SPC's Festival Chorus for this performance, and in the particular the chance to feature in three of the work's movements.

Composed by **Elena Kats-Chernin** with libretto by **Tamara-Anna Cislowska**, the work traces waves of migration to Australia with personal stories recounted from Lebanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian and Russian migrants, alongside movements about the Australian landscape and even Vegemite!

Choristers also welcomed the opportunity to premiere James Henry's stirring *Murr gumurrugu* (Ibis).

Everyone at River City Voices was united in bringing this iconic work to western Sydney, a region replete with untapped migration stories. Watch this space!

The concert was broadcast by ABC Classic - Lunctime Concert - on Sunday 19 November, 2023



OTHER GIGS

River City Voices choristers also had the opportunity to perform at a number of other external events.

These include:

Sydney Eisteddfod 90th Anniversary Gala

Conducted by **Dr Nicholas Milton**, choristers joined singers from 15 other Sydney-wide choirs performing Elgar and Handel.

Sydney Town Hall
Saturday 1 July, 2023



From All Sides

In another first, River City Voices choristers provided some backing "vocals" for a scene in Western Sydney director and producer Bina Bhattacharya's feature film **From All Sides**.

With the film airing in the **2024 Cannes Film Festival**, we could argue that RCV will make its international debut next year!

[Read more in this article.](#)



Westfield Santa Parade

Welcoming in the festive season at local Parramatta Westfield, River City Voices choristers joined the Santa Parade and then entertained children and shoppers around and about the Centre with some classic choral favourites.

Singers were led by conductor **Natalie Gooneratne**.



OUTREACH & PATHWAY PROGRAMS



Facilitator Gabriel Newman
leading workshop participants
in beating rhythm!
PHIVE, Parramatta Square

LEARN TO READ MUSIC: ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

14 October 2023 | PHIVE, Parramatta Square



2023 marked the launch of our Learn to Read Music workshop program. The positive benefits of a literate society are well expounded. Music is the first language of humans, but fewer and fewer people are able to read music.

Like reading literacy, the ability to read and play music has similar beneficial developmental, social and well-being outcomes, including increased confidence to engage in a wealth of musical activities and simple appreciation.

River City Voices is fortunate to have choristers with a wealth of experience in other fields. No less than **Gabriel Newman**, tenor, music teacher, cellist, and our workshop program developer and facilitator. Targeted at people with no music reading ability whatsoever, Gabriel has devised various modules focusing on rhythm, musical notation, scales, and key signatures to ensure that participants can demystify the dots and squiggly bits on the page!

Gabriel's talent and enthusiasm in delivering the program can best be summed up by our first workshop participants:

*“I have a tendency to put pressure on myself to get things ‘right’
- this workshop, i.e. Gabriel, shattered like tinkling glass,
this lifetime habit. For the first time in my life,
I felt free with music.”*

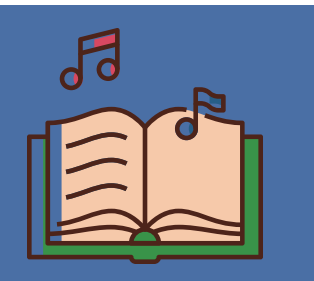
*“Gabriel demystified the subject, put me and others at ease
and clearly had an enthusiasm and love of music
that was infectious.
It was a wonderful experience.”*

This pilot workshop was delivered as a one-day workshop at PHIVE with 20 fee-paying participants with plans to deliver another workshop during the summer holidays in January 2024.

The immediate goal is to partner with City of Parramatta Library as part of its annual series of programs in order to deliver it free to the community, particularly for younger people and primary school students.



Program Impact



Increasing opportunities for affordable and inclusive musical education in the community



Promotion of next generation artists and audiences

Assistant Conductor Development Program

Thanks to Annual Organisation funding received from Create NSW, this program will resume in 2024 !

Expressions of Interest for the position closed on 15 December with seven applicants, our largest cohort yet.

Auditions with the choir will take place in February when rehearsals re-commence for the year.

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

"After 2022's hit-the-ground running post-COVID re-emergence year packed with activity, 2023 - our 5th birthday - was a year to reassess our 2019-2022 Strategic Development Goals with reinstated and new initiatives, and sights firmly set on securing operational funding for 2023/24 and beyond".

January is always a busy time for River City Voices with multiple grant applications to write, advertising and administering audition rounds before February rehearsals commence, and in 2023 we also ran our Learn to Read Music Workshop at PHIVE.

With a successfully delivered 2022 season and a 5 year Artistic Program plan devised, our application to **Create NSW for Annual Organisation** to support 12 months of operations from July '23 - June '24 was ambitious in its capacity building targets:

- Increase the operational/artistic team from 2 (GM/AD) - 4 (GM/AD/Marketing/Choir Coordinator)
- Develop/diversify new income streams and audiences
- Deliver fundraising strategies that raise a minimum of \$120K to cover 2024/5 staffing in addition to any funding received
- Increase the choir's artistic excellence/creative production, and
- Enable succession planning.

We are grateful to Riverside Theatres, Lord Mayor of City of Parramatta Council, Cllr Donna Davis, Sydney Youth Orchestra, Dr Christopher Sainsbury, and Brett Weymark of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs for their letters of support which we are sure lent gravitas to the success of our application.

During the year, we revised timings and venues for some of the planned 2024 programs, and in order to position the organisation to offer 45 week staff contracts in 2024, we sought a variation to the grant in November, resulting in our ability to allocate the **\$120K** received across 18 months to December 2024.

Another application submitted in March was an **EOI for multi-year funding** from Create NSW for annual support across 2025-2028, with successful applicants required to submit a more detailed application in June. This funding program was then delayed to align multi-year funding agreements with the NSW Government's new arts, culture and creative industries strategy. Advice in November stated that we would be eligible to apply for funding in early 2024, effectively a 12 month delay, with uncertainty hovering over future program planning, engagements and bookings.

To broaden the grant income stream, throughout 2023 we also applied for: **Rescue and Restart Stage 1** - \$2,500 to be applied towards additional administration hours for the AD (successful); **Endeavour Energy Community Grant** to support our Learn to Read Music Workshop Program; **Australia Council Project Grant** - \$35,000 for 2023's Blue Sky Country Christmas with Ngarra-burria First Peoples Program; a submission to **Australian Communities Foundation** to seek supporters for Cancel Choir in August 2024; **City of Parramatta Creative Projects Grant** - \$20K for 2024's All Aboard with Beethoven Kids' Proms November concerts at PHIVE which were not successful. We also submitted an approved acquittal report to City of Parramatta for Super Critical Mass in August.

In 2023, River City Voices was extremely grateful to receive \$7K from **Powerhouse Parramatta** to support Super Critical Mass Parramatta. Funds were allocated to engage a young, short-term, local arts worker as an event coordinator. In addition, Powerhouse provided an extensive film and sound crew that professionally recorded the event.

Having taken a break from online crowdfunding last year, we launched an online campaign to coincide with our first gala fundraising event - **Sing, Swingle & Schmooze**. Held in PHIVE's Discovery Space, the event aimed to: test the venue's acoustics for future programs and showcase the choir's versatility; leverage support from and appeal to local businesses and philanthropists; be a fun and memorable social event, and if successful, a must-attend on the Parramatta calendar; and to of course raise funds!

As a first venture of this kind in fundraising, most boxes were ticked. A growing sense in the community of a "cost of living crisis" led Board members to review the event plan. With funding received from Create NSW, it was decided to allocate a small amount of funds towards supporting expenses so that we could trail this kind of event. Ticket sales (\$85) were below target with 75% capacity achieved. In terms of ticket value, the entertainment by River City Voices and guest artist Monica Trapaga and band was excellent, catering delivered by local Indigenous company Kalico was delicious, drinks created and served by Bar Bae and In the Booth photo booth both added flair and fun to the night.

We were thrilled that **Walker, Parramatta Square** rallied to our call donating \$10K to support our December program - Blue Sky Country Christmas. Seen as a tangible and meaningful way to action Reconciliation objectives, their support also validates the quality of the programs we deliver, and our positive community impact.

Along with the concurrent Give Now online crowdfunding campaign, Walker donation and staggered donations throughout the year, RCV covered all event costs and raised \$14K.

It was an ambitious undertaking, and we acknowledge and extend huge thanks to all of our donors and choristers in particular, who once again so generously gave their time on the night decorating, singing and donating items for the popular silent auction. Having delivered this event and considered pros and cons, our aim is to continue mounting an annual social fundraising "event" trialling various options from 2024, to discern a format that provides best return on investment with manageable demand on human "capital".

The standout income stream for 2023 was performance fees (c. \$54K) related to a variety of commercial engagements. This included Christmas performances, the Sydney Opera House 50th birthday "Open House weekend" performance in October on the Concert Hall stage, extension fee for the 2022 Catch ad, and a new advertisement engagement for Carlton United Breweries. Finding a way to maintain some element of this kind of income is essential and a Board priority.

Connecting with local organisations is also key to development. We look forward to furthering our relationship with Powerhouse Parramatta and Walker Parramatta Square.

2024's artistic program has been devised to build on our current audience base through cementing the Luscious programs for our audiences through familiarity of time, venue and style of repertoire and engaged artists. Our planned children's show aims to tap into a different demographic reaching new hearts and minds, and Cancel Choir is our signature Brave program that distinguishes River City Voices from other choirs.

We hope to share these programs with you in the New Year with the benefit of professional design experts!

INARA MOLINARI
Director & General Manager



Sing, Swingle & Schmooze - Photos: Grant Leslie

River City Voices acknowledges and thanks the following organisations for funding and sponsorship support received in 2023



CREATE NSW
Annual Organisation Grant - \$120K

These funds support capacity building initiatives and operational and program costs across the 18 month period July 2023 - December '24, with \$40K allocated for the 6 months July-December in 2023.

**PARRAMATTA
SQUARE**



Program Sponsor- \$10K

Supporting First Nations composers through our program Blue Sky Country Christmas



Program Sponsor- \$7K

Supporting next generation arts workers and River City Voices" capacity and promotion through Super Critical Mass Parramatta (ParraSocial)

Thank you to the following individuals for supporting our Give Now online campaign and for generous donations throughout the year.

Creeks \$1000+

Jason Coates
Schon Condon
Andrew Lau
Casey Poon

Streams \$500+

Anon (1)
Fiona Yue

Brooks \$100+

Anon (4)
Donna Davis | Maureen Dolle |
Peter Dolle | Wendy Hopley
Ivars Karklins |
Daniel Placido | Ingrid Turner
William Soper
Diana Weston
Dominic Wong

Springs up to \$100

Anon (12)
Andrew Adams | Nicole Altmann
Diana Bayley | Linda Bugarin
Darcy Burke | Fiona Cox
Karl Fetterplace | Ann Hordern
Sam Huynh | Ros Lenehan
David Lowe | Elizabeth McLoughlin
Wilfred Roach | Nicole Senior
Elizabeth Starr | Yana Taylor
Daniella Verde



RCV Altos: Fiona Yue, Rachel Yang, Sally Glass, Liz Mulcare, Rufina Ismael and Belinda Huang

Backstage: SOH Open House Weekend.

DIRECTORS' SUMMARY

This summary, taken from the Financial Report prepared in 2024 by new Director Timothy Dashwood, includes both profiles of the Directors and comments on the prime features of River City Voices Ltd activities over the **12 months** to 31 December 2023.

DIRECTORS

The names of the board directors at any time during this period are:

CATHERINE DOLLE-SAMUEL

Chair

Catherine has diverse experience as a resilience and HRM professional as well as working as an academic in management and ethics. Coupled with experience working globally in a range of sectors, her significant exposure to and engagement with Board-level decisionmaking, enables her to consider strategy and operational issues. As a thought leader in the business continuity community, Catherine has engaged globally with sector colleagues to share knowledge and experiences.

She holds a Masters in Commerce (Organisation & Management), and an Honours degree majoring in Australian history and in the past five years, Catherine has volunteered her skills for the Business Continuity Institute, City of Parramatta's Historical Advisory Committee and local school Parents & Friends Associations.

Catherine was a founding member and key contributor of the choir VOX and is passionate about the artistic and cultural possibilities for the Western Sydney Region. Catherine is also a founding chorister.

ROBERT LOVE, AM

Director

Robert Love graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of NSW (majoring in drama). His first professional jobs were as trainee director for the Old Tote and Australian Theatre for Young People. In 1976 he founded Toe Truck Theatre, a theatre in education company, for which he acted, directed and managed for the next five years. Then followed short stints with the contemporary music Seymour Group and as a lecturer at James Cook University.

Senior management/leadership roles followed at the Seymour Centre, the New Nimrod Theatre, State Theatre Company of SA, Sydney Theatre Company and Fox Studios. Robert took up his position as Director of Riverside Theatres in late 2000 expanding its performance program to include festivals and annual seasons of theatre, dance and opera, a schools and family program, an arts and disability program, and music and cinema series. He facilitated Sydney, national and international performers and organisations in extending their programs to Parramatta. Over recent years he has advocated for the redevelopment and renewal of Riverside. He added the National Theatre of Parramatta as a local production house to the Riverside family in 2015. In August 2020 after 20 years at Riverside he stepped down as its Director to undertake projects through Love Stages continuing to promote the importance of performance in our community.

WILLIAM SOPER FCA (UK)

Treasurer

Bill's 40 year career as a chartered accountant in both the UK and Australia, has taken him from the accounting profession through to various consulting companies - both medium and large sized with between 30 and 1,500 employees.

His roles ranged from operational management through to Finance Director, and during his career his employers have included Price Waterhouse (now PWC), Dames & Moore, URS Australia (now Aecom) and ERM.

Although semi-retired, Bill continues to work in a voluntary capacity and included within these roles he has been Finance Director of Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA) Australia's peak body for seniors and technology. He is currently President of the Computer Pals for Seniors group in Turrumurra.

A keen cyclist, Bill managed a charity bike ride for a former colleague, and took up his greatest challenge yet, cycling from Melbourne to Sydney as part of the "Peleton Events Ultimate Challenge", raising significant funds for three different charities.

SCHONG CONDON RFD

Director

Managing Principal of the Condon Advisory Group, Schon has a career spanning over 40 years in Accounting focusing on Financial, Operational, Sustainability and Management advice to help businesses during times of growth, stabilisation and difficulty.

He is well recognised within the profession as a leading advisor and media spokesperson.

His professional role has seen him in numerous leadership and command roles including President of the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce, Chair of CPA Public Practice Committee, Chairman Hawkesbury Business Connection and President of the Royal Australian Artillery Association of NSW Inc. Schon holds a Bachelor of Business Degree from the University of Technology Sydney and a Graduate Diploma in Management from the University of Canberra. He is a fellow of the Chartered Accountants ANZ, Institute of Public Accountants, CPA Australia, and former member of the State and National Public Practice committees, Taxation Institute of Australia, Foundation Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and Member of the Association of Independent Insolvency Practitioners.

In addition, Schon is a Commissioned Officer in the Australian Army and has maintained an active Army Reserve career, including being a former Commanding Officer of 23rd Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

INARA MOLINARI

Founder, Director/Secretary

Inara has nearly thirty years' experience in the performing arts and community sectors as a professional singer, administrator and manager. Her connection with the arts scene in western Sydney began over twenty years ago, when she established "Opera West" in Wentworthville, a weekly course for aspiring opera and music theatre singers.

After returning from the USA in 2000, Inara founded "The Tall Poppeas", Sydney's only female baroque vocal ensemble that delivered innovative programs and staged productions for festivals and curated programs throughout Sydney and

interstate for ten years. Inara later co-founded Ondine Productions producing the Australian premiere performance of Francesca Caccini's "La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina" (1625), which was short-listed for an ArtsHub award, and the premiere early music version of Philip Glass's Akhnaten complete with infused perfume created in New York specially for the performance!

Inara has been a strong community advocate and volunteer in both the Cumberland and Parramatta LGA's, representing the community during the Council Administration period following mergers, and also as a member of Cumberland's Arts Advisory Committee.

Inara holds a Bachelor of Arts/Law from The University of Sydney, a Bachelor of Nursing from Australian Catholic University, and a Diploma in Opera from Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

PIROOZI DESAI-KEENE

Director

Retired from ther Board in February, prior to the first Board meeting for the year.

MEETINGS OF DIRECTORS

There were five (5) directors' meetings in 2023.

Director	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
Schon Condon	5	4
Catherine Dolle-Samuel	5	5
Piroozi Desai-Keane, OAM	0	0
Robert Love, AM	4	3
Inara Molinari	5	5
William Soper	3	2

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The principal activity of the company during the financial period was the rehearsal, production and performance of three major programs delivered in and engaging the western Sydney community as outlined in this report.

2023 saw a continuation of annual curated program activities with another unexpected commercial which contributed significantly to the organisation's financial earnings.

OPERATING RESULTS

The result from ordinary activities Activities for the year ending December 2023 resulted in a profit of **\$49,440** (FY 2022 profit of \$12,239, FY 2021 loss of \$16,178.

Operating revenue for the year ending 31 December 2022 was **\$186, 239** (FY 2022 \$92,939, FY 2021 \$34,039

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Nil significant changes.

In 2023 River City Voices adopted Xero as its accounting software which has streamlined record keeping and increased reporting efficiency. The Directors acknowledge and extend their heartfelt thanks to **Pamela Thornton** for providing her services *gratis* in customising the software and developing new budget templates with management.

LIKELY DEVELOPMENTS/ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

River City Voices received a Create NSW Annual Organisation grant to support activities for the period July 2023 - June 2024. A variation was submitted and approved to extend the grant period and allocation of funds across an 18 month period to the end of December 2024. This allows the organisation the ability to offer 12 month contracts to existing and potential new arts workers in 2024.

DIRECTORS' BENEFITS

No Director of the company has, since the end of the previous financial period, received or become entitled to receive a benefit by reason of a contract made by the company with the Director or with a firm of which they are a member, or with a company in which they have substantial financial interest, other than directors' remuneration disclosed in the financial notes.

MEMBERS' GUARANTEE

The company is incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and is a company limited by guarantee. If the company is wound up the constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the entity. At the end of 2023 the number of members was 3.

BASIS OF PREPARATION

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis.

No provision for income tax has been raised, as the company is exempt from income tax under Division 50 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

The directors have determined that the company is not a reporting entity because there are no users who are dependent on its general purpose financial reports. The company is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the mandatory Australian Accounting Standards applicable to entities reporting under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and the significant accounting policies disclosed below, which the directors have determined are appropriate to meet the needs of members. The company was registered with the ACNC on 31 July 2018.

STATEMENT OF PROFIT & LOSS

Period ending 31 December 2023

REVENUE	Dec 2023 \$	Dec 2022 \$
Grants	62,500	29,794
Sponsorship, fundraising and philanthropic	23,629	13,141
Ticket , registration and activity sales	27,844	20,450
Chorister Contributions	15,141	8,735
Performance Fees	53,970	15,800
Merchandise	574	1,335
Bank interest	2,576	430
Sundry	5	2,495
TOTAL REVENUE	186,239	92,938
EXPENDITURE	Dec 2023 \$	Dec 2022 \$
Artistic Contractor Fees	45,763	56,081
Administration contractor fees	22,830	0
Marketing (includes Marketing Director - 2023)	28,161	1,689
Production Costs (includes venue hire)	30,625	16,331
Administration	7,738	3,430
Equipment	344	59
Depreciation	1,287	1,287
Sundry	50	1,822
TOTAL EXPENSES	136,799	80,699
NET PROFIT/ (LOSS)	49,440	12, 239

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Period ending 31 December 2023

ASSETS	Dec 2023 \$	Dec 2022\$
Cash on Hand	201,881	87,654
Non-Current Assets - Equipment	8,857	10,145
TOTAL ASSETS	210,739	97,799
CURRENT LIABILITIES	2023 \$	Dec 2022 \$
Accounts payable and deferred revenue	97,700	34,200
TOTAL LIABILITIES	97,700	34,200
NET ASSETS	113,039	63,599
TOTAL EQUITY	113,039	63,599

HAPPY 5th Birthday RCV !

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