**CHAMBER CHOIR IRELAND: PERFORMANCE ARCHIVE**

**Introduction**  
The background to this proposal lies firstly in the fact that Chamber Choir Ireland as a public name is a mere seven years old (2013-20) following a rebranding of the National Chamber Choir of Ireland (1991-2013). Yet it can trace its origins back through the RTÉ Chamber Choir, with whom there was some dovetailing (1984-1996), the RTÉ Singers (1966-84), Raidió Éireann Singers (1953-66) and Cór Raidió Éireann (1942-53). As a result of such an extensive and changeable institutional identity, there is a danger that the history of what is a continuous tradition of professional choral music in Ireland will be lost over time without some archival steps being taken. A secondary, and second reason for this proposal is that very often in attending choral concerts in Ireland, a work may be listed as an ‘Irish première’, based purely on the memories of those who might be able to confirm whether this is true or not. This is clearly unsustainable beyond the bounds of living memory without someone researching the subject.

**Performance Archive**  
My proposal therefore is to provide a simple online database which will list the performances of this lineage of choirs over the 78 years from 1942 to 2020. In its most basic shape, it will form a table of information with columns denoting the following where the information is available:

1. Choir name: RTÉ Chamber Choir, Chamber Choir Ireland, etc.
2. Performance date: Day, date and time
3. Conductor Paul Hillier, Celso Antunes, Colin Mawby, Hans Waldemar Rosen, etc.
4. Repertoire Probably multiple, which will form a core database of choral works
5. Soloists Whether external or from within the choir
6. Singers Optional, as it may be difficult to construct, but very useful.
7. Source Link to source or uploaded manuscript or printed document.
8. Contributor Possibility to identify the contributor if wished, or to use a tagname.

**Online Database**  
Costs for the project will include the establishment of a domain name (say [www.choralarchive.ie](http://www.choralarchive.ie)), the annual hosting of the site, and the design of the database and interface. Ideally it would be populated initially by former choir members being asked to think of their five favourite performance memories, which should yield a wide range of performance records, even if from memory, after which the website would be put online, with contributors contributing to it over time. A more systematic approach could be added to this corpus, perhaps by a graduate student or former choir member taking an interest in contributing to the archive, whether on a voluntary or paid basis.

**Future Development**While this will hopefully provide Chamber Choir Ireland with an exceptionally clear view of its own history and development; of its former conductors, singers and repertoire, it would provide a model that could easily be scaled up for the whole country, perhaps through the offices of Sing Ireland. Many choirs have similar schema online, but, with the regular reinvention of websites, rarely do they venture back to the foundation of the choir. Two exceptions to this general rule are the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir,[[1]](#endnote-1) and for example the Woolhampton based choir of Newbury Choral Society[[2]](#endnote-2) in England, conducted by Cathal Garvey. A country-wide website would allow any registered choral enthusiast to record details of concerts or religious services ranging from quartets through chamber choirs to choral societies, as well as parish church and cathedral choirs, and in the process unifying the material to allow a great analysis of the range and frequency of choral performances in Ireland.

**Conclusion**In this time of pandemic with so many people limited to their homes, this proposal to provide a Chamber Choir performance archive, and hopefully ultimately a country-wide archive of choral performances in Ireland, potentially with online input from people around the country, would be a valuable contribution to Ireland’s choral landscape nurtured by Chamber Choir Ireland, and has the potential to glean a far more accurate and nuanced picture of the history of choral music in Ireland.

Friday 16 October 2020

1. https://sites.google.com/site/rtephilharchive/ [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.newburychoral.org.uk/php/NCSperformanceMain.php [↑](#endnote-ref-2)