

Welcome to Sangstream!

We are always delighted to have new members, and hope you enjoy singing with us. This sheet gives you some information about who we are and how we organise ourselves – please do feel free to ask any of us if there's anything else you'd like to know.

What is Sangstream?

Sangstream was started in 1997, as an offshoot of what was then the ALP Scots Music Group (now just Scots Music Group or SMG, see www.scotsmusic.org). Since 1999 the choir has been run independently, although we are still affiliated to SMG. There's a copy of the constitution in the welcome pack.

Sangstream aims to be a friendly and fun group open to anyone who has an interest in group singing. It offers the opportunity to develop singing and harmonising skills with the help of an expert tutor, and also aims to help people learn about and share Scots songs, and to take these songs into the wider community.

We employ a Musical Director to lead us – Mairi Campbell since October 2003. Prior to that for the 3 years to June 2003 it was Jenny Clark, and before that, from the beginning in fact, Christine Kydd. All very talented people!

Committee

Sangstream is loosely organised by a committee who are elected at the annual AGM. Currently there are 9 members: Shauna Dickson (chair), Maureen Morris (treasurer), Katty Proudfoot (membership), Nancy Davis, Carol Forsyth, Kate Frame, Sylvester Leyland, Lorna Leyland (archives) and Dave Leslie. There is currently a vacancy for vice chair. However, many other choir members also contribute to the running of the choir, and everyone's participation is encouraged. If you have anything you would like to contribute, or any suggestions, or if you'd be interested in joining the committee, please let us know.

Subscription and term dates

There is a termly charge (currently £40 full, £20 concession) for being a member of Sangstream, to cover tuition costs. It would keep our treasurer happy if you paid up as soon as possible. In fact we've decided to try out asking people to pay subs for the next term at the end of the preceding term, so that we've got an earlier indication of numbers.

Each term lasts for roughly 12 weeks, and ten of those weeks will be led by our musical director. On the other two weeks we enjoy leading ourselves. If you have a song you would like to teach the group on either of those weeks, please let us know. In July and August for the past few years we have organised 'drop in' sessions, led by a range of traditional singers. You can pay for these as you go.

Venue and times

Almost all of our sessions take place in Boroughmuir High School. When the school is unavailable (e.g. in school holidays), we look for another nearby venue. We try to start promptly at 7 and to finish at 9. A short break round about 8 is a chance to buy a drink from the SMG stall.

Material

The bulk of our material is from the Scots tradition, although the arrangements are very contemporary. From time to time (and to cheer ourselves up) we do sing songs from other places and other times. As a rough rule of thumb, over a year (36 weeks) we work on about ten new pieces, but also maintain a number of existing pieces from our repertoire. We have a Music Organising Group (MOG) which works with the Musical Director to help select the songs we sing. If you have an idea for a song, or have any views on the material we sing, please speak to one of the group: Carol Forsyth, Elspeth Mackay and Maureen Morris.

Learning the pieces

We strive to learn our songs by ear – you are not expected to be able to read music. If you haven't learnt songs this way before, you may be surprised at how easy it becomes. Word sheets are provided, but we encourage people to try and 'get off the sheet' and learn the words. Again, this is easier than many people imagine. After we have all become familiar with the tune or melody of the piece, harmonies are introduced. It's up to you to decide whether you'd like to sing a low or a high harmony, or whether you'd like to stick with the melody for each song. We keep things flexible, and don't have formal soprano, alto, tenor, and bass parts. A number of free CDs are available of the songs we sing and the parts. We try to re-issue them every so often - very useful for helping you become familiar with the songs and the parts. Great for long car journeys too.... The latest ones should be in the welcome pack (or will follow soon, we hope!).

Performing

One of our aims is to take traditional song out into the community, and every term we look for opportunities to perform in public. Over the past few years we have performed in venues such as the Museum of Scotland, St Giles, the French Institute, at the Killin, Arran and Coldstream folk festivals, in Princes St Gardens as part of Adult Learners' Week, as part of the Storytelling Festival, in George St at Christmas as well as at ALP SMG events. We've put on our own concerts as well. These events often provide the focus for the term, but although we aim for a good standard, we try not to let performing become too serious. Nobody has to perform if they don't want to, though people who do are often surprised by the 'buzz' that comes from performing.

Waiting List

At the 2001 AGM Sangstream decided to limit the number of members to 'about 50'. This was to try and keep the choir relatively small and friendly, and to make it easier to maintain the repertoire of songs. We now keep a waiting list; when people leave, members on the waiting list are contacted. We do, however, act with discretion if ex-members wish to return, as they already know the songs. If you have friends who wish to join, please do invite them to come along to try us out one evening, but please let them know that they will have to contact one of the committee and ask to be put on the waiting list if they wish to join.

NB: currently (September 2007), we're very close to our maximum.

Socialising

We aim to be a fun and friendly group, and the social element is pretty active. Every Thursday after the session a group of people head off to the pub – please do come along and let us get to know you! There are often informal social events after performances and at the end of every term. At least once a year, in February or so, we organise a weekend away together, using the rent-a-hostel scheme.

Website

We have a website – www.sangstream.org.uk, admittedly due for a revamp, but which provides the words to some of the songs, gives details of past and future gigs and also includes some embarrassing photographs... It also gives details of how to join the Sangstream e-group (sangstream@yahoogroups.com); if you have access to email, this is another route for discussing issues, disseminating information and chatting to each other.

We hope this will answer any questions you may have. If there's anything else you'd like to know, please do ask (then we can update this sheet).

Happy singing!

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