



The Friends of St Mary's Choir
Registered Charity No 1064035

The Snowman, Thursday 22 December 2023

The Friends of St Mary's Choir applied for a Town Council grant to help cover the costs of putting on three screenings of perennial Christmas favourite The Snowman, with a live orchestra, in the church just before last Christmas.

The Friends is a charity with completely separate finances from the Church, existing to support the girls', boys' and men's choirs by purchasing music, robes and equipment and subsidising activities for the singers. Our aim is to ensure that all members of the choirs - regardless of their background or family situation – are able to be fully involved in the musical and extra-musical life of the Choir. In recent years the Friends have provided significant financial support for a number of choral activities including day trips to sing in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace, Chester Cathedral, and St Paul's Cathedral; and week-long residencies at Lincoln, Bristol and Canterbury Cathedrals. This year the choirs will be travelling Normandy for their first foreign tour since Covid.

In December 2019 the Friends staged two live performances of The Snowman, both to capacity audiences, and more tickets could have been sold. We were keen to repeat this in 2022, adding another performance in the hope of similar demand.

Music was to be performed by a live orchestra, conducted by St Mary's Director of Music, Oliver Hancock. The orchestra for this event was to comprise both professional and talented young amateur musicians from the local area, offering the next generation of musicians a rare opportunity to perform with seasoned professionals and demonstrating the musical talent of our town. The famous song 'Walking in the air' was to be performed by one of the St Mary's choristers.

Putting on The Snowman involves considerable costs. The bill for screening and music licenses was £3000, and although other costs were kept to a minimum – including most of the musicians being paid only a very small fee for their considerable time commitment – the total expenditure predicted was nearly £5000.

Despite the costs, we were extremely keen to keep the ticket prices as low as possible, particularly given the cost of living crisis. We had seen that other Midlands venues screening The Snowman were charging in excess of £70 for a family ticket, and we felt that providing a far more affordable event for families at Christmas was important.

We therefore applied for a grant to help mitigate the financial risk associated with putting on such an event and thereby help keep the admission cost to a level that was affordable within a family budget for the people of Warwick.

We were delighted to sell out all three performances before the day, and not just to families with young children – many adults attended without children, highlighting the universal appeal of The Snowman, and its status as a Christmas classic.

In total, over 900 people attended across the three screenings, and it was wonderful to see the church full of happy people enjoying the music and film. There was even spontaneous baby dancing during the Dance of the Snowmen!

We hope to hold more community events in St Mary's in future, and are really grateful to Warwick Town Council for their continuing support.