



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022 SEASON

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The Queen's University Symphony Orchestra (QUSO) is one of only two fully student-run orchestras in the UK and Ireland. Currently, QUSO is an independent organisation, aiming to enrich the musical life of Belfast and the university area by inspiring and involving members from all walks of life in a high-quality musical ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

Well, what a year it's been! This year, the Queen's University Symphony Orchestra made its return following nearly a year and a half of nothing... We managed to run rather successful split rehearsals in the first half of the year, with wind and brass together and strings together, culminating for a sell-out Christmas concert in the Whitla Hall at the start of December 2021. Following a Christmas break full of planning on the Committee's part, rehearsals started back in January, after wind and brass auditions, with the full orchestra back together in the QUB Harty Room. Rehearsing with reduced numbers, the orchestra prepared for a tour to Dublin in February, performing as part of the IAYO's 26th Festival of Youth orchestras in the National Concert Hall. Following this, we were delighted to welcome back all those players who were unable to attend the Dublin Tour to rehearsals, as we began preparations for the Spring Concert around Easter. In April we were delighted to present the orchestra in the beautiful Elmwood Hall at Queen's. Following this, QUSO were delighted to be part of Darragh Tibbs' production of 'Plane Ticket', a brand-new Radio Play. We look forward to our three-day Development Week course before our Summer Tour to Galway in June. Overall, QUSO has had a very successful and enjoyable year.

MEMBERSHIP

QUSO had a rare problem this year with too many applicants! We had to limit participants in wind and brass in the first semester to 20 players per rehearsal, to meet social distancing requirements. String players were also limited for several weeks; however, this was removed around Halloween.

Wind and brass auditions were held at the start of January, in the form of a shared rehearsal – Colm Mohan conducted the applicants in a rehearsal of Stravinsky's Firebird, while 4 other Committee members acted as a panel. 25 players attended and the panel selected 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 4 clarinets, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, 1 flugel horn and 1 tuba.

Numbers for the Dublin tour were also limited, with a maximum of 50 participants. Several players pulled out after a couple of weeks, reducing final numbers to 45. A limited number of members signed up to Galway tour due to work commitments.

Membership fees for this year were £5.00 per member. Participation in this season's events was as follows:

- **Total applicants** (start of year): 120
- **Total paying members** (as of end of year): 70
- **Total participants** (Christmas Concert): 64
- **Total participants** (February Tour – Dublin): 45
- **Total participants** (Spring concert): 56
- **Total participants** (Radio Play): 24
- **Registered participants** (Summer Course & Tour – Galway): 38

COMMITTEE DETAILS

This year's committee was selected in Summer 2021 and was structured as below. Matthew Toal and Rhiannon Mulligan were accepted onto the Committee in their roles in October 2021. Rhiannon Mulligan resigned from the Committee in the second semester as Librarian & Social Engagements Officer.

Chairperson: Adam McCambridge

Secretary: Tara Mulvey

Treasurer: James Magrath

Tour Manager: Matthew Toal

Librarian & Music Liaison: Katie Lyons

Conductor: Colm Mohan

Conductor: Maebh Martin

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT GOALS

At the beginning of this season, the Committee decided to try and make some changes to QUSO. The aims were to formalise the Orchestra, create a more defined structure to the running and background of QUSO and raise the profile of the Orchestra. The following is a summary of the actions which have been taken throughout this season to put into effect the envisioned changes:

- QUSO have formalised the Committee, moving meetings to a more formal and structured format. Detailed minutes are taken and circulated by the secretary, following all meetings.
- QUSO have rebranded, with a new logo, typeface, and colour scheme.
- QUSO have increased their online presence, creating a website (www.quso.weebly.com), increasing outreach on Facebook, creating a Gmail and YouTube account, and have created an Instagram account to be used by orchestra members during rehearsals to give an 'insight into orchestra life' (resembling NYOGB's ideas).
- QUSO formalised membership, creating the 'Terms of Membership' document, which is essentially an 'Organisation Constitution'. This sets out the roles of Committee members, the expectations of orchestra members, the running of the orchestra and everything else in-between.
 - This will be altered to create two documents – QUSO's Constitution (outlining how the organisation runs) and the QUSO Membership Terms (expectations of members).
- QUSO have created a Privacy Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Covid-19 Policy.
 - These are currently being re-structured into a Privacy Policy and Wellbeing Policy, which will outline the role of the Wellbeing Team, established this year.
- The Committee have made an effort to get more members involved in social activities, including pre-rehearsal pizza and other activities on tour.
- QUSO have created a Revolut account in the Treasurer's name, allowing for easy payments in other currencies for tours.
- QUSO have created new Committee Roles for the next season, alongside writing role descriptions for all positions, with an application process which can be carried forward into future seasons.
- The Committee has tried to bridge the gap between them and the Orchestra, to create more of a community, while engaging QUB to further QUSO's development.

EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS

QUSO has had a busy year, with various concerts and engagements, as listed below. Brief reports follow on each event, where appropriate. Thanks to the Committee for their writings the events.

- **REHEARSALS**

Rehearsals ran on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 – 9:00pm. Before Christmas the orchestra was split into two ensembles. The strings were rehearsed by Colm Mohan in the Catholic Chaplaincy, moving to the Harty Room around Halloween, while Maebh Martin rehearsed the wind and brass in the Harty Room until Halloween, after which they moved to the Catholic Chaplaincy. After the wind auditions in January, full orchestra rehearsals resumed with appropriate mitigating COVID measures. Social Distancing measures in rehearsals were removed around March.

Punctuality and absences were issues throughout the year; however, the players were committed and hard-working during rehearsals. Colm commented: “During my rehearsal time I noted dramatic development in confidence, tone quality and section cohesion. Outside of rehearsals certain wind players and soloists clearly practiced and improved for solo passages. Wind principals were especially receptive and consistently produced high quality throughout the year.”

- **CHRISTMAS WITH QUSO (Whitla Hall, 1st December 2021)**

QUSO were delighted to be back to performing after such a long time, and what better venue than the Whitla Hall? Featuring music from Grieg, Warlock, and Zimmer, as well as Wham! and many Christmas favourites, this was concert not to be missed! Due to Covid restrictions, the orchestra had been unable to rehearse together until the day of the concert, so our wind/brass and strings have rehearsed separately, preparing their own pieces under the batons of Colm Mohan (strings) and Maebh Martin (wind and brass). The full orchestra also came together for audience carols.

Recording: [click here](#) (QUSO’s YouTube channel)

Poster: [click here](#) (QUSO’s website)

Programme: [click here](#) (QUSO’s website)

- **QUSO FEBRUARY TOUR 2022 (Dublin, 19th – 20th February 2022)**

We were honoured to perform once again in the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras’ (IAYO) Festival of Youth Orchestras in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, in February 2022. This concert marked the first time we have been able to perform as a full orchestra since February 2020 and it was certainly worth the wait. Under conductor, Colm Mohan, QUSO closed the concert with a superb performance of the Berceuse and Finale from The Firebird Suite by Stravinsky. Other pieces included an exquisite solo performance of Tara’s Theme by our leader, Tara Mulvey, alongside two other pieces. We were thrilled to receive a standing ovation for the performance from the National Concert Hall audience and a huge amount of gratitude is owed to the IAYO for their incredibly thorough organisation of the festival. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. More information in the ‘Repertoire’ section.

Recording: [click here](#) (IAYO’s YouTube channel)

- **QUSO 2022 SPRING CONCERT (Elmwood Hall, 12th April 2022)**

After a few years, we were excited to return to the beautiful Elmwood Hall for our 2022 Spring Concert. With a wonderful mix of music, we sold almost 300 tickets for an excellent evening of film music, Sibelius, Stravinsky and even some Riverdance! Both conductors returned to the rostrum, with the first half conducted by Maebh and the second half by Colm. Between these, we had a raffle, with some superb prizes kindly donated by local businesses. The concert was very well received by the audience and, once again, feedback has been very positive from audience and players alike.

Poster: [click here](#) (QUSO's website)

Programme: [click here](#) (QUSO's website)

- **'PLANE TICKET' RADIO PLAY (SARC, 13th – 14th April 2022)**

QUSO were delighted to be asked to participate in this new project, organised and produced by Darragh Tibbs. It involved an afternoon of rehearsals on the student-composed score, conducted by Colm Mohan, for the student-written play, followed by a day of rehearsal and recording with the voice actors. From QUSO, 7 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, 1 double bass, 2 oboes, 3 flutes, 2 clarinets, 1 horn, 1 flugel horn, 1 tuba and 1 percussionist played. This was a very special project to be part of – the final product was absolutely wonderful and would very easily draw a tear to the eye. A huge congratulations to all involved, including the writer, composers, voice actors and production team, especially Darragh. We look forward to seeing it reach many audiences (plans are to show it in QFT and various arts festivals, in Belfast and further afield).

- **DEVELOPMENT WEEK COURSE (Harty Room, 24th – 26th May 2022)**

Having received £400 from QUB to run a short course for their Development Week, QUSO will run a 3-day course in preparation for our summer tour to Galway, working on brand-new repertoire, assisted by tutors. We look forward to running this project.

- **QUSO SUMMER TOUR 2022 (Galway, 6th – 9th June 2022)**

Planning is still underway for QUSO's Summer Tour to Galway in June. Currently, a concert has been planned for June 8th in Galway Cathedral, with enquiries for a chamber concert on another day still ongoing. A concert in Belfast has also been proposed, to make the most of the new repertoire (anticipated in the days before departure for tour).

REPERTOIRE

QUSO has had a lot of varied music this season, with still more to come yet. The following is a summary of each concert, with the corresponding conductor indicated.

- **CHRISTMAS WITH QUSO**

Colm Mohan

Grieg – Two Nordic Melodies (S)
 Warlock – Capriol Suite (S)
 Zimmer - Pirates of the Caribbean Medley (S)
 Zimmer - Inception main theme (S)
 Audience Carols (Tutti)
 Jazzy Christmas songs arranged by Jonny
 Hayward and Colm Mohan (S)

Maebh Martin

M Martin – Tannenbaum Fanfare
 Wham – Last Christmas (W&B)
 Arr. Nestico – A Fireside Christmas (W&B)
 Arr. Hosay – A Celtic Christmas (W&B)

(S) = Strings

(W&B) = Wind & Brass

- **IAYO FESTIVAL OF YOUTH ORCHESTRAS**

Colm Mohan

Mascagni – Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana
 Steiner (arr. O’Brien) – Tara’s Theme from Gone with the Wind
 Wagner – Pilgrim’s Chorus from Tannhauser (for cello & bass chorus)
 Stravinsky (arr. Issac) – Berceuse and Finale from the Firebird

- **SPRING CONCERT**

Colm Mohan

Maebh Martin

Williams – Empire Strikes Back Medley	Sibelius – Finlandia
Shore – Lord of the Rings Symphonic Suite	Grieg – Peer Gynt Suite No. 1
Steiner (O’Brien) – Tara’s Theme	Wheelan (McMullan/Martin) - Riverdance
Stravinsky (Issac) – Danse Infernale, Berceuse and Finale from the Firebird	

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

There were 9 official meetings held by the QUSO Committee during the 2021/22 Season, with the first meeting held on 10/11/2021. Secretary, Tara Mulvey, took minutes at all meetings except 10/11/21. Below is a summary of each and the key points from them:

Meeting 1 (10/11/2021)

Apologies: Tara Mulvey Absent: Rhiannon Mulligan	Committee roles assigned, planning and logistics for Christmas concert.
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Meeting 2 (28/11/2021)

Absent: Rhiannon Mulligan	Finalise Christmas concert, Dublin tour initial planning, W&B audition planning.
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Meeting 3 (12/12/2021)

Absent: Rhiannon Mulligan	Dublin tour further planning
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Meeting 4 (21/01/2022)

Absent: Rhiannon Mulligan	Costings of Dublin tour and further concreting plans, QUSO merchandise.
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Meeting 5 (30/01/2022)

Apologies: Maebh Martin Resignation: Rhiannon Mulligan	Terms of Membership, Dublin tour, committee re-election, conductor auditions, online presence extension.
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Meeting 6 (10/02/2022)

All present	Finalising plans of Dublin tour prior to departure in coming weeks.
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Meeting 7 (22/02/2022)

All present	Digital QUSO resource training, plan to digitise music library, rep planning for Spring Concert, conductor audition details, further concerts, development week funding, looking towards planning next year.
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Meeting 8 (24/03/2022)

Apologies: Maebh Martin	Spring concert planning, summer tour planning, AGM planning, policy amendments
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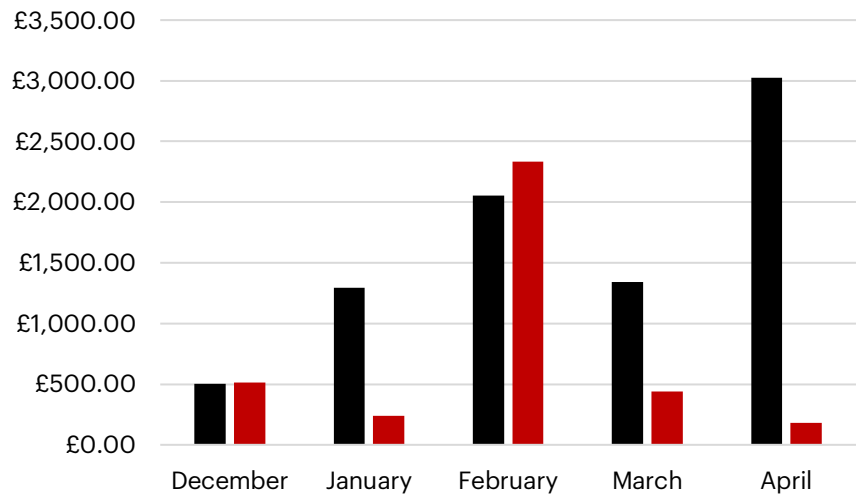
Meeting 9 (08/04/2022)

All present	Summer tour, Radio Play, finalise Spring Concert details (inc. programme), Committee roles decided for 2022/23 season, GM applications, development week
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ANNUAL ACCOUNTS REPORT

A summary of QUSO's income and expenditure is provided below. All QUSO funds are held in a Revolut account in the name of current Treasurer, James Magrath.

Figure 1 (right) shows, graphically, the income vs expenditure for QUSO from the period of December 2021 – April 2022 (as at 24/04/2022)



A more detailed breakdown for the year is provided in the tables below:

Income	Sum of Value
Dublin	£ 2,354.63
Galway tour	£ 1,600.00
Spring concert	£ 1,182.37
Christmas concert	£ 1,028.39
Grant	£ 780.00
Hoodies	£ 485.00
Raffles	£ 263.56
Membership	£ 255.50
Donation	£ 191.93
Advertising	£ 125.00
Grand Total	£ 8,266.38

Expenses	Sum of Value
Dublin (breakdown available on request)	£ 2,962.28
Hoodies	£ 441.77
Entertainment	£ 152.20
QUSO Merch	£ 105.71
Music	£ 58.54
Printing	£ 22.55
Sundry	£ 14.98
Grand Total	£ 3,758.03

Opening balance: £210.00
Current balance: £4718.35

Projected income/expenses for the coming months:

Income	Sum of Value
Rest of tour payments	£ 1920.00
Grants	£ 608.61
Grand Total	£ 2528.61

Estimated Cost PP: £141.72
Subsidised to £110 PP (Based off 32 participants)

Projected Closing Balance: £ 2187.71

Projected Expense	Sum of Value
Galway - Hostel	£ 1700.00
Galway - Bus	£ 1615.00
Development week tutors	£ 450.00
Galway - Van hire	£ 425.00
Galway - Venue	£ 425.00
Galway - Cliffs of Moher	£ 200.00
Galway - Food	£ 200.00
Sundry	£ 44.25
Grand Total	£ 5059.25

AIMS AND GOALS FOR NEXT SEASON

QUSO is always striving to improve and to establish a structure of operation which can be carried on for years to come. The following are a summary of next year's initial aims and goals which the current Committee would propose to achieve:

- QUSO aims to improve relations between QUB and QUSO, moving towards QUSO becoming a departmental ensemble under the Music Department. This would ideally involve receipt of funding to bring in professional section tutors for three rehearsals per semester, to work on the repertoire with players and further improve.
- With the newly established Committee Roles (10 people in total), it is hoped that Committee members will be able to work to plan and run the orchestra without needing full Committee meetings, and that the orchestra will be able to run more smoothly on a weekly basis.
- We would like to develop our fundraising efforts to outside the standard (i.e., not relying on concert audiences as our only income). With a fundraising co-ordinator on the Committee, this will allow us to have more opportunities for income (e.g., grants, bag-packs, paid gigs, etc.).
- We aim to establish QUSOq, a string quartet available for hire, made up of members of the orchestra, from which profits will be split between the players and orchestra.
- A potential 'Official Partner' of a local business would be an ideal progression and guarantee income. Kingsbridge Private Hospital has been suggested.
- QUSO aims to digitise the entire music library in our possession, allowing for easy access and less time-wasting. A new filing system is also on the cards.
- A proposal for National Lottery Community Fund support has been made, requesting £16,000 of funding to allow the purchase of various instruments, enabling wider participation for those who cannot buy their own, to widen our outreach and refresh our equipment.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

"This was set out to be a particularly challenging year. The fact that the pandemic had prevented rehearsals and events from happening for over a year and a half, there were a huge number of (constantly changing) restrictions and the fact that we started the year with no form of handover from previous committees would have made this, on paper, an impossible task.

Despite this, not only did QUSO get back to running, but by the end of June 2022, we will have performed 6 concerts, played for a radio play, gone on two tours and completed a total re-brand and re-structure of the orchestra. None of this would have happened if it wasn't for the relentless drive and dedication that all members of the orchestra have given, particularly though, the Committee – this is a year to be proud of and it has been an absolute honour and pleasure to work with everyone. Thank you all for your commitment, passion, and pride in the orchestra. You are all wonderful people and have done a very good thing.

To those members of QUSO and the Committee not returning next year, thank you for being part of QUSO – you are always welcome back and we wish you all the very best for wherever you go next in life. I hope your experience has been an enjoyable one and that it stays with you for years to come. Don't be a stranger and come and visit us whenever you like!

For those members returning, next year promises to be wonderful and I look forward to working with an excellent committee again next year to keep QUSO going in the right direction. See you all soon and thank you again.

- *Adam McCambridge (Chairperson 2021/22 Season)*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thanks to all the Committee members for their contributions to this report. Full reports from each member are available as appendices to this document. These can be found on the QUSO website, www.quso.weebly.com.

Next season's Committee members shall be announced at the Annual General Meeting for the 2021/22 Season on Tuesday 26th April 2022, at 7:00pm in the McMordie Hall, QUB Music Department.

SPECIAL NOTES OF THANKS

QUSO has always worked thanks to the good will of people around us and this year is no exception. We would like to extend special thanks to the following people, groups, and organisations:

- **Amanda Kirkpatrick**, Music and Events Co-ordinator at Queen's University, Belfast.
- **Fr Dominic McGrattan, Shannon Campbell and all the QUB Catholic Chaplaincy Team.**
- **Bertie Buckley and all the team at the Irish Association of Youth Orchestras.**
- **Our new QUSO Photographer, Aaron Aicken.**
- **All our sponsors, prize donors, advertisers and everyone who has supported QUSO this year, financially or otherwise.**
- **All of our audiences.**
- **All of our Guest Players this year.**
- **Our players and Committee.**

Note: Appendices are available with individual Committee Members' reports for the year – these can be found on our website, www.quso.weebly.com