



**Bedfordshire
Festival of Music,
Speech & Drama 2018**

Notes and Lines

The Chairman's
Annual Report

Notes and Lines 2018

It is a considerable pleasure to report upon the 2018 Bedfordshire Festival of Music Speech and Drama.

Over eight days in March the halls at the Corn Exchange complex came alive through some truly wonderful performances. The weather on the opening Saturday conspired to reduce some classes however, the Beast from the East could not deny our performers a stage!

Again this year we utilised the facilities at King's House which have proven to be a particularly suitable venue for our Special Schools event. Kings House has excellent facilities for those young performers with mobility, access and safety issues. We are grateful for the specific sponsorship which enabled this venue to be used again this year; we hope to continue to use this space again in 2019. Additionally this year, for the first time, we used facilities at the Bedford Girls' School for the purposes of speech and drama performances, this additional space enabled us to spread the timetable and contain the class sizes for these performances which in previous years had become too large for comfort.

Over the Festival we welcomed 3250 visitors as paying spectators and approximately 3000 as performers on stage. We were again particularly encouraged by the number of choirs entering the Festival. The Community Choirs were a sight to behold with the Corn Exchange completely full. This is clearly a growing trend and one we wish to do all we can to encourage. The number of performers and audience members stretched our logistical and staffing abilities to the extreme, however, we maintained the timing of the schedule which was due in no small part to our dedicated team of Stewards.

In 2018 once again the committee faced complying with a plethora of newly introduced child performance regulations involving considerable additional data collation. This we had anticipated and compared with 2017, compliance was achieved through a more rigorous data collection procedure.

Over the years the Festival has changed in content and style with a far greater emphasis on speech and drama, the music entries have continued to decline, particularly at senior level. An issue we are attempting to address through a number of initiatives. In 2018 this trend continued due in part to the decline in schools offering music as part of the core curriculum and an increasing cost to parents for instrument tuition.

Each year I am greatly indebted to our dedicated and hard working Committee of volunteers without whom the Festival could not function. Their work runs throughout the year with only August providing some respite. At this point I must specifically thank our newly appointed Festival Secretary Alix Smith. This was Alix's first full festival week and all credit goes to her for both the attention to detail and good humour at all times. We look forward to Alix remaining in this role into the future.

This year our funding support has remained consistent from Friends, both corporate and personal, for which we are most grateful. Many supporters provide funds annually, however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the assistance we have previously enjoyed from some organisations has become more selective. The trend is clearly towards bodies funding 'projects' rather than general expenditure. We have worked hard to contain costs whilst at the same time wishing to maintain our reputation for the quality of our facilities and visitor experience.

Whilst our finances remain on a sound footing we will be reviewing our budget for the 2019 Festival making sensible changes where this is possible. Over the longer term the Committee is seeking to make the Festival less reliant on our donors. However, we remain committed to the lowest possible door entry price in order that the widest possible cross-section of the community we serve can access our event.

In closing I pay tribute and give thanks to all involved with the Festival; our Stewards, dedicated teachers and performers, adjudicators and all supporters who work so hard to inspire performances of such high quality.

In anticipation of 2019 and with best wishes to you all.

Jonathan Keep
Chairman



Festival Secretary's Report 2018

The 2018 Festival saw another extremely successful and enjoyable week of performances. My first year as Festival Secretary has been thoroughly rewarding and it was a pleasure to see everything coming together in March.

This year, for the first time 100% of all entries were made online via the website which helped enormously with getting dates, times and information out to performers efficiently. Next year we will remove the option for paper entries which should run very smoothly as they weren't required at all this year.

The entries overall have increased this year by around 50 from last year's total with the Speech and Drama entries continuing to rise. A number of new schools and groups took part who are keen to return next year.

The music entries have remained much the same as in previous years. This has been a challenge due to continuing changes in instrumental teaching provision across the country. We are hoping to increase numbers next year by engaging more with teachers, parents and students. We are also now a partner of the Bedford Music Hub who supported our Celebration Day this year. Other members of the Hub include the Bedford Music Cooperative, Bedfordshire Music Trust and the Bedfordshire Choral Society amongst others so this will put us in close contact with music teachers and groups in the borough.

Choir day on Saturday went ahead despite the snow with our adjudicator for the day, Stephen Roberts travelling to us overnight from Oswestry! There were a few school choirs unable to get to us, but all classes still went ahead. Thankfully all 8



community choirs for the evening session on Saturday were able to perform, a couple of them new to the Festival and keen to come back next year.

We were extremely privileged on the Thursday of the Festival to be joined by Hannah Keep and Jermaine Blake who created a wonderful video for us including footage of Celebration Day, String classes and Speech & Drama. They worked tirelessly to get the video ready for our Gala Concert on the final Saturday of the concert and we were able to play it during the interval.

I have been trying to increase the Festival's presence on social media over the past year. The Facebook and Twitter pages were a great help at the start of the Festival to get the message out that things were still going ahead as planned despite the snow. We had many new likes of our Facebook page during this period as performers were looking for information. Every cloud has a silver lining! The Festival video and wonderful photos of the Gala Concert also brought many new people to our pages. The video in particular has been viewed almost 4 and a half thousand times and has resulted in enquiries about the Festival from people who may be interested in getting involved next year.

The Celebration Day class at King's House was a success with performances from Pilgrims Pre-Prep School, Ridgeway School, Ivel Valley School and Weatherfield School. We were very grateful to the Bedford Music Hub for providing a live band to accompany the song at the end of the session.

Looking forward to the next cycle, following feedback received after the Festival, the Committee would like to encourage more performances from other cultures in all sections of the Festival to reflect the diverse nature of the borough. We would also like to continue to encourage more adult performers.

Alexandra Smith,
Festival Secretary



2018 Gala Concert Winners

Bedford Choral Society Cup and Prize
Pilgrims Choir

Melville Prize for the most Promising Performer at the 2018 Festival
Lucy Barrett

Gala Concert - Swan Hotel Rose Bowl for Music
Lucy Barrett

Gala Concert - Jane Whitbread Cup for Junior Speech and Drama
Emily Polhill

Gala Concert - Woodfine Lousada Challenge Cup for Junior Singing
Charlotte Fryc-Wixted

Gala Concert - Hans Freyhan Salver for Piano
Flik Feng

Gala Concert - Borough of Bedford Challenge Bowl for Senior Speech
and Drama
Redford School of Speech and Drama Senior Group

Gala Concert - Eglinton Challenge Bowl for Senior Singing
Katie McDonagh



















