



# **Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech & Drama 2019**

## **Notes & Lines**

The Chairman's  
Annual Report

## Notes and Lines 2019

It is a considerable pleasure to report upon the 2019 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 being considerably better than the previous year!

Again this year we utilised the facilities at King's House which have proven to be a particularly suitable venue for our Celebration Day event including Special Schools. 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 in 2020 and beyond. We are particularly grateful to the professional contributors involved in the Special Schools event, providing engaging musical accompaniment and valuable organisation for most of the day.

Over the Festival we welcomed 3500 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.

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 2019 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 Festival Secretary Alix Smith; all credit goes to Alix for both her attention to detail and good humour at all times. We look forward to Alix remaining in this role into the future.

In recognition of the Festival's volunteer base and dedication to the task I am delighted to report that the Festival has been awarded the prestigious Queens Award for Voluntary Service. This award is full testimony to the thousands of hours given to the Festival each year by a large volunteer cohort. In achieving this recognition the Festival was subjected to detailed scrutiny regarding processes, management and volunteer experience. It is of considerable credit to all those involved that these enquiries were satisfied in a timely and comprehensive manner. We intend to proudly display the QAVS logo in our literature and correspondence in the 2019/20 cycle and beyond. We intend to hold a celebration event to coincide with the presentation by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire the details of this will be released in due course.

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 clear trend is 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 Festival experience.

Whilst our finances remain on a sound footing we will be reviewing our budget for the 2020 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 entry prices in order that the widest possible cross-section of the community we serve can access our event.

This will be my final 'Notes and Lines' as Chairman as I shall be retiring from the Committee at the AGM in July 2019. It has been a privilege to be involved with such a worthwhile organisation and I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all involved for their tireless support over the years. I have no doubt the Festival will continue to flourish into the future given the significant support enjoyed from within the Bedfordshire community.

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

In anticipation of 2020 and with best wishes to you all.

**Jonathan Keep**  
Chairman

## Festival Secretary's Report 2019

The 2019 Festival saw another extremely successful and enjoyable week of performances. It was a pleasure to see everything coming together in March.

The removal of offline entries has gone smoothly this year with even more people getting to grips with the online form for the first time.

The entries overall have increased again this year by around 100 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.

We are still unfortunately facing challenges with the music entries. There has been a downward trend for a few years now due to continuing changes in instrumental teaching provision across the country. We will continue working closely with the Bedford Music Hub which keeps us in touch with teachers and the Bedford Music Co-op along with other organisations in the Borough and I am looking every year for new people to send syllabuses' to in order to improve our music numbers.

Choir day on Saturday was a success with our lovely adjudicator Sarah Jefferies. We had a total of 8 school choirs in the morning session, 6 community choirs in the afternoon and the open choral class and Harding Memorial Bowl in the evening with notable performances from The Sharnbrook Community Choir, Harmony Chamber Choir, The Songbirds and Rhapsody Chorus who were all winners in our afternoon / evening classes.

I am continuing to try and increase the Festival's presence on social media. The Festival Video that was made at the 2018 Festival has really helped to increase awareness as it



reached over 4000 people. We now have over 400 followers on our Facebook page which is up by over 60 compared to this time last year and we have over 200 on Twitter. I hope that the QAVS presentation in September will help even more people to become aware of the Festival. I have already had contact from the local press who are hoping to come along.

The Celebration Day class at King's House was a success with performances from Weatherfield Academy, Ivel Valley, Ridgeway School, Pilgrims Pre Prep and Westfield Dramatic Society who were joining us for the first time. We were very lucky to be joined by some musicians from the Bedford Music Co-op who accompanied and lead the group songs at the end. I had lots of very positive feedback about the morning and all of the performers seem to have really enjoyed themselves!

The Gala Concert was once again a real treat with some amazing performances in both the Music and Speech & Drama sections. The standard seems to get higher every year and we have been spoilt for choice with people to invite to perform.

Looking forward to the next cycle, I'm going to make a real effort to make more contact with schools and peripatetic teachers in the area to increase our music numbers and we would also love to see more adult speech & drama performers.

It is hugely exciting that the Festival is being awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service this year. It gives much deserved recognition to the huge number of volunteers that join us during Festival week as well as the Committee who work tirelessly all year round to make the Festival such a success.

Lastly, I would like to say a big thank you to Jonathan Keep who is leaving us as Chairman of the Festival this year. His calm & rational support is always welcome. Working for Jon as well as the rest of the Committee has been an absolute joy and he will be missed.

**Alexandra Smith**  
Festival Secretary



# 2019 Gala Concert Winners

The Bedford Choral Society Cup and Prize presented by Diana Shooter,  
Chairman of Bedford Choral Society following their performance

**Bedford Modern Junior School Year 5 & 6 Choir**

Melville Prize for the Most Promising Performer at the 2018 Festival

**Aidan Cham**

The Swan Hotel Rose Bowl for Music

**Aidan & Alex Cham**

The Jane Whitbread Cup for Junior Speech and Drama

**Alex Felice**

The Woodfine Lousada Challenge Cup for Junior Singing

**Isla Hughes**

The Hans Freyhan Salver for Piano

**Matias Yung**

The Borough of Bedford Challenge Bowl for Senior Speech and Drama

**Jonathan Hosking**

The Eglinton Challenge Bowl for Senior Singing

**Simon Woodhead**



























