

# CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL OF PERFORMING ARTS

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Christchurch Hall, Cheltenham, Saturday 30th November 2019

Present: As Attendance List                      The meeting started at 11:10 am.

### 1. **Welcome and Apologies**                      (Apologies as listed)

The Chairman, Garth Barnes, welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Hon. Secretary, Brian Harding, read out the names of those members who had sent apologies for absence.

### 2. **Minutes of the last AGM 1st October 2018**

The Minutes of the previous meeting had been posted on the CFPA website and copies were handed out at the meeting. It was proposed by Janice Keen, seconded by Carol McDowall, and agreed unanimously that the Minutes be accepted and signed as a true record.

### 3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### 4. **Presentation – The Valerie Walsh Award**

This award is given after each Festival to the performer with the highest marks across all three disciplines: Dance, Music and Drama. Valerie Walsh made a short address to the meeting, praising all the 2019 performers, and presented a cheque for £100 to this year's winner, Jasmine Went.

### 5. **Chairman's Report**                      (Full report held on file)

The Chairman began his report by recalling the successes of the 2019 Festival.

'All the feedback from the Festival was extremely good and we continue to support a huge number of children and adults by providing them with a public platform on which to demonstrate their talents in Music, Dance and Drama. This is the essence of the Festival, our raison d'être, and the motivation for all our volunteers who give so much of their time and effort.'

Garth mentioned and thanked all those who had made such an immense contribution. He praised the organisational skills of key individuals and the team-working of the committee members that enabled the Festival to run so smoothly and effectively, each year.

'The Borough Council deserves a special mention for the funding it provides each year without which, the Festival would not be able to continue. We are most grateful, not only for the financial help, but for the public show of support that this grant demonstrates.'

Garth highlighted the different challenges that the Festival faces each year and reminded the meeting that it must adapt and develop in line with changing requirements and the changing society in which it operates. He cited the huge pressure the Executive had been under to implement the complex child licensing requirements and pointed out that, although we were able to reach an accommodation to reduce some of the burden this year, the matter will not be entirely resolved until we can convince the County authorities that their rules are not conducive to the running of Festivals such as ours.

'Brian Harding has taken the lion's share in managing the licensing requirements forced upon us, and I would like to thank him publicly for all his efforts.'

Garth also mentioned other individuals who serve the Festival so well: Frances Watson and all the stewards, Judy Kelly and her hard-working team, as well as all the Executive and committee members.

'The list of people who work behind the scenes to make the Festival a success is phenomenal and my grateful thanks go to them all for the many hours they spend.'

There were no questions and the report was accepted and warmly greeted by a round of applause.

### 6. **Treasurer's Report**                      (Full report held on file)

The Treasurer, Allan Gillespie, presented the independently examined accounts and reported an improvement on last year's £12,600 loss. This year the overall loss has been reduced to just £1,100.

**Income:** Commenting on the published Accounts, Gillie noted that revenue from Advertising, Donations, Friends' receipts, Sponsorship and Programme Sales, were all down from the previous year. On the

positive side, Box Office receipts and Entry fees were up – even allowing for the increase in admission price from £3 to £4. It should be noted that the Gift Aid figure covers the three years 2016-2018.

**Expenditure:** Gillie noted that Adjudicators' Expenses were up but their Fees were down, suggesting there had been less adjudicators' time wasted (thanks to tighter class scheduling by the secretaries). The hire cost of the Town Hall was also down slightly, due to the Festival running for only 12<sup>1/2</sup> days. He also noted that Brian had struck a good one-off deal with the Town Hall, which would probably not be repeated in 2020. He mentioned the Programme and Syllabus (and associated postage) costs and said steps were already in hand to make a significant reduction in these ever-rising costs by not *printing* the Syllabus, but making it accessible and downloadable from the website (thereby saving about £2000).

In conclusion, he said the overall loss was modest by comparison with the previous year, thanks to a team effort by all the Trustees. He also informed the meeting that a major effort is now underway to secure sponsorships and donations.

Questions were invited. John Keen asked whether the Festival receives a discount from the Borough Council for the hire of the Town Hall and whether the other (commercial) Cheltenham Festivals get a better deal. Gillie replied that we do receive a 20% charity discount against the standard commercial rate for hiring the Town Hall and, in addition, the overall cost is heavily reduced by the annual £20,000 grant we receive from the Borough Council.

Diggory Seacombe queried the basis on which the adjudicators charge their fees. He was informed that fees are charged on a per session basis, with agreed rates set in accordance with the British & International Federation of Festivals, under whose terms the adjudicators are appointed. Gillie also pointed out that the section secretaries were ever-conscious of the benefits of tight class scheduling so that adjudicators were not paid for unnecessarily extended sessions.

There was a general discussion on the lack of sponsorships and the need for improved publicity. Cecil Sanderson suggested using Radio Gloucestershire's morning programmes to promote the Festival – and also using flyers around the town to encourage more audience attendance. Sally-Anne Davies said she was surprised, each year, to hear of schools and teachers who did not know about our Festival. It was suggested that our Festival might benefit if a collaborative relationship could be established with Cheltenham Festivals and Carol McDowall said that we should try to make better use of social media such as Twitter and Instagram.

The Treasurer was thanked for his report by the President, John Rawson, and congratulated on his success in reducing last year's substantial deficit. The report was accepted by the meeting unanimously.

#### 7. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

It was proposed by Allan Gillespie, and seconded by Carol McDowall, that Matthew Bennett be appointed as the Festival's Independent Examiner for next year. This was agreed unanimously.

### 8. Committee Reports

#### a) Dance (Full Report held on file)

In the Dance report, which was read out by Neil McDowall, Carol recalled the enthusiasm and excitement shown by the performers in their eagerness to get on stage and dance. She commented on the very high standards of performance and the entertainment value provided by dancers of all ages.

'It is really interesting to watch the competitors grow in confidence, ability, and self-esteem.'

Carol highlighted the success of the Primary Schools class and the excellent performances in the Patricia Mace Pas de Deux class.

Carol paid tribute to the hours of work spent by members of the Executive Committee in dealing with Gloucestershire County Council's bureaucratic demands on child performance licensing. She concluded by thanking the stewards, Judy Kelly and Karen Gillespie for their back-room expertise, and especially the Dance Committee whose continued support keeps the wheels of the Festival running.

#### b) Music (Full Report held on file)

David recalled a happy and fulfilling fortnight for the performers and the Music team. He highlighted the communal effort of all the volunteers and thanked the stewards and back office colleagues, particularly Karen Townsend, for their sterling work during the Festival.

David noted that the performances were as exciting and enjoyable as ever, particularly the choir days, where the comments of the two adjudicators were greatly appreciated. He explained, however, that due to the relatively few entries for the Rock, Jazz and Modern Music classes – and the special arrangements that they require – these classes have been dropped. He did point out that the junior vocal classes continue to flourish and now make up nearly one third of all music entries.

'The young people gain good life skills from taking part and these classes give particular joy to those in the audience.'

David commented on the success of the Nutland competition, which will again be held in March at Bethesda. He concluded by thanking all who had contributed to its success last year, including Daphne Nutland, Sally-Anne Davies, Ailsa Howarth and John Rawson.

**c) Speech and Drama** (Janice's report held on file)

In Rebecca's absence Janice Keen delivered a brief report. Janice noted that, although entries were down slightly, there was certainly no drop in the standard of the work presented or in the enthusiasm displayed by performers. The adjudicators were, as always, very complimentary of the standard of performances, which they all agreed, was at a high level and compared most favourably with other festivals around the country.

Several new classes had been trialled this year – some were well supported – others not so well and these would be reviewed by the Speech and Drama team. The re-scheduling of classes – some starting later in the morning and finishing in the early evening - had proved to be of benefit to some performers and had also meant that adjudicators' time was used more effectively, thereby saving on their fees.

Janice expressed the thanks of the Speech and Drama Committee for the outstanding work of Judy Kelly, Karen Gillespie and all the office volunteers.

**9. Reports from Officers**

**a) Chief Steward**

Frances informed the meeting that, from a pool of 95 volunteers, 70 people had carried out stewarding duties at the Festival and 12 of these were new recruits. Frances made a special mention of two colleagues, Chris Keen and Allan Gillespie, who had stepped into her shoes (when she was unavoidably absent looking after her husband). Students from the Star College were, once again, made welcome during one of the Dance days for their work experience.

Frances reported that her suggestion of dividing the Chief Steward's role into two areas is now being implemented: the pre-Festival administrative work of record-keeping and allocating stewards' duties will be carried out using an on-line system. And the daily front-desk role will be shared among a small team of experienced stewards.

'I am pleased to say that things are progressing well with this change and everything is looking good for the future.'

Frances' report was warmly received with a round of applause.

**10. Appointment of Trustees**

Brian Harding explained that, in accordance with the Constitution, each year the three trustees who have been the longest in office since their last appointment, must stand down. This year, the trustees standing down are: Allan Gillespie, Janice Keen and Brian Harding. In addition, Rebecca Vines who was appointed as a trustee by the Executive Committee, must also stand down at this AGM. All four have indicated their willingness to be re-elected as trustees.

In the absence of any other nominations the meeting unanimously agreed that Allan Gillespie, Janice Keen, Brian Harding, and Rebecca Vines, be re-elected as trustees.

**11. Festival 2020**

There were no comments from the meeting on this item.

**11. AOB**

There being no other business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 12:00 midday.

