

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016

The 2016 Richmond upon Thames Performing Arts Festival in February and March has been a qualified success. While the standard of entries has been high, the entry fees – with the exception of the Instrumental and Speech & Drama Section – have all been lower than in years past. Takings at the door were also reduced in three of the five sections. In addition, there were some significant unforeseen expenses which had to be taken into account as you will see in the Section reports and the Accounts. Each year we have argued to keep our fees low and/or to reduce some of them to keep our Festival affordable for our participants. But each year we follow the recommended Federation guidelines and increase the fees of our Adjudicators and Official Accompanists. Our losses this year suggest that the time has come to review and increase our entry fees.

We began our new year without a Treasurer, and I am pleased to report that Graham Harmes, at the invitation of Pam Frazer, accepted the role and has produced the clear and concise accounts you have before you. I look forward to his official election later on in this meeting. I am saddened to report the decline in the health of our newly elected President, Hazel Wood, which has meant that she is no longer able to play an active role in our activities. However, I am grateful to Hilary Fisher, singer, singing teacher and staunch Festival supporter, who has stepped into the breach and has agreed to be elected *in absentia* at this meeting.

We are all indebted to Pam Frazer for her continuing negotiations with Hampton Fuel Allotment who have once again provided us with a sizeable grant.

This year thanks to the efforts of Jenny Thornton, our Festival hosted the annual Southern Regional Forum which took place at the end of May in Whitton. At least half a dozen Festivals sent representatives and we had an informative meeting, focusing on the importance of having a procedure for assessing risk. Our Festival does not have a written policy although we agreed that it would be helpful to have some way of recognising and assessing potential risks at each of the venues that we use. A template was provided and we will be adapting it to our needs before our next Festival in 2017. We were also made aware the Charity Commission requires a written policy for handling complaints and this will also be addressed.

Margaret Warden has done sterling work in recruiting new stewards to help with the running of all the Festival events this year and ensuring that we are compliant with the Federation's Safeguarding and Child Protection policies.

Sue Bell has proved invaluable as our new Patron's Secretary and I am very glad that she is part of the Festival team for at least another two years and hopefully more!

Our participation in the Rugby World Cup celebrations was very successful; our October showcase at the Richmond Adult Community College was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by the Mayor, Martin Seymour, and his wife. Thanks to the negotiated reduced fee for the October venue and the no cost venue for an earlier mini-showcase in May, the income exceeded the expenditure for these events. Our Showcase for the 2016 Festival took place at the more usual time in May at the Normansfield Theatre in Kingston. This proved to be a very attractive and accommodating venue. It was reasonably priced with very helpful staff, some on-site parking and convenient for public transport; we look forward to returning there next year.

Last year we reported that our Festival would be presented under the umbrella of the Borough Council's Arts Festival. However, when we were given more details it appeared to both Pam and me that our Festival did not fit their remit and we declined to take part. With hindsight I believe this was a mistake. The Council produced a brochure which was little more than a Calendar of Events largely dominated by the Barnes Music Festival and had we accepted we would have had some additional publicity for our section events. Nevertheless, I think we can take heart from the fact that although we made a loss overall this year, our section footfall, i.e. takings on the door, represented a significant increase over those in 2014 and 2015.

In closing I would like to add my appreciation for all the work that Pam Frazer does not only as the Festival's Administrative Assistant, but also for her hands on involvement in the Sections that are outside her specific remit – Stage Dance and Speech and Drama. This year, in spite of having only one usable hand for much of the Festival she has managed to do more than ever and deserves our unstinting gratitude.

Judy Hildesley, Chairman

June 28, 2016