

Taunton Festival of the Arts

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7.30 pm, Wednesday 28th September 2016 The Taunton Catholic Centre

Present: Michael Chapman (Acting Chairman and Hon. Treasurer), Audrey Axford, Natasha Ballardie, Jean Broadbent, Anne Cleves, Nigel Cousins, Gwyn Flitters, Diana Jerrold, Matthew Kirby, Linda Marshall Cole, Harold Mead, Martin and Gill Parker, Christine Rose and Sandra Sutton.

Acting Chairman, Michael Chapman, warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies** were received from the President, Diana Rees, Gillian Greig, Alastair Kirby and Veronica Spencer.

2. **Minutes of the 2015 AGM**

A few small errors were pointed out by Gwyn Flitters and immediately amended by Secretary, Anne Cleves. They were then signed by the Acting Chairman.

3. **Matters arising from the Minutes** – none.

4. **Acting Chairman's report:**

Despite the fact that the Festival has been going for the last 103 years, it is not standing still or vegetating and shows continuing signs of innovation and forward thinking.

Although in the previous year our financial resources were stretched to the limit this year's results have shown that we have turned things around and have sufficient in the bank to enable all the Festival events to move forward with confidence. We are grateful to a number of people who were generous in their support and we thank them most sincerely. Our Friends and Benefactors, to whom we are indebted, are ably looked after by Gill and Martin Parker who keep our supporters informed of our activities and encourage them to attend events. They take a great interest in all sections of the Festival.

One of the lessons learned from 2015 is that each event must be so conducted that it at least breaks even and we are working towards that happening this year by seeking sponsors who will underwrite each prize awarded in the competitions we run.

We have a hard working team of Trustees and Committee Members who manage to make things happen and we are grateful for their huge input. However we have to recognise that some are at the upper age limit of involvement and there is an urgent need to recruit people to take the place of those who are retiring or who propose to retire in the near future.

We are aware of our Chairman's health situation and we wish him well in his recovery but it would seem unlikely that he will continue to be involved in the visionary role that he has developed over the years and so we need to replace him.

We are grateful too for the input that Sylvia Fellgett has made as Stewards Secretary for the Drama Festival, even after retiring a couple of years ago. Matthew Kirby will take on this job until he finds someone else to take over Sylvia's role

Kate Walden has retired as a Trustee and although we do not often see her at Trustee meetings her support of the Music Festival and her valuable input and suggestions have been well received. We thank her and hope that she will continue with her practical comments and ideas.

It is now two years since Hilary Daniel, our Wind Section Trustee left the area for Cornwall and although she continued to be involved it was inevitable that her involvement in a more local community would eventually take precedence. We thank her for her enthusiasm and commitment to both TYM and to the Wind Section which she ran with efficiency. We are delighted that Christine Rose

has joined us and with the able help of Di Jerrold (who will also help Nigel Cavey with TYM) they will take on Hilary's role. Welcome to you both.

At the end of last year we were delighted that Sandra Sutton replaced Mary Trewin as the leader of the Strings Section and we congratulate her on being one of the members of the North Devon Sinfonia which won the BBC 'All together now!' competition and played at the Proms in the Park.

For some time now Anne Cleves has been looking for someone to take on some of the things that she has done so well over the many years she has been involved with the Festival. We are so glad that Jean Broadbent has taken on Anne's role as Correspondence Secretary and it is to Jean whom you must communicate with regard to Adjudicators' contracts and venue bookings. We are also grateful to Gillian Greig for taking on Anne's role as Stewards Secretary. We are not quite saying farewell to Anne at this stage but she is actively pursuing a successor for her other tasks and huge thanks are due to her for helping to keep the show on the road.

Hazel Jordan has for the last three years been putting together the Music and Drama Syllabuses and the Programmes but she is a very busy lady and the growing demand on her time from the Festival has led to her resignation and this has left us with a major problem which is yet to be solved. Many thanks are due to Gwynneth Flitters for standing in the breach and rescuing us from disaster with the added help of Andrew Garton.

During the year we have lost two stalwarts of the past who both in their time had a major input into the running of the Music Festival which was acknowledged with Life Membership of the Festival in recognition of all that they did. Mair Rogers and Molly Wagstaff will be known to some of us.

Our venue-hiring policy over the past few years has been to dispel in the minds of the general public that we operate for the sole benefit of the Public School sector and so we have tried to spread the load and operate on neutral ground as far as possible. We have successfully used Temple Methodist Church during the last two years and intend to continue to do so again whilst at the same time recognising the excellent facilities that such schools as Queen's College and Taunton School offer. So we continue to use them both and I believe that the Dance Festival has at last found its true home at Queen's Hall where a hugely successful Dance Festival took place in June and where we were well supported by the Queen's events team led by Jan de Caux.

The Somerset Song Prize takes place every two years and after the last competition in which a significant financial loss was made a decision had to be reached as to whether we allowed the competition to float on its own or continue under the Festival banner. Since we originally developed this prestigious competition as an extension to the other competitions that we run, it was decided that it remain as a Festival event. It is independent in the sense that they have a separate bank account and an excellent committee who are working towards its financial success, more of which later.

We are trying, under the leadership of Nigel Cousins, to develop a Film Festival. This has had to be put on hold until next year due to Nigel's personal circumstances with the serious illness of his wife limiting his availability to arrange this year's event.

Our website is managed by Ed Cresswell but needs to be better utilised by the committee so that each of us maintains it in such a way that the public accessing it will have up to date information. A big vote of thanks to Ed for all that he does for us.

Thanks too to Veronica Spencer, who has helped Linda in various ways and been present at events when she was able to support.

During the year we celebrated the career of Mary Trewin, who until recently was a member of our committee, by a Celebratory/Thank you Concert in Temple Methodist Church. A great number of her former pupils attended from all parts of the country and it was a wonderful occasion appreciated by all who came, both as audience and those who took part.

In conclusion I would say that Taunton Festival of the Arts is in good shape but needs to take on board a number of dedicated individuals to take the place of those who need to retire and to develop the publicity aspect of all that we do.

5. Hon. Treasurer's report (see enclosed sheet)

In the year ending 30th June 2015 the Festival made considerable losses in the following three events – Taunton Live 2015, Film Festival, TYM/TYS. These losses drew on our reserves to such an extent that at the beginning of the year we were in a precarious position. The Taunton Live 2015 accounting is included in its entirety in the current year accounts to 30th June 2016.

I am happy to report that due to support from some anonymous donors and the successful Music and Drama Festivals but also especially due to a highly successful Dance Festival, we have recovered our position and I am delighted to report that at the end of the financial year we have £ 7339.92 in the bank with all debts accounted for.

It is hoped that all competition prizes will be covered by sponsorship and none will run at a loss.

Income will continue to come from Class entry fees, Audience entry charges, Adverts in the Syllabus and Programmes, Friends and Benefactor donations and sale of Programmes.

The Headmaster of Queen's College had granted us use of The Queen's Hall for the TYM/TYS competitions at no charge. This year's revised arrangements for the competitions with no preliminary round should see this competition in profit again.

I wish to acknowledge the help Gill Parker has given me in putting the accounts together, with grateful thanks. Our turnover means that we now need to have audited accounts and we must go to a professional accountant to carry out this service and arrange an Extraordinary General meeting to receive those audited accounts

Linda Marshall Cole proposed, and Natasha Ballardie seconded, that the accounts be adopted and all agreed.

**6. 2015 Film Festival report and 2016 Music, Drama and Dance Festivals reports.
Competitions' reports: TYM, TJYM, TYS, TJYS, TYMTS (Music) and TYTP (Drama)
Friends and Benefactors' reports.**

Taunton Film Festival 2015 - our first Film Festival (Nigel Cousins)

We held our first Film Festival in November 2015. Three of the available five classes ran, with the 'tinys' and the open adult classes having no entries. Overall there were low entry numbers. However, this meant that it was possible to screen all entries, which was a delight for the entrants.

Bearing in mind that a film entry is not adjudicated on the day, but prior, I was delighted that our adjudicator (Mr Andrew Popkin) went that extra mile and added tremendous value for everyone. He had extracted clips from the entries and proceeded to explain exactly what he had seen and liked, as well as where he felt more points could have been gained. The adjudicating was undertaken on the standard international scale and would have been similar to that adopted at Cannes. This provided a great perspective for all. Mr Popkin went on to prepared lengthy notes/reports for each entry/entrant, which added a lot of value to the event. This was a tremendous amount of work for Mr Popkin, for which he asked no payment (and instead I provided him with a couple of bottles of good red wine!).

There was time to screen a number of winning entries from other recent International Film Festivals, all produced by children, that added further value and I was told was much appreciated. I have concluded that our Film Festival was a success.

All this said, there are a number of valuable points to consider for the future:

State schools do not promote film, nor make opportunities in school for film.

There are now no local independent schools offering film as either co or extra-curricular opportunities.

It is clear that entries must be sought from a much wider net.

Recent communication resources have opened up the chances to contact potential entrants worldwide, but now on a cost basis that we can embrace. This must be the obvious way forward.

The reality is that the Taunton Film Festival remains embryonic, but filled with potential. Financing will be the issue over the next few developmental years.

I should like to thank everyone who worked hard and helped make this event run, especially The Space, who fell over backwards to welcome and accommodate us.

Piano day report 2016

Our piano day and a half was extremely enjoyable, and people stayed on after their classes had finished in order to listen to our adjudicator, Alan MacLean. He managed to be energetic and sensitive at the same time, and every student felt they mattered. He told them he was not here to criticise, but to help them.

Instead of merely talking, he ran the classes like a series of mini workshops, bringing children back to the piano to iron out problems. Teachers and parents were full of praise for this approach. One

beginner pianist had stage fright and began to cry. He told her she did not have to play, but maybe she would like to hear a few more children and then decide. It worked! She played and left the stage with a big smile.

A potentially more difficult problem was raised when an adult pianist had decided she wanted to play a difficult Beethoven sonata and completely lost her bearings. He let her carry on, then leapt onto the stage and with gentle tact worked on a couple of passages where she was trying to play too fast for comfort. The improvement was immediate. Alan praised her commitment and her pleasure was obvious.

When hearing the more advanced pianists he mentioned the importance of sight reading, which many only realised rather late in their careers. He was glad that our festival had sight reading classes. He gave 4 Outstanding marks and 46 Distinctions, and praised the standard of teaching in our area. My thanks go to Anne Cleves, Mike Chapman, and all the stewards who gave up their time to help us, and to Taunton School for keeping us well fed and watered.

Wind Day report (Hilary Daniel)

The Festival day began at 9.30 am at the Temple Methodist Church, which offered fantastic facilities, including a warm concert venue, warm up room, café facilities and a brilliant lunch and tea.

The adjudicator, James Stretton, a very talented trumpet player with the RSC and an examiner, was very much in touch with the children and offered some good advice on how to stand, how to acknowledge your applause and more about looking at the music as a living work of art rather than just dots on the page.

The day began with a morning of solo recorders, small groups and ensembles. All shapes and sizes of recorders were enjoyed being played by some quite young competitors and one recorder was almost the size of the youngster who was playing it! There was a wonderful atmosphere of excitement as each player took to the stage and a very appreciative audience clapping loudly. Out of the 22 entries 2 Outstanding, 12 Distinctions and 8 Commended were awarded.

The Taunton Children's Orchestra began the afternoon session. After the shuffling of chairs and music stands, the children played their pieces. The 'cellos seemed bigger than the players, the brass instruments looming up showing little fingers on the keys and all watching their conductor, Alison Pink, avidly. Lisa Tustian brought in the timpani, which were played by her son. The adjudicator was most impressed with the orchestra.

Brass classes followed but with considerably fewer entries than last year (10 entries: 2 Distinction and 8 Commended), as Castle School, which usually provides the main brass entries, did not enter any individual pupils; nor were the Steel Band and jazz bands available to play as they were involved in their school production.

Woodwind classes followed with 22 entries; 7 Distinctions and 1 Outstanding were awarded. The standard was very high this year and a new Jazz class resulted in joint winners of 2 boys and 2 girls in first position.

The final classes were entries from Junction 25 - a Free Reeds band. Their leader, Claire Wren gained an Outstanding grade for her solo performance and the band were awarded an Outstanding for their 2 pieces.

Many thanks to Frances Webb, our accompanist, who accompanied the pupils brilliantly, providing the right level of sound without drowning them and always encouraging a good performance.

In conclusion, the day cannot run without helpers and a big thank you must go to Mike Chapman, Anne Cleves and her stewards, Joanna and Ian Rossiter and the helpers in the kitchen who made the day memorable.

I personally take away with me memories of lots of happy smiling faces of both adults and children, who came, performed and succeeded in entertaining us and, in doing so, confirmed in no uncertain terms that music making is very much in existence in Taunton and surrounding areas.

Strings Day report (Sandra Sutton)

Venue

The Temple Methodist Church is a very good venue in many ways, having several rooms where teachers and pupils can unpack instruments and warm up; having the use of the upstairs chapel for Keith Jones to play through accompaniments with candidates during the lunchtime was particularly useful and worked very well.

Having an amazing group of TMC helpers made a huge impact. They were so helpful and supportive re teas/coffees, lunch and even with helping to keep people from entering the church during a performance. With the Church having 3 doors, this was one of the main problems and occasionally one or two people couldn't be stopped from entering or leaving the church during a performance. Notices were placed on some doors, but, for the future, it might be a good idea to have notices on all 3 door and perhaps to have one or two reminders inside the church. The only other problem was one of extraneous noises. Some, such as emergency vehicles with sirens outside, cannot be avoided, and just have to be tolerated, but others, such as the noise from members of the public entering the building for Mothers and Toddlers Dancing Groups might have been curbed if there were more signs. To the credit of all performers, though, it was not at all obvious that any of them had been distracted by any of the noises.

Some visual signs NO PHOTOGRAPHY, NO VIDEO RECORDING inside the church would have been useful as reminders. Amendments to the running order were given to stewards and adjudicator on the day, and it was useful to have one posted on the doors.

Acoustically, the venue seemed to be fairly good, and even the less experienced solo guitar sounds could be heard very well. The main problem seemed to be when introductions were made. Very few of the voices could be heard clearly.

One comment from a member of the public was that there should be a microphone. She was meaning that this should be available for performances rather than for spoken introductions. We felt that using a microphone was probably not a good idea as speakers and players have to practise with a microphone in order for it to work effectively and it was felt that this might create more problems than it solved. Part of the presentation in the festival was to project your speaking voice and this was something which needed to be practised in advance. Performers on Thursdays tended to give a spoken introduction before performing, whilst those on Friday tended not to.

I'm not sure if it is clear from the syllabus if candidates should announce their pieces before they begin. The timings on Friday were accurate on the day, but if every piece had been announced, more time would have been needed. The announcements made by candidates on Thursday were mostly completely inaudible. Maybe this needs to be highlighted in the syllabus.

It was very good to see Gillian Greig who was very keen to learn about many different aspects of the Festival. Mike and Anne were there, as always setting up and looking after everything which came their way and we were very ably supported on both days by our stewards.

Adjudicator

This year's adjudicator was Rachel Greenwood. Before the two days of strings classes, I found Rachel to be very accommodating and meticulous in preparations. She was very approachable and was happy to adjudicate guitars as well as the extra ukulele classes which were added late on in the run up to the festival. She was also happy to allow changes, chiefly from Mrs McGhee, who seemed to change her mind on an almost daily basis as regards which class Poppy would be playing in. Rachel was a good time keeper and, when there was time to do an impromptu "workshop" e.g. showing the brass trio that they could perform without a conductor, she did. The way she handled this was sensitively and tactfully done as she didn't belittle the conductor, just demonstrated that the trio could do it without being conducted.

In the larger classes, Rachel managed to keep to time very well and always gave interesting and appropriate advice to all performers. She made some very good points regarding presentation: attention to breathing at the beginning of a piece to make a good start. She involved the audience in this, asking them to clap at the moment when they thought she would be starting her note. This demonstrated the point very well and it was a useful ploy to involve everyone in realising the importance and the effectiveness of how breathing in a certain way made you feel more relaxed and gave a better start to the performance.

Details of negotiating large shifts, for example in "The Swan", details of balance, tuning, using a flatter bow to make a different sound, were covered effectively as were performance details such as foot-tapping! Tips on singing a phrase of the music before playing it, playing the ending before you start the piece when practising, were useful, practical tips for all performers.

Rachel's comments about enjoying performing were made throughout both days and showed empathy with all the candidates.

She did take time to praise the string teaching in the area and this went down well, as expected, with all the people there.

Feedback

Some felt that Rachel's adjudications were a little on the harsh side. I'm not totally convinced of this, myself, and, felt that maybe in other areas of the country the categories she awarded would be appropriate. But whatever stance one took on this, it was apparent to all that Rachel's comments showed knowledge and understanding of technical and musical issues and her marking was consistent throughout the two days.

The Chamber Music classes were commented on because it was obvious that in class CM1 a trio was played by 4 people. This was brought to the attention of the adjudicator. One comment made by one of the teachers was that they thought the restriction of having one player per part was a little tough on the younger players.

Extra Trophies

The extra cups and trophies so generously provided by Feroze Pomeroy on the morning of the guitar day was indeed a generous and appropriate gift, even if it did produce a rush of adrenalin first thing in the morning rearranging which trophies were to be given to which class, and a slight confusion with signing receipts for the correct trophy at the end of the class.

As a new member of the team, I was a little unsure about the protocol for the way this went and was grateful to Mike and Anne for their positive input. Without their helpful comments I may still be wondering, "May anyone just turn up and present trophies on the day"! I am still wondering, though, if this should have gone through the committee at some stage? But, am happy to go with it.

Entries

Entries were as follows:

16 group entries: 8 duet entries: 92 individual entries

Late entries created a few concerns this year and I think, are being addressed for the coming year.

Thank you for reading/listening to this rather long report. I'll leave you with this thought:

A parent rang me up to say that her son was not able to take part in the Parent and Child class, and was it ok for her to accompany someone else's child?

What I had assumed was implicit in the title "Parent and Child" warned me never to take anything for granted!

I look forward to another year with my eyes opened wider than last!

Trophies not given out 2016

Hugh Jones trophy for 'Cello

Violin Trophy

Nesta Franklyn for Double Bass

C W Horwood Cello Cup

Sonata Class

TSMD Festival Classical Guitar Trophy

The original Staplegrove Trophy (now replaced)

New Trophies given by Feroze Pomeroy 2016

Beginners Guitar Trophy

7 Years and Under Guitar Trophy

Junior Guitar Trophy

12 years and under Guitar Trophy

6 Years and Under Guitar Trophy

Vocal Days report (Linda Marshall Cole)

It was the first time for many years that we used just one adjudicator and worked our way through the entries until we had finished. This involved three and a half days. From a timetabling and organisational point of view it was methodical and so much easier to keep proceedings under control. It may have lost a little buzz factor but at least all the competitors had a chance to hear their adjudications which has to be one of prime reasons for entering.

In these circumstances it is vital to have an adjudicator with expert knowledge, good communications skills and a sense of humour. Gaynor Keeble ticked all these boxes and many more. She wrote excellent individual reports, delivered the adjudications with style and backed up the teachers with her perceptive comments.

Again we had a large number of entries, particularly 14 and under. I would like to make particular mention of Lisa Tustian for her enthusiasm in introducing so many young people to Festival classes.

The venue for the solo classes proved to be excellent in most ways. Although the Church acoustic is not perfect, it is good enough. The temperature was warm and the piano was fine. The complete package that Temple is able to offer us, at a reasonable price, makes it unbeatable. It is beneficial to have the use of a practice room, to be fed on site and generally be welcomed and looked after so well. Queen's Hall for choirs is still important because of the large numbers involved and it verged on full capacity at one point.

It was regrettable that there were no entries for the Senior Vocal classes. I had rallied a couple of my own students to take part but the event was not viable, even as an attachment to the end of a Junior Day rather than have a separate Saturday. Sara Jefferies had been booked to adjudicate. No doubt we will use her services for some other occasion soon.

The official accompanist situation needs careful consideration. There were very few requests for accompaniment which makes it hard to balance the books when you have someone on standby for three days. Keith Jones did the majority of the work, felt that he wanted to contribute to the Festival and therefore charged minimally. Some competitors were accompanied by excellent musicians already in the room. This obviously was by arrangement and they were given the sum paid in for official, which was not much, but enough to keep them happy as they were on the premises.

Andrew Carter came in on one day to play as official accompanist and for Wellington School students and the bill was split two ways. A debate concerning the way forward is important.

My thanks go to Anne Cleves and Mike Chapman for running the nuts and bolts of the days, particularly when I was away teaching. Also Janet Watson does a really good job looking after trophies. In my absence Penny Hart and Veronica Spencer were in attendance as "talent spotters" for the summer gala.

Drama Report (Matthew Kirby)

The Taunton Drama Festival of 2016 was once again held at the Temple Methodist Church, Taunton from 7th – 11th March. It was a most successful and enjoyable week, not only from the perspective of an organiser, but also as a teacher and spectator. The entries were consistent, with many entries from the independent schools, but also some state and private entries. This was of course wonderful to see!

Our adjudicators this year were Rebecca Vines and Thalia Squire. Rebecca adjudicated for us on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, whilst Thalia finished the week for us on Thursday and Friday. Rebecca is a new adjudicator to BIFF. Having said this, she has a variety of experience as both a Director and teacher for Speech & Drama. She was extremely constructive and encouraging in all her adjudications. The most amazing thing was that she always kept to time, despite giving feedback to every single performer (even with classes that had 40+ performers!). Thalia is a well-known adjudicator and examiner in this area, having previously adjudicated for us. Thalia was once again a delight to have at the Festival and it was wonderful to hear her extensive experience and knowledge in all of her adjudications.

We had several new classes at this year's Festival, which included: Sight Reading for Year 4 & Under, Project Speaking and Group Shakespeare. All of these new classes seemed extremely popular and I hope to build upon this success next year. We were also extremely lucky to welcome Jeremy James Taylor OBE to run an acting audition workshop on Tuesday 8th March, in which 12 students participated. Jeremy is the Former Artistic Director of the NYMT, a casting director and has a wealth of experience in the performing arts industry. This workshop was definitely well received and I am keen to continue to build upon it next year. Jeremy took the time to watch each student's monologue, highlighting areas that were positive, whilst providing helpful advice, encouragement and areas to improve upon. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my band of true and loyal supporters (especially Alastair, Sylvia, Mike and Anne) who have constantly offered their help, knowledge, advice and feedback. I am now thinking ahead to 2017 with our adjudicator Marie Dixon, and looking forward to continuing to make the Drama Festival a great event.

Dance report (Natasha Ballardie)

This year, we held the Dance Festival at Queen's College. The festival was split over two weekends as we couldn't hire the venue for 3 or more consecutive days. We thought problems would arise with this, but it worked out well and the competitors were very obliging when the programme was published.

We started with the younger age groups and finished with the older children on the second weekend. Entries came in fast and thick towards the closing date and my postman did wonder if he was posting fan mail to me! At this point, I was very nervous if we would be able to accommodate all the entries. But, with a lot of long hours with the dance committee, we managed to arrange the programme with three 11-hour adjudication days and 6 hours on the Sunday, finishing in the nick of time before the Gala Evening started.

Our adjudicator Linda Young was fantastic and did comment on how well the festival was run and how calm and friendly the atmosphere was. We also received very warming feedback from the parents/students about Linda which was greatly appreciated by her.

Thank you to the festival for your continued support in the ever growing dance section.

The 2017 Dance Festival will be held from May 30th – June 4th 2017.

Competitions reports:

Taunton Young Musician of the Year (Hilary Daniel)

The above competitions took place on 28th February in Queen's College Hall, Taunton.

During the morning of the event you could hear singers warming up and musicians tuning up in the practice rooms, all aged between 13 and 18 years.

The Taunton Young Singer Competition opened the afternoon's programme with a stunning display of young people making music in this joint Final.

The young instrumentalists then took to the stage. As in the first half, one had to look twice at the competitors because the quality of their performance belied their years.

At the end of a wonderful afternoon's music, the extremely experienced adjudicators, Ian Curror and Helen Deakin, retired to make difficult decisions.

The winner of the Taunton Young Musician was Adam Heron, whose maturity and musicianship was outstanding. 'Cellist Willard Carter took second place, again with a magnificent performance, and third was Brian Low, an equally talented pianist.

The Deputy Mayor, Vivienne Stock-Williams, presented the trophies and prize money and Mike Chapman warmly thanked the many people who had supported a wonderful afternoon of music and song.

Taunton Young Singer of the Year (Linda Marshall Cole)

On Sunday afternoon, 28th February, we witnessed a stunning display of young people making music at Queen's College, Taunton, in the joint final of Taunton Young Singer and Taunton Young Musician. There were four singers competing for the vocal trophy, each presenting programmes demanding skill and diversity. The winner was Gregory Steward, 2nd place went to Katey Rylands, both from Wells Cathedral School, and placed joint third were Charlotte Penny (recently of Taunton School) and Sarah Wynne (Wellington School). Ian Curror was the adjudicator responsible for the vocal competition who worked in partnership with Helen Deakin, the instrumental adjudicator, and they were both impressed by the standard and were unanimous in the decision making.

Our thanks go to the Headmaster and Governors of Queen's College for generously sponsoring this competition with the use of the venue, Queen's Hall.

Taunton Junior Young Musician of the Year (Gwyn Flitters)

Saturday, February 27 saw the final of the Taunton Junior Young Musician of the Year, featuring eight competitors, all under 14 years, of at least grade 5 standard, with six different instruments, and a great variety of music. Adjudicator, Kevin Duggan, organist at Dunblane Cathedral, had come all that way to hear them, (and yes, he did play for Andy Murray's wedding!) and he was very pleased at the high standard already achieved by the young musicians. He complimented them and their teachers on the attention to detail in their performances and praised the accompanists. He was looking not only for technical merit, but also for flair in communicating with the listeners through their music.

The Taunton Junior Young Musician was Poppy McGhee, an 11 year old violinist from Wells Cathedral junior school. She received the Jefferson Horsley Trophy and £100. In second place was Ben Shattock, a 12 year old pianist from Taunton School, who received £50. Poppy also received the Westlake Cup, awarded for outstanding performance in the recent Taunton Music Festival.

Taunton Junior Young Singer of the Year (Nikki Ridley)

The inaugural Taunton Junior Young Singer (generously sponsored by Ashfords, Hippyck and Viridor) was much enjoyed by singers and audience alike. The 11 competitors, aged between nine and 13, presented an enormously varied programme including music by Purcell, Mozart and Richard Rodney Bennett alongside a range of parlour songs and songs from the shows. All the performers displayed poise and communication – some well beyond their years - and the proficiency on display made the adjudication a very hard task for tenor, Tom Robson who had the unenviable task of selecting a winner and runner up.

Second place was awarded to Ellen Steward (taught by Naomi Harvey) who gave a very assured and musical performance of her chosen songs. The Cleves Cup, £100 (sponsored by Ashfords) and title of Taunton Junior Young Singer 2016 went to Abigail Govey (taught by Lisa Tustian). Abigail's rendition of Rodney Bennett's The Bird's Lament had every member of the audience transfixed and the warmth with which her performance was received suggested she was the choice of the audience as well as the adjudicator

Taunton Young Theatre Music Singer of the Year (Linda Marshall Cole)

Fourteen performers, between the ages of 15 and 17, took part, filling a definite niche in the market. Very few singers used this opportunity as an extension of classical singing as most explored a wide range of eras, venturing well into the 21st century. The standard was extremely high, as commented on by the adjudicator. My personal remark would be that there was an excess of nasality.

However, that is a small criticism in comparison with the hard work, commitment and talent that was on display. It was a hugely successful day.

On the closing date for the competition there were only about six entries. This was in spite of having sent the information round months ahead and then much nearer the time. It took hours chasing up the teachers for entries, and subsequently getting in all the information for the programme. The plan for next time would be to target the individual teachers rather than expecting of Heads of Music to forward the information. Wellington School has a teacher called April Anderson, Taunton School has Mark Lawson and I will enquire of King's and Queen's whether they have specialist Music Theatre teachers. Also the entry form will request (a) School, (b) Singing Teacher (c) List of songs with show, composer, lyricist (d) and perhaps timing of programme so that all information is gathered at source. My thanks to Hazel for setting out the programme and emailing it to Rockwell Printers in East Reach, Taunton, so that I was able to collect the copies before closing time.

The joint first place winners were Imi Sanders-Dutton and Louisa Everett from Blundell's School, Tiverton, 3rd prize was awarded to Gregory Steward from Wells Cathedral School and the most promising young singer was Esta Felix a student from Uffculme School. They were worthy winners amongst a generally high standard. The adjudicator, Andrea Calladine, was full of praise and subsequently sent a letter abounding with positive strokes about the competition, personnel and management. She did a good job for us. It is important to employ adjudicators who are experts in music theatre and are truly comfortable with this medium, which she is.

The official accompanist, Mark Shelvey, was called on to play for ten of the fourteen singers and this he did with incredible sensitivity and anticipation of every need. This was commented on by the adjudicator and quite rightly too. He is very special.

I had managed to raise the money for prizes from (1) me (2) the parents of last year's winner (c) Notorious, the new music shop in High Street, Taunton. We cannot ask the same people again so Veronica Spencer, on my team, has agreed to write round and invite sponsorship for the individual prizes for Taunton Young Singer and Taunton Young Music Theatre Singer. This is an important aspect of affordability in running these competitions.

My thanks go to Mike for overseeing everything, Sally Rixon, as adjudicator's steward for looking after Andrea's requirements. She is a good mixture of a business woman with a fascination for music theatre, so that works well. Hannah Deason-Barrow, as competitors' steward knew exactly how they felt and made each one feel at home. I would also like to thank Martin for selling tickets and Anne for organising teas and sorting loose ends. The tea urn failed to heat up so Mike and Anne improvised brilliantly. The Gwyn Williams Room and the practice facilities below really suit this competition so we are grateful to Taunton School for the use of the Music School.

Taunton Young Theatre Performer of the Year (Matthew Kirby)

The Taunton Young Theatre Performer of the Year competition once again took place at this year's Drama Festival. In a new initiative, we decided to run the event on Tuesday 8th March at 7pm at the Temple Methodist Church. The Junior Category had five performers participating and the Senior Category had two, with several performers being absent due to other commitments. The standard was so much higher than last year; the choice of material was varied and even contained some musical theatre. We were honoured to have Jeremy James Taylor to adjudicate this competition. Jeremy was extremely impressed with all of the recital performances and commented on how committed and enthusiastically driven all of the students were. The competition was a huge success once again for 2016 and I hope to build upon this for next year, with some more changes being discussed. The winner of the Junior Category was Nyah Davies (from Bruton School for Girls) and the winner of the Senior Category was Billy Hemmings (from Taunton School). Nyah was chosen as the overall winner, receiving The Robin Bush Award. I would like to thank anyone who helped in any way to make this competition a success. In particular, I would like to thank Hilary Marshall, who once again gave a £200 competition for this competition.

Gala Concert (Natasha Ballardie)

This was an evening for students that had been placed in previous festivals from the Music, Drama, Dance and film sections of the festival, to come together and perform under one roof. Guests were greeted with bubbly and mingled in the pleasant atmosphere, before the performance started with children as young as 5 prepared themselves backstage. We started the evening by singing Happy Birthday to the Queen (as you do) which I felt eased the performers and settled the audience. The evening rolled extremely well with each act coming on one after the other demonstrating high quality, enthusiastic and mature performances. The Gala Evening, I hope will continue year after year. Possibly June 4th 2017. Thank you to all that gave up their time to support a fantastic evening.

Friends and Benefactors Report (Gill and Martin Parker)

In 2016 our scheme attracted 10 Benefactors and 7 Friends which means we raised £1355 (with Gift Aid about £1673) for Festival funds. We ask that everybody involved with the Festival promotes the Friends and Benefactors scheme as best they can. Please ensure that our advert is included in all the programmes. We need to make sure that the Friends and Benefactors names are included in the programmes as this is one of the promises made when people join. We will endeavour to give programme editors a list about two months before the event unless they let us know to the contrary. We have tried to keep our Friends and Benefactors up to date with the Festival's activities through occasional emails or letters

7. Somerset Song Prize 2017 (Martin Parker)

The SSP is a biennial art song competition for 18 to 26 year olds. It was established by the Festival in its centenary year 2013, as a progression and extension of its singing competitions. The SSP is still very much part of our Festival though it is developing its own organisational structures. I am secretary of the committee. The Patrons are Elizabeth Watts and Roger Vignoles. Brian Cresswell and Guy Robinson take responsibility for most of the organisation.

The plan for 2017 is:

- a Launch event at CICCIC on 13th January.
- Regional Rounds in Birmingham, Cardiff, London and Taunton at the end of March/beginning of April
- Semi final and Final at Temple Methodist Church on 13th and 14th May.

The adjudicators for the Final will be Jonathan Lemalu, Joan Rodgers and Roger Vignoles. The Prizes will include an audience prize, an award for the most promising young singer under the age of 21 and first prizes of £1000 to the best singer and £1000 to the best pianist.

In the past the Festival has had to support the SSP financially. This time we are determined to balance the books. To this end, amongst other initiatives, we have established a marketing sub group, made bids for grants from 5 charitable trusts and we intend to set up a Supporters Group which will run parallel to the Festival's Friends and Benefactors scheme.

9. Chairman

M.C: Brian Cresswell is still out of action and the expected recovery after a fairly recent procedure has not yet happened. However, he has not resigned and may still wish to be involved. He will still, therefore, be the Chairman.

10. Appointments of Officials and Trustees.

There are some changes and Sandra Sutton needs to be voted in as a Trustee. Gill Parker proposed, and Martin Parker seconded, that Sandra Sutton should be voted in as a Trustee and all agreed.

President: Diana Rees

Chairman: Brian Cresswell

Hon Treasurer: Michael Chapman

Secretary to the Trustees: Anne Cleves

Correspondence Secretary: Jean Broadbent

Dance Secretary: Natasha Ballardie

Drama Secretary: Matthew Kirby

Assistant Drama Secretary: Alastair Kirby

Acting Drama Stewards Secretary: Matthew Kirby

Film Secretary: Nigel Cousins

Music Secretary (Piano & Keyboard) Gwynneth Flitters

Music Secretary (Strings) Sandra Sutton

Music Secretary; (Vocal) Linda Marshall Cole

Music Secretary: (Wind) Christine Rose

Music Stewards Secretary: Gillian Greig

Competitions' Secretaries:

TYM Secretary Nigel Cavey and Diana Jerrold

TJYM Secretary: Gwynneth Flitters

TYS Secretary: Linda Marshall Cole

TJYS Secretary Nikki Ridley

TYMTS Secretary: Linda Marshall Cole

TYTP (Drama) Secretary: Matthew Kirby

It was proposed by Gill Parker and seconded by Martin Parker, that all officers should be elected 'en bloc' and all agreed.

11 AOB

Sandra Sutton: a reminder that Adam Heron, the TYM winner, would be playing in the Taunton Sinfonietta Concert on Sunday December 4th 2016 3 pm at the Temple Methodist Church.

Natasha Ballardie: a Competition for the Taunton Young Dancer to be proposed at the next meeting.

Gwyn Flitters: Claire Barnett-Jones, former Festival and Somerset Song Prize competitor, was appearing at the Last night of the Proms.

12 Date and venue of the next AGM is September 27, 2017.

Post script: Who is this?

'That man is amazing. How does he wear so many hats and not get frayed? He is a very lovely and special person and works so hard for the Festival'

'Cannot thank him enough'

'He is so patient and helpful to newcomers'

'Where would we be without him?'

'He does such sterling work and dauntless efforts'

'From shifting of furniture and putting up signs to boosting everyone's confidence: all way beyond the job description of a'
'I certainly endorse everything that has been said.'
'He is a **treasure**' (clue?)



