

Taunton Festival of the Arts

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7.30 pm, Wednesday 27th September 2017 Taunton Catholic Centre, Taunton.

Present: Diana Rees (President), Martin Parker (Chairman), Michael Chapman (Hon. Treasurer), Audrey Axford, Natasha Ballardie, Anne Cleves, Nicola Cooper, Gareth Dayus-Jones, Gwyn Flitters, Diana Jerrold, Sarah Key, Matthew Kirby, Linda Marshall Cole, Gill Parker, Christine Rose and Sandra Sutton.

1. **Apologies** were received from Jean Broadbent, Doug Huckle, Mavis Kettlewell, Nikki Ridley, Lady Rougier, Veronica Spencer and Rachael Parvin.
2. **Minutes of the last AGM** were passed and signed.
3. **Matters arising from the Minutes** – none.

4. The death of Brian Cresswell.

Anne Cleves: A brief resume of all that Brian Cresswell achieved in his time here in Taunton, as most of you who knew him will realise, is an impossible task. You will all have your personal memories, however, and, I hope will be tolerant of any omissions as I seek to portray the many, many gifts of our dear friend from my perspective. I first met Brian before coming to live in Taunton when he invited 5 choirs to join together to perform Tallis' famous 40 part Motet, which is not often performed by amateur choirs, I think. It was quite tricky, needing lots of practice.....to cut a long story short, the audience was seated centrally in St James church, with the choirs positioned around them. By a miracle of very, very careful watching we sang this marvellous work without getting lost or coming in at the wrong time. What a triumph but just as we all heaved a collective sigh of relief, we heard Brian explain to the audience that they were very unlikely to hear the work 'live' again in their lifetime, so we would sing it again..... A real risk taker! A wonderful man! Music in education, one of Brian's major campaigns and interests,(Three cheers!) brought the creation of the Saturday Morning Music School in 1974. I came across this in 1976 when looking to keep my 2 younger children happily occupied while I was teaching; heaven sent for my daughter, who joined everything in sight – loving singing, recorder and guitar classes in particular. The young brother was not so keen but I think he managed to entertain himself in a crafts area and no doubt created mayhem there also happily. There was a wonderful 'buzz' of purposeful, cheerful activity for the children of all ages. In 1981 this became the Somerset Rural Music School.

Brian was also involved later, along with Michael Stocks, then County Director of Music, in the formation of a Taunton Children's choir, ages from about 8 – 13 years. A mix of state and private school children came to Kilve Court for a trial weekend. I took 6/7 boys from TJS. I have never seen children laugh so much as when Brian was

introducing them to silent singing in a rendering of 'The emperor Napoleon had twenty thousand men'. One of my pupils actually fell off his chair, pink in the face and choking with mirth. My role, as the token female... seemed to involve mopping up pee in the girls' loos, trying to calm down a group of little girls who were enjoying 'being upset' and finding a little hand holding mine on a walk to the beach. (Definitely not one of my pupils!!)

The Taunton Children's choir was duly formed and flourished for several years under Michael's direction and I was privileged to be part of it as one of the three conductors.

At the Music Festival classes, unforgettable was the King's Hall pre-prep choir singing under Brian's direction, with shining faces, slightly untuneful little voices (they were very young) but with heartfelt spirit and absolutely giving their all. He achieved similar responses when he was at the former Archbishop Cranmer Primary School forming a choir and finding suitable music for them to sing in their Christmas service and the Leavers' service at St James Church. His heart was in state education but music was for everyone, of all ages, where ever Brian and his creative, energetic spirit were.

This was also the case when Brian founded the Somerset Opera Group, conducted the Somerset County Orchestra and directed the choir at St Mary Magdalene. No wonder he was awarded the Sir Charles Groves Prize for his outstanding contribution to Music in the Community in 1999.

When, to our sorrow, Tracy Colbeck, chairman of the then Taunton & Somerset Music and Drama Festival, suddenly died in 2002, Brian was warmly invited to become the chairman.

We, the committee, knew that the detailed, nitty gritty aspect of running the Festival was not Brian's strength but, my goodness, what an impact his energy and imagination had on us all – a real, visionary 'Big Picture' man. It was a privilege to work with him and we miss his gentle humour, his wisdom, his profound musicianship – so understated – and marvel at all he achieved.

Michael Chapman: I first came across Brian when he was at Pyrland Hall (now King's Hall School) to which my boys attended and they still remember him.

When I first became involved in the Festival some 12 or more years ago, Brian was Chairman and I was invited on to the committee for some reason. I well remember Brian's skill as Chairman in focussing our attention on how he felt we should be developing as an organisation as well as his witty remarks and amusing anecdotes and at times helpless laughter. He was always keen to close the meeting on time so that he could listen to or watch an important football match. At times I must have frustrated him in this in producing a string of items under AOB.

On becoming Treasurer I really got to know him well through the planning of Taunton Live 2015 when we met at least once a week. I acted as his sounding board as he came up with many ideas some of which would not have had a chance of making it and others that would have been financial suicide. It was during these meetings that we developed a friendship and I came to see the sort of person that he was – very supportive of his family, ambitious for the development of the Arts in Taunton and influential in so many groups and organisation to which he seemed to have an entrée. He seemed to know everyone in the music world especially in the Taunton area but farther afield also.

He was unpretentious not wanting to take the limelight but not afraid to speak out against lack of opportunity especially for state school pupils. He became a good friend and like many of us here today I miss him being around.

5. Chairman's Report

I was elected Chairman of the Festival by the Committee on 19th April this year so this is my first Annual Report. I would like to thank everybody for making me feel welcome and I feel I must mention Anne and Mike in particular. They have been generous with their time and have offered much wise counsel.

I want to say straight away that I have found the Festival to be in very good order. The festivals and competitions all went well in 2017. There were over 2500 performances in the three festivals which just goes to show what a valuable service we provide to education in the performing arts in our community.

Our Gala Concert provided performing opportunities for over 125 young people of varying ability. Each year I find this show highly entertaining and worthy of a much larger audience. We try to find performing opportunities for our high achieving contestants. In July Linda Marshall Cole linked with St John's Church to put on a lunchtime concert, showcasing the talents of four of our best singers from recent competitions. In the same vein, Ian Lum the most impressive winner of a very high quality Taunton Young Musician of the Year competition, will be performing one of Haydn's cello concertos with the Taunton Sinfonietta on 3rd December. Before I leave competitions I need to mention our newest event: the Young Dancer of the Year competition which will be held for the first time later this year on the 10th December.

We are blessed with good venues for our activities. Mark Cracknell is a generous host at Taunton School, Jan de Caux looks after us really well at Queens College and Joanna Rossiter and her team at Temple Methodist Church go out of their way to be most hospitable.

The success of our Festival depends on the skills and hard work of a small army of volunteers. I would like to thank them all here and now. Firstly our committee, then the organisers of our festivals and competitions, next the various teams who support them, Gillian's stewards, Natasha and Matthew's teams of helpers, The Song Prize Committee and finally our Friends and Benefactors. I hope I have not forgotten anybody!

But of course, all the hard work is well worthwhile - when we see youngsters enjoying their time on stage, having fun, when we see so many outstanding performances and when we watch from year to year young people developing skills which can afford them so much pleasure in later years.

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

I am pleased to report that we have enjoyed another good year consolidating our position in the previous year although I am unable at the present to be able to bring you the actual result. However I am pleased and relieved to say that with the help of Ian Shattock we have been able to present our accounts for the year 2015/16 to the Charity Commission. The accounts that we brought to you in September 2016 were unfortunately inaccurate and so I am asking that this meeting accepts the accounts set before you.

Ian has set a template for us to follow in years to come and has agreed to act as Independent Examiner in the future.

You will note from the 2015/16 accounts that our Income was £ 56,289 and our Expenditure was £54,954, leaving us with a surplus of £1,335.

As far as this year is concerned we will have to present the accounts at an Extraordinary General Meeting some time in 2018. Without quoting figures I can tell

you that all three of our Festivals have shown a profit as have the competitions except for TYM and TYS.

We have been well supported by supporters, friends and benefactors and patrons. Parents and friends and others have supported the events which has also generated further income as well as through the sale of programmes.

We have set up a new bank account in order that we can operate online. The old one has been retained to pick up the donations from our old Patrons.

The Somerset Song Prize also has its own bank account and although very much under the umbrella of Taunton Festival of the Arts it is accounted for separately but included in our overall result.

We have continued to use Brookfield House for the accommodation of our Adjudicators where we receive excellent service from Ian and Jill Reid who give us a special rate which is better than using Premier In or Travelodge.

As far as venues are concerned we get excellent value from Temple Methodist Church and Taunton School. Queen's College give us a discounted rate to help offset VAT and to recognise our charitable status but we have to carefully look at this in deciding to use it as a venue particularly for the competitions.

We continue to claw back via the Gift Aid Scheme substantial sums from donations. The influx of some new members to our committee including Doug Huckle who has taken on the role of Treasure I believe ensure the continued consolidation of the Festival in the opportunities it provides for talented young performers and has enabled me to retire from that post. I am happy to support Doug as he acquaints himself with what needs to be done and will release me to support our chairman Martin Parker in the valuable work he is doing.

There were no questions.

Gwyn Flitters proposed that the accounts be accepted, she was seconded by Natasha Ballardie, and all were in favour.

7. 2017 Music, Drama and Dance Festival reports from the section secretaries.

Piano (Gwyn Flitters)

The number of entries in the piano classes has risen again, but some classes were reduced by illness among the younger children. Nevertheless, the day and a half were truly enjoyable, owing to the great amount of talent we have in our area. Our adjudicator Timothy Barratt, who has great experience in dealing with musicians of all ages and standards, gave advice and encouragement in a friendly, positive manner. Any spare time was put to good use. A rather nervous child was encouraged to play his piece again, with Tim adding a second part. The nerves disappeared and a smile took their place!

Tim has the ability to play from memory any section of any piece in order to illustrate a point. The audience found this amazing. Tim said it was largely the result of playing repertoire from memory and listening to so many exams and festivals! Highlights of the days were the duets, (Tim had never heard so many in one festival) and the high standard of playing from the senior pupils. The teachers were praised for their hard work and for encouraging so many children to gain confidence by performing in public.

I would like to thank all the stewards who gave up their time so cheerfully, and Taunton School for providing us with refreshments.

Woodwind and Brass (Christine Rose and Diana Jerrold)

The day started well at Temple Methodist church with Melanie Ragge announcing straight away that she was not a 'dragon' and intended to give positive and encouraging advice to everyone. She turned out to be a most inspiring adjudicator and all of the entrants gained so much from her wealth of knowledge and expertise, especially as she gave such thorough comments for each and every entrant. The morning ran fairly well on time and there was a relaxed but purposeful feeling. After lunch we were well entertained by Castle school's various groups. This is an area to be encouraged and it was a shame that there weren't any other entrants and not many people in the audience to enjoy it. An excellent afternoon of Brass playing and entries from the Concertina band completed the day and Melanie Ragge was very impressed with the extremely high standard. One class received all distinctions, something, she said, she rarely gives. Keith Jones accompanied sympathetically, as always, and we are very grateful for his time and commitment.

The recorder classes took place on the following day and were adjudicated by Caroline Diffley. The morning ran smoothly and she was a very encouraging adjudicator, especially with such a lot of very young children

There were a total of 87 entries this year compared to only 54 last year; 37 entries for the woodwind classes, 21 for brass and 25 for Recorder, 2 Music Making and 2 entries for Free reeds. W2 and W3 classes were particularly well supported, but we would have benefitted from another warm up room for all the entrants who arrived at the same time and for those who wanted a run through with Keith Jones, the official accompanist.

Temple Methodist has many advantages as a venue but it is a very difficult place to park and offload instruments and equipment, especially for the school minibuses. In future it may be worth investigating using the other door beside the stage to exit so as not to block the entrance for other people coming in or, indeed, attempt to find a different venue. It is also very difficult to hear the adjudicator's comments from the very back of the hall, despite Melanie Ragge speaking very clearly and loudly. It may be worth roping off the last few rows to encourage people to sit nearer the front. It seemed such a pity that these young people were playing to a tiny audience for much of the day and this seems like something worth looking into.

Strings (Sandra Sutton)

The String Classes were held at the Temple Methodist Church on Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd February. As ever, the support from committee members Mike, Anne, Gillian, and the team of volunteer helpers, was amazing and appreciated by all. Support from Temple Methodist Church led by Jo Rossiter was equally fantastic and appreciated by all and ensured the smooth-running of everything on both days. We are, indeed, extremely lucky to have such wonderful organisers as well as having an excellent support network.

The adjudicator for both days was Kay Tucker; an experienced adjudicator who had been involved with the Taunton Festival in previous years. Over the two days she awarded 2 "outstanding" certificates (both being awarded to Charlotte Lee) and 37 "Distinctions" (which she sometimes broke down into 2 categories "Distinction" and "Distinction Plus").

There was plenty of variety across the two days with a saxophone quartet, string group, string duets, string quartets, clarinet ensemble, orchestras, flute trio, recorder groups, guitar solos, teacher and pupil duets, parent and child duets, family music making, trumpet ensembles, brass groups, harp solos and a ukulele solo as well as many solo performances on bowed stringed instruments and many solo performances on guitars. All performances showed a high level of commitment from the performers as well as their teachers, and this was duly mentioned by Kay. Keith Jones demonstrated his amazing talents as accompanist to many of the performers. His ability to organise rehearsals, to accommodate changes and to fit in last minute additions shows us how invaluable he is to us and I for one really appreciate all he does for us at the festival.

During the two days Kay Tucker showed a very sensitive and humorous approach which went down well with performers and audience alike. Some quotes I made from the 2 days were:

"The go for it approach is good; now we need more finesse" and (referring to the timpanist in one of the orchestras) she warned: "only the courageous should apply for this post!"

One of the stars from this section of the festival was undoubtedly Charlotte Lee who, as I mentioned before, gained the only two "Outstanding" awards given across the 2 days. She also won 4/5 trophies, all well deserved, as the repertoire she played was very demanding bearing in mind she gave no less than 6 performances from memory all on the same day and she is only 10 years old.

Charlotte would have been an obvious choice for the forthcoming Gala Concert, but shortly after the festival she and her family moved to Germany to live, so we suspect we have possibly seen her last performance in this festival. (I think Mike and I are both hoping that Charlotte's mother will have got over the experience of Charlotte being beaten into second place by Anthony Knight in the Transitional trophy; and I think that Mike's firmness and well timed comment, "The adjudicator's word is final" may well have averted a possible "Handbags at Dawn" episode!)

Yes, every festival should perhaps have one of these every year and I felt sure my handbag would have been up to it if required!

Vocal classes (Linda Marshall Cole)

I am very happy to report another season of high level enjoyable vocal music making. This is the second year we have employed one adjudicator and run the classes in age order over three days, with a fourth morning for choirs. This is much easier administratively and no doubt suits the participants much better. We started on Monday, 6th February, with 8 and under to 10 year olds, Tuesday 12 to 14 and Wednesday 16 to 18. The numbers competing were substantial, although not quite as many as last year. Again we should thank Lisa Tustian, and King's Hall in particular, for encouraging so many of the younger ones to take part. The adjudicator was Sarah Jefferies, returning after a year's gap. She is brilliant, very knowledgeable and experienced, on board with the latest information about breath support, state of the larynx in the young, very clear thinking and organised, communicates well with all ages and is a bundle of fun. She seemed impressed with the standard and awarded a few of the rare "Outstanding" category marks. There was a decreased requirement for the official accompanist. I think this was because the fees for this service had been raised and people had made other arrangements. However, Keith Jones and Andrew Carter did what was necessary in their usual skilful and supportive way. There were no takers for Senior Vocal classes again this year. I believe this is a national tendency and that we have to accept that the demand is no longer there. The classes were held at Temple Methodist

Church, with the adjudicating table near the front to make it appropriate for all sizes of voices to be heard. We are very well looked after by the team at Temple, with everything including refreshments on site, so it is unbeatable from a pastoral care point of view and also is affordable. On the Thursday morning, the choir classes were held at Queen's Hall, Queen's College. This venue is important as it houses large numbers. A good time was had by all, again with Sarah Jefferies adjudicating. I was not able to be present every day so I am grateful to the key committee members, Mike and Anne, and also the stewarding team for running everything like clockwork. Penny Hart and Helen Hamilton-Meikle were present for two days between them to report back to me on suitable performers for the Gala concert.

Speech and Drama Classes (Matthew Kirby)

The Taunton Drama Festival of 2017 was once again held at the Temple Methodist Church, Taunton from 5th – 10th March 2017. It was a most successful and enjoyable week, not only from the perspective of an organiser, but also as a teacher and spectator. The number of competitors/entries was consistent (with nearly 400 children participating throughout the week). This was of course wonderful to see! Our adjudicators this year were John Eastman and Eleanor McLeod. John adjudicated the TYTP competition on the Sunday afternoon, as well as running the acting audition workshop on the Sunday evening. Eleanor adjudicated for us for the remainder of the week (Monday – Friday). Eleanor is an experienced BIFF adjudicator, LAMDA examiner and teacher of Speech & Drama. Her feedback was invaluable, delivering both constructive and encouraging adjudications. John is an experienced actor and director, having completed a MA at the Central School of Speech & Drama and also taught Shakespeare at City Lit. Despite the small number of participants in the workshop, it was wonderful to hear John's extensive experience and knowledge in all of his adjudications. We had several new classes at this year's Festival, which included: Bible Sight Reading, Impromptu Speaking and Sight Reading for Year 4 & Under. All of these new classes seemed extremely popular and I hope to build upon this success next year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my band of true and loyal supporters (especially Alastair, Mike, Anne, all at the Temple Methodist Church and all of the Stewards, particularly those who stepped in at the last minute

Dance Classes (Natasha Ballardie)

The Dance Festival was held at Queen's Collage, Taunton from 31st May to 3rd June 2017.

Dancers from all over the South West, performed various styles of dance to an audience and our adjudicator Danielle Drayton. Danielle had a positive and kinder spirit with the candidates and lifted moral when on various occasions we were tested by parents and teachers. She commented on the high standard of work and performance from all the students.

This year proved to be challenging from previous years as new rules were brought in by Queens not to allow anyone other than festival helpers and dancers back stage. As we were told this on our first day, you can imagine our dance mums were non-too happy. With the dance festival's fantastic helpers, we ironed out the blips and do what English people do best and offered a cup of tea.

It was a very successful 4 days and Taunton Festival of the Arts would like to thank the dance committee for all their help and support. I would especially like to thank Gillian for stepping in and organising helpers, standing on the front line to sell the

tickets and programmes. I would also like to thank the festival committee for their continued support.

Competition reports on TJYM, TYM, TYS, TJYS, TYMTS and TYTP

TJYM (Gwyn Flitters)

The Taunton Junior Young Musician, held in Temple Methodist Church, was more like a concert than a competition. We had nine musicians playing trumpet, flute, clarinet, guitar, piano and saxophone. Our adjudicator, Richard Deering, a very experienced performer and examiner, complimented them on the standard of their playing and their choice of repertoire. He said it was not always easy to choose a winner when the instruments were so varied and the overall standard so high, but he was looking for someone whose performance really moved him.

He asked them to make their performance begin as soon as they came on to the stage.

‘Look at your audience and smile when you announce your pieces. Do not hide behind your music stand!’ Richard also gave them useful tips on presentation, and not worrying about the odd wrong note! ‘Think about the style and what you want to convey to your listeners. Enjoy your performance and your audience will also.’ And judging by the comments afterwards, they did!

1st prize of £100 and the Jefferson Horsley trophy was awarded to Matthew Osborne, (trumpet) from King’s Hall School, who played with great feeling and control. Joint 2nd prizes of £50 went to two clarinetists, Abigail Hopwood from Queen’s College and Ellen Steward from Wells Cathedral School.

My thanks go to our stewards, on the door and behind the scenes. And also to Joanne Rossiter, from Temple Methodist Church, who never fails to provide refreshment so promptly and cheerfully.

TYM (Diana Jerrold)

The eleventh Taunton Young Musician of the Year Competition, sponsored by the Taunton Rotary clubs, was held at Queen’s College on Sunday 26th February.

Ten extremely talented and polished performers competed to a very high standard, displaying complete commitment and musical understanding of their choice of repertoire. The unenviable task of choosing a winner was up to the adjudicator, Elizabeth Childs. She spoke to each competitor giving detailed and encouraging comments, with good advice for future performances.

Ian Lum, ‘cello, was awarded first prize, having captivated the audience with his mature and inspiring playing of the first movement of Elgar’s Concerto.

It is hard to think how these young musicians have reached such a high standard in an incredibly short time.

The afternoon was thoroughly enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience, who are now off to practise their scales....

TYS (Linda Marshall Cole)

Taunton Young Singer was held on the morning of 26th February sharing the day with Taunton Young Musician taking place in the afternoon. The two adjudicators were Gaynor Keeble (vocal) and Liz Childs (instrumental). They are both very capable musicians and it was good to witness the way they worked so well together.

I was concerned that only five singers had signed up for this competition. The numbers are diminishing year by year. The reason seems to be related to the pressure on

young people to spend every available minute on their academic studies as the stakes are high. One competitor told me that he had been advised not to take on extra mural activities unless they were related to his career ambition. However, he took no notice as he wanted to sing! In the event, all five were meaningful contenders. First place was awarded to Florence Davies (King's College, Taunton), 2nd Ella Corlett (King's Bruton), 3rd Kieran Smith (Blundell's School, Tiverton).

The venue was Queen's Hall, but although changes had been made to the Hall recently, I did feel that the acoustic environment was ungenerous, particularly to the lower voices. I would like to thank Andrew Carter for acting as official accompanist.

The additional prize of a lunchtime recital at St. John's Church, Taunton, on 14th July, could not be taken up either by the winner or the singers in 2nd and 3rd place. Knowing this difficulty before St. John's went to print, I advertised in general terms that vocal competition winners from Taunton Festival would be performing. In the event Amelie Lloyd, winner of Taunton Junior Young Singer, and Gregory Steward, last year's winner of TYS and this year's TYMTS 2nd place, were booked to take part. In addition the joint TYMTS winners from 2016, Louisa Everett and Imi Sanders-Dutton performed. All the singers were excellent, resulting in a contented audience being entertained by some able young people and also some money being donated to the Festival coffers.

Looking to the future, we cannot gamble on numbers as small as five, so have suggested that we hold a Singing Competition day next year, with one adjudicator who is equally knowledgeable about classical and music theatre voice qualities and styles, TYS in the morning and TYMTS in the afternoon. Sarah Jefferies has agreed to adjudicate for this event. The date has now been fixed for Saturday, 25th February, 2018.

TJYS (Nikki Ridley)

Now in its second year, Taunton Junior Young Singer (generously sponsored by Ashfords, Taunton Music Trust and Amici Chamber Choir) has proved to be extremely popular with its target audience. This year ten singers aged between ten and 13 from Taunton and the surrounding area met in Temple Methodist Hall to perform a wide variety of pieces. Folk songs and musical theatre classics were performed alongside repertoire by Handel, Mozart, Hahn and Caccini, amongst others, showing that these young singers are as versatile as they are committed. In her adjudication speech Amy Carson said she was 'hugely inspired by the performances' and gave all the singers things to think about as well as being extremely positive and encouraging to the whole field. Ellen Steward and Spike Maxwell were highly commended for their performances. Esme Daniell-Greenhalgh from Exeter Cathedral School was placed third, Magus Larsen from King's Hall, second and Amélie Lloyd from Heathfield was awarded the first prize and the Cleves Cup.

It was particularly pleasing to witness the support and enthusiasm with which all the singers responded to each other's performances

TYMTS (Linda Marshall Cole)

We had nine applicants for this competition, which was acceptable, but entries arrived at the last minute and numbers were down from previous years. However, we had a really good afternoon. Bryan Husband, with considerable experience of the genre, was a good adjudicator. He did not have long to speak, as he had a train to catch, but I had seen some of his reports and they were full of apt and helpful comments so I felt we had been well served.

First place was awarded to India Lightwood (Queen's College, Taunton), 2nd to Gregory Steward (Wells Cathedral School) and 3rd to Katie Theobald (Queen's College, Taunton).

The competition was held in the Gwyn Williams Room, Taunton School Music School. It is very useful to have the run of the practice rooms and therefore in general it is a suitable venue. There is just one drawback which is the relative loudness of the grand piano. Some accompanists kept it in check but others were not quite so successful.

Our official accompanist was once again Mark Shelvey, who is well versed in the Music Theatre style and gave the competitors very useful rehearsals and suitable support in their performances.

Next year, as already expressed, we will have the Music Theatre element in the afternoon, with the same adjudicator as the classical competition in the morning. Then we can expect an exciting vocal day, hopefully within a reasonable budget. This will only involve one Sunday for the competitors. However, if they are really keen, they can still take part in both competitions.

Drama: TYTP (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 Sunday 5th March 2017 at 2pm at the Temple Methodist Church. Initially, we were due to start at 3pm, but due to an increased number of entries, we decided to start one hour earlier at 2pm. The Junior Category had eleven performers participating and the Senior Category had five. A significant increase in entries compared to last year, which was truly wonderful to see! The standard was so much higher than last year; the choice of material was varied (with acting monologues, poetry, readings, musical theatre, performance poetry and musical theatre). We were honoured to have John Eastman to adjudicate this competition. John was extremely impressed with all of the recital performances and commented on the high standard of all the performers. The competition was a huge success once again for 2017 (with an increased number of entries) and I hope to build upon this for next year, with some more changes being discussed. The winner of the Junior Category was Lily MacNiece (from Kings Hall) and the winner of the Senior Category was Cassie Grace (from Taunton School). Lily 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 £100 competition for this competition.

Linda Marshall Cole warmly thanked Gareth Dayus-Jones for becoming her successor as Vocal Secretary for the Festival.

Natasha Ballardie gave special mention and thank to Gillian Greig who organised stewarding so efficiently for the Dance Festival.

7b Friends & Benefactors' report (Gill Parker)

In 2017 our scheme attracted 11 Benefactors and 13 Friends which means we raised £1250 (with Gift Aid about £1557) for Festival funds.

In addition the Song Prize Supporters scheme raised £880 plus some Gift Aid.

I have tried to keep our Friends and Benefactors up to date with the Festival's activities through occasional emails or letters.

8. Gala Concert (Natasha Ballardie)

The Taunton Festival of the Arts held its second Gala Evening on 4th June 2017 at Queen's College, Taunton. Students from the Music, Drama and Dance sections of the festival came together to wow the audience with their performances. The evening ran smoothly as we followed the running order from the previous year. One point we must consider for next year, is to cut out the 2 monkeys running on and off stage with the piano!

With special thanks to Gareth Dayus-Jones and Lisa Tustian, who were the accompanists for the evening, and to Sally Jenkins for arranging a wonderful harp group before the Gala started. I would also like to thank Taunton Festival of the Arts committee for their help and support. It was a wonderful evening which was enjoyed by a fabulous audience and brilliant performers.

9. Somerset Song Prize (Martin Parker)

I think SSP 2017 was a big success with a very high standard of singing and playing. It seems that the SSP is well on the way to achieving Brian's ambition for a Somerset singing competition which is recognised to be of national importance.

Preparations began with a successful Launch evening function at CICCIC in January and then, in February, we received entries from 83 singers and about 75 pianists. The Regional rounds followed in Taunton, Cardiff, Birmingham and London at the end of March/beginning of April. Our adjudicators have selected 22 couples for the semi-final: 1 from the Taunton round, 2 from Cardiff, 3 from Birmingham and 16 from London. These numbers were roughly in proportion to the number of entries received for each venue.

The finals were held at Temple Methodist Church over the weekend 13th 14th May. This venue proved to be ideal in many ways and, as usual, Joanna looked after us with generous care, providing a delicious tea.

The competition itself ran smoothly with help from some of Gillian's Festival stewards, Lisa Tustian's young pupils and Hannah Deason Barrow as Adjudicators' steward. Mike Chapman and Wayne Bennett were MCs and Guy Robinson and Hilary Marshall kept things moving behind the scenes. The vibes were that the competitors enjoyed the experience of a weekend in Somerset not least because of the generous overnight hospitality provided by several kind people.

Despite a big effort to sell tickets our audiences were not large. I guess there were about 35 on the Saturday and 85 on the Sunday. It seems that Art Song is not a big draw in Somerset!

Harold Mead, the SSP Treasurer, expects there to be a profit of about £2875 after one or two loose ends have been tidied up. We received £6250 in donations and sponsorship (£5000 from the Fairfield Trust, and the rest from Somerset Opera, the Ron Tickner Trust, Amici and Harold himself). Entry fees brought in £2460. Ticket sales for the Semi Final and the grand Final totalled £1630 and the Supporters scheme contributed £840.

The adjudicators at the Final were Joan Rodgers, Jonathan Lemalu and Roger Vignoles. Taking the first prize of £1000 was British tenor Joel Williams supported by pianist Ian Tindale. Runner-up with a prize of £500 was the Estonian soprano Mirjam Mesak whose pianist, the American Michael Sikich, won the £1000 pianist prize. Jacob Phillips won the Most Promising Young Singer prize and the English baritone Hugo Herman-Wilson won the £250 Audience Prize which was presented by the Mayor, Councillor Hazel Prior Sankey.

10. Appointment of Officials and Trustees

- a) Michael Chapman had been invited to become the Deputy Chairman.
It was proposed by Linda Marshall Cole, and seconded by Di Jerrold that Michael Chapman's appointment as Deputy Chairman should be agreed and all were in favour.
- b) Proposed new Trustees: Doug Huckle and Gareth Dayus-Jones.
Linda Marshall Cole had relinquished the position of Trustee.
It was proposed by Audrey Axford and seconded by Gill Parker that Doug Huckle and Gareth Dayus-Jones should become Trustees and all were in favour.
- c) The non-Trustees on the committee are Jean Broadbent, Di Jerrold and Christine Rose.
It was proposed by Natasha Ballardie and seconded by Gareth Dayus-Jones that the 3 committee members should be accepted as non-Trustees and all were in favour.
- d) Competition Secretaries, and helpers, who are not official committee members: Nigel Cavey, Nikki Ridley, Linda Marshall Cole and Gillian Greig.
It was proposed by Gwyn Flitters and seconded by Diana Rees that the above should be accepted in those roles, and all were in favour.

Committee of Trustees

President	Diana Rees
Chairman	Martin Parker
Deputy Chairman	Michael Chapman
Hon. Treasurer	Doug Huckle
Assistant Treasurer	Michael Chapman
Secretary to the Trustees	Anne Cleves
Music Secretary (Piano)	Gwyn Flitters
Music Secretary (Strings)	Sandra Sutton
Music Secretary (Vocal)	Gareth Dayus-Jones

Other Secretaries

Music Secretary (Wind)	Christine Rose
Assistant Wind Secretary	Diana Jerrold
Assistant Drama Secretary	Alastair Kirby
Correspondence Secretary	Jean Broadbent
Stewards Secretary	Gillian Greig

Competition Secretaries

TYM Secretary	Nigel Cavey
TJYM Secretary	Gwyn Flitters
TYS Secretary	Linda Marshall Cole
TJYS Secretary	Nikki Ridley
TYMTS Secretary	Linda Marshall Cole
TYTP (Drama) Secretary	Matthew Kirby
TYD (Dance)	Natasha Ballardie

11. AOB – none

12. Date and venue of the 2018 AGM – 26th September, 7.30 pm at the Taunton Catholic Centre.