

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2020

Well, this has been a very strange year, hasn't it? Our festival was really lucky to be able to complete by the beginning of March, before the world went onto hold. Many other festivals in our region were not so lucky and this continues into the future.

Dance went to a new venue at Northbrook Met college this year , with good facilities and super support from the staff. A few hiccups on the first day were easily sorted and the hope is to return.....if ever that is possible. The following weekend was the singing section and this was very popular with the audience filling the Chichester room every day. The groups were difficult to manage on Sunday afternoon but we got through and the Mayor and her Consort enjoyed them very much. The Piano and Instrumental classes followed the next weekend which I nearly missed with either a very bad fluery cold or maybe early C-19, however the championships and concerto classes were of a good standard and most enjoyable, with Madam Mayor in the audience again. After a week respite, Drama started at Field Place, with a new adjudicator after our first one had to withdraw for family reasons. There were some complications with arrangements at Field Place and also some very long days, however, again the standard of the work presented was excellent. Then a final exciting few days of Dance at the Pavilion as usual, with good audiences but some cancellations creeping in due to illness which anticipated the full closedown which happened two weeks later.....PHEW!

So an artistically and financially successful festival was completed. But, the office closed down and we all began trying to fathom the 'new normal', learning new technical skills, not having any toilet paper or pasta and watching endless hours of tv, Netflix and You Tube! I feel the longing for live performances will fuel future audiences, even if that does not happen immediately.

The support we offer to the next generation of performers is going to be invaluable to them in these difficult times, however we must accept that the festival may well have to be very different in the future. Many of our stewards are in the 'vulnerable' age group so may well not be able to support us as freely as before. Group classes, so popular with audiences, will take time to come back.

So we look forward to a new age in festivals. Well done to Drama and Piano/Instrumental for being ready to run, although it is with bated breath as we watch the new regulations come in. Singing is going to be a difficult one to re-establish until safety is completely understood. Dance is hoping to run some sort of new style classes and I wish them good luck.

And to you, our supporters, stay with us please, we will be back just as soon as we can safely do it!

Jan Spooner Swabey

Hon. Secretary