



Croydon Performing Arts Festival 2021 Annual Reports

Chairman of the Trustees

Frustratingly, the 2021 festival had to be cancelled for the same reason that that of 2020 was. As in the previous year, the festival collapsed in two stages: the first cancellation was the Music and Speech & Drama sections at Royal Russell; we had hoped to keep the later events in the Fairfield Halls, but that was not possible. The restrictions prevailing in late May made it seem vaguely feasible for us to run the Dance section at Fairfield, but the accompanying challenges were too great for us to consider running this intense and labour-stretching week; so, after much consideration and discussion among the Trustees with regard to safety, well-being, and risk, we reluctantly cancelled. We asked the third-party management at Fairfield to, yet again, transfer our deposit to our 2022 booking and, at the time of writing, somewhat concerningly, we have not had a response, but my Trustee colleagues have convinced me that I am worrying unnecessarily.

Following the cancellations, our professional compensation obligations to adjudicators and accompanists were fulfilled, and entry fees were returned to all entrants who claimed.

The cancellation, however, gave us all time to reflect and, as a result, we have altered the dates and introduced new classes. For some years we have regularly discussed the problems of obtaining sufficient entries for Music and Speech & Drama during the usual spring weekends, which are further affected by the timing of Easter, school holidays and public examinations. Therefore, for 2022 — and hopefully thereafter — we have moved the Music and Speech & Drama events at Royal Russell to the last weekend of January and the first weekend of February. This was done in consultation with BIFF, as well as Coulsdon & Purley Festival who, somewhat disturbingly run many of their events in Croydon under our noses in March.

Completely out of the blue in the summer, I received a letter from the solicitors responsible for Geoff Shaw's residual estate, informing us that we were due 20% of that estate. This turned out to be a sizeable sum and, while we intend investing 66% of that sum, once approved by the Trustees, the remainder has been partly allocated towards some notable classes within music in Geoff's memory. These classes will be multi-instrumental and focused upon the works of Croydon's composer — Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and his daughter — as well as named composers who have significant anniversaries. We have also, with the valuable co-operation of the London Mozart Players, reinstated the Concerto Competition.

These three new classes, aimed at more advanced performers, have been highlighted to a wide range of conservatoires and schools by the sending of flyers designed very attractively by a Royal Russell School student, who has kindly given of her skills freely and allowed us to use the material for further festival events. I have responded to her kindness by offering to write any references that she may seek for her portfolio.

All the Music and Speech & Drama events, apart from Choral, will be held at Royal Russell School again, and we would like to thank Chris and his staff for their incredible support, which was extended still further this year by offering us storage space for the trophies and materials that had been previously lurking in various people's garages and spare rooms.

As before, the audience admission for these Royal Russell events will be free as I am keen for us to fully simulate ideal performing experiences for our entrants by having substantial numbers of listeners, and we are encouraging all entrants to bring as many supporters with them as possible. It would be good if we could find a sponsor(s) to cover that lost revenue, as well as covering the cost of the coffee-cart facility. If anyone knows of somebody or an organisation that would cover that relatively modest sum in return of a week of publicity in Fairfield Hall later in the year, please let me know.

Speaking earlier of trophies, which are stored now at Royal Russell School, we have a surplus now, as modern performers are less motivated by that form of reward. If anyone knows of a possible valuer and/or buyer, we would like to make contact to realise the worth of these redundant trophies.

A further addition to our planning was to conclude the 2022 festival, and, hopefully, make a regular occurrence, with a Gala Concert in Fairfield Halls, immediately following the Dance week. That Gala Concert — write this in your diary now for Saturday 4 June! — will showcase the best of what we do in Music (Western and South Asian), Speech & Drama and Dance.

I have mentioned in my report for the past three years and itemised it on the last three AGM Agendas, but 2023 sees Croydon assume the mantle of London Borough of Culture and I am still seeking ideas and responses concerning what part CPAF can take in this important year.

Finally, on behalf of all Members and Trustees, I would like to thank Bridget for the enormous amount of work done throughout the past year on our collective behalf.

Richard Deering

There is little to report on the running of the festival this year as again, sadly, we were unable to hold our live festival. But I must make some thank yous to:

Geoff Lawrence, Judy Moseley, Ophelia Gordon, Liam Swatridge and Jenna Manji for their continued contribution and support of the festival, and the behind-the-scenes work that has taken place;

Judy, Terence Roberts and Gillian Bibby who have for many years stored festival materials in their homes/garages; items have now been transferred to Royal Russell, with thanks to Chris Hutchinson;

the Trustees who have spent time and given considerable thought and care to the decisions made as regards to holding, or not, the sections of the 2021 festival.

In addition, our sincere condolences to Gillian, whose husband, John, died on 7 August. Gillian has been a stalwart of the festival for nearly 30 years, and even while caring for John, has been a most dependable helper at the festival. As recently as 16 July, she assisted us in the rehousing of trophies and materials at Royal Russell. The Trustees made a donation to the family's chosen charity, The Ryan MS Therapy Centre.

We send our congratulations to Ophelia and Sam, to be married on 5 November.

I have, over the past year, 18 months, attended several excellent online sessions run by BIFF, and so present a report from the last, the AGM and Conference, held online at the beginning of October.

The overwhelming message of the 2021 BIFF Conference was "We all want live festivals to return." Many festivals went online during lockdowns, and some, owing to timings and the changing government regulations, were hybrid (part live, part online). Benefits of this have been many, from keeping performing going to receiving

entries from both those who might not feel comfortable performing to a live audience and people outside of the local area, both nationally and internationally, who would not have been able to attend that particular live festival. It was also asked if more parents were entering performers as something for them to do (and not leaving these decisions to teachers, who might or might not value, enter festivals). Classes suited for online have been identified, particularly in speech and drama, for example, screen writing, Tik Tok, radio etc., and it was thought that this could be a way of getting secondary schools over the threshold.

It was agreed by all that online festivals were no substitute for the real thing, but that they were here to stay in some format. Of course, any online classes run could not be included with live performance classes. They are not a level playing field. Obvious examples include a piano class. At a live festival, each performer comes and plays their piece on the one same, unknown, piano, straight through once in front of an audience. In an online festival, each performer plays their piece on their own, familiar, instrument, of varying condition, and may have taken however many run-throughs before the “perfect” one was reached and that recording submitted (and the recording technology be of different qualities, also). Dance festivals and adjudicators also expressed their concerns with online festivals; they are very complicated (and finding studio space to record performances was a challenge). It was suggested that if online classes are still included, those entries could be shared on screen during the live festival.

The positive of the pandemic I have found for Croydon, in our cancelling two years running now, is the support we have received. Many people both last year and this year donated their entry fees to the festival, and, following our launch at the beginning of September, I have received several messages of “We’re so glad you’re back.”

We have also been supported hugely by BIFF. Despite staff being placed on furlough in April 2020 and those working, working remotely (the team returned to full-time work on 1 October 2021), Steven Roberts and his team have continued to work tirelessly to support festivals and adjudicators. Over the past 18 months, we have received regular briefings, updated guidance, advice on running online festivals, adjudications, risk assessments for live festivals and more, all based on the changing government regulations. At the same time, they have also continued to support IT developments and review the adjudicator code of practice and the complaints policy. The new-adjudicator process is also being refined. Festival subscriptions have been reviewed, and, having had two cancelled festivals, we have paid a significantly reduced sub these past two years.

One of the big discussions at the Conference was about inclusivity, and festivals’ representing communities and the full range of each discipline. Guest speaker Sharon Watson (chief executive and principal of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance) and others present were impressed by our inclusion of South Asian dance and music within the main dance and music sections at Croydon and that they fall in as a natural part of the sections, their syllabuses matching those of the Western ones.

Looking to next year, I very much hope that we will receive a good number of entries for all sections, including the concerto competition and new advanced music classes. We will of course need to be looking at and working to regulations from the government and our venues as to the running of all live sections.

The last piece of news from BIFF was that in celebration of their centenary, they have launched a project for a 5-6-minute film that explains what festivals are all about, to be premiered at the 2022 Conference. Also, the team are producing a digital, interactive timeline: adjudicators, events, facts, festivals and people. The visuals of the beginning of this which we saw were fascinating, and I do hope that our archive material will be of use towards this project.

Finance Report

There are three pieces of **good news** to note for the 2021 accounts.

The first is practical. This is our second full year of being a CIO; so the comparative figures from 2020 are for a full financial year. We now have like-for-like figures on the page, which we could not provide in the same way last year (2019 was the year we started as a charity and then became a CIO, each requiring their own set of accounts).

The second is that the cancellation of the 2021 Festival did not cost us. The decision to cancel was made early enough in the year that we had paid no costs for venues, adjudicators or accompanists and so did not need to pay any cancellation fees, which we did last year. The deposit of £7,884 paid to the Fairfield Halls for our 2020 booking (dance and choirs) and transferred for our 2021 booking has been transferred on to 2022. We received a full entry for the Dance section, it having been set to be an All-England qualifier. This brought our entry fees to £11,068, the majority of which was refunded, but some fees were given as donations.

The third is the most noticeable in the accounts. We received a legacy from Geoff Shaw, of £96,000. This money has been put into the reserve account and will be used for prizes for both the advanced classes (Concerto, Coleridge-Taylor, Anniversary) and recital classes in the Music section (Western and South Asian), and for overall prizes in the Speech & Drama section.

Change in bank accounts

We continue to use the current business account with NatWest, and have a PayPal account for receiving entry fees, and making direct payment for resources where possible (to save my paying and being reimbursed). The two COIF accounts (one of which was the restricted Winifred Gall prize fund account) with CCLA were closed in October. We received little interest on these, and it was agreed, upon advice from Geoffrey Lawrence, to close these, transfer the unrestricted monies into the current account, and to open a reserve account with NatWest for the restricted funds. The reserve account now holds the remainder of the Winifred Gall fund, the dance award given last year by Patricia Snowdon and the legacy from Geoff Shaw. The reserve account is linked to our current account, and we have online banking facilities for both; so obtaining the prize monies at the Festival itself will be very simple.

Since the year-end, and the accounts and this report produced, much of the legacy has been invested in other funds.

A few other notes

Subscriptions and donations. We continue to receive subs via the GoCardless system. As I wrote last year, this does take 1% (30p per £30 full sub, 20p per £20 concession), but ensures that subscriptions are made and received, and is a most appreciated source of regular income for the Festival. It is very simple to sign up to at croydonperformingartsfestival.org/give

Entry fees. These were very high for Dance, it having been re-scheduled as an All-England Qualifier. Numbers for Music (58) and Speech & Drama (16) were very low, no doubt owing to the pandemic.

PayPal fees (Miscellaneous income and expenditure). PayPal is the quickest and easiest way for entrants to pay with the online entry system. Payment is taken at the point of checkout; so all entries submitted are paid in full, and no chasing of payments is required. As a charity, we are charged 1.4% plus £0.20 per transaction. The figure in the expenditure is the charge made when we receive payment. For entry fees refunded with 180 days of the original payment, the PayPal charge is refunded, also. This is the figure in the income.

BIFF, AED, insurance, licences. The subscription each Festival pays to BIFF is calculated upon the size of the Festival etc. We are usually billed in May, after the Festival, when numbers have been submitted to BIFF. Last year, BIFF spent time establishing what to charge festivals, owing to the pandemic; so we paid the 2020 sub of £125 in this financial year (October). We were then charged £50 for 2021 (paid in June), as we had two full cancellations owing to the pandemic.

Awards and prizes (expenditure). We are invited to send the winner of our senior piano class to the Emanuel Trophy Piano Competition run by the North London Festival. Ophelia Gordon, our 2019 winner, represented us in the virtual 2021 Festival.

Independent examiner's fee. The 2019 figure was higher as we had two sets of accounts to be audited for that year.

We remain indebted to Geoffrey Lawrence for all his work throughout the year, advising us on our accounts and the constitution.

Bridget West