

Arts Centre Manager's Report to the Annual General Meeting

Thursday July 13th 2017

2016 -17 was once again a very busy year for the Centre and I would like to echo Barbara's thanks to the staff and volunteers without whom we couldn't offer such a busy programme. As Barbara mentioned, there are only 4 core staff and none of us is full-time, which makes for a very busy environment!

I usually start this report by picking out a few statistics from the previous year, so over the 2016-17 year we mounted 35 live events (9 more than the previous year due to the Festival of Song and the Landmark Stories festival), 11 exhibitions and fairs and an average of 15 classes per week, plus a further 8 offered by independent providers. We have maintained our involvement as co-organisers of the Teddington Village Fair and are a partner organisation for both the Richmond upon Thames Music and Drama Festival and the First World War Partnership.

I think it is fair to say that this has been a challenging year for the core staff due to the ongoing computer problems that we experienced. In the end we had to bite the financial bullet and undertake a thorough overhaul of our systems which included a new server, complete re-cabling, new backup and power supply. The final bill was just over £10,000 and despite careful planning, was very disruptive and time consuming. I hesitate to say that all is now well, but I'm sure you can appreciate that not having invested seriously in our computers for over a decade this was an infrastructure upgrade that was long overdue.

However, this upgrade has delayed a major item that I had hoped to tick off my 2016 to do list: linking online booking directly into our box office. This will enable you to go onto our website, see the seating plan for allocated seating events, choose your seat, add a pre-show supper if you wish and get the members' ticket rate provided your membership sub is up to date! This is a long overdue objective, but we are now making progress. We have been accepted by Secure Trading, an online secure payment provider and our new website will be launching next month. We will have to make one more hardware investment but then we will be ready to switch over from We Got Tickets to direct booking.

Artistic Programme: Looking Ahead

Onto more exciting matters. The one-off festivals and multi-genre events that we have tried out over the past two years have proved successful artistically and thanks to the support of

The Gosling Foundation in particular, covered their costs. These events help us to keep the programme fresh, try new things and hopefully reach new audiences.

We will continue to include these within our programming and at the end of this financial year, February 2018, we hope to theme an event around tango. This will include free taster dance sessions, an exhibition of tango inspired art, photography and sculpture and workshops. We are working with local dance school Freedom Tango, who have been working with local social care and health agencies promoting the benefits of tango as a tool for people suffering from dementia or experiencing social isolation. Linking our activities into art as a therapy has long been an ambition of ours so I am excited to see where this opportunity may take us.

Two new partnerships in the pipeline are with bring Your Own Baby Comedy Club – real comedians performing their routines for sleep deprived parents with 0 – 12 month old babies; should be fun and a film club who are interested in running monthly themed film nights. This is still at a very early stage, but they are keen enough to want to try some test nights during the autumn 2017 season even though our brochure is already at the printers. Cinema is something that we have had a lot of requests for, but the equipment hire and film licensing is expensive, so this is a classic case of where working in partnership is a real advantage to us.

I would like to add my thanks again to The Gosling Foundation for their supporting us once again with a grant of £5,000 towards community arts projects. This is the only consistent annual grant that we receive and I cannot stress how much it of a difference it has made. Last year their grant contributed to the Festival of Song and the Landmark Stories Festival. This year it will help us replace the floor in the Bell Room, fund the Big Draw family Workshop and contribute towards the tango event.

Education:

Josie has continued to focus on building up our one day workshop programme in order to try out new ideas but also to enable us to offer more opportunities despite our limited space. She is also trying to build more performance classes in and both she and I are delighted that a new adult drama course, introduced at the end of the last financial year has proved a great success. For the future she is investigating calligraphy and still hopes to find a mosaics tutor.

August works. You find out more about this in the Landmark Times, which is being printed this week together with the brochure, but in summary whilst we won't have any concerts in

August, we will be very busy refreshing the Centre. As well as the new main hall carpet, we are aiming to get lots of decorative maintenance jobs done and subject to the final cost, have a new washable floor laid in the Bell Room that will be more suitable for the drama, exercise and parent and toddler classes that take place in here.

Finally, I would like to add my thanks to all the amazingly hard-working and dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees. Everyone of them has a part to play in helping the centre grow and develop – as do you, our very valued members. Invidious as it is to pick anyone out, I would like to give special mention to the newly re-launched Gardening Group who, under Sian's leadership, have made a very big impact on the look of the Landmark grounds in a short space of time. They will also be busy in August and are happy to welcome more to the team.

Lesley Bossine July 2017