

Musical Director's Report

Christchurch Schools' Music Festival Association AGM

Wednesday 15th February, 2017

The 2016 Festival was a great success and I'd like to acknowledge everyone who helped "All Creatures Great and Small" happen –the indefatigable members of the Music Team, our outstanding accompanists and all the performers and teachers; the Festival Executive Committee, under the inspirational guidance of our new president Sharyn Hay; all the managers, parents and caregivers for their endless help; and all the principals and staff in schools for supporting the Festival in its aims. It was a lot of hard work for a lot of people but the end result was something we can feel proud of. I particularly want to thank Malcolm for his amazing work keeping the lines of communication open via our website and Charles Levings for continuing to look after the purchasing and copyright side of things as we look to transition that role. Our thanks also to the staff and students at Hillmorton High School for providing the superb poi dancers for *Tihore Mai* and also the staff and students of Van Asch Deaf Education Centre for signing during the National Anthem and *The Bare Necessities*. On a sadder note, we missed the involvement of Susan Frost and her continued ill health has meant that I have had to progress the appointment of Massed Choir conductors without her. I'm sure you all join with me in sending her our very best wishes for the battle she has ahead of her.

Last year I was delighted to be reappointed for another 3-year term as the Festival's Musical Director and Symphony Orchestra conductor. It is an honour to continue in these roles and I hope that over the next 3 years we can chart a steady course for developing the Festival where it is currently held as well as charting a safe course towards moving back to the Town Hall. Incidentally, I will only seriously consider moving to the Town Hall for the following year if we have a very clear indication that the Town Hall will be ready well before the dates of the Festival.

With regard to other appointments, I am delighted that Josh will be continuing in his role as conductor for the Massed Choirs and welcome Rachel Wilford to the team. I know that they will both do a wonderful job and that Rachel will be a great addition to the Festival family. I would also like to welcome our new Business Manager/Treasurer, Miranda Donnell and am excited to be working with her.

Some of the other main points from last year's festival include:

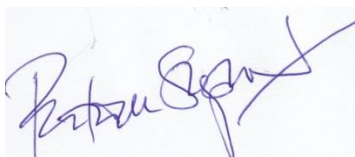
- the workshop for teachers on vocal technique was again well attended and was very informative and helpful. My congratulations and thanks to Sharyn Hay, Kate Hays, Josh McGirr and Elizabeth Muschamp for their input into this event. It continues to be a very valuable way to support the choral teachers in schools and keep those essential lines of communication open between all of us
- the theme of "All Creatures Great and Small" was particularly well-received and in the choir evaluations there seemed to be the overriding sentiment that we had selected a particularly good group of songs. Hopefully "Whatever the Weather" will meet with similar approval. We did miss the use of movement in some of the Massed Choir songs (something usually provided in Susan's bracket) but we have some ideas already for how we can include some simple movements into some of this year's songs. I do want to reiterate that every year we select music that reflects a broad spectrum of styles and genres, cultures and backgrounds, and that one of the aims of the Festival is to broaden and educate the children through a wide variety of music
- Children's behaviour. Cellphones were an issue in 2015 but with intervention, thankfully, not this year, so let's keep those reminders in place. The two large screens placed in front of the choirs also lessened behavioural issues but one could also argue that it also lessened the experience for the performers unable to see images for other items that they weren't involved in
- Again, very positive comments on the use of the screened images. The graphics and concert design worked superbly and I'd like to thank Julian and Malia Hay for putting together a fantastic series of images, both

static and moving, to accompany the show. Their input on how the whole show was presented augurs well for the development of the Festival, taking it to new levels of polish, professionalism and visual interest

- ArmediaNZ proved to be very amenable partners with regard to recording the show. I propose that the Music and Production teams meet to view the final product as a way of debriefing. It will also be good to discuss issues with the finished product in front of each other
- With more input from the Production team we will need to have draft programmes to myself and the Production team by June so that we can get started on the technical aspects of presenting the show earlier. This may be subject to alteration (and that's fine) but I simply do not accept that a group's programme would be so drastically altered following auditions as to not warrant having a draft programme in place earlier. After all, the make-up and standard of each group remains very similar, if not the same, from year to year
- We are looking for a new stage manager for the 2017 season and will discuss the options for this in the following exec. meeting
- the involvement of the SPCA was very much appreciated by us and them. The amount collected was \$848 (which we topped up to \$1000), so quite a bit down on last year. The social conscience side of the Festival is working well, though, and this year we may be able to revisit the theme of natural disasters brought on by weather with regard to which organisation(s) we approach, although I have no firm idea yet
- the conversation around the Friday night performance week "aftermatch" continues but it is clear that with some life members shunning it, the abysmal service at the venue and the significant cost incurred, this situation cannot continue so it is my wish that it does not happen in this format this year and that the life members be invited along at a different time to a social gathering that also includes current and prospective sponsors. The Friday post-concert get-together for the Music Team and Production Team will be very similar to what happens on the other two performance nights in the Green Room – it could hardly be worse than what we've had!

Finally, it is with sadness that at this AGM we farewell Robyn and Kathy from the Executive. Both have been stalwart servants of the Festival over many years and we will not only miss them but also their passion, knowledge and support. I will leave it up to Sharyn to go into further detail in her report but sufficient to say here that they will both be missed and we wish them all the very best as they pursue other interests.

My thanks to all of you for your hard work in 2016 and I look forward to building on that success in 2017 with "Whatever the Weather".



Patrick Shepherd
Musical Director