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ALL-ENGLAND THEATRE FESTIVAL

Reaching out to drama groups throughout England



*The only countrywide,
competitive festival
of one-act plays.*

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England

I'll start with a hearty 'well done' to Eastern Area for hosting a splendid Grand Final at Norden Farm Centre for the Arts in Maidenhead. Carol Hennessy, Jim Yates and the rest of the well-marshalled Maidenhead Festival team organised the event impeccably and all the productions gave great pleasure. In the end, and by the narrowest of margins, Woking College Theatre Company, by dint of their imaginative stage presentation, choreographic élan and directorial flair won the day with *Education, Education, Education* from Bench Theatre of Havant, who presented the stunningly acted two-hander *A Dangerous Woman*. Congratulations to Nantwich Players (reaching the Final at their first attempt) and to Leicester Drama Group for completing a memorable quartet of productions. This was the best Grand Final I have witnessed.

Three weeks later visitors from across the land descended on Harrogate for the AETF-hosted British Final. We were blessed with good weather, a fitting venue, the attendance of both the Mayor of Harrogate and Chairman of North Yorkshire County Council and an opening ceremony enlivened by Harrogate Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Woking College carried the English hopes. The quartet of performers was completed by Stromness Drama Club (who brought John Godber's *Shakers* all the way from Mainland Orkney to the playwright's native Yorkshire), Theatre 3 Newtownabbey who performed Luigi Jannuzzi's enigmatic but fascinating two-hander *A Bench at the Edge* and the Unknown Theatre Company who performed Nick Payne's acclaimed *Constellations*. It was a tribute to the quality of all four productions that only two marks separated the winner from the two groups who tied for third place. The sounds of joy from the young performers of Woking College as Robert Meadows announced them as winners shook Harrogate Theatre to its foundations. Thankfully, their subsequent stage invasion did not require the intervention of riot police with tear gas (although it was a close-run thing!)

The British Final also saw local Pateley Bridge playwright Keith Burton receive this year's Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy from Simon Smith of Cresselles. At a fringe event on the Saturday, Keith's winning play, *A Penny for Them*, received a public reading by Pateley Bridge Dramatic Society at the Frazer Theatre, Knaresborough.



Woking College Theatre Company in ebullient mood after receiving the Howard de Walden Trophy
(courtesy Walter Hampson)

So, the curtain comes down on another splendid season of festival drama. It also comes down (a year early) on my own incumbency as Chair of the AETF and as editor of this Newsletter. I wish my successors in both roles the happiest of stewardships. If any reader would like to take on the twice-yearly challenge of editing the Newsletter, do feel free to register your interest with either Jean Cunnington or myself.

Have a wonderful summer

Ian Clarke



Keith Burton receives the Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy at Harrogate Theatre (courtesy Walter Hampson)

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Stromness Drama Club - Scottish Champions and British Finalists (courtesy Walter Hampson)



Northern Area

This year saw the birth of the Cheshire Drama Festival. It owes its existence to the dedication and sheer hard work of GoDA adjudicators Bev Clark and Sue Doherty in consort with the wonderfully responsive and cooperative Nantwich Players who hosted the first event at their delightful Nantwich Players Theatre, a former Quaker Meeting House. Six local groups competed over two nights at the end of March in front of good houses. In the event, it was Nantwich Players themselves who won the festival with *Edgar and Annabel* by Sam Holcroft, a fascinating dystopian drama set in post-Brexit Britain. The Cheshire Festival will move to Macclesfield in 2020 and (provisionally) to the Little Theatre, Chester, in 2021. The future of this new event looks rosy.

This year's Northern Semi Final was hosted by Alan Godfrey and his Durham and Sunderland colleagues at Washington Arts Centre over the early May Bank Holiday. Seven out of the eight Northern Area festivals sent their winners to perform at the event. The narrow stage and limited changing room and storage facilities created difficulties which were heroically overcome by Alan, his hard-working team and the semi finalists themselves. Jan Palmer Sayer provided lucid and sometimes trenchant critiques of each performance. The repertoire was eclectic and contained two pieces of brand new writing by Sue Pierce (winner of the Geoffrey Whitworth trophy in 2017 and 2018) and Helen Bowie. The Deputy Mayor of Sunderland, who attended the final session, was delighted by the fare on offer. AETF newcomers Nantwich Players were pronounced Northern Area champions and went on to give a fine account of themselves at the Grand Final in Maidenhead.

There is no respite for Northern Area. After hosting the British this year, we will be doing the same for the AETF Grand Final in 2020. This will take place at Bridlington Spa on 13 June and members of the re-constituted Hull and East Riding Festival committee are already rolling up their sleeves in preparation. A seaside location is always a special treat and

we look forward to providing some bracing North Sea air as an adjunct to the drama on show at the Spa.

Till next year.

Ian Clarke – Secretary, Northern Area



Central Area

This year we again proved that the format of three, six-play quarter finals and a six-play semi final creates both a festive atmosphere and something that the treasurer can smile about. My thanks to all those who hosted the four AETF events for their commitment to the cause.

Preliminary rounds

Birmingham: Although our festival played to a slightly smaller audience this year, it was a success both artistically and financially. Keith Phillips proved a popular choice as adjudicator and has been booked for next year.

Worcestershire: Unfortunately Jean and I were unable to attend this year due to clashing dates; however, the ever-helpful grapevine reports that the festival was well attended and staged a variety of performances. Paul Fowler's decisions were well received by the audience and teams.

Warwickshire: We attended a single evening's performance. The fare was varied and entertaining. The adjudicator, Nick Wilkes, appearing for a second consecutive year, was well received by the two young teams and their supporters.

South Staffordshire: We attended the Hastilow Festival in Tamworth on the opening night and witnessed three good performances, one of which was the eventual runner-up. Jennifer Scott-Reid was encouraging in her adjudications and her appetite was whetted for the ensuing four days of drama.

Leicestershire: Jean and I were unable to attend this year due to family commitments; however the grapevine reports that the festival was well attended (with ten entries). Mike Kaiser's decisions proved popular with cast and audience.

Herefordshire: On the evening we attended there was only one competitive entry due to a last-minute cancellation. The adjudicator, Nick Wilkes, was appreciative of the fifteen strong adult cast. The cancelled play was replaced by a filmed reading by one of the teams which proved to be a very interesting experience.

North Staffordshire: We attended the Thursday show and had an enjoyable evening of theatre. Robert Meadows, the adjudicator, said that the two youth groups performing that night gave great support to the belief that the future of live theatre in the area was in capable hands.

Shropshire: We attended the last night of this three-day festival and a good one it turned out to be. The adjudicator, Chris Baglin, said that it had been a very versatile festival and that great credit must be given to all those who had taken part.

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Quarter Finals

Western Division: This year's festival was at the Norbury Theatre, Droitwich. We witnessed a good day's theatre and Jennifer Scott-Read concluded that the two-handers selected to go through to the semi final would be worthy representatives.



Colwall Players - Western Division winners with *The Allotment*

Central Division: Unfortunately, Jean and I were unable to be at the Brewhouse, Burton this year. Chris Jaeger adjudicated six very different plays performed to a large and appreciative audience.



Leicester Drama Group - Eastern Division winners, Central Area winners and Grand Finalists

Eastern Division:

Again, Jean and I were unable to be at the Little Theatre, Leicester for this event. Alan Hayes adjudicated six very different plays and praised the festival for its high standard.

Semi Final

This year our semi final was held at the Brewhouse. The six competing teams played to two very good houses over two sessions. In his summing up, Ben Humphrey said that it had been a full day of high-quality drama.

Thus concludes another successful year and I would like to thank everyone involved at all levels within the Area for their contribution, especially team supporters and AETF members, a number of whom have made valued financial donations. We are actively looking ahead to 2022 when Eastern Division hosts the AETF Grand Final and to 2023 when we take on the far greater task of hosting the British Final. Meanwhile you are cordially invited to our Central Area AGM which takes place in September or early October. Full details will appear on our Area web page at www.aetf.org.uk

Roger Cunnington - Chairman, Central Area



Western Area

Western Area thrives, which is to say that, despite some structural limitations, we can claim a moderately successful 2019 season. The limitations become apparent from the detail below but, as ever, we measure success by the quality of our festivals. In that respect we have been well served by the work of the GoDA adjudicators who graced the Western Area competitions this season and, perhaps in response to discussions at last September's excellent GoDA conference which I attended, were unfailingly friendly and provided high quality and determinedly helpful feedback. Another plus point was the fact that the Area semi final and both quarter finals either broke even or made a small profit.

Since our Area remit is to organise competitions above County level, it follows that our future is bound up in the health or otherwise of preliminary rounds. My aim is to attend as many as I can.

Avon held their three-day event in mid-March at the charming Chipping Sodbury Town Hall. Presiding over the competition was the ever cheerful Chris Jaeger. He had nine plays to review. The two productions selected for progression, both performed by Sodbury Players, were *Untucked* by Teresa Hennessy and *For All The Saints* by Eileen Enwright Hodgetts. Because the latter was unable to go forward, Athelston Players, with *Philip and Rowena* by Gillian Plowman, progressed to the quarter final instead.

Bristol held their two-day festival in February at their long favoured Olympus Theatre on the Wise Campus at Stoke Gifford. Six groups performed and the experienced Jan Palmer Sayer adjudicated. St Alban's Players with *Holding On* by Barbara Crass were selected for progression.

As usual **Somerset** held their event at the Warehouse in Ilminster. Nine groups participated over two days under the watchful eye of Nancy Heath. She selected Ilminster Entertainment Society's production of *A Resounding Tinkle* by N F Simpson for progression.

Sadly I and my wife Jacqueline missed this year's two-day **TADDfest** which attracted six entries at the Shaftesbury Theatre, Dawlish. Nick Wilkes selected Teignmouth Players' production of *Nuts* by Jeffrey G Pirie for progression.

As ever the **Totton** festival was a vibrant affair. It attracted fourteen entries over five days. Jennifer Scott-Reid, the hard-worked adjudicator, selected two productions for the quarter final – *A Dangerous Woman* by Paul King performed by Bench Theatre and *Effie's Burning* by Valerie Windsor performed by Chameleon Theatre Company.

Sadly, the **Harold Jolliffe**, despite having a main supporter in the Swindon and District Theatre Guild, elected not to affiliate with the AETF in 2019 because of a decline in membership.

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Exmouth, as usual, held their festival in April but owing to circumstances beyond their control were unable to send their winning team to the quarter final.

As previously forecast, we were reduced to two quarter finals and both were contested by four groups.

The Northern Division event was held at Bath on 13 April at the tiny Mission Theatre. We were lucky enough to secure the services of Mike Kaiser as adjudicator. Despite the restricted wing access and an entrance and exit for sets through the front door from Corn Street, the theatrical quality was well up to the mark and the contest was tight. The winners, St Albans, and runners-up, Ilminster Entertainment Society, progressed to the Area Semi Final.

The Southern Division event, adjudicated by Alan Hayes, took place at the Digby Hall, Sherborne on 4 May. The limited in-house lighting had to be augmented by local borrowings and hours were spent both rigging and returning the acquired kit. Bench Theatre and Chameleon Theatre Company, both representatives of the Totton festival, were selected to contest the Area Semi Final.



Two photos of Bench Theatre, Western Area Champions, performing *A Dangerous Woman*.

The Area Semi Final, adjudicated by the ever meticulous Paul Fowler, took place at the excellent Merlin Theatre at Frome on 11 May. Paul praised the high standards achieved by all the contestants, emphasised the closeness of the result and praised the event organisers. He selected Bench Theatre to go forward to contest the AETF Grand Final (where they were

to give a magnificent account of themselves and finish a narrow second behind Woking College).

We are working as hard as resources allow both to revitalise and expand our field of operations. Arrangements are in place to visit Exmouth with the aim of cementing that festival's commitment to the AETF. We also hope to re-open contact with relevant bodies in Cornwall with a view to resurrecting our Western Division. Links have been established with five groups in Dorset that have declared an interest in a new preliminary round festival. The next stage is to set up an organising committee. We are committed to lending them start-up funds for this. Further downstream we plan a campaign in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

So, there is work to be done – but I seem to recollect saying that before. Perhaps it's time for a national initiative to awaken the theatrical grass-roots.

Ron Roberts - Chairman, Western Area.



Eastern Area

The Area was missing one festival this year. Cambridge dropped out of the AETF competition because its long-standing venue (Mumford Theatre) had become too costly and the new venue (the ADC Theatre) was not available in the right timeframe. Notwithstanding this, the festival has twelve entries confirmed for September 2019 and we wish them a successful event. Hopefully they will be able to book the new venue in Spring 2020 and thus return to the AETF fold.

This year's Eastern Area programme was led by Southern Counties in the delightful Barn Theatre, Oxted in late February. Eleven plays were performed (compared with eight in 2018) over five evenings. An impressive four entries were from Glow Youth Theatre and one of these (*DNA* by Dennis Kelly) won and proceeded to the Area Final. Nick Wilkes, the adjudicator, was impressive and popular with participants and audiences alike. One production was withdrawn at the last moment due to the illness of a key cast member but the group substituted an entertaining non-competitive performance that was well received. Audiences were bolstered by the significant number of local and/or youth groups and a small profit was made.

Next up was the Maidenhead Festival. There were six entries (compared with eight last year) although preparations were disrupted by two withdrawals in the preceding fortnight. Despite this, audiences were reasonable and the event broke even financially. The festival was won by Woking College Theatre Company with their impressive production of *Education, Education, Education* by the Wardrobe Ensemble.

For many years it was very rare for groups to withdraw after formally entering festivals but in recent years this seems to be an increasing trend. It creates a real problem for organisers. Similarly I have come across groups opting to go forward and winning their preliminary round festival but subsequently having to declare their unavailability for subsequent rounds of the AETF. This is again hugely frustrating for festival organisers and whilst I appreciate that we live in dynamic times with increasing time

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pressures, I urge groups to ensure that they meet their commitments and ensure their 'show goes on'.

The Waltham Forest Festival was also held at the end of March. Nine plays were performed (five adult and four youth). The festival was won by Cambridge-based Bawds with a production of Sean Baker's *Killing Him Softly* and it generated a small profit.

The last of the preliminary round festivals was the Elmbridge. It was adjudicated by Keith Phillips. Sadly, there were only three entries; no local groups took part and, as a consequence, this is likely to be the 58th and final festival. Woking College, who had already won at Maidenhead, were this year's winners.

The Area Final was hosted by the Elmbridge Drama festival at the atmospheric Cecil Hepworth Playhouse, the former electricity generator room of the once famous Walton Film Studios in Walton-on-Thames. Because Woking College had won two of the preliminary rounds, there were just three finalists. In Sean Baker's play (performed by Bawds) the characters re-write the script. Dennis Kelly's play (performed by Glow Theatre) is a chilling story about the impact of a misguided practical joke. *Education, Education, Education* (performed by Woking College) is a fast moving and highly amusing snapshot of life in a comprehensive school following Tony Blair's election success in 1997.

In a close-fought competition the adjudicator, Jill Colby, awarded the winner's trophy to Woking College who not only progressed to the AETF Grand Final hosted by Eastern Area at Norden Farm but won the latter event as well and then the British.

Ian Thomas - Chairman, Eastern Area



Woking College Theatre Company (Eastern Area champions, AETF Champions and British Champions) performing *Education, Education, Education*.



REMINDER OF NEW OPTING FEE IN 2020

As previously advertised, next season sees the introduction of an opting fee of £10 for any group entering a first round event that also elects to be considered for advancement to succeeding rounds of the AETF competition. The money will be levied by each preliminary round and the mechanism will be the newly amended Declaration Form (a copy of which can be downloaded from the AETF web pages)

Ian Clarke



Treasurer's Ramblings



"When did I first start rambling?
Well, it's a long story..."

Although, as reported in the last Newsletter, the AETF has direct lineage from the start of the British Drama League in 1919, we have decided, in view of the number of name changes that have occurred along the way, not to celebrate the fact that we have been representing

amateur drama for 100 years.

I can report that the four Areas have spent, or formally allocated their share of the money received from the Crusoe Farm Co Ltd. Much of the money has been used to develop new Preliminary Round festivals to secure a legacy. Although the National Committee has yet to make a decision on what to do with its share, we will certainly be looking to use the money on things which will have a long-standing impact, perhaps in combination with unspent money received from member donations. The possibility has been broached on a number of occasions of extending the Grand Final and/or putting in place a Youth Final. Your thoughts are always welcome.

Roger Cunnington

SHARING ORIGINAL SCRIPTS – A NEW VENTURE



The AETF plans to hold an online repository of 'original' scripts that have been entered in the ongoing festival so that other groups entering preliminary first rounds of the festival in the future can pick and choose from the scripts on offer without the need for

a license.

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The repository will provide an additional source of repertoire for groups to choose from and give original authors an opportunity to have their plays performed far and wide. For a play to be registered an author must give his or her permission. Each Area will be responsible for obtaining details of the scripts and the permission of the authors involved.

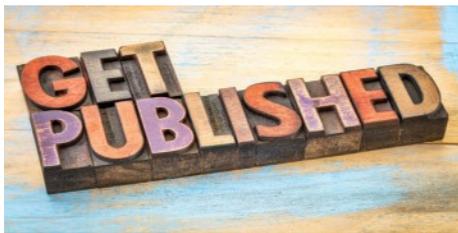
A new page will shortly be created on the website entitled 'new scripts'. It will include the title of the play, the festival and year it was first performed, the author's name and email address, cast details, genre, setting and a brief synopsis.

Groups wishing to read any of the listed scripts should contact the author direct via email.

Please note that if you are an author who wishes to charge a performance fee – this is not the site for you!

Details can be deleted at any time by contacting the webmaster.

Jean Cunningham



(a beginner's guide)

by Austin Hawkins)

Austin Hawkins started writing for the Torquay Little Theatre with the trio of monologues 'Going Solo' which enjoyed several appearances at festivals. 'Friday's Child' followed and is now part of a trilogy with 'Vulnerable' and 'Faking Genuine', each of which has been performed at AETF events. These plays have garnered a number of awards and are published by Cressrelles. Austin's three-act play 'Legacy' has been published in the USA by Heartland Plays.

One of the joys of being in the audience at theatre festivals, including those of the AETF, is the expectation that some original plays are likely to be in the programme. Festivals provide good opportunities for new writers who learn a great deal from seeing their work brought to life by a committed director and cast. Rehearsal and performance can show up the flaws and lead to some much needed re-writing.

Often it is those who have had an active role in producing plays or, like me, perform front of house duties on a regular basis, who start to think: 'Maybe I could write a decent play.'

Although some festivals recognize and reward new writing, adjudicators must base their assessments on production, direction, acting and dramatic achievement. Thus the writers themselves seldom get feedback. Once past the first excitement of seeing their play on stage, most new writers turn to wondering whether or not the work is worthy of being published. But what are the thoughts of publishers as yet another

play from a budding writer surfaces in their inbox? What immediately grabs their attention? What are the pitfalls new writers stumble into when approaching a publisher? I decided to explore this for the benefit of AETF readers and new or aspirant playwrights.

Simon Smith runs Cressrelles, a long established and respected UK publishing house. Simon is keen to stress that any potential publisher has a duty to respect the time and trouble a writer has taken to complete his or her play: **'I always try to read a manuscript all the way through as the author has taken the time to write something and approach me. It deserves that much respect at least. Unfortunately, when you receive hundreds of scripts and every author is clamouring for you to read theirs, it is often tempting to say 'no' if your immediate interest isn't piqued.'**

Rebecca Ryland heads Heartland Plays in the USA, a company with a busy and eclectic Web-based portfolio for the stage. What most excites Rebecca's interest in a new play? **'There are few subjects that haven't been written about but when the subject is framed in an unpredictable context from a fresh perspective, it immediately grabs my attention. So also does believable dialogue that draws me into a situation and characters. It may sound simple, but reading something that feels real, even if it is set outside the perimeters of realism draws me into that world and makes me want to stay long enough to see what happens.'**

What singular piece of advice should new or even not so new writers take on board?

Simon: **'Firstly, get involved – go to the theatre, join your local amateur drama society – learn your trade and always bear in mind the limitations that a live environment involves.'**

Rebecca: **'Do attend plays - lots of them. You have to develop an understanding about how words are translated into action and how scripts become realised in live theatre. Visualise every aspect of your play as it develops - every line, character, action and scene in your play. If you can't see how it works, neither will anyone else; and if it doesn't work in your head, it probably won't work on stage.'**

Simon also places great emphasis on re-writing: **'Polish, polish and polish again. Keep re-reading your own work – if it makes no sense to you, it's not going to make sense to me! Poor spelling and grammar risk putting the reader off. Make sure you are consistent throughout. Whatever you write, make sure it's interesting; if you stifle a yawn, I'm likely to fall asleep.'**

Anyone who has written a successful play will, I feel sure, agree that re-writing is crucial. However, one can go too far. One of my plays was in rehearsal for an upcoming festival. I called the director to suggest a couple of minor 'improvements' in the dialogue. She gave me short shrift: **'Stop it! It's reached the stage where there is no further point in tinkering with the lines.'** Suitably chastened, I left her to get on with rehearsals.

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Despite all the good advice to be found in books and websites on playwriting are there pitfalls that new playwrights unwittingly stumble into? Rebecca: ***'Attempting to say everything they ever wanted to say in one play. I've seen this in new plays I've watched as well as those submitted for consideration. It's important to know how to edit one's own work and accept that not everything you believe is essential to the dramatic action of a play. Trying to address or conquer too many issues in one script just dilutes the strength of the work.'***

Simon emphasizes the need to ensure your play is 'doable': ***'My heart sinks when confronted with a one-act play involving ten scene changes; or a cast list and/or stage setting defined down to the minutest detail.'*** Simon also stresses the need for good dialogue and an intriguing plot: ***'All other things are secondary to a good storyline. Casting and staging can all be worked on; you have to lure someone in first. My father taught me to read a manuscript and put it aside for a few days; if you can't remember a single line from the play after that interval it's probably time to reject it.'***

Publishers will, of course, appreciate a play that arrives in a format that makes life easy for them. Rebecca: ***'Write in Word. Don't use preformatted programs, especially those intended for film. They are nearly impossible to edit and no one wants to retype your entire play to fit the publisher's format.'***

Some final 'dos and don'ts' from Rebecca: ***'Include more female than male actors if you want amateur theatres to consider your play; know your intended audience; take risks; avoid long pedagogical speeches and keep the number of characters to a minimum unless you are writing for large-cast school productions. Obviously write what drives your passion but recognise that some of the best plays ever written may never reach the stage.'***

So there you have it - time to dip your quill in the ink pot?



The AETF is constantly looking for external sources of income since it cannot rely on ticket sales alone to drive its national event forward year by year. As a member of our financial sub-committee, I was tasked with researching Crowdfunding as a potential fundraising tool. The concept itself is straightforward - a lot of people each give a little amount of money to a cause they deem worthy - worthy being defined as anything that can have a positive impact on people, communities or the environment. In other words, it is a way of raising money to make good things happen to oneself, a family member, a club or a community.

There is a simple, commercial system that facilitates this process. **JustGiving** is used by nearly 26,000 worldwide charities,

including Unicef, Cancer Research, the British Heart Foundation and Help for Heroes. It is a 'one-stop shop' that handles all types of fundraising and giving. It helps fundraisers to champion a story and maximises the donations received. At the end of any campaign, the funds raised are deposited in a nominated bank account.

Can the AETF join? The answer is 'yes' since any organisation in the UK, Ireland and Canada with a charity registration number may do so. A **JustGiving** (JG) Charity blog exists to help start-up activities. Charities use JG because it is a fast and reliable platform that reaches people who are most likely to care. JG has elicited high praise from charities great and small. The children's charity Tree of Hope describes it as 'invaluable for charities with lean teams....they have helped to raise money (for us) year after year.'

Any specific project or appeal is given a fundraising page, which can be customised with pictures, brand description and stories to spread the word. JG provides an e-mail and iPhone App and donate buttons to make it easy to give. People can donate in one of nine leading currencies via debit or credit cards or PayPal. In the UK direct debit donations are also possible. Most pages have a duration of 120 days, although once active, an appeal can be extended for one year.

JG embraces a wide spectrum of causes, including health and medical, in memoriam, children & youth, disability, emergencies, animals and pets, international aid, social welfare, gardens and the environment, LGBT and art and culture. The AETF certainly falls within the latter category. Incidentally, it is not possible to claim Gift Aid for donations made in this way.

The costs of using the service vary according to the target figure to be raised. To raise up to £15k (per annum) the cost is roughly £220, made up of £15 per month + VAT + a very small processing fee. A target of more than £15k accrues costs of £39 per month, pushing the annual charge up to £570. Any appeal that fails to hit its target receives the contributed funds less some small handling fees. Pages with defined targets raise more than those without.

So, armed with these facts, the AETF national committee must decide whether this is an appropriate avenue to explore. If the answer is 'yes' it will clearly need to give serious thought to defining a target and to recruiting skilled assistance in setting up and maintaining a campaign page.

Ron Roberts



NATIONAL STATISTICS

This is not a good time to discuss AETF statistics as several festivals have yet to make their returns (one festival said they were unable to give me the figures as they have all been deleted to comply with GDPR!)

Congratulations to Ian Clarke for putting on a most enjoyable British Final weekend in Harrogate. The event played to 55%



of the house capacity and accrued a surplus of receipts over rental. An overall profit on the event is expected.

Talking of house capacity, it occurs to me that this might be a reasonable thing to record in future stats. Your thoughts, please?

Although this is not statistics related I should mention that the Executive Committee met in January to discuss the future structure and configuration of the AETF. They decided that, although there is a lot wrong with the current set-up, it would be too traumatic to instigate change. However, the fact that one Area Final had only three entries this year and another one seven suggests that we may well be reviving discussions about structural disparities in the near future.

One of the reasons for not instigating change is the difficulty of recruiting new and younger blood to committees. Committee work remains unfashionable, onerous and, it seems, boring for people of a certain age (many of whom, in any case, lead pressured and busy lives). Yet committee work is vital to the health, planning and future direction of all corporate entities. In an ideal committee set-up everybody should take on some responsibility for action. Remember the old adage – 'many hands make light work'. It remains as true as ever and we should never expect someone else to carry the burden unaided.

Roger Cunnington



INSURANCE

As you are probably all aware the AETF has its own insurance for all of its directly organised festival events (at quarter final level and beyond). Equally it should be common knowledge that all groups who enter any production in any festival

should have their own insurance.

All groups entering any AETF- affiliated festival must now sign a declaration form confirming that they have adequate public liability insurance cover. For groups who do not have this cover we have been able to negotiate bespoke cover covering all rounds of the festival. Contact Roger Cunnington (cunnington@talk21.com) for details.

FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

In the last newsletter I reported on the activities of this committee which comprises Ian Clarke, Carol Hennessy, Ron Roberts & myself. After our latest meeting the following was put before the national committee and endorsed for the 2020 season.

1. Quarter finals should provide £75 to any winner and runner-up going forward.
2. All semi final winners should receive £100.

3. If raffle income at these events does not cover this expenditure the National Treasurer will fund the balance.

It was re-affirmed that all Areas should continue to try and cover ALL their yearly expenditure out of income. They will NOT, however, be held responsible for losses incurred when hosting a national final (English or British). Also re-affirmed was the practice of funding the total amount of money given to the English finalists (£400) from the proceeds of the sale to an advertiser of the back page of the National programme cover.

Roger Cunnington



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