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**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

**2024 AGM**

2023 was an extremely full and productive year!

**Review of 2023 Whole Team Events**

* **Tockington** – a triumph, despite a few challenging and unexpected injuries and illnesses. All 36 team members and 6 leaders worked their socks off, as did our other volunteer adults (costume, clog, sound engineering) who were around for some of the week. We added several new dances to the repertoire, several of them brought/taught by team members – Portland Hill (North West), Garland for Lucy (Garland), Over the Hills (Stave), Leaving of Liverpool (Social), Country Life (song) and Bellringing (song)
* **Festivals – Upton, Chippenham, St Albans, Bromyard** - all went fantastically, and everybody worked really hard as ever. All our own planning worked pretty smoothly, and we were given the opportunity to play for several ceilidhs (Upton & Chippenham) and do at least one concert style show at every festival as well as street busking and teaching workshops. Special mention for the collaboration with Young Miscellany at St Albans, lovely to make links with another youth group. I am keen as usual to have feedback if there are things that we could do better.
* **Buxton day of dance and our own event in Bakewell** – despite a very wet day in Buxton, we managed to impress a lot of people (well done to the team members who sang songs and danced jigs in the deluge!), and we were presented with a certificate by Buxton Fringe festival for our well attended Family Ceilidh on Sunday in Bakewell.

**Special mentions for smaller groups**

* **DERT** – two DERTy teams and a DERT team, and four trophies! (both DERTy prizes, Rapper as a Foreign Language, and Third in the Open class) – well done to all dancers, musicians and tommies.
* **SDU** – our longsword dancers put on a great show at Octobers’ SDU Longsword competition in Sheffield in October, and were runners up in two categories – brilliant work, everybody.
* **Callers** – building on 2022, we’ve had quite a few people having a go at calling at our ceilidhs this year – well done and looking forward to more in 2024!
* **Winter workshops** – This year we ran three winter workshops, one day each for Cotswold Jigs, Rapper and Clog (big thanks to volunteer tutors Jack Worth & Rich Arrowsmith for jigs, Matt Nikel for rapper, and Vicky Cooper & Harriet Kempson for clog). Hoping we managed a better balance this year in terms of the amount of winter activity (not as many hours going up and down the motorway) versus still having good opportunities to learn/hone new skills.
* **EFDSS Folk Educators day** – having been invited to demonstrate how we work, we didn’t have long to pull together a small team of NYFTEs plus Chris and Aidan to Cecil Sharp House in March – well done and thank you, to all involved.

**Team membership updates**

Last year we waved goodbye to Tilly, Evelyn, Ben, Harry Short and Daisy, and we’ve got four (Alex S, Harry Ford, Ed & Bella) who are expecting this year to be their final one with us. In February we had eight try out at The Cause, seven of whom have decided to take up their invitation to join the team. Of these, two (Alex R & Reuben) are from families new to NYFTE and five (Xav, Tim, William, Charlotte & Amina) are younger siblings of existing team members. That pushes numbers up to 38.

We’ve again had a lot of interest from people wanting to join over the last 12 months and my spreadsheet now stretches as far as 2036! Looking forwards – we still expect the team to get a little bigger next year and then perhaps shrink when our current large year 12 cohort leave, though we’ll see how it goes with a large team. With such a long list, we do want to allow as many to join as is practical. I am at the stage of turning people down altogether if they will be too old to join by the time there’s room for them – anybody who is currently older than year 4 is unlikely to get put on the list. As ever, please direct people who are interested in joining to the website and manage their expectations when you talk to them – thanks again to everybody who has been doing that already!

**Admin**

Webcollect, Google Forms, and the members only bit of the website seem to be working pretty well for comms and logistics, and we are now at the stage of mostly re-using forms rather than inventing new ones which cuts the work down a bit. I’ve delegated some of my festival liaison responsibilities to (my partner) Richard A which is a big help and we have a small group of volunteers (Richard A, Lucy S and Blair L) in charge of the September Bristol weekend. Thanks to everybody who has stepped up to help out with official committee roles or less official behind the scenes stuff, every bit is hugely appreciated!

**Costume**

In 2023 we added a coloured waist band to the trouser kit, and while there were some technical issues and the team are not huge fans of the new addition, we’re going to persevere with them for another year at least because when they are on neatly they look great.

We managed to do a new set of NYFTE merch in the summer with hoodies, baseball caps and tote bags – big thanks to Tilly for pushing this forwards. We’ll look to do a new order at some point soon.

**2024 and beyond**

* So far in 2024 we’ve already run our training weekend at The Cause.
* Next up is Denstone and the end of week concert – all families have had loads of information about this already and have all filled in your event forms (thank you). Massive thanks to Anne-Marie C, Chris N, and everybody else who has helped find NYFTE’s new Easter home, I am very excited about the move.
* The performance event planning for this year has all happened well in advance and has gone pretty smoothly – all dates/events now confirmed, see members only page of website for details
* The members only bit of the website also contains various pdf music files and notation and videos for various dances. Please do take the opportunity to practice between now and Denstone next week, it will make things run more smoothly!

**Reflections on current state of organisation**

I do feel that we’ve made huge progress with moving forwards as an organisation over the last year – it feels like 2019 was our first year without Dave & Heather, and 2023 was the follow up to that having had a 3 year hiatus in between due to the pandemic. I’d say we’re now back on track with figuring out how best to run things in a way that is sustainable. That said, we’ve still a way to go.

I’ve had a tough year one way or another and feel that the role I’ve been fulfilling for NYFTE is a lot bigger than what I’d originally signed up for. I know I’m not the only one who needs to keep my eyes open for signs of burn out. I am hopeful that as we settle down following our transition to being a Charity that we can also reflect on some different ways of making the behind the scenes organisation rely less heavily on the time and efforts of such a small number of volunteers, though I’m not sure what that will look like yet.

Huge thanks as ever from me to the rest of the committee for their hard work and their practical and emotional support towards making the teaching and event planning work for NYFTE, and to all our parents for helping NYFTE function at events and for general taxi services – we couldn’t do it without you!