

MILTON KEYNES FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

For the Year Ending 30 June 2025

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts (The Festival) is an unincorporated Association registered with the Charity Commission (Registered Number 293601).

The Festival operates in accordance with a constitution dated June 1968. Under this constitution, the Trustees are the Officials for the time being, made up of a Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. Management of the Festival is vested in the General Committee consisting of the Officials together with other members all being elected annually at an Annual General Meeting.

Trustees

The trustees for the year under review have been:

Vice Presidents

Adrian Boynton

Jocelyn Lord (resigned November 2025)

Chair Pat Haig (resigned November 2025)

Secretary Janice Hughes

Treasurer Christine Taylor FCA

Music and Drama

Alistair Haig (resigned November 2025)

Michael Guy (app'd November 2024)

Gina Sharp (app'd November 2024)

Michelle Okowa (app'd November 2024)

Adrian (Ka Wing) Ho (app'd November 2024)

Isabelle de Sousa (app'd November 2024)

Dance

Adam Scott Lewis

Keeva Buckley

Kerry Bright (resigned November 2024)

Keeley Robertson

Claire Wilson (app'd November 2024)

Nick Harper (app'd November 2024)

Eloise Ferry

Leanne Hughes (app'd November 2024)

Trustees are generally appointed from volunteers who have experience in the Festival movement. Briefing is provided by the section heads in their duties and they are given training in the Festival's child protection policies.

Affiliation

The Festival is a member festival of the British and International Federation of Festivals. The Dance section is also a qualifying event for the All England Dance competition, and regularly sponsors dancers to compete in the UK Young dancer competition.

Auditors

Formal audit is not required by virtue of the limited financial turnover. Independent examination of the financial accounts is carried out by:

Andrew Paul ACA
15 Parsons Close,
Church Crookham,
Fleet, Hampshire, GU52 6HL

Bankers

Charities Aid Foundation,
25 Kings Hill,
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4JQ

National Westminster Bank,
501 Silbury Boulevard,
Saxon Gate East
Milton Keynes
MK9 3ER

AIMS OF THE ORGANISATION

The object of the festival, as set out in the constitution, is to advance the education of the public in the Arts and in particular the Arts of Music, Speech and Drama, and Dance in all their branches.

In furtherance of its objects it has powers to:

- 1 hold or promote annual competitive festivals;
- 2 present and promote public performances, concerts and recitals;
- 3 affiliate to the British and International Federation of Festivals and to further the objects of that Federation.

OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Festival takes place each year between February and March and consists of three separate section events, Dance, Music, and Speech and Drama in pursuit of the charity's educational objective. The Festival is primarily structured around the needs of children and young people who account for over 90% of its entrants. It aims to develop an audience and support for the performing arts by encouraging parents, friends and the public to attend at its events. In addition, it may offer a number of classes for adult, amateur performers of any age.

The Festival may present workshops, to assist artistic development, and concerts, which severally promote the festival, give entrants a more structured performance opportunity and act as a showcase for their talents.

Within this structure, the committee seeks to provide an environment for performers which is supportive, encouraging, does not expose them to feelings of failure and, insofar as the festival is competitive, has rules necessary to ensure fairness and applies them. Opportunities for young people to by perform in public can be very limited. Artistic development cannot be fully satisfied only by taking examinations.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

Income was slightly down, but remains strong. Although dance suffered from the AED qualification cycle, entries were still healthy. Music and Drama sections are not profitable as such, but are supported by the success of the Dance section. A profit was made overall.

Catering costs continue to increase in all sections. The provision of reasonable catering is essential, given the long days worked by adjudicators and volunteers. In 2025 less of the offering was provided by volunteers and more bought in from a professional caterer.

Our use of technology is also critical. In Dance we use an on-line entry system provided by All England Dance, which offers the ability not only to manage entries but also to co-ordinate timetables and play music for the individual performances. In a qualifying year this also means that the clerical task of co-ordinating qualification information is removed. The system is paid for by a three-year licence fee (£850) and a levy per performance (2025 £805, 2024 £1,354). The Music and Drama sections use an online entry system provided by Mushroom Ltd and billed annually (2025 £568, 2024 £526).

AED kindly loan laptops and iPads for use with the Connect system, and in 2025 we also invested in a festival laptop for use with the Connect system.

All sections now have the use of SumUp card machines. These enable audience members to pay for tickets and other purchases electronically. This has had the unintentional side effect of encouraging more audience members to enter the auditorium, increasing footfall in the Music and Drama audiences, and of facilitating the purchase by parents of lanyards for solo dancers and of lanyards and medals for groups which are placed, which we do not provide for free.

RESERVES AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

Our reserves remain healthy. Venues and adjudicators all have to be booked in advance and expect to be paid even if an event has to be cancelled. The reserves at the balance sheet date would enable us to meet these costs without any income arising. The Music section also needs to be able to cover the cost of piano hire and tuning if we were to lose our major sponsor, Kawai UK Ltd.

The Trustees are confident that sufficient reserves have been built up to enable them to meet any costs or lost revenue that may arise from a hiatus in their events.

In 2025 we again applied for and received the Body of Persons Approval (BOPA) which obviates the need for individual child licences in all three sections.

The committee has considered the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on the provision of public benefit. Charity law requires the use of the Festival's funds to further the charitable objectives of the festival to be considered by the trustees each year. The Committee will continue each year to consider how best to use these surplus funds to achieve the charity's objective in the future.

Dance has recently increased our place medals to the first four places. This differs from many Federation festivals, but does mean that a number of entrants who in past years would have

ended outside the medal placings were able to take away a more significant souvenir. This is popular with participants, and we feel it to be a good use of our charitable funds.

We provide an annual Bursary intended to provide opportunities for talented performers to further develop their skills. We continued to provide this in the Dance section in 2025 and our adjudicator nominated Vivian McClean to receive the award, which was paid in October 2025, after our period end, when she began studying at Bird College. In 2025 we also awarded bursaries to four dancers enabling them to enter the All England Dance Young Dancer award. All four dancers made it through the audition stage to the knock out round and two dancers appeared in the final held at the Royal Opera House.

In the Drama section a small prize is awarded to an outstanding entry to the Drama section. Awards are also made to the first three places for musicians selected to appear in the YMoY.

RISK POLICY

The principal risks affecting the festival centre around the need to provide a safe environment for our young participants to perform in, and the financial threat to an organisation which has always been self-funding. An annual risk assessment is carried out using the model provided by our umbrella organisation the British and International Federation of Festivals (BIFF). The financial risks have been dealt with above.

Our child protection policy is revisited in each financial year, following the guidelines developed by our umbrella organisation, and administered by the Honorary Secretary, Janice Hughes. Our policy is published on our website and in all syllabi and programmes issued by the Festival.

In addition to our general obligations to meet child protection standards the awards of Body of Persons Approval by Milton Keynes Council will depend on our continuing to meet those standards.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as a Festival, we are required to ensure processes are in place to ensure that all the personal data which we handle regularly through entry forms, volunteer details and sponsor or donor information are safeguarded. Names, addresses, dates of birth, email addresses are all personal data which processed as part of festival planning. Under the legislation we are required handle such data with care, and retain it only insofar as it is required for the purposes for which it is collected and that all subjects are aware of the data we hold and have the opportunity to request its deletion.

SECTION REPORTS

Dance Report

2025 was not an All England year, but as we are already operating near capacity we are obliged to limit new schools to those based in the Milton Keynes area. We have a growing interest from Asian dance schools, where the entry numbers are increasing each year. Total entry income, although reduced, was therefore still very healthy and box office money reflected this too.

A small Gala is held as part of the main event, to celebrate the individual skills of our solo performers. This generates no additional income / costs, other than small cash prizes for the winners of each age group as chosen by the adjudicator.

As well as competitive entry sections which reflect the AED qualification process, we provide a Platform section for those who wish to perform in a non-competitive arena and an Own Choreography section for young dancers wishing to develop in that area.

Our volunteers provide their services for free and are supplemented by work experience students from a local performing arts college, Arts1.

Music, Ensembles, Choirs & Drama sections

Our 2025 festival was our 57th annual festival event and we were thrilled to have a wonderful number of performers taking part and feedback from adjudicators, parents, teachers and performers was very positive, as always. Numbers were up across the board, (1,250 performances overall, 2024 – 1268), but we were particularly pleased with the large, increasing, entry in our piano sections, 493 performances in 2024. In all last year's festival saw almost 4,000 individual performers in solo, ensemble and group presentations. Our adjudicators and audiences were highly complimentary about all the performances.

2025 was the first year that the new team of Gina Sharp (festival admin and reception), Isabel de Abreu (singing, speech and drama and Orchestras, Choirs and Barbershop Day), Michelle Okawa (multi-section support and catering), Adrian Ho (piano) and Mike Guy (instrumental and Young Musician) were in charge of the offering, so its success reflects great credit on them.

The festival offers both competitive and non-competitive classes in all genres, with each entrant receiving a graded certificate and a hand-written feedback sheet with constructive comments from one of our specialist professional adjudicators. There is also the opportunity to win a medal or trophy and possibly some prize money.

In music, up to 8 of the best performers of age 18 and under are invited back to showcase their talents once again in our Milton Keynes Young Musician of the Year competition. Each receives a special certificate, trophy and an amount of prize money and one will be named Milton Keynes Young Musician of the Year. Every performer in this year's showcase was highly praised by our judges Gill Johnston and Jena Pang, both acclaimed musicians, teachers and adjudicators. The winner of this year's title was violinist Sean Lau, with second and third places to pianists Adrian and Aaron Tai. The other finalists were pianist Yiding Wang, violinists Ezra Bail and Reeka Channele Manglicmot, flautist Georgia Haydon and clarinettist Theodora Colvin. Many congratulations to all of them. Two special guest performances by Milton Keynes Young Singer of the Year 2025 Rosie Freear and the Calliope Flute Quartet added an extra level of entertainment to the YMoY event, which was hosted by Festival Vice-President Mr Adrian Boynton.

PUBLICITY

The website is kept up to date and we appear on Twitter and two Facebook pages which are used to promote the festival and advise entrants of any news or impending closing dates.

The Music and Drama organisers look out for new prospective entrants / drama schools / community choirs to approach about the festival. Over 200 syllabuses are sent out by mail to prospective Music and Drama entries and in addition section leaders message them via their

social networking platform / email. Dance is already operating at capacity and entry is restricted to performers from those schools who are situated within a 15 mile radius of our venue, with a few exceptions for schools which have been regular participants for many years.

Thanks and Acknowledgements.

We are privileged to have the continued sponsorship of Kawai Pianos who donate several of their beautiful concert grand and upright pianos to our music festival for our performers' use and we are grateful for their generous support and for also agreeing to extend their patronage to the Milton Keynes Young Musician of the Year competition. Without their ongoing support the festival would not be able to accept as many piano entrants as we do, so we are ever grateful for their kindness and generosity and to their Milton Keynes retail partner, Bonners Music. Kawai have agreed to continue their support in 2026.

We are greatly indebted to members of the general and section committees who support the festival by their work throughout the year. In addition, we enjoy the support of a number of volunteers who help with the actual festival events; their help is always needed and very much appreciated.

Finally, we are most grateful to the management, staff and volunteers of The Venue at Walton High School for their help over the years and for their assistance with arrangements for the festival events.

Janice Hughes
Secretary

Christine Taylor
Treasurer

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 30 June 2025 which are set out on pages 8 to 11.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



*Andrew Paul ACA
15 Parsons Close,
Church Crookham,
Fleet,
Hampshire, GU52 6HL*

23 April 2026

Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts

Receipts and Payments for the period ending 30 June 2025

	2024 - 2025	2023 - 2024
Incoming Resources		
Festival Sections		
Festival Entries	21,402	24,234
Box Office - Admissions	16,020	13,809
Programme Sales	1,020	1,140
Other Income	5,086	2,070
Note 1	<u>43,528</u>	<u>41,253</u>
Other Income		
Note 2	<u>1,212</u>	<u>131</u>
Total income	<u>44,740</u>	<u>41,384</u>
Resources Expended		
Festival sections		
Adjudicators fees and expense	10,877	13,069
Hire of halls and equipment	12,302	11,122
Medals and Prizes	2,981	3,893
Syllabus and Programme printing	4,169	1,463
Catering costs	6,929	4,153
Licence and copyright fees	1,385	1,880
Note 1	<u>38,643</u>	<u>35,580</u>
General costs		
Annual General Meeting & Expenses	1,260	
Bank Charges	325	55
BIFF Conference fees	150	380
BIFF costs	713	768
Other Admin costs	155	329
Note 3	<u>2,603</u>	<u>1,532</u>
Total resources expended	<u>41,246</u>	<u>37,112</u>
Operating (deficit) / surplus for the year	£3,494	£4,272
Young Musician of the Year net costs	548	621
	<u>2,946</u>	<u>3,651</u>
Anniversary Fund:		
Dance Bursaries	920	760
Music Bursaries & Prizes	220	450
Note 4	<u>1,140</u>	<u>1,210</u>
Surplus for the year	1,806	2,441
Opening funds	35,318	32,877
Closing Funds	<u><u>37,124</u></u>	<u><u>£35,318</u></u>

Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts

Funds Available for the period ending 30 June 2025

Bank Balances	2024-2025	2023-2024
NatWest Current	21,297	25,255
CAF Cash	8,892	5,268
CAF Gold	6,935	4,795
Unrestricted Funds	<u>£37,124</u>	<u>£35,318</u>

Janice Hughes
Secretary

Christine Taylor
Treasurer

Note 1 Section Surpluses and Deficits

	Dance		Music		Drama		Music & Drama		Choir / Ensembles		Total	
	2024 - 25	2024	2024 - 25		2024 - 25		2025	2024	2024 - 25	2024	2024 - 25	2024
Incoming Resources												
Festival Sections												
Festival Entries	11,301	13,272	7,264		2,263		9,527	10,716	574	786	21,402	24,234
Box Office - Admissions	10,017	9,612	2,796		1,812		4,608	2,769	1,394	1,428	16,019	13,809
Programme Sales	1,020	1,140	0		0				0		1,020	1,140
Other Income	5,086	2,070	0		0				0		5,086	2,070
	27,424	0	0		0		14,135	12,945	0	1,968	2,214	43,527
Resources Expended												
Festival sections												
Adjudicators costs	3,905	4,072	4,791		1,721		6,512	8,450	459	547	10,876	13,069
Hire of halls and equipment	7,957	7,775	2,542		1,043		3,585	2,934	760	413	12,302	11,122
Medals and Prizes	1,165	2,312	1,334		412		1,746	1,581	70		2,981	3,893
Syllabus and Programme	2,138	1,259	1,748		200		1,948	204	83		4,169	1,463
Catering costs	3,737	2,563	1,739		1,034		2,773	1,396	419	194	6,929	4,153
Licence and copyright fees	816	1,354	376		182		558	526	11		1,385	1,880
	0	0	19,335		0		0	15,091		1,802	1,154	0
Section (Deficit) / Surplus	7,706	6,759	-2,470		-517		-2,987	-2,146		166	1,060	4,885
General income											(1,212)	(131)
General costs											2,603	1,532
YMOY											548	621
Revenue Bursaries											1,140	1,210
(Net costs)												3,079
(Deficit) / Surplus for period												1,806

Note 2

General Income:

	2025	2024
Bank interest	160	131
Hotel refunds re bookings in 2024	1,052	-
	<u>1,212</u>	<u>131</u>

Note 3

General Costs:

	2025	2024
Bank charges	325	55
General non-attributable costs	155	418
Equipment purchases	1,260	-
Insurance	350	350
Conference fees	150	380
Other costs	363	329
Total non-section costs	<u>£2,603</u>	<u>£1,532</u>

	2025	2024
Young Musician of the Year	548	621
	-	-
	<u>548</u>	<u>£621</u>

The Young Musician of the Year event is held every year to celebrate outstanding performances from soloists in our Music festival.

Note 4

Bursaries and prizes

The Festival regularly puts aside funds for bursaries intended to benefit talented performers in the Dance, Music and Speech sections of the Festival.

Funds were again set aside from reserves for a £500 bursary for a dancer going on to study full time in the Autumn (see Trustee report page 4). Bursaries were also awarded to fund four dancers to enter the UKYD national dance competition. Monetary prizes were also awarded to performers in the Dance Gala section, from the Speech section of the festival and to performers in the YMoY.

Actual payments in 2024 (2023) were as follows

	2025	2024
2025 YMoY awards	220	225
2025 Music & Vocal prizes		75
2024/25 UK Young dancer of the Year	420	410
2024 dance bursary	500	500
	<u>£1,140</u>	<u>£1,210</u>