



Arts Richmond

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Annual Report

April 1st 2023-March 31st 2024

Introduction

A Year of Consolidation

Since our last AGM Arts Richmond has a busy year of events all calculated to support our overall aim of supporting our affiliates and keeping the arts alive in the borough of Richmond.

I am pleased to report that our financial situation has seen an improvement but it continues to be a major focus of all our efforts.

My thanks to all the volunteers; members of our various sub committees; my fellow Trustees and Linda Hansell for all their hard work and commitment to the charity.

Looking forward I believe we have a strong team who are focussed on making Arts Richmond more financially secure and looking for new ways to promote our affiliates and boost awareness of all the Arts in the Borough.

1. Objectives

The subcommittees of the Board of Trustees work hard in pursuit of our objective to disseminate information and promote engagement in the huge range of arts events and activities produced by our affiliated groups and societies. In furtherance of the same objective we also promote a number of events ourselves as evidenced in this report.

2. Management and membership

At March 31st 2024, 125 organisations were affiliated to Arts Richmond, down on last year by 8 but we are confident more will join or re-join before the new subscription year is up .

Our current Trustees are John Coombs (Chair) Hilary Dodman (Deputy Chair) Simon Bartlett (Treasurer) Sue Pandit, Gillian Thorpe, Jean Wit, Peter Cregeen, Geoff Acton, Sandra Green and Rachel Tranter.

3. Communication and Publicity

Linda White continues to do wonderful work producing our monthly *What's On* newsletter. Gillian Thorpe continues to play a vital role in monthly proof reading. Our circulation of 1000 remains constant and the newsletter is distributed to the libraries and Visit Richmond outlets. The digital edition is widely disseminated among the affiliates every month. The newsletter now generally runs to 12-16 pages - evidence of the numerous activities of our affiliated societies and the importance they attach to inclusion of their events in our publicity.

On 31st March 2024, our Facebook reach per 28 days was on average 11.6K which is up on last year. On Instagram we had 1600 reaches per 28 days, slightly down on last year but our actual followers have grown. On X we had

over 2700 followers. This again demonstrates the enormous increase in our social media presence in 2023-2024. This is due entirely to Deborah Meanes our volunteer Press Officer who dedicates 7 hours a week solely to social media.

We could not manage without our loyal group of ‘stuffers’ who meet every month to ensure the inclusion of affiliates’ flyers and the distribution of the posted newsletters.

The team is Hilary Dodman, Janet Langhorne, Jenny Mason, Heather Morgan, Judith Anderton, Jennifer Braddle and Linda White and we are grateful to them all.

We are hugely indebted to Jean Wit, our Assistant Treasurer who continues to volunteer in the office one day a week and works remotely for Arts Richmond on some other days. One new volunteer Makeba Moore who came on board September 2023 to help with the Young Writers Makeba worked tirelessly to coordinate with schools and collate entries. Astrite worked on the graphics for both the book, and projection images for the event itself. Astrite has now stood down as she has now located to Brighton.

4. Partnership with LBRuT

Arts Richmond is incredibly grateful to LBRuT for their continued financial support for our activities which contribute to the delivery of the Borough’s Cultural Strategy.

5. Visual Arts (Chair: David Upton)

Committee members: John Coombs, Hilary Dodman, Heather Montford, Linda White, Gill Hiley Jane Aldous Catherine Jefferies and John Wylie

The Visual Arts Committee is a dynamic group, committed to creating and sustaining opportunities for artists across Richmond borough and beyond.

Chair of Visual Arts, Catherine Sweet stood down in November 2023, handing over to David Upton. David took the reins halfway

through the subscription year, hitting the ground running David is getting to grips with all that the Visual Art Committee cover.

Richmond Artist of the Year 2023

This event is now in its 3rd year, and we welcomed 24+ artists to the Marble Hill House and Gardens on Sunday 11th June.

Artists were able to find a spot both inside and outside the house. Entries were judged by representatives from the Marble Hill and Leigh Gallery (Hampton Hill), and our visual arts chair Catherine Sweet and we were able to award a cash prize made from the entry costs. Finished works were displayed at the on-site inside the house for visitors to enjoy until the end of July,

We are grateful to everyone involved for their commitment and energy, plan next year for the event to be held at The National Archives Kew.

Art House Open Studios 2023

Arts Richmond took over the running of the Art House Open Studio from the borough Art Service, which had been dormant since the pandemic. 49 artists enlisted and the event was run over two weekends in July 2023 15th/16th July and 22nd/23rd July. This event was only possible due to the hard work and vision of our then Visual Arts Chair Catherine Sweet. Catherine not only coordinated with all the artists and created the well-received brochure including all its marketing. She worked with the artists in getting there feedback by way of evaluation forms in order to have enough information to apply for funding for 2024. This was a huge project for Arts Richmond, which relied on the hard work and diligence of the office and all its volunteers.

Affordable Art Tent – Richmond, Kew and St Margaret’s 2023

This year all fairs and fetes were running and Arts Richmond took the ambitious decision to appear at three.

Artists were able to submit up to three pieces of work for £100 and under, per event, we took in 474 pieces of art overall. Both Richmond and Kew sold well, however St Margaret’s less so and the decision to not to attend St Margaret’s in 2024 was taken. The Visual Arts Committee were extremely grateful for all who turned up and helped set up, pack down and steward during the day.

The Diana Armfield Drawing Competition & Exhibition at The Patch

We are very grateful to The Patch for offering their spacious and elegant facilities to host the presentation of the awards for the Diana Armfield Competition 2024 on 7th March, and to display the entries afterwards.

Diana Armfield herself once again judged entries to this competition, supported by John Coombs and Linda White. There were 107 entries and as ever they were of such high quality that it was difficult to choose between them.

Diana, with the Deputy Mayor Councillor Fiona Sacks, also presented the awards at the private view on 7 March. We were also able to list entries for sale on our website shop section. Many thanks to Linda Hansell for administering this significant event, including cataloguing all 107 entries.

6. Literature (Chair: Hilary Dodman)

Committee members: Peter Cregeen, Hilary Dodman, Heather Montford, Sue Pandit, Gillian Thorpe, Anne Warrington, Jean Wit and York Membury

This committee had an enormously busy and successful year. The committee members worked tirelessly to promote a programme of

top quality events and increase levels of participation.

Arts Richmond Literature Festival November 2023

This year was the third year that Arts Richmond has independently run its smaller version of the former borough November Literature Festival. Our festival took place every Wednesday evening in November 2023 at The Exchange in Twickenham. Our Speakers were Leah Broad, Lisa Jewell, Andrew Humphreys and Michael Frayn under the title of ‘Creative Voices’

On Wednesday, November 8th we welcomed **Leah Broad**, who was interviewed about her book ‘Quartet’ which is about four women composers who changed the musical world. She discussed the lives, loves, adventures and trailblazing careers of these extraordinary women: Ethel Smyth, Rebecca Clarke, Dorothy Howells and Doreen Carwithen. The talk included excerpts from their music. Leah’s interviewer was Charlotte Walker from Bluefire Theatre Company. We learnt so much about these little known but very important figures.

On Wednesday, November 8th, bestselling author **Lisa Jewell** talked about her latest book ‘None of this is True’

Lisa is a top 10 New York Times and number one Sunday Times author who has been published worldwide in over twenty-five languages. Her talk helped us to appreciate why this author is so enormously successful with her creative imagination and her firm grasp of character.

On Wednesday, November 15th our guest was **Andrew Humphreys** who talked about his book ‘Raving Upon Thames’ Richmond’s Crawdaddy Club. The club launched the careers of both the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds, with their guitarists Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page. At the same time, UK festival culture was born on Richmond’s

rugby fields, while upriver at Twickenham Eel Pie Island was a magical ravers' hideaway where Rod Stewart, David Bowie and Jimmy Page hung out before taking to the stage themselves. Put simply, without Richmond and Twickenham the Sixties would never have happened. This was an amazing evening thoroughly enjoyed by all especially the Twickenham and Richmond residents who were around at the time.

On Wednesday, November 22nd we welcomed our very own patron **Michael Frayn**. Michael was in conversation with Ian Bruce, talking about his book 'Among Others: Friendships and Encounters' a patchwork memoir of a lifetime's encounters. Truthful and loving, sometimes elegiac, sometimes comic, it's a celebration of the endlessly intriguing otherness of others. This was the most wonderful relaxed evening and extraordinarily interesting to hear Michael talk about so many of the interesting people he has met in his long life.

We are enormously grateful to all our wonderful speakers, to all those who came along in such numbers on four dark, November evenings to be our audiences and to the team behind the operation both at the Exchange and Arts Richmond.

Each evening was supported by Helena Calletta of The Open Book who sourced and sold copies of all our speakers' books and presided over book signing sessions on each occasion. We express our thanks to her for her generous support.

Roger McGough Poetry Competition 2022-2023 prize giving May 2023

The awards for the Roger McGough Poetry Competition launched back in October 2022 were presented at the Exchange in May 2023. On this occasion we enlisted the help of local actors to present the finalists' work. Roger McGough attended the event himself and treated us to a few poems of his own at the end of the event. A huge amount of work goes

into the organisation of this competition. It was led by Anne Warrington, supported chiefly by Linda Hansell and her office volunteers. The generous support of Roger McGough ensures a good response to this event but we are keen to develop it further next year.

Young Writers' Competition and Festival of Writing 2023-2024

Our annual Young Writers' Competition was launched in September 2023 and the celebratory prize-winners Festival of Writing took place at The Exchange on Sunday, 17th March 2024. This year we were honoured with the support of well-known writer Anthony Horowitz who kindly gave up his time and drove back from Stratford to attend and present the finalists certificates on the day alongside the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Councillor Suzette Nicholson,

There were over 600 entries to the writing competition from schools, clubs and individuals across the borough. We thank in particular Makeba Moore who liaised with all the schools and collated the entries. We are also enormously grateful to those on our Literature Committee who were involved in the initial sifting and to our three external judges, Anne Beach, Loz Keal and Elizabeth Ryan for their hard work in identifying and selecting the most outstanding pieces of writing for our anthology and presentations at the event.

The children's work was brought to life by a wonderfully talented group of young actors from Edmondian Players, Dramacube and from Richmond College, directed with great enthusiasm and professionalism by Marc Batten.

To support the Young Writers' event we applied for funding to Barnes Literary Society and were successful in securing sponsorship of £500. We are grateful to BLS for their

generosity and to Sue Pandit for her advice and support in this process.

7. Drama (April 2023 – March 2024)

Chair: Daniel Wain. Plus drama committee members who served during this period: Hilary Dodman, Jeremy Gill, Loz Keal, Héloïse Plumley, Gillian Thorpe, Linda White.

2023-24 proved to be a vibrant year for local theatre. Our drama affiliates continued to recover from the shutdowns and hiatus caused by the Covid pandemic with creativity, energy and positivity. It was comforting to see audiences slowly rediscovering the unique pleasure of live performance, although ticket sales and re-engagement both proved sluggish. So the year proved to be one of consolidation but also inevitable change.

Arts Richmond's Drama Committee continued to build closer relations with our affiliates, following the Consultation carried out by new Drama Committee Chair Daniel Wain in Spring 2022. These initial discussions focused on four principal themes, which we started to address during 2023-24 and will continue to do so: collaboration, marketing, resources (especially technical) and the Swan Awards.

Cross-affiliate Collaboration

We have initiated a series of 'Drama Forums', bringing together our affiliates, Drama Committee members and Swan judges. The first took place in February 2023 and we have since held a further three, with the latest in May 2024.

One tangible outcome has been the creation of a consolidated schedule of all shows in the borough, to avoid 'clashes', help affiliates to share resources and avoid cannibalising audiences (and so maximise sales). This also helps scheduling for both Swan judges and our limited pool of technical resource. As with so much that we've implemented this year, it's about collaboration and co-operation rather than competition. We are delighted that BROS, Dramacube, Q2, RSS and TTC have contributed to the schedule, and would encourage other affiliates to do likewise.

Radio Plays Competition

In April 2023, we unveiled a second Radio Plays Competition, sponsored by the family of the late Colin Skipp (Tony Archer in *The Archers*), with submissions by early June. Sadly, the originator of the initiative Nancy Baldwin was unable to support beyond initiating it, so the 2023 project was managed by Daniel Wain and Drama Committee member Héloïse Plumley.

We received a very cheering total of over 30 entries, which were assessed by a panel of six experienced local readers, with four selected as finalists. The

quality was as impressive as the quantity, and the reading panel faced some robust discussions and tough decisions before agreeing on the finalists: Ben Francis, Loz Keal, Hannah Lobley and Clare Norburn. Simon Nelson, BBC Writersroom's London Development Executive kindly provided individual feedback to all four. These plays were then recorded at Hampton Hill Theatre by a repertory company of local actors (Ellie Armstrong, Oliver Redpath, Mia Skytte and Daniel Wain), with Harry Jacobs as sound technician. We thank them all for their time and talent.

The recordings of all four finalists were then played at the prize-giving event at the Exchange, Twickenham, on 17th October 2023 (and are still available on Arts Richmond's YouTube channel). The audience included the Mayor (Suzette Nicholson) and Colin Skipp's widow Lisa and daughter Nova. The winner was Clare Norburn for *The End: Roll Credits*. Clare received the Colin Skipp Radio Drama Cup, a £100 cash prize and, most importantly, a meeting with Simon Nelson to receive personalised one-to-one feedback.

In 2024, we will be running another new writing competition, this time focused on live theatre. The finalists will have their scripts performed at the Orange Tree Theatre on 13th October, when the winner will be announced. Ongoing, the plan is to alternate the Radio Plays and New Stage Plays competitions on a biennial basis.

Swan Awards

One of the main areas raised by the 2022 affiliate consultation and then discussed in-depth at the first Drama Forum was the Swan Awards.

Many major affiliates (including BROS, RSS and TTC) had expressed dissatisfaction, going so far as to suggest that Arts Richmond either end the Awards or at least pause them while they consult their members on whether the Swans should continue. After the first Forum, it was agreed to continue the Awards for a further year (2023-24) but to make several changes, in response to affiliate feedback. These included amendments to the event itself, the award categories and the judging panel.

Starting with the panel, during 2023-24, the Drama Committee provided the judges with more ongoing support, with either Hilary Dodman or Gillian Thorpe attending each meeting. Daniel also arranged for the judges to meet at Hampton Hill Theatre rather than at ETNA and updated the judges' guidelines to provide greater clarity.

In addition, as the judges have to attend approximately 60 productions per year and we need a minimum of three at each, the panel was enlarged from six to nine. So Paul Bethel, Susan Conte,

Michelle Hood, Margaret Keelan, Elizabeth Slater and Warren Walters were joined by Terry Dunne, Katherine Orrell and Stephen Pratt. The latter three shadowed the existing panel during the summer and then came onboard as full judges as of September 2023. We thank them all whole-heartedly for their dedication and support.

Unfortunately, the original list of Swan nominees, announced in late July 2023, was incomplete, with a few errors. We have tightened up on the communication protocols and award definitions as a result, with updated rules being agreed with both judges and affiliates.

Again in answer to feedback, for the 2023-24 award season, it was agreed to make some changes and additions to the nomination categories. So the acting awards have been updated to more gender-fluid titles (e.g. 'Best Performer in a Male Role'), we have renamed the Cygnet Award 'The Best Production in a Non-Theatre Space', a 'Best Ensemble' has been introduced and we have doubled the number of technical categories from two to four (hopefully looking to recognise the involvement of those creatives we want to encourage). In addition, the Wild Swan nominations will be announced at the same time as the other nominations (rather than just on the night of the award presentations).

Even those who wanted to see the Swans scrapped or suspended agreed that the 'Swan Awards' event was a big date in the theatrical calendar. We therefore refreshed this in September 2023, under the new name of the Arts Richmond Drama Party. The aim was to celebrate all those involved in local theatre, not just award nominees, as well as to provide an opportunity to socialise and party. We moved from the traditional Sunday to the non-school night of Saturday (16th September to be precise), opted for a slightly later start time and a lower ticket price, and changed the physical layout of the space. The venue was once again the Landmark Centre, Teddington. We also reintroduced entertainment (a pianist, comedian, disco and MC). This more inclusive event saw over 200 attend, Arts Richmond make a decent profit (despite the cheaper ticket price) and, most importantly, received almost overwhelmingly positive feedback. Thanks to Loz Keal, Daniel Wain and especially to Linda Hansell for organising the Party, and to Kay Williams and Colin Squire for their continued sponsorship.

To keep the Swan Award element of the Drama Party relatively concise, only the winners went onstage to collect their trophies. So, to recognise all those who were nominated, in 2023, we also re-introduced a separate, dedicated Nominations Evening. This was held at York House on Thursday 3rd August,

attended by nominees, Swan judges, members of the Drama Committee and the Mayor, who presented the nomination certificates.

For 2024, we will be continuing with both the Nominations Evening and the Drama Party, with a few minor changes to reflect feedback on the 2023 events. We have also refreshed the judging panel for 2023-24, keeping the number to nine.

AOB

The rising cost of venue hire and the loss of both active members and rehearsal space meant that we sadly saw both Park Players and St Mary's Drama Group close recently, although the latter is looking at options for revival. We understand that other smaller affiliates are also struggling for space and resource. The Drama Committee will do all we can to help with support and guidance, given the continuing challenges of rising prices and changing demographics.

Over the coming year, we will also look to expand the Drama Committee itself and continue to support both the Swan judges and all our affiliates regardless of size. We therefore look forward to another active and productive year of theatre in 2024-25.

8. Showcoach

(Chair: **Janet Langhorne Committee Members: Jean Wit, Linda White Helen Taylor**)

Our Showcoach programme continues to provide regular fascinating and varied day and residential trips. These events also offer participants coach transport as appropriate and a friendly atmosphere for socialising with like-minded people. I am delighted to note that we are seeing an increasing number of new members joining us on these trips to share the delights already enjoyed by our 'regulars'

April - This month we had our residential trip by coach to Liverpool and North Wales. 21 members enjoyed a 4 night stay in a centrally located 4* Hotel, ideal for visiting restaurants and all local sights as well as watching preparations for the Eurovision Song Contest which was just about to take place right next to us. We visited the Anglican and Metropolitan Cathedrals, both stunning, and were taken on a tour of the Beatles areas of the city. We also took in The Walker Art Gallery and went to Great Crosby Beach to see the famous collection of Anthony Gormley cast iron sculptures, 100 in total. In North Wales we visited Gwydir Castle, Bodnant Gardens and Powis Castle. We also went to Port Sunlight to see Lord Lever's village and the Lady Lever Art Gallery. This was a very busy and successful trip arranged through Heritage Travel.

June

28 members enjoyed a trip into the Hampshire countryside by coach, visiting first the Bombay Sapphire Distillery, where our guide explained the numerous processes involved in distilling and we watched a film about the origins of Bombay Sapphire whilst sipping our complimentary G&T! This was a fascinating place to have visited.

We also visited one of Gertrude Jekyll's famous gardens which has been lovingly restored by the current owner who gave us a talk about its history. We were then able to wander around these beautiful gardens. This day was enjoyed by everyone.

August

We had our annual day out by coach to Chichester. 29 members had signed up to see The Sound of Music at the Chichester Festival Theatre. This is always a popular day as it gives time to visit the city as well as see a really great production of a very well-known musical.

Also this month 10 members attended a brilliant Prom at the Royal Albert Hall given by the visiting Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andris Nelsons and featuring the excellent pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet playing Gershwin. This was an enjoyable evening despite the travel problems of attending over a BH weekend.

September

This month 14 members visited 2 very different houses: Leighton House, the home of Lord Leighton the artist and collector of many different artefacts, and Sambourne House (nearby) the family home of the legendary Linley Sambourne, illustrator and photographer.

Both houses are owned and maintained by Kensington and Chelsea Council. We were given a fascinating guided tour of Leighton House before going onto Sambourne House which is still maintained in its Victorian splendour.

Another enjoyable visit

October

10 members visited the Eel Pie Island Museum. Here we learnt about its history and its famous inhabitants and were able to look at a huge collection of memorabilia strongly featuring the Swinging 50s and 60s.

After this we had a guided walk along the riverside and learnt more about the history of Eel Pie Island and the trades that took place along the river. We then adjourned to the Eel Pie Pub for lunch!

December

The planned visit to Cadogan Hall was cancelled because of both change of host and programme.

March

This month we had an excellent visit to Tate Britain to see the Singer Sargent and Fashion exhibition. This was preceded by an illustrated talk about the Exhibition by one of the Tate lecturers. These visits are always popular as the Tate really looks after us with refreshments before and lunch after the talk. All of the 24 members attending really enjoyed their day at the Tate.

I would like to thank our Administrator, Linda Hansell and my committee members, Helen Taylor, Linda White and Jean Wit, for their help and support throughout the year.

Janet Langhorne, Chair

9. Music Committee

Chair Hilary Dodman. Committee members Willian Summers, Hugh Rogers, Joe Humphreys and Geoff Acton

This year saw the formation of a new Music Committee and we are very grateful who stepped up to the plate to take on this role. The principle activity in 2023/24 was the Choral Workshop.

Choral Workshop in September 2023: We held a Come and Sing Day conducted by Richard Harker at St Richards Church in Ham on Saturday September 23rd singing songs from Leonard Bernstein & Stephen Sondheim's 'West Side Story'. We attracted 83 participants who had a wonderful day and a great deal of fun. The final performance was attended by a good number of family and friends who enjoyed a rousing performance. Ten new members signed up to Arts Richmond as a result of this event.

The committee is working hard to extend the range of its activities.

10. Assuring quality for members and funders

This is achieved through;

- **Our office being open for contacts and prompt responses every day from 9.30am to 12.30pm.**
- **Our attention to the regular production of a high quality newsletter giving accurate in**

date information about the activities of our affiliates and ensuring they receive value for money for their membership fee. Our attention to the development of our social media platforms and our constant striving to increase our profile in these areas

- **Our Trustees Board meeting regularly to consider members' views and**

expectations and take them into consideration when instigating projects and planning for future events

- **Our trustees working to ensure the probity and financial stability of the charity**

Arts Richmond

Joint Presidents 2022-2023 The Rt. Hon. Sir Vince Cable and Lady Rachel Cable

Vice Presidents: John Coombs, Hilary Dodman, Pam Frazer, Sandra Green, Edie Purdue

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Deputy: Hilary Dodman
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(Literature)

Catherine Sweet
(Visual Arts)

Danny Wain
(Drama)

Janet Langhorne
(Showcoach)

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2014 Dame Jacqueline
Wilson
2015 Clive Bradley CBE
2016 Sara Burn Edwards/
Howard Greenwood BEM
2017-18-Samantha Bond
2018-19 Roger McGough
2019-2020 Lynne Faulds
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2021-2023 Sir Vince and
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2023-2024 Lady Camillia
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Thanks

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