

Report of The Annual Leith Hill Musical Festival Youth Day 23rd March 2013

Plans by teachers, months of learning songs, rushing the family to leave on time and wearing school uniform on a Saturday! All of this before climbing the steps onto a very large stage with your friends, looking out to a sea of several hundred faces, watching the teacher, listening to the accompanist then opening your mouth and singing your heart out. Stepping forward alone to sing a solo. All for the joy of singing and making music.

The heavy snowfall on Saturday prevented one school from taking part but nearly 600 children still took all the steps mentioned above in order to provide the most wonderful day of singing. The audience was thrilled by soloists, and two, three and later in the day four part harmony singing. Accompanied and unaccompanied songs sung by children from many nationalities, abilities and in different languages and some also used signing. Energetic actions were used to emphasise enthusiasm in particular by the rock and gospel choirs. Later in the day it was good to hear lower registered voices. Young men and women to join LHMF choirs in the future, perhaps.

The adjudicator for the day was Elizabeth Wigley a very experienced singer and teacher of music to all children with a speciality for children with Special Educational Needs. She was listening for blend of sound, phrasing, diction, communication through performance and mostly for singers enjoying their music. She was thrilled to hear and see examples of all of these requirements and gave very positive feedback to all schools.

It should be difficult to single out any performance but I want to mention the diction of the children of Sacred Heart, Battersea when they sang *The Rhythm of Life*. Find the words and see if you can articulate them all, from memory and at a speedy tempo. I have never heard it done so well. But, the performance of the day has to be from St. Francis of Assisi School from Crawley. They sang both songs with no conductor and had the audience in the palm of their small hands. When they sang *God Speaking* with one small solo line, the audience had lumps in their throats and many were physically weeping because it was so very moving.

A fabulous day arranged by Felicity Hill and with the aid of lots of volunteer helpers. This event gets better and better each year. I cannot wait until the 2014 event.

Barbara Christopher