



Accolade AGM – Secretary's report – 2014-15

Congratulations ! Accolade Community Arts Organisation is about to enter its 3rd year having grown and developed in very significant ways. First of all, we can now boast a fantastic membership of almost 100 people, with over 14 nationalities represented comprising the Newry and Banbridge choirs, the orchestra and the associated Bulgarian musicians and dance troupe.

Thanks to our fantastic musical directors, Vessie and Nikolay Ivanov, we are developing our musical knowledge, abilities and performance skills beyond what we think are our capabilities, all down to their fantastic direction and inspirational influence.

We have enjoyed a very diverse range of activities from indoor and outdoor concert performances, busking, carol singing, fundraising bag packing, coffee mornings and social activities which have enabled us all to get to know each other better and recognise the marvellous knowledge, skills and talents in so many areas that we can all share and enjoy.

As an organisation, we have grown and continue to grow, revising our Constitution, formalising our Membership, addressing key challenges within the Committee and working together to develop our key aims, values and determining where we are and where we want to go in the next 3-5 years.

None of this would have been possible without the ongoing advice, support and funding opportunities provided by the Arts Council, Community Relations Council, NICVA , CAP, Banbridge and Newry and Mourne District Councils and the new Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough council officers and funding programmes, and we express our very sincere gratitude to them and look forward to continued partnership working.

Some key highlights of the calendar year

July 2014

The 2nd year began with the installation of the new Committee with Paula and Cliff retaining their respective roles of Secretary and Treasurer and Samuel Lawson appointed new chair following Trevor's resignation. Eunice remained as Designated Safeguarding Officer. The *Let's sing together* project funded by Arts Council NI (ACNI) is underway and the Newry choir is busy with fundraising activities eg back packing at TESCO

August 2014

The Arts Council funded *Classical and World Music tour* begins in Warrenpoint and the orchestra performs at the Banbridge District Council's outdoor summer theatre programme in Solitude park. A very significant piece of community development work began with the

Bulgarian community in Kilkeel supported by Andrew Kernaghan. Vessie requests to set up Bulgarian dance troupe as part of Accolade.

September 2014

Delivery of the Bulgarian themed concert in Kilkeel. Vessie and Nikolay secure 2 facilitators for the Bulgarian dance troupe. During the Committee meeting of 22nd Sept 2014, Paula Guzzanti, The secretary commends Vessie and Nikolay 's work “ ***I am very impressed with the work that you do. Everything is going so well and Accolade is so well established now.***

November 2014

Accolade continues to grow with the establishment of the Banbridge choir comprising some 20 members aged 16 to 60+. Our rehearsal space is the Community Room at the TESCO OUTLET store. We would want to acknowledge our sincere gratitude to David McKay the TESCO Community champion who has gone out of his way to ensure that we feel at home and are fully catered for every week.

December 2014

Vessie and Nikolay reiterate the need for a project manager/ administrative support for Accolade. Fundraising and other events are taking place almost on a daily basis at Tesco, Sainsburys, Autism Phybroyalgia, Scarva tea rooms to name but a few.

January 2015

Committee meeting identifies the need for a Project Manager for Accolade due to the increasing workload on our Musical Directors.

February 2015

The Diverse music in the community project begins – with the orchestra. Exploring different music from different cultures using various instruments and different styles of music. Funded by the CRC.

ACNI *Intercultural Arts* programme was very successful and received a brilliant evaluation.

An innovative piece of work with professional film maker, Diane Millar, leads to the production of a promotional video featuring the development of Accolade choirs and orchestra thanks to CAP.

March 2015

The Banbridge choir were delighted to be invited to perform at the St Patrick's Day festival in Solitude park, Banbridge at the invitation of the then Banbridge District Council. The Committee meeting on 13th March saw new Safeguarding appointments of Helen McDowell as the overall Designated officer supported by representatives from the choirs and orchestra. Very sincere thanks to Eunice for previously holding this role and for her ongoing continued support.

April 2015

Open Arts Community choir project – working with people with disabilities begins

Community Arts Programme

May 2015

Developmental work regarding Accolade's Strategic plan began with Mrs Charo Lanao from CAP. Draft Aims for Accolade choir. The Newry choir had their first official corporate engagement performing at a local wedding in stunning setting of Narrow water Castle. Recognition of the community work of Accolade has been recognised through the new Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council awarding us a significant grant of £7000 to bring the arts to lonely and isolated members of society with the choir and orchestral members performing in local residential settings and care homes. Further endorsement to Accolade was received from the audit conducted by Arts Council NI with Beverly Coomber commenting that we *Accolade are brilliant and that everything is perfect and that we are an example of how things should be done* .

At this point Vessie recognises the essential key role that Cliff has played “thank you so much Cliff for the brilliant work, your faithfulness and dedication”

Thursday 28th May – very significant event for Accolade with the 2 choirs and orchestra very first collective concert of multicultural celebration in Newry Town hall.

June 2015

The month opened with the Special General meeting which was very professionally chaired by our independent facilitator, Mr Frank Dolaghan. The meeting was attended by over 53 members. A vote of no confidence in the current Committee, Membership was regularised, and the difficult relationship between the Committee, or specifically the then Chairman and the Artistic Directors explained with unanimous support for Vessie and Nikolay. Frank concluded that Accolade needed to clarify its identity, role and future.

A very productive interim committee meeting took place on 17th June with key preparations being made for tonight's AGM, including finances, reports, membership fees, nominations, legal support for review of the Constitution and project details.

The Banbridge choir has been very active this month hosting a fundraising coffee morning in Banbridge old town hall. A donation will be made Seapatrick care home when we visit them under the recently approved ABC Council funded care home touring programme

Performing at the annual Buskfest Banbridge busking festival on Saturday 27th June in Banbridge town centre was a new venture for the Banbridge members. Great experience, we had a fantastic day's craic and a few pints of refreshment were enjoyed.

The Multicultural evening - for many of us this was one of the key social highlights of the year at the Big Telly art space in Banbridge. We shared the unbelievable musical talents of so many of our members from singing, performing arts, playing the ukulele and the

opportunity to share music and culture with our newly made friends from Bulgaria all made for an unforgettable evening.

Very sincere thanks to Ann Ward for facilitating the development workshop which was a very thought provoking and rewarding experience.

JULY 2015

The highlight of this month is undoubtedly the Accolade choir trip to Prague for our Newry Members. This is a fantastic milestone

We continue to go from strength to strength with discussions with the Arts Council to discuss a Sustainability programme funding which will enable us to develop our 5 year strategic plan and do invaluable work.

Vessie and Nikolai – where do I begin? We are all unbelievably blessed that they chose to come to our wee neck of the woods and begin the phenomenal work here. We all benefit from the highest standards of professional musical direction but more than this we are truly blessed to have met two such amazingly inspirational people. It feels like they are shining a guiding light of their unbelievably open, warm and generous personalities, phenomenal talent, energy and creativity upon us all. How can we fail to be brightened and lifted up under their amazing guiding light. Let us continue to share this light with the rest of our locality and the world and you never know James one day we may get to Florida

Yes we are happy together! Yes we are full of joy and light !

