

DEPUTATION THREE – LEEDS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION  
COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, Fanny, are you comfortable?

DAME FANNY WATERMAN: Thank you very much, yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the members of your deputation.

DAME FANNY WATERMAN: Thank you. My Lord Mayor, Leader of the Council Keith Wakefield and, of course, the Councillors of the City of Leeds. I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak to Leeds International Piano Competition in its golden anniversary. Accompanying me now are Mr Robert Solyom, Mr Ed Anderson and our Administrator, Nick Westerman.

I am Dame Fanny Waterman, Chairman and Artistic Director of the Leeds International Piano Competition, which I founded 50 years ago with Marion Thorpe and my late husband, Dr Geoffrey de Keyser.

I am very honoured to have lived and been a native of this city of Leeds, where I was educated and it has given me every opportunity and every honour possible, including the Freedom of the City of Leeds. Not only me, but it has given the greatest support to the piano competition. We have had a few Lord Mayors who have been passionate about music and the competition and one of them is certainly here today, so I wish to thank everybody who has helped us to achieve this position of being what is known by the international music community as the greatest piano competition in the world.

The reason for this is that we have introduced to the world some of the greatest pianists of our time: Andras Schiff, Murray Perahia, Radu Lupu, and wherever they play they carry with them the banner of the city of Leeds which is mentioned in their programmes.

The late Denis Healey said of our competition that it is one of the wonders of the world. Lang Lang, who was asked to be the Global Ambassador for our competition, says there is not another hall in the world where the impact of our winners has not been graced. Also, I had a phone call from No. 10 Downing Street saying that the Burmese heroine wished to meet me because she had watched this competition when she was incarcerated and how much she admired it, so she is also an ambassador.

I say from the very beginning that the purpose of my visit is to ask if you would consider being as generous as possible by allowing us to use the Civic Hall for our final night. I have been on a hundred competitions and they generally have a great ending and I feel that, as we have your wonderful Civic Hall here, I would be very happy and grateful if you would consider allowing us to invite our international, national people connected with the competition, great donors, financial donors without whom we could not exist and, of course, we must not forget the volunteers –

they are absolutely marvellous, they give of their time. That is really the purpose of this deputation from me.

If I walked out of this hall and I stop a passer by and say, "Have you heard of the Leeds International Piano Competition?" they give me a blank stare. How is it that wherever I go all over the world I only have to mention Leeds – no longer your football team but the competition (*laughter*) and I am so proud of this. A few weeks ago I was here when Victor Watson had an honour and I walked out on to the street asking someone and they had never heard of it. This has to be rectified and I feel that with your support and passion we could make Leeds even more beautiful than it is.

At the time of the competition, or at other competitions there are flowers, there are banners, there are posters, people have on the backs of their cars "Leeds International Piano Competition" and even my taxi driver in Warsaw would ask me, "Who has got through to the second stage?" I do not think anybody here would realise it is actually going on.

This is a suggestion I have made. I am not asking for money, I have got priorities. However passionate I feel about our competition, I do feel that there are more important things for you to concern yourselves with, like hospitals, schools that need books, the police, so many other things that I think that this suggestion of mine, how we could help with the city making itself more beautiful at the time of the competition.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Fanny, you have had your five minutes. (*Applause*) Well said. I am going to ask Councillor Harper to respond.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Fanny, for attending and your Deputation. I am famous for forgetting the vote! All those in favour of Fanny's suggestion and deputation? (*A vote was taken*) Thank you, I think that is unanimous.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the considerations which your comments will receive. Thank you and enjoy the rest of today. Thank you. (*Applause*)