

Orange British Academy Film Awards, 12 February 2012

Chairman's opening speech:

Tim Corrie

They said it would be easy the second time. They were wrong.

Bright sparks are relatively common, but sparks of genius are something else entirely.

A train arriving at a station.

A man on the moving hands of a clock.

A restaurant kitchen where the hero/chef is a rat.

An English king with a stammer

And those sparks of genius are wonderfully present in the films we are acknowledging and perhaps rewarding today.

A puppeteer's horse

A film obsessed child.

A silent black and white film about talkies.

You can all imagine the early script conferences – you want to make a film about what? In WHAT? But they did – and we were the beneficiaries.

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts has probably never been stronger – we have embraced our members in New York and Los Angeles who celebrate their 25th anniversary this year – hearty congratulations to them – but the struggle to find structured finance for these sparks of genius goes on.

It is our challenge, your challenge, to ensure that this Academy remains a keeper and fierce protector of these flames.

Without the dedicated professionalism of a huge number of people none of us would be here tonight – and it is my pleasure to single out and thank some of the most significant contributors. Amanda Berry is almost synonymous with BAFTA – she is its star and its blithe spirit. She is blessed in having Kevin Price as colleague, counsel and sometime critic. They are magnificently abetted by the Film Committee led by Nik Powell and Pippa Harris, as well as Clare Brown who has probably been here for the past three days and nights organising everything on the Academy's behalf.

Orange have now been our sponsor and principal support for a remarkable fifteen years – their love of film and affection for this Academy is palpable and hugely appreciated.

The Royal Opera House, this extraordinary temple to the arts which lends splendour and glamour to our evening fields a brilliant team under Moya Maxwell.

Finally please allow me to pay tribute to Katherine Allen and the team from Whizz Kid and who have produced tonight's entertainment, and also the team from Freud's Communications under Kate Lee who have so ably looked after so many of us this evening and on many other occasions over the years.

You will be relieved to know that this is my last appearance as Chairman at these awards and next year you will be able to welcome John Willis presently firmly ensconced in the Deputy Chairman's role.

As most of you know there will be a short tribute to some of those who have sadly passed away in the past year, bear with me please in asking you to withhold any applause until the end of the sequence.

And now really finally before handing over to the dauntingly eloquent and utterly beguiling Mr Fry may I please prevail upon tonight's happy winners to convey their thanks in witty but pithy terms.

Thank you all.

Have a wonderful evening.