

South London Theatre Centre 55th AGM

Date: 6th June 2022, 20.20 start.

Location: The Old Fire Station and on Zoom.

1. PRESENT

In person:

Simon Gleisner (Chair), Fiona Daffern (minutes), Cal Beckett, Charlotte Benstead, Peter Burke, David Carr, Graham Clements, David Clements, Jenny Clements, Carole Coyne, Adam Crook, Anne Davey Orr, Matthew Davies, Roisin Deady, Celia Delaney, Chaz Doyle, Caroline Durant, Han Evans, Bryon Fear, Lorna Felix, Dennis Fenton, Brian Fretwell, Kay George, Jeanette Hoile, Dave Hollander, Mark Ireson, John Irvine, Jack King, Bex Law, Geoff Lill, Tom Mathias, Gareth Milton, Lee Ridgeway, Chris Stooke, Chris Theophilus, Lisa Thomas, Sean Thomas, Andy Webb, Val Williams, John Winters, Malcolm Woodman, Janine Wunsche.

Online:

Chris Bennett, Jon Boniface, Leon Chambers, Dan Kelly

Apologies:

Gail Cotton, Sarah Farage, Barry Heselden, Guy Jones, Marissa Papas, Greg Williams

2. ABBREVIATIONS

General Council = GC

Building Preservation Trust (BPT)

Members' Club = MC

Bar Committee (of the Members' Club) = BarCom

3. OPENING REMARKS

Simon Gleisner, our Chair welcomed all those in person and online to the 55th AGM of South London Theatre Centre Ltd., with apologies for the late start due to technical problems on Zoom.

The Chair reflected on the enormous changes over the last year, from the beginning of 2021 in lockdown to a cautious reopening last year and now back to a full repertoire. We have made some great progress through difficult times and stayed afloat, albeit there are financial challenges ahead, more of which later.

To remind us of what we have achieved, Roisin Deady has put together a great video of all our productions. This was received to great applause.

A few initial thanks (in no particular order):

- Andy Webb and the cast of The Habit of Art for giving up the theatre space on their get in week.
- Charlotte and the BPT for all their fundraising efforts and looking after the building
- Bex and David for keeping the building running and safe on a day-to-day basis.
- The Members' Club for keeping us watered and socialising.

- Our wardrobe volunteers, who raised a tremendous £6.5k on hires last year.
- Teresa, Pharrell, Marcelle, Jack, Greg and Shiv for running our Youth Theatre.
- Members of General Council for all their hard work and commitment.
- Every one of our members who has volunteered their time doing front of house, bar, backstage, repairs, publicity, etc. to keep the place running.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT

Chris Stooke, our Financial Director, introduced the financial report for the year ending December 2021. The summary results are in the Annual Report, which has been circulated to members. We are still waiting for the final audited results and these will be circulated, once approved. The figures will not change.

SLT made a profit of £38k last year. This was helped by grants / funding including payments through the BPT, not yet fully spent. If we exclude these specific BPT payments, we still have a profit of c£8k, which is good in the circumstances. We have been able to invest in the Youth Theatre and community elements. BPT kindly covered our rent costs last year and through fundraising, a significant element of the new website costs. The bank balance at 31 December 2021 was c£86k. We have a similar figure still.

There are challenges moving forward in 2022. We need to start paying our rent and utilities are increasing significantly. There should be an increase in revenues from shows, hires, etc. but we need to ensure we have enough reserves.

Chris has met recently with the auditors to discuss our VAT status. It was advantageous for us to register for VAT for the renovations. We would need to repay significant sums if we now deregistered. The auditors advise we must stay registered for 20 years in total (approximately another 10 years, as registered a while). This has raised some further issues with our auditors about cash flow between BPT and SLT, which we are resolving.

No further questions raised.

Proposals

Chris proposed the current accounts to the membership.

Seconded by Jack King.

AGREED by those in attendance.

Chris proposed Begbies be retained as our auditors.

Seconded by Tom Mathias

AGREED by those in attendance.

5. UPDATES

The Chair gave the following updates on priorities ahead.

Income and Membership

There are increasing costs and we need to manage our income carefully. Our full membership is increasing now we are back to putting on shows, but we need to do a drive for Friends membership. We need to fill our audiences for shows. We need to review ticket prices, which are unchanged from

2018. GC have started some research and will be reviewing over the next month. We are mindful that there are many squeezes on members' incomes at the moment and want to be as inclusive as possible. Members are invited to come and talk to GC with any suggestions on how we might structure ticket prices.

Building Matters

Charlotte Benstead, Chair of BPT, gave a brief update on work around the building. The current priorities are the rusty beam, and the tower (which is leaking). A sub-group has been set up to include representatives of BPT (Charlotte, Bryon Fear and Carole Coyne, co-opted), GC (Gareth Milton) and BarCom (Graham Clements). Bex Law (Building Manager) will join once works start.

Following a competitive tendering process Ash (who undertook the renovation work) were appointed and are currently scheduled to undertake work on both the beam and the tower between 1 – 10 August. Costs are within the funding envelope. Charlotte has been liaising with LB Lambeth who have confirmed we do not need to go through listed building consent, as these are repairs.

The next priority will be front door security.

Formal goodbyes from BPT were noted for Chaz Doyle and Fiona Daffern and a welcome to Bryon Fear. There is a vacancy if anyone is interested in being on BPT. Speak to Charlotte.

Questions:

Brian Fretwell asked if a second beam had been found. Charlotte confirmed yes.

Website

Gareth Milton and Cal Becket gave an update on the new website. We are just waiting on the site to be fully configured for mobiles and other formats. There is approximately 5 days of work to completion. Thanks to those members who have volunteered to test the site and found a few 'bugs'. Feedback has been positive, and deemed very easy to use, with no knowledge of HTML required.

The intention was to show a preview, but unfortunately, the internet is playing up in the theatre.

Questions:

Geoff Lill asked how long the website would be good for. Gareth replied that it was fully compliant with all of today's requirements, so should last a while. However, future technological advances cannot be predicted with certainty!

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Simon Gleisner updated progress. Progress has been slower recently due to covid. However, GC has been working on a draft policy and workplan and engaged Spot the Gap consultancy, to provide additional specialist advice and support. We have a strategy day planned shortly and then will come out to the membership for full consultation. If anyone is interested in supporting GC in this area, please get in touch!

Charlotte commented on the importance of gathering data on membership, as often required for funding bids.

Theatre

Cal Beckett announced the new Autumn /Winter season was up on the website. Cal introduced the plays and the directors to the audience.

Submissions for 2023 are opening on 7th June for one month. The intention is to plan for a 12-month season.

Questions:

Charlotte asked if the vacant TC post would be appointed to. Cal responded yes, that is the intention (GC can co-opt) and would try and balance composition, at least gender-wise.

Celia asked if consideration was given to cast size when planning the season, larger casts = bigger audiences? Cal responded there were several factors in addition to artistic merit and cash flow. That included balancing rehearsal facilities for large casts and ability to cast big shows consecutively. In addition, managing large casts can be a challenge for new Directors and we want to be encouraging of new talent. Lisa interjected that the Great North Wood was happy to provide free rehearsal facilities, where their upstairs space had not been otherwise booked out.

Bex asked whether seat layout should be a budget consideration as well as an artistic one. Cal responded that it was a factor, but should not override artistic merit.

6. GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Three members of the current GC were not standing for committee again: Will Howells (resigned in April) (Theatre Committee), Marissa Papas (Deputy Chair), and Fiona Daffern (General Secretary). Thanks were given for their contributions during their tenure. All other members had accepted nominations to stand again and were unopposed, so no voting. Two new people had accepted nominations for vacant roles, Lee Ridgeway (Deputy Chair) and Lorna Felix (General Secretary). Lee and Lorna are warmly welcomed.

That leaves three vacancies: 1 x Theatre Committee, 1 x Publicity Director, 1 x Marketing Director. There are options open to GC, we can either co-opt people with full voting rights, or set up sub-committees who can attend, but not be committed to attending meetings every month. If interest in any of these please contact the Chair by Friday.

We are also looking at how we can get better diversity at this level and ensure there are strong and diverse voices in decision-making.

Questions:

Malcolm asked if co-opted members would have voting rights. Simon confirmed there was that option.

Tom asked if we were looking a more diverse programming. Cal responded that was definitely a goal.

No further questions – the meeting ended 21.20