

**Minutes of the  
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on  
Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020**

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Apologies: Mike Bishop, Sue Bell, Steve Taylor Mike O'Doherty, Tess Townsend, Ann Beauchamp

Present Cath Messum (Chair) and 43 full members

**1. Minutes of the last meeting**

1.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2019 were approved and signed.

Proposed Charles Halford Seconded Mike Elgey

**2. To receive and adopt the annual report and audited accounts of the Company for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

**2.1. The Chair presented her report for the year**

Good evening everyone, I'd like to welcome you all to this year's AGM. Despite the unusual setting of being online, I hope you can bear with us as we work through the business of the meeting. As previously announced, we will not be having a members discussion at the end of the business part of the meeting but will instead defer this to the new year when restrictions, hopefully, will have been relaxed so that we can have a face-to-face meeting in our home, Hampton Hill Theatre.

I'd like to begin by taking a couple of minutes to reflect on those members who we have lost in the last 12 months: Jean Goodwin, Marion McLaren, Geoffrey Morgan, John Roebuck, Graham Sawyer, Jim Sawyer, Michael Smith and Rita Stringer. All will be missed both by their families and their friends at TTC. I'd just like to ask if we can all take a moment to remember them. Thank you.

To say that 2020 has been an exceptional year for the club is a massive understatement. Looking back now, I think we were extremely fortunate that not only did we have a successful pantomime but we also managed to produce 3 well received productions which have all been acknowledged by the Swan awards nominations. I won't go into any more detail as that's for Lottie's Artistic Report, but I would like to congratulate everyone who was involved in King Arthur in Space, Amadeus, The Revlon Girl and Cause Celebre. We have also been fortunate to have Frances Ruffelle the well-known musical theatre actress to agree to become a patron of the club joining Rula Lenska. They have both been so supportive of the club and our activities over the past year.

Timing is everything, and the government announcement of lockdown coincided with a board meeting. I remember sitting in the Coward Room with the board and we were all feeling stunned about the implications that people had been told to stay at home yet not saying that theatres should close. We were fortunate that Cause Celebre had just closed but Loot & Teechers were in rehearsal and Gypsy was in the

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process of being cast. We agonised over what was best to do for our members and our outside hires.

At the end of that week, we were finally told that theatres should close so we at least knew exactly where we now stood and our hires team of John Gilbert and Wes Henderson Roe then had the unenviable task of informing our external bookings that we were closed for the foreseeable future. Lottie and the PSC team had the equally unenviable task of letting all the production teams know that everything had to stop and, at that time, having no idea when they would be likely to re-start.

But all was not lost - Lottie and her team took the decision to try and move online to enable our creative community to still function at a distance and I think we've all come to appreciate the benefits and drawbacks of Zoom. Sunday night readings have been fun to both watch and participate in and some have even been recorded and available on our YouTube channel. The Wilde Weekend was an enormous challenge but was an excellent demonstration of the theatrical talent we have in the club, particularly giving opportunities to actors we don't always see on stage. I could go on, but I'll leave it to Lottie to review all this in more detail. Suffice it to say that I'm extremely proud of all our members who have supported our online efforts.

We (Speaking on behalf of the Trustees) would also like to thank all those who volunteered to support our more vulnerable members, co-ordinated by Clare Henderson Roe and Heather Stockwell. It was good to know that our community spirit is so strong. The local foodbanks have benefitted from our bar's stock that was approaching its sell-by date and was given to them by Charles Halford and the bar committee.

The board continued to meet as scheduled plus many additional get-togethers as government advice changed and we were greatly helped by updates from The Little Theatre Guild who were lobbying for amateur theatre with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. We wrote to our MP, Munira Wilson, for her support which she was very happy to give and she's hoping to support us by visiting when we are up and running again.

The board also took the decision to try and reduce our outgoings to the minimum balanced against keeping the building in such a state that we could re-open as quickly as possible once Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. This was aided by a grant from Richmond Council but we are still waiting to hear about our insurance claim which has been rolled into a class action against the insurers. Steve Wayman has been successful in gaining a grant of £5,000 from the Theatres Trust Fund towards improving the air conditioning in the building to conform with Covid requirements and is exploring other sources to help fund other projects that we need to do. We also need support from all our members and would urge you to consider using Easy Fundraising when shopping online, buy a ticket for the Get Lucky Local Lottery or even to make a donation to the club if you are able.

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Thanks again to John Gilbert for being so pro-active with making HHT a Covid secure building which enabled us to re-open to a small extent for outside hires, including workshops run by several children's groups in August. But, with the current lockdown restrictions, everything has had to stop again but I'm holding out the hope that restrictions will be lifted so that we can have a production on the stage in January, albeit under the current Covid rules. I would also like to thank all those who've helped with essential maintenance, notably Mike Elgey, Wes Henderson Roe, Harry Jacobs, Terry Stevens and Kathryn Halford and Alice Fordham who have been leading the gardening team to keep the front of HHT looking tip-top.

I now turn to Diversity and Inclusion. I have been a TTC member for 30 years now and have always felt that in general it has been a welcoming group. However, at the beginning of the summer, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the feelings of our membership on social media, highlighted that our policies on Diversity and Inclusion were out of date. Not only did the board update our policies but we took the decision that we needed a group to focus on this and that the group needed an external advisor as it was felt that we simply did not have the depth of understanding and knowledge in the club to really get to grips with this.

It was at this time that a vacancy occurred for a non- executive role on the Board and Michael Bishop was co-opted to take on this non-exec director role. He was asked to lead the Diversity & Inclusion group and work with our external advisor - Yagini Dave - to see what we, as a club, can do to improve our diversity and provide a safe environment for all our members to thrive. It is our intention that at our members' discussion meeting, Mike and Yagini will present their progress to the membership.

I would now like to thank all the members of the board this year for their outstanding support for the club - Mike Bishop, Laurie Coombs, Rebecca Dowbiggin, Gerry McCarthy, Ken Mason, Joe Stockwell, Lottie Walker and Steve Wayman. I would also like to thank Jane Smith in her role as Company Secretary and our Minutes Secretaries - Barry Hill (who retired in March) and Jacqui Grebot who took over from Barry.

As you will have seen from the AGM notice, both Ken Mason and Gerry McCarthy are stepping down from the board and I want to personally thank them for all their support over the years. However, their replacements of Mike Elgey and Fiona Auty bring a wealth of experience with them and I'm excited to move forward with this new team.

I'd like to finish by assuring all members that the board will continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation but we are determined to get at least some productions on stage even though at this moment we cannot guarantee when. As I hope you are aware, the revival of Stones in His Pockets has now had to be moved to January subject, of course, to whatever the government dictates is safe.

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I also hope that the next AGM will be back to normal at our home, Hampton Hill Theatre.

I wish you all the best of health and luck over the coming year.

And now, I'd like to handover to Lottie for the Artistic report.

To receive and adopt the Chair's report  
Proposed Bernie Messenger Seconded Tracy Frankson

**2.2. The Artistic Director presented her report for the year**

Before I put pen to paper for this evening I looked at the report I wrote for last year's AGM And I laughed out loud when read the pieces about it being my toughest year yet in the job. If only I'd known then what I know now.

It's not the norm to mention every play we've performed in a year at the AGM, purely because people have homes to go to and to be honest, if you saw it you know about it and if you didn't the chances are you're not interested. But this is not a normal year and as with so many things in 2020 I'm playing things differently, if only to remind us all of what we are here for and what we have achieved. I will, however try to be brief!

We went from last year's AGM straight into the wonderful, truly bonkers world of King Arthur in Space, a delightful piece of festive frivolity enjoyed by children of all ages. Where else in South West London could a space ship be seen on the same stage as four Disney princesses and several disco glitter balls? The laughter from the auditorium could be heard in the bar and the show, together with those happy little children's faces gave us all the boost we needed to get through the dark nights leading up to Christmas.

After Christmas we turned a little darker in tone, in tune (see what I did there) with a cold January to 18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna and Amadeus. What made this play work so well was not the harpsichord from the TV series "Harlots" (although it was a bit of a scene stealer), but the sheer team work involved. Technically this is a highly complex play. And artistically it is sometimes perceived as a two hander. Our version could not have been less like that. Every member of the cast, speaking and non-speaking completely embodied their character, both the lead characters were generous to other performers on stage and the audience went away with memories of the piece as a whole, with the technical team being hailed as loudly as the actors.

From Vienna we travelled much closer to home in February with "The Revlon Girl". A true ensemble piece this tragic true story that so many of us remember was played out beautifully, with so much attention to detail. It will be a long time before I forget the leaking roof dripping into the bucket. Neither will I forget being both moved to tears and laughing out loud within 5 minutes. This play really was an emotional rollercoaster.

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And talking of emotional rollercoasters, no sooner were we out of the Welsh Valleys than we arrived in Bournemouth in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the crime of passion that was Cause Celebre. Part court room drama, part tragic love story Cause Celebre was originally written for radio. So it took very clever design, direction and performance to be able to create several different scenes and moods within a split second. It also takes a special type of production manager and director to go onstage for the final performance – without the book – to cover for last minute illness. But cometh the hour, cometh the man and woman and that is exactly what Steve Wayman and Fiona Smith did, when they covered for last minute illness to ensure our final performance went ahead.

So we started the year really well and the above productions garnered some 22 Swan nominations and 6 awards between them.

We were all set to continue our programme for the rest of the year, with Loot well into rehearsal, Teechers about to begin rehearsal and Gypsy almost cast when Covid 19 struck.

To say the decisions following the initial closure of the theatre were difficult is an understatement. Initially we thought it best to move a few things and push a few things back and, although this was all hugely disappointing for everyone, not least those people newly cast or about to go onstage, it was not quite so bad as being told a few weeks later that actually the outlook was far more grim than we'd imagined and all bets were off. I had no choice but to cancel the entire season. Without exception every director accepted the news graciously and I'd like to thank them for making a horrible job just that little bit easier.

But the spirit of TTC would not be daunted! If anything my job has been even bigger during lockdown as I've tried to come up with ideas to keep us all entertained and to implement the ideas that so many other people have suggested to keep our theatrical juices running. The PSC have all also taken on far more than their usual jobs of reading plays and monitoring rehearsals and I'd like to give them and the Board a huge vote of thanks for both supporting what we've gone ahead with and pulling me back from the brink of stupidity when I've gone too far off piste.

The list of people to thank for keeping our show on the virtual road is literally too long to mention this evening, although I would like to say a public thank you to our two patrons, Rula Lenska and Frances Ruffelle for their contributions to and publicity of our online events, to the PSC for stepping up to the plate in style and without hesitation, to Nigel Cole and Harry Jacobs for putting in a truly incredible amount of work on the audio dramas and podcasts and to Christine Wayman for engaging so proactively with the artistic teams and managing against all the odds to increase TTC's profile during a pandemic when our building is closed. A list of what we've been up to whilst not able to perform in the theatre looks something like this Play of the Week (this ran every week until the initial lockdown was lifted, with a play chosen by Steve Wayman that all of our members could watch either individually or at the same time):

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- Shakespeare in Solidarity (involving some 40 TTC members and both our patrons in a poem about love and friendship that Rebecca Dowbiggin created from Shakespearean quotes)
- Sunday Night Theatre – TTC’s play readings (this ran weekly until the end of the first lockdown and is now a monthly event)
- Wilde Weekend (25 hours of Oscar Wilde and more hours than I can count in the planning and rehearsing it took to get on)  
Lockdown Monologues (12 new pieces written, directed and performed and filmed by TTC members)  
Audio Pantomime  
Re-engineered archive Audio Plays

• And the huge undertaking of the launch of our podcast, Auditorium! Auditorium! Has thus far produced 13 Frights of Hallowe’en and the new season of Twisted Christmas Stories, together with whole series of interviews with key TTC people shedding some light on how things happen in and around the theatre, both on and offstage And there’s much more to come!

And we have more exciting developments in the pipeline. TTC formed a Diversity and Inclusion Group in the summer and I’m looking forward to their input to both our Christmas and Valentines events. They also have their own podcast episode scheduled and we are planning to expand the artistic programme to have some special events aimed specifically at attracting a more diverse audience.

However, all this positive stuff has had to be tempered with a large dash of reality in these challenging times and some changes in the way we operate are inevitable:

Because of social distancing and other Covid restrictions, even when we reopen the theatre our choices of play will be very limited and I never want to go through the process of cancelling an entire season again. So for the short to mid-term at least all plays are now being selected by the PSC and directors are being invited to pitch for the opportunity to direct. We are never having more than 2 plays in production at any one time so that we can be flexible in terms of rearranging things should we need to. We’ve had a dry run with “Zoo” and Lily Bevan’s comic monologues, which has also necessitated 3 directors working together with one tech team on a stage with virtually no set. This is the first time we have asked directors to work together in this way. I doubt it will be the last.

There are three other key changes that all members need to be aware of:

- Play readings will be replaced by a Zoom presentation by the director of each play to give an overview of play, characters, etc.
- Auditions, where possible will be via Zoom
- Scripts will no longer be provided to actors by TTC. Audition pieces WILL be provided but if successful actors must provide their own script and pay the bookshop rather than TTC. This gives people who want it the opportunity to purchase Kindle or other online copies or to take advantage of the spiral bound and A4 scripts now provided by some publishers.

Also, because of the ubiquitous Covid restrictions, social distancing etc.. our choice of plays for the stage must be limited. We will be performing studio shows in the

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main auditorium for some time. This means very small casts and crew. So our programme of online entertainment will continue in order that we offer as much opportunity to perform as possible to our members. Our home grown monologues are in production at the moment and will be available to view on YouTube early in the New Year. We have a new podcast series about to start in early December, with the initial Christmas ghost story being broadcast on Boxing Day. Also on Boxing Day, the traditional day that pantomimes open, our Dick Whittington radio play will be broadcast on YouTube.

We will be celebrating Christmas with a lovely Zoom evening of festive readings and songs, and our Valentine's event will run for the entire weekend of 13/14 February. So we have much to look forward to over the next few months, which will include reopening our lovely theatre with Wes Henderson Roe's newly adapted for the main stage production of "Stones in His Pockets".

As a personal indulgence I'd like to mention Danny Wain. Danny was due to stand down from the PSC in March but offered to stay on to help out during the "couple of months" we would be closed. He's still here, managing the PSC diaries, taking a lead with online events, and directing monologues. I am so pleased he stayed on and so grateful for his continued help and support.

And thank you to all our members and supporters who came to the theatre or switched on their devices to see and hear us this year. I am looking forward to seeing you all in the theatre - in fact in the bar - in 2021.

To receive and adopt the Artistic Chair's report  
Proposed Barry Hill Seconded Mike Elgey

**2.3. The Finance Director presented the Auditor's report and audited accounts  
for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.**

The initial part of my report will cover the financial year from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. I will then move onto the current situation in the second part.

I would like to start by saying thank you to all members of the Club for their continued support during this especially difficult and trying time.

And more specifically thank you to Jane for her continued work and support making payments, banking and other tasks. As well as Sue for her work as production accountant. And thank you Sandra for the box office reconciliations.

Thank you to Eddie, Charles and Laurie Coombs for bar banking, reconciliations and stock management.

Thank you, Kim, Clare and Laurie Gibson, for running the box office.

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Thanks again to Sue for the Membership accounts, Robin for maintaining the membership database and also John and Wes for managing all of the outside hires.

Thank you, Cath, for managing our participation in the Get Lucky Local Lottery, and Christine for setting up and overseeing Easyfundraising and Amazon Smile.

And thank you to Mags and Leslie for all their work on the wardrobe and starting to generate income through the sale of surplus costumes and hires.

Now onto the accounts for 2019/20. I'll give a brief overview, but the full accounts and Trustee report are available on our website.

The headline is that we made a profit in the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 of £11,117 compared to a loss in 2018/19 of £8,650. This is an increase of £19,767 and was a welcome return to the black.

Excluding depreciation of £36,908, we made an operating profit of £48,025 in 2019/20, compared to £19,504 in 2018/19.

This first slide shows income over the past eleven years. The red line is the total expenditure excluding depreciation.

As you can see, total income increased marginally, but our operating margin – the distance between the top of the graph and the red line – grew significantly. This is largely thanks to a decrease in revenue expenditure, particularly maintenance costs.

Looking at the income, box office was our largest source of income, with a 28% increase from 2018/19. This cost the Club £3,759 in box office costs and card processing fees. We were fortunate to be able to stage all our shows during the financial year, so the box office income for 2019/20 was not impacted by Covid-19.

The same cannot however be said for outside hires, and by association bar income. With an estimated £10,000 of income lost in 2019/20 despite the impact being limited to only a few weeks. Income from outside hires was down just over £17k from last year, roughly a 20% reduction. The bar fared better with just under a £1k reduction.

Looking briefly at the performance of the 2019/20 shows we can see that all shows were well attended, with no shows having attendances below 50%, compared to three last year. The box office gross income figures were also helped by the extended run of Wolf Hall and Bring up the Bodies, but the gross contribution (total ticket receipts less production costs) for all main house shows was broadly similar.

The profit and loss is only one aspect of the accounts. If we turn our attention to the balance sheet, we can see that the Club incurred its most significant level of capital

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expenditure in recent years, at £80,022 in 2019/20, up from £10,257 in 2018/19. This was largely due to the lift, but also in part to the replacement of the telephone system. A huge thanks to Harry for all his work organising and overseeing both projects.

The Board has a reserve policy of £210k, which is broadly equivalent to one year's revenue expenditure. Unrestricted free net current assets – essentially our usable cash reserve - at 31 March 2020 stood at £279,466 (£311,463 in 2018/19) which is in excess of the level set by the Board. Of this £89k has been designated for capital projects over the next three financial years (2020-21 to 2022-23). The reduction of the reserves from 2018/19 to 2019/20 is in line with expectations due to the planned capital expenditure during 2019/20.

There has been limited capital expenditure to date this year – 2020/21 – as all but essential capital expenditure has been halted. We are in the process of reassessing the capital programme in light of the current situation. Thank you again to the BAT team for their input, and especially to Mike and John.

This seems a logical point to move onto the current situation. The impact of the response to COVID-19 in 2020/21 has been significant, with box office and bar income at zero for the year to date. Against a budget of over £100k for the same period. We have been fortunate to be able to have a limited number of business and children groups hiring the theatre over the summer. But that income is still significantly lower than we would have usually expected.

However, thanks to the hard work of all our volunteer's, expenditure has been able to be reduced and the Club is grateful to the Government and London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council for the grant it received from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. The Club was just able to maintain a neutral cash flow for the first three months of the year – April to June – but has been running at a deficit and eating into its reserves since July. On average the Club has been operating at a £4k monthly loss, excluding grants and donations received.

A claim was submitted to our insurers for loss of income but was rejected. This has been a common issue with business interruption insurance during the pandemic, and as such the Financial Conduct Authority took a test case to court in August to test the legality of the insurers position. Our insurer is part of this case, and therefore we have been informed that the findings will be relevant to our claim. The initial judgement handed down in mid-September found in favour of the claimants – us – however, just last week an appeal was heard in the Supreme Court and we are now waiting for this judgement to be handed down. This will be the final judgement with no further appeals. I am cautiously optimistic that we may receive a settlement, but am also realistic, and as such no funds associated with the claim have been accounted for to date.

Thanks to the stewardship and prudence of previous board members and membership, the immediate future of the Club and Theatre is not at risk. However, the longer this situation continues the more of our reserves we will have to use, and

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this will begin to put a limit on the ambitions of the Club in the future, and could leave us unable to meet any significant unplanned capital expenditure.

Due to the current situation and the complications it will bring with seating plans and audience numbers for future shows we have been left no choice but to change our box office provider to a more sophisticated solution that can handle social distancing seating arrangements. This does however come at a cost, and coupled with the restrictions on audience numbers, and many months of no income the Board feels we have no choice but to add a transaction fee to all ticket bookings.

This fee will be levied on each ticket and will be less than one pound for member tickets. The fee covers the cost of the box office software and the card transaction fee. Both of these costs have previously been paid by the Club, which has in effect been subsidising every ticket. I would rather not be adding this fee to the tickets, as I will not enjoy paying it myself. But given the events of the past nine months we feel it is unavoidable, and in the best interest of the Club and its members.

We are also continuing to explore fundraising opportunities and I am grateful to Steve for all his work co-ordinating this. We have received a grant from the Theatres Trust Fund to help us improve our air conditioning and ventilation, to conform with COVID requirements. And are actively exploring other opportunities to help meet the cost of making the Theatre more COVID secure.

I would also like to thank everyone who has made a donation to the Club directly, or via our donate button on the website, Easyfundraising, Amazon Smile or the Get Lucky Local lottery. These are all very gratefully received. Your support is particularly generous in these financially difficult times for everyone.

Finally, I would like to end my remarks by again saying thank you to my fellow board members, volunteers and the wider membership for all your hard work and support of the Club.

This concludes my report.

*The slides from my report will also be available in the member's area of the website.*

To receive and adopt the Finance Director's report  
Proposed Berni Messenger Seconded Eddie Dapre

**3. To receive the Auditor's report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

Proposed Clare Henderson Roe Seconded Charles Halford

**4. Appointment of auditors**

To resolve that Taylorcocks of Farnham be continue as Auditors and Independent Examinors for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

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Proposed Eddie Dapre Seconded Roger Smith

**5. Remuneration of Auditors**

It was resolved that “the Board of Directors fix the remuneration of the Auditors and Independent Examinors for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019”.

Proposed Berni Messenger Seconded Heather Stockwell

**6. Re-election of Directors**

Gerry McCarthy and Ken Mason are standing down this year. Nominations to replace them have been received from Fiona Auty and Mike Elgey.

It was therefore resolved that the under listed be appointed as Directors of the Company to serve until the next annual general meeting or sooner as the members may decide:

Cath Messum as Chairman  
Mike Elgey as Premises & Equipment Director  
Lottie Walker as Artistic Director  
Laurie Coombs as Operations Director  
Fiona Auty as Sales & Marketing Director  
Joe Stockwell as Finance Director

Proposed Michelle Mackrell Seconded Nick Eliot

There was a vote for the Non-Executive positions as there were three candidates for two posts. Those standing were:

Michael Bishop  
Harry Medawar  
Stephen Wayman

Votes were sent to the Company Secretary in advance of the meeting as set out in the AGM notice. The Company Secretary announced that following a count of the votes Michael Bishop and Stephen Wayman were elected as the Non-Executive Directors to serve until the next annual general meeting or sooner as the members may decide.

Members asked to record their thanks to the Board which operated during 2020 in the most difficult of times. Proposed by Clare Henderson Roe and Seconded by Roger Smith.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20.54

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Jane Smith  
Company Secretary

27<sup>th</sup> November 2020