

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

Apologies: Kathryn Smith, Harry Jacobs, Tracy Frankson, Simon Bartlett, Clare and Wes Henderson Roe, Heather Morgan, Mike O'Doherty.

Present Lottie Walker (Chair) and 31 full members

1. Minutes of the last meeting

1.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2022 were approved and signed.

Proposed Roger Smith. Seconded Sue Bell

2. The annual report and independently examined accounts of the Company for the year ended 31st March 2023 were received and adopted.

2.1. The Chair presented her report for the year.

2.2. The Artistic Director presented his report for the year.

2.3. The Finance Director presented the Independent Examiner's report and accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Please see the appendix for the full reports from the Chair, Artistic Director and Finance Director.

Proposed Roberta Cole. Seconded Sally Cadle

3. The Independent Examiner's report for the year ended 31st March 2023 was received.

Proposed Charles Halford. Seconded Sally Cadle

4. Appointment of Independent Examiners

It was resolved that "an independent examiner be appointed for the year ending 31st March 2024 following consideration of services by the Board".

Proposed Sue Bell. Seconded Mags Wrightson

5. Remuneration of Auditors

It was resolved that "the Board of Directors fix the remuneration of the Independent Examinors for the year ending 31st March 2024".

Proposed John Gilbert. Seconded Sue Bell

6. Re-election of Directors

It was 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:

(Christine) Lottie Walker as Chairman

Steve Wayman as Finance Director

Daniel Wain as Artistic Director

Richard Auty as Operations Director

Fiona Auty as Backstage and Technical Director

Ben Clare as Sales and Marketing Director

Nigel Cole as Non-Executive Director

Geraint Thomason as Non-Executive Director

Proposed Roger Smith. Seconded Kay Eliot

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

A gift was presented to John Gilbert by the President with thanks from the whole of TTC for his work in the office over several years.

Members recorded a vote of thanks to the Board for their work during 2023 and the work taking place on capital projects.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Jane Smith
Company Secretary

22nd November 2023

Following the conclusion of the AGM there were three presentations made to members:

1. The Operations Director, Richard Auty, provided information about the capital works being undertaken, namely to replace the fire panel and related works, and the roof replacement. There are further works to be undertaken from 2024 onwards to replace the boilers and air handling system. The costs are significant and will be dependent on fundraising.
2. Fiona Auty presented to members about the 25th anniversary celebrations to be held in 2024 commemorating the official opening of the Theatre. A number of events are to be held which will be advertised in the magazine.
3. Lizzie Lattimore and Jenna Powell presented a report on YAT activities during the year.

Appendices

Chair's Report – Lottie Walker

Welcome to you all. Before I begin the official proceedings tonight I'd like us to take a moment to remember those members and friends we've lost since our last AGM. Jack Smerdon, Alan Coleman, Colin Greenhalgh and Barry Evans were all great supporters of our club both on and off stage. If you didn't have the pleasure of meeting them do look them up on the website to see just how much they've contributed over the years. Please join me in a short silence whilst we remember them. Thank you.

Although I've been Chairman for a year now this AGM covers the year to the end of March this year, which means that I was not in this role for the entire year and I need to thank Cath Messum for managing all that was thrown at us before my tenure began. Also big thanks to Danny Wain who has valiantly taken over the artistic programme I left behind me. My last AGM speech - As Artistic Director - began with the words "I hope 2023 is boring". By the time we'd got to November last year we'd had as much drama off stage as anyone could possibly wish for. But there was, of course more to come.

Onstage TTC has gone from strength to strength and we've welcomed many visiting companies, both old friends and several new companies, with a wider variety of programme than ever before. We've also reached out to the wider community more and enjoyed partnership opportunities with Historic Royal Palaces, Strawberry Hill House and The Mitre at Hampton Court. We have been working with

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

both St Mary's and Exeter Universities and have been able to use the talents of some wonderful interns who are gaining work experience with us in several areas of the organisation from marketing to backstage technical design and operation.

Offstage our series of dramas has continued – from the leaking roof to the upgrade of the fire alarm system, replacement of the chairs in the studio and everything in between. It has been a period of improvement, repair and refurbishment. It has also been a time of great expense. More of the financial detail will of course follow from Steve but I just want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has helped us steer our way through what seemed the stormiest of seas. This year's Board have worked tirelessly to maintain some kind of equilibrium, and allow business as usual and I'd like to thank them all – Steve, Danny, Fiona, Geraint, Nigel, Richard, and Harri as well as Jane our Company Secretary and Helen our Minutes secretary for all they've done to literally keep the show on the road and Roger, our President for his wise counsel. Harri Osborne has now stepped down from the Board and I'd like to thank her for all her hard work with BAT and thank you, too to Ben Clare for answering the call to join the Board to cover marketing mid-session so that Fiona could take over the Technical role. All a bit "musical board members".

I'm delighted to have some good news to report this year. You may remember that back in September 2019 we agreed a plan of action from the outcomes of the strategic review undertaken by Michael Norman. I'm pleased to be able to reel off the following list of items completed:

- Development and implementation of a ten year rolling business plan
- Simplification of membership categories
- Expansion of marketing and publicity functions, especially digital media
- Redecoration of the foyer to be more welcoming and interesting
- Review of bar management and operation
- Reconsider the TTC auditorium production run cycle
- Creation of teams for new membership, sponsorship and community outreach

This means that everything on the list has been completed except the electronic distribution of Theatre Magazine; we have a plan for the consideration and implementation of this and will hopefully be offering this option to those who want it early next year. Which will mean that we have completed all recommendations in time for our 25th anniversary celebrations and will be looking to commission another review that will take us towards TTC's Centenary year in 2027. Richard will be giving us some detail around the building's maintenance and improvements a little later. It's all positive stuff.

I'm pleased to say that we are on course for a fabulous celebration of our building's silver anniversary next year, which Fiona will elaborate on later this evening and that the seeds of plans for TTC's centenary are also already being sown.

I've explained that this AGM covers just the first quarter of the calendar year, but I feel it only right to give a nod to the rest 2023. 2023 has been a fabulous year for the injection of new talent both on and offstage. We've welcomed many new acting members as well as volunteers front of house and in various backstage and offstage capacities; it was particularly good to welcome a member of the Eliot dynasty back into the fold when Kay took over the bar management. Our open mornings are now a hive of activity, with a steady stream of visitors being given guided tours, coffee – and membership information whilst the foyer also hosts marketing, technical and other meetings. Many

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

of our new members have come to us via this route and I'd like to thank Clare Henderson Roe and her open morning regulars for making the building and the club so welcoming.

2023 has also been the year of bad news for the actual building – there's a lot that can go wrong with a building after 25 years and it would appear that in our case it all did! Nobody could have failed to notice the many fundraising appeals and the scaffolding that has been the physical embodiment of some of our financial woes, which are, as you all know, many and varied. So a huge thank you on behalf of all of us to everyone who has supported us in our fund raising appeal. We still have a long way to go but we're off to a strong start and I'm pleased to report that the order has gone in for the first tranche of name badges for our auditorium seats. They will be duly badged for our anniversary year. The fund raising has been an enormous task and I can't stress enough how much we all owe to Nigel Cole for leading the charge.

Steve will mention this in more detail but I also can't let the opportunity pass to say a personal and public thank you to John Gilbert for all he did for us whilst the building was managed by John Gilbert Marketing. And to officially welcome on board Sarah Carter from Barley Harbour who have taken over the contract.

And now for the fun stuff...

Hampton Hill is lighting up this Friday – the bar will be open, the building will be festive and Santa is in town so do come and join us. And then we've got our crazy Christmas show, Spamalot to look forward to and a special event on Sunday 10th December with our patron Rula Lenska. Our TTC festive celebrations are on 15th December (book now before it sells out) and we're ending the year with a season of movies on the big screen in that fallow period between Christmas and New Year when we all need to get out of the house. I hope to see you there!

Artistic Director's Report – Daniel Wain

Although, as Artistic Director, I programme in calendar years, this report, like those from Lottie and Steve, looks at TTC's last complete *financial* year. So, although I will touch on more recent shows and developments, and indeed future ones, my focus is on TTC's artistic achievements between April 2022 and March 2023. For the first eight months of that period, Lottie was still AD, while I was Chair of the Programming Team. First therefore I want to thank Lottie for her invaluable support as we've transitioned roles. I like to think it's been relatively seamless.

The financial year 2021-22 having been considerably affected by Covid, this last was our first where we approached something that looked vaguely like 'normality' (whatever that is in this never-ending state of flux). That said Covid still caused last-minute cast changes, the need for unrehearsed stand-ins and, most regrettably, the closure of *The Killing of Sister George* after just one performance. On the plus side, it has been comforting to see audiences back enjoying the unique communal experience of live theatre. The entire sector, both professional and amateur, has faced considerable post-pandemic challenges, and TTC has been no exception. However, our members have responded with alacrity, adaptability and ardour.

So our 2022-23 season saw us 'back to normal' in terms of the quantity and quality of our output, even if the challenge of attracting pre-Covid levels of audience support meant we produced slightly shorter runs of five performances only for most shows. That said, our studios have routinely sold-

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

out and our main house productions played to healthy capacities, albeit of varying degrees of haleness.

However, let's return to the artistic programme for April 2022 to March 2023.

We started in robust form with *When We Are Married* in May, directed by Michelle Hood. J B Priestley's irrepressible warhorse proved a popular choice with both audiences, playing to 80% capacity, and Swan judges. Hot on the heels of the financial and artistic success of our previous main stage production, *Shakespeare in Love*, TTC cemented our return to pre-Covid 'normal', albeit with a last-minute virus-inflicted cast change.

Our second show was another iconic comedy, albeit of a more recent vintage and staged in the studio: *Abigail's Party*. Mike Leigh's classic, directed by Ian Kinane, proved an early sell-out, and would probably have sold well on the main stage. However, its intimate traverse staging highlighted the detailed direction and universally excellent performances.

The next main house production was Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, in June & July. A true ensemble production, this was a deliberate companion piece to our play-in-a-week *The Recruiting Officer*: TTC's first major post-Covid show, helmed by the same director, Matt Beresford. Then our studio production of Frank Marcus's ground-breaking 1960's tragi-comedy *The Killing of Sister George* provided painful proof of Covid's continued presence. Our thanks and commiserations to the entire team, led by Jeremy Gill, who had invested so much time and energy for so little ultimate return.

A happier story was our September studio production of John Mortimer's delightfully whimsical one-act play *Edwin*, previous plans for which had been kiboshed by Covid. Although attracting only half-full audiences, it enabled us to showcase two shorter pieces, directed by Bob Dilley, and written by Ben Francis (who also directed *Edwin*) and Vaughan Evans.

After *Sister George* and *Edwin*, Covid has had no impact on subsequent shows, thankfully, both during 2022-23 and into 2023-24. Indeed George Bernard Shaw's timeless classic *Pygmalion*, in October, saw TTC consolidate our return to pre-virus vigour. Featuring several newcomers in sizeable roles, this main house production, directed by our President Roger Smith, proved popular, at 69% capacity, and for good reason.

Another masterpiece is Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*. This inexplicably lesser-known gem was a canny choice, selling out the studio weeks before opening. It was also cheering to be able to garner such a large, quality cast of male actors, both stalwarts and talented newcomers. Clare Cooper and her entire team richly deserved their Swan for 'Best Production of a Play'.

From the sublime to the ridiculous, Daniel Wain's *Guardians of the Pantoverse* marked our return to full-scale panto and achieved TTC's highest ever Box Office, at nearly £23,000. A highly experienced creative team, helmed by director Nigel Cole, musical director Lizzie Lattimore, choreographer Gita Singham-Willis and assistant director Juanita Al-Dahhan, attracted both established and new cast members, large audiences and enthusiastic reviews. It also proved a high watermark, appropriately given the subject matter, in our use of onstage technology.

From the imagined near future to the not-so-distant past, we opened 2023 with *The Edge of Darkness*, directed by Steve Taylor. A fabulous set and strong performances consolidated TTC's

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

'West End'-worthy credentials with Brian Clemens's atmospheric Gothic thriller. Again, capacity passed the two-thirds mark.

Sticking with the crime genre, but moving from high fiction to real-life, TTC next presented the London amateur premiere of Stephen Dolginoff's *Thrill Me*. A fine exemplar of maximising the 'black-box' potential of our Coward space, this was again a near studio sell-out, attracting a new audience to TTC, thanks to Dolginoff's worldwide following, and a worthy winner of the Judges Award at this year's Swans. Well done to director Wesley Henderson Roe, musical director Nic Luker and their cast and creative team.

TTC successfully continued its combination of cutting-edge studio shows and 'bums on seats' main house productions with Alan Bennett's *The Madness of George III* in March: an original National Theatre hit which proved just as popular in Hampton Hill. Directed by Sally Halsey, a large company was notable for its gender-blind casting, including that of the titular role, and we achieved an impressive, and comforting, post-Covid record capacity of 93%.

Our final show of the financial year, *Bull*, directed by Josh Clarke, again sold out the studio, with audience feedback extremely positive. Completing a potentially difficult year, our production of Mike Bartlett's painful, provocative examination of workplace politics ended our 2022-23 season on an emotional, artistic and commercial high.

My whole-hearted thanks to all those members who contributed to our swift and successful return to salubrity. Beyond those already mentioned, I thank the casts and creative teams who brought such talent, commitment and good humour back to our theatre, and to our army of volunteers in a plethora of other vital roles.

So that completes my topline review of the financial year 2022-23. Since then, we've obviously seen a cornucopia of creativity on our stages, with the return of our New Writing Fringe (bigger and bolder than before), those distinctly non-identical Summer twins *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, and, most recently, our autumnal comedic treats *They Don't Pay? We Won't Pay!* and *Treasure Island*. Our sell-out studio show *Passion Play* is imminent, to be followed by our Christmas cracker *Spamalot*, before we embark on an exciting and varied 2024 programme. I will comment on all of those, and more, if I'm still here next November. Going forward, while we continue to rebuild audience confidence, our programming needs to remain mainstream for auditorium shows, although we can stage more cutting-edge productions in the studio. In 2024, we might boost the number of performances per studio show, but current audience levels sadly don't justify increasing those for standard main house productions. However, we have introduced 4.00pm 'matinees' for our main house shows, which I think has distinct benefits for audience, cast and crew. As this move doesn't seem to have hugely harmed revenue, I plan to keep this as standard for all main house shows until total sales allow us to re-introduce two Saturday performances once again.

As of *The Madness of George III*, we also introduced a sliding scale for ticket prices. This has spread attendance more evenly across the week while also boosting total ticket revenue. Staying with finances, we continued our parsimonious but pragmatic approach to production costs, which have remained well below budget for both 2022-23 and 2023-24 to date.

As I said in a recent magazine piece, "spending prudently on our shows isn't a cost; it's an investment upon which we see a return. Our audiences expect and deserve quality. If you're going

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

to reduce the store's stock, don't remove your best furniture from the window. Our creative teams already work wonders on shoestrings as thin as tapeworms".

That said, in 2025, we might need to reduce our total number of TTC productions, not because of production costs, but due to increased demand for space and our ongoing volunteer shortfall. Here, I repeat what Lottie said at last year's AGM: "We cannot keep relying on the same people... to solve all our problems. So I'm sending a plea... to everyone to think about volunteering to take on a new skill... If there are more people to share the load we'll still have a theatre to play in for years to come."

The fact that this still applies one year on is telling. To quote from my latest magazine piece, "TTC only survives thanks to the selfless dedication of its army of volunteers... Time, allegedly, is free, but for an organisation like ours it is priceless, arguably more valuable than money".

So the entire Board continues to focus on developing our active membership, in terms of diversity, number and skills. Post-auditions, I now personally contact everyone who has not been cast, to encourage all, but especially first-timers, to return. I think it only right that we acknowledge the time, effort and courage that each of our auditionees invest, and thank them accordingly. However, enlarging the small pool of technical volunteers remains the key challenge which we must address. With Fiona now on the case, I'm hopeful that we will.

Looking at 'involvement' more widely, we've started to forge closer relationships with our neighbouring theatre companies, largely via Arts Richmond, where I now chair the Drama Committee. TTC has played an active role in recent AR 'Drama Forums', looking at tangible ways in which we can increase collaboration for mutual benefit. TTC also advised on the recent changes to the Swan awards: the enlarged judging panel, the new categories, the reinstated nominations celebration and the revamped 'event'.

Closer to home, Lottie, Steve, Jane and I have represented TTC at regular meetings with our sister company YAT over the past year, to strengthen our long-term relationship. I'm particularly excited by the prospect of a 2025 co-production. Watch this space...

Staying with programming, the Programming Team has agreed a new remit and way of working to make our play selection process more efficient. Team members now focus as much upon supporting the ongoing delivery of our shows as selecting them. So all the Programming Team continue to act as 'Artistic Links', but I've firmed up this previously nebulous role to provide greater clarity and purpose.

In terms of plays programmed, the challenge as ever is to identify that 'sweet spot', where what the Programming Team would like to stage overlaps with what chosen directors want to helm and, increasingly important alas, what rights-holders will allow us to stage.

Continuing to look towards 2025 and beyond, I aim to ensure that our shows are more evenly spread across the calendar year. More immediately, we will also focus on celebrating the 25th anniversary of our beloved Theatre in 2024, in conjunction with the Noel Coward Foundation, our local lad having his 125th birthday next year.

For now, in addition to all my previous thanks, I extend my warm appreciation to the Artistic & Programming Team behind both our last and present seasons: our current crew of Alice Langrish,

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

Hannah Lobley, Stephen Pratt, Steve Taylor and our chair Douglas Schatz, and to previous members Nigel Cole, Heather Mathew and Andy Smith.

Finally, I must acknowledge the Board. While being Artistic Director is demanding and sometimes draining, knowing that I am part of a professional, passionate team of subject matter experts is hugely comforting and encouraging. So I thank my fellow Trustees for their collaborative, can-do attitude, their sang-froid and sometimes gallows humour in the face of considerable challenges. Just as importantly, I thank them for recognising that a truly effective team is aligned to a shared purpose, with clear priorities and ways of working, and where each member trusts the other to get on with what they know and do best.

For me, the key to our entire future success is purpose-based teamwork - as a board, business and membership club. So onwards and upwards. Thank you for your attention and understanding. You've been a lovely audience.

Finance Director's Report – Steve Wayman

The initial part of my report will cover the financial year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. I will then move onto a brief review of the first six months of 2023/24.

But before I do that I would like to say thank you to all members of the Club for their continued support through a very difficult period. More particularly, on behalf of all members and myself, I want to thank the Accounts team in particular Sue Bell for all their behind-the-scenes work dealing with payments, banking, expenses and countless other Finance tasks. Quite simply, without their unseen and largely unheralded work, this business and this club simply would not be able to function.

Other personal thanks from me go to:

- Richard, Kay and all of the bar teams;
- To Clare and all of my "colleagues" on box office;
- To Robin and the Membership team;
- And to the Office, first John and then Barley Harbour (led by Sarah) for picking up the mantle of Theatre Administration so quickly and expertly.

Now onto the accounts for 2022/23. I'll give a brief overview, but the full accounts and Trustee report are available on our website.

The headline is that we made an operating loss in the last financial year of £34,004 after theatre equipment and building depreciation of £43,358. This compares to a profit of £29,856 in 2021-22. Within this, a sum of £11,440 was received in Grants & Donations.

This in itself is nothing to be concerned about; we are a Not-For-Profit and each year we make a variable profit or loss.

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of The Teddington Theatre Club Limited held on
Monday 20th November 2023**

On to the Balance Sheet, and our reserves were down a further £40k Year on Year due to essential Capital spend, some planned, some unplanned. Major items in 22/23 were: Grid remedial work, new chairs for the Coward, the super-projector and some LED lighting replacement projects.

Onto where our income came from. In fact our total income reached a new high. The main components of this were Box office (+54%), Theatre hires (+46%) Memberships (+29%) and Bar takings (+68%) - all substantial increases, albeit versus a previous year which was impacted by Covid. Only Donations & Grants was reduced (-81%).

If we now look at our capital on a historical basis, we use a term called “Cash at Bank and In hand” which really means readily available funds. This is the crucial factor of liquidity for any business – do you have the accessible funds to respond to an unplanned issue if called upon? As I mentioned, our Reserves dropped again last year to around £217,000, and have done so again in the current FY, more on that shortly. This reflects the impact of major Building & Equipment projects.

For 2022/23 the Board took the calculated step of reducing its minimum reserve policy from £210,000 to £150,000. This was because we had evidence through the dark years of Covid, that the £210k figure was unnecessarily high and we also needed greater flexibility as we approached a period of major capital expenditure.

So that concludes the review of 2022/23. I want to now provide you with a short update on Financial matters for the first half of 2023/24.

I will start with the profit and loss. After 6 months, Operating Income is steady and close to budget. We’ve mainly kept overall ticket pricing levels unchanged so as to maintain our audience numbers, however we’ve had no choice but to increase some of our Theatrical Hire rates, due to the major cost increases we’ve faced. I’d remind you all that although we are a NFP, we cannot afford to subsidise other companies.

This only tells part of the story. The balance sheet movements year to date have continued downwards, to the point where the Board have felt the need to reduce the Reserves policy level even further – which we hope and expect is a temporary measure.

As you all know, the building is approaching 25 years old and several major items have needed replacing. If we hadn’t done so, the building would have had to be closed to the public. In 2023/24 so far, we have replaced the flat roofs, the fire panel and associated systems, commenced remedial work on our 50 fire doors and bought a new lighting desk (the last one was effectively obsolete).

Other major systems are old, highly inefficient and hence expensive to run, eg the heating, lighting, hot water and air conditioning, but they’re also expensive to replace. So the benefits of replacement by more modern and efficient versions is a double-win for us, if and when we can afford them. We have a long way to go and that brings us to the 2023 fundraising appeal.

Thanks to the kindness and generosity of our members and friends, we have so far raised an initial £70,000 in donations, which is terrific and has allowed us to get this year’s essential work done without borrowing money. But the truth is that we are now probably in perpetual fundraising mode if the theatre and the club are to remain economically viable under the current model, and that is something we all have to face.