

Everyman Theatre Cardiff Limited
Annual General Meeting held at Chapter Arts Centre on 25th September 2024

Present: 44 members and friends.

Apologies: Gill Rees, Sarah Day.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks – TH (Chair) welcomed members. He said that the Board has made the recommendation not to proceed with next year's Festival and referred to the fragile state of the finances. In answer to questions of why the announcement was made in advance of the meeting, he said that there was a need to protect our database of 17,000. He urged members to work together to turn the Company round.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting – These were approved.

3. Matters Arising – None.

4. Financial Report (EH) –

- **EH** summarised his Financial Report – There was a significant loss of £40,000 and reserves are not sufficient to hold the Festival next year. He said the Board could be personally liable for debts.
- Peter Harding Roberts queried **EH's** Report statement that the Company had started the financial year with about £70,000 (after unforeseen bills had been paid) when the balance sheet showed £62,783. **EH** agreed that he was including the outstanding loan in his figure and this was a liability, not an asset. He therefore agreed that his figure of a "closing position of £30,000" would be reduced to around £20,000 if the loan and the debt to GL Events were deducted.
- In answer to further questions from **PHR**, **EH** said there was currently about £25,000 in the bank. We owe about the same amount to SLS/SSS, who have agreed to defer payment until the VAT reclaim (would be around which the same amount) is settled.
- **EH** said that they had to factor in that the purpose of the Festival was to fund Everyman's other activities; **PHR** said that the sole purpose of the Festival was to further Everyman's charitable objects and if the Festival had only made 20p, it would have been a resounding success. He was astonished by the suggestion that the Festival would have been cancelled if it was only projected to break even and that the membership would never have allowed such a cancellation. He pointed out that other Festivals have made small profits or losses; others had just broken even, but all had been fully compliant with the purpose of the Festival i.e. to put on plays in the open air.

5. Festival Report (PW)

- **PW** thanked the Board, the Festival Committee, **CF** and **AB** for all their help and summarised main points of the Report he had circulated. He considered that the good points were the strong productions, the improvement of the audition system by using Calendly and the increased number of auditionees. The cashless Bar worked with Glamorgan Brewery and took around £52,000. However, he said that there had been the usual problems of people missing rehearsals and the costs of rehearsal space had risen substantially. We had to replace the cheap Gang Show build-space and, though we found a good space with Avanti, it came at a cost.
- He felt that artistically it was one of our strongest years. The productions were very successful, but the special nights did not work as well as hoped, with a number of reasons for lack of sales- the weather, cost of living, competition, lack of parking spaces. Though one

factor mentioned had been higher ticket prices, we took only £200 less with 20% less ticket sales.

- James Hailes asked if ticket prices had been raised too much. **EH** said that prices had been flat for a number of years and return would have been low even if things had gone well. However, the plan to increase return had fallen short. **JH** also said that we ‘gambled’ on some special nights rather than Choir Nights. **PW** said that they were popular acts and **EH** said that choirs took 50% of the take and costs expended did not make a material difference.
- **AP** said that the Festival was well run, but Festivals and theatre are struggling at the moment. He said the Festival is a risk in terms of income and it is a flawed model if we don’t address it. The only way to continue was to find a form of income or funding to allay our risk. He was proud of what has gone before, but this is a chance to rethink.
- James Hailes said that the losses are attributable to the Shakespeare and Light Entertainment productions while the Musical was profitable, so perhaps we need to look at the balance. There is no musical in the Playhouse Season; we need to engage a younger audience. **SF** pointed out that “Rent” had gone over budget and musicals are not viable as part of the Playhouse season.
- Robert Orchard said that in the past Festival attendance had been higher and wondered why it was not viable now. He felt that it would be disastrous to stop the Festival and asked where cost control was. **EH** responded that the costs were on budget, but have ballooned. **AB** felt that the main reason for losses was lack of the usual successful launch and **PW** said that people did not buy tickets up front. Harriet Taylor said that anecdotally the higher ticket price was the main reason for lack of sales. **SB** said that costings have gone up and tastes have changed. There are more events in the city centre. **WV** agreed about the cost of tickets and parking charges. He said there was also a lot of noise from Castle events and suggested we might look at another location; **PW** said this has been done. Pam Weiner agreed that ticket prices might have deterred buyers She said public perception is of us as an amateur company which may affect their attitude to pricing levels. She also said there was no price structure or concessionary prices.
- **EH** said that he had proposed higher prices, but discounts were not publicised well enough. He had wanted to offer ‘bundles’ of tickets, but it cannot be done through the present booking system. **CF** said that different Festival models were looked at, but there are always flat infrastructure costs. A shorter Festival would need 70% houses, so when inflationary forces are factored in, the model is not viable. Greg Owens said that he has been involved since the beginning of the Festival and there have been moments when huge change has been forced on us. He said that it was clear huge thought had gone into addressing issues, but he did not think that marketing had been strong. Also the Festival is now very technical and we might reduce costs by looking at alternatives, though he hoped we would still consider cover for the audience.
- **PHR** said that the Board is making an unequivocal recommendation that there be no Festival next year. **TH** agreed “at Sophia Gardens’ and said we need to re-think the model. **RO** asked what the alternatives were. **CF** said that so far we have looked at the current model and will be looking at alternatives next, but might not be able to do this for next year.
- James Hailes asked if we had any sponsorship. **PW** said he has been speaking to Marie Woods, a fundraiser, but **EH** said that we don’t have funding at the moment though **PHR** fought long and hard to find some. **EH** said we have looked at other sites and SLS has advised about the non-viability of other sites (no electricity or water supply). Kristian Zgorzelski asked about results of analytics. **TH** said this information was limited. He said he welcomed members to be part of the wider discussion.

6. Membership Report (KS)

- There are 126 adult members and 21 youth members (**SB** said that the Youth Group are now back to pre-Covid levels). There are 44 ‘floating’ members so we have 191 members (199 last year). **KS** has looked at Festival membership and said many were also in productions during the year.
- **AP** asked if there was any progress in using the resource of our loyal ticket buyers e.g. through a Friends/Patrons’ scheme. They might wish to help us with a ‘rescue’ package. He also felt we should talk to the Arts Council or try to find a large investor.
- Harriet Taylor said that she has not received email communications. **KS** said that there have been email problems that we are trying to solve, but people must keep up membership payments if they wish to receive comms. **CF** said that Josh Lewis has offered to help look at the system.
- **TH** said we will be looking at the benefits of being a member and also a Friends’ scheme. **RO** said that a season ticket scheme had been successful in the past and asked why membership was not higher. **KS** and **EH** have worked on this. Dan Parker asked if membership could be per show, rather than per year. When **KZ** asked which shows generated biggest uptake of membership, **KS** said that it usually the musical.

7. Youth Group (**SB**)

- **SB** said that it has been difficult since the pandemic. Most youth group members join to make friends; having help with mental issues and encouraging confidence are also important. She tries to give members different theatre experiences – a Comedy Night, a performance at the Mansion House, a new venue, Theatre for One. She decided to take a break from NT Connections this year and focussed on “Romeo and Juliet”
- **SB** said she was grateful for Board support to enable them to perform at the Willow Globe. It was a big boost to the Youth Group members.
- The future - **SB** hopes to link with other groups. She has decided not to do a Comedy Night because the Chapter hire charge went up. She plans a Christmas Show and will take part in NT Connections again (with a bursary). The Youth Group has also been invited back to the Willow Globe.
- **TH** said that it is the Youth Group’s 30th anniversary next year and we would like to factor this into our plans.

8. Clubnight Report (**BS**) – A report was circulated

- **BS** said that Clubnights were the ‘beating heart’ of Everyman. Average attendance is about 15.
- Melting Pot – This features professionals. Cost of about £100. It is a lovely community of people and is also educational. He encouraged members to attend.
- John Jones suggested meeting on a different day. **BS** has already said that he might change to an earlier start of 7.30pm, which would leave more time for members to meet in the Bar after the Clubnight. **TH** said this could be for future discussion. He said that Clubnights and Melting Pot were brilliant marketing points for Everyman.

9. Volunteering Report (**FG**) – A report was circulated.

- **FG** said that this is a new arm of Everyman, established after the success of the Victoria Park Project. There is a steering group of some long-standing members of Everyman and some new people. They are seeking to engage with communities who would not normally attend theatre and to increase diversity. This year they have mainly done outreach work.
- Dan Ivor Jones wondered if there was any intention to look at Welsh culture and make links with the Welsh Arts community. **TH** said this could be important to factor in. Trystan Davies said there is no Welsh amateur dramatic group in Cardiff so he would be interested in joining one. John Atkinson asked what the group’s objective is. **FG** said they are willing to be

moulded by whatever works for the community they are working with e.g. producing workshops or a production like the Victoria Park Project.

10. Appointment of Officers and Ordinary Members –

- Nominations –
Chair – Toby Harris
Vice Chair and Festival Chair – Cressida Ford
Treasurer – No nomination
Company Secretary - Sue Osmolska
Membership Secretary – Kate Stanbury
Clubnight Co-Ordinator– Barry Slack
Ordinary Members – Amy Brooks, Sarah Day, Russell Davies, Catherine Roberts, Paul Williams.
- These were elected unopposed.

11. A.O.B.

- Robert Orchard asked to be assured that members will be involved in deciding the future of the Festival at an EGM.
- **AP** thanked the Board for their Reports .

12. Closing Remarks –

- **TH** thanked the outgoing Board. He said it has been a particularly challenging year with issues, such as the relationship with Chapter. He said that **RD** has now managed to secure four theatre slots over 2025-26. He thanked out-going Board members, notably **EH**, out-going Treasurer, for his tireless efforts and **FG** for all her work on Volunteering and Community. He thanked **MS** for her work on Quality Assurance and **TC** for her fantastic work on marketing, social media, Bar and logistical elements of the Festival. He hopes to continue to work with her on marketing.
- **TH** thanked the members for attending and said we need members to help chart a way through a challenging 12 months.
- **MS** said that there will be an Everyman Cabaret to fundraise (first in a series over 12 months). It will be hosted at Wyburn and Wayne's Theatre Café and the organisers will be meeting with them soon.

Meeting closed at 9.12pm