

LEWES LITTLE THEATRE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SATURDAY 29 OCTOBER 2022 10.30 am

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. To receive the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 30 October 2021 (attached)
3. To receive the Accounts for 2021/2022 (attached)
4. To receive the report of the Board of Trustees for 2021/2022 (attached)
5. To confirm the change of the main name of the CIO from Lewes Theatre Club to Lewes Little Theatre
6. Address by the Artistic Director
7. Questions from members
8. To confirm the appointment of three Trustees (see Board Report paragraph 2 for details)

LEWES THEATRE CLUB
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SATURDAY 30 OCTOBER 2021

Minutes

Virtual meeting, conducted via Zoom webinar.

Jo Cull, President, presided.

Meeting chaired by Sue Tait, Chair of the Board of Trustees. Meeting attended by 31 current members.

1. Introduction and welcome by the President

Jo Cull welcomed delegates and asked for a few moments of silence in memory of members who had passed during the last year,.

She then went on to thank those who volunteer in all areas of the theatre, in particular those covering vacant positions. She drew attention to the fact that volunteers were still needed in every department, and invited anyone who felt they had something to offer to come forward.

Finally, in handing over to the Chair, she paid tribute to Sue Tait, and her many years of service to the theatre, not least as Chair of the current Board and the former Committee over the last six years, and for many years of previous service to the Committee.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 31 October 2020 were received. There were no comments or questions.

3. Accounts for 2020/21

The accounts for 2020/21 were received. There were no comments or questions.

4. Board of Trustees Report

The report of the Board of Trustees for 2020/21 was approved.

Since the report was written, the Club's application to be come a Charitable Incorporated Organisation had been approved by the Charities Commission, and a new charity, established under the constitution dated 1 June 2021 (charity number 1196153), had been created. The new charity was now operating in parallel with the former charity established in 1939 (charity number 1014554), and this meeting represented the final AGM of the old charity, and the first AGM of the new. The Board of Trustees will now transfer the all assets to the new charity, at which point the old charity will be wound up.

Mike Palmer made a brief statement on the management of the theatre car park, in advance of a detailed statement in a forthcoming newsletter.

5. Address by Artistic Director

Shaun Hughes, Artistic Director, described the events that had been staged on-line during lockdown; the reopening of the theatre in July 2021 with a socially distanced production; and the resumption of unrestricted performances with a full season of six productions starting in October 2021. Plans were well in hand for

another exciting season for 2022/23. He paid tribute to all those who volunteer, and who support the theatre in so many different ways.

6. Appointment of Trustee

The following was appointed to the Board of Trustees for a three year period of office ending in 2024:

Chris Spinks (*nominated by Mike Palmer, seconded by Tony Bannister*)

7. Closing address by Chair

In her closing address, Sue Tait spoke of the friendship and support she had received from many people over her many years as Chair of the Board and former Committee. In particular, she paid tribute to the support she had been given by Jo Cull and Tony Bannister.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

LEWES LITTLE THEATRE
BOARD REPORT 2022

	Last Elected	Term Expires	6-Year Rule	Attendance
Chris Spinks	October 2021	2024	2027	8/8
Estelle Carpenter	October 2020	2023	2023	8/8
James Meikle	October 2019	2022	2022	5/8
Mike Palmer	October 2019	2022	2025	8/8
David Rankin	October 2020	2023	2023	8/8
Chloe Holland	Coopted for 2022			5/5

1. Governance and Management

As was reported at the last AGM, we are now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), and we are completing our first year of operation under our new constitution.

The working title of the theatre has, for some time, been Lewes Little Theatre. However, for the Charity Commissioners to approve a change of main title of the CIO from Lewes Theatre Club, the confirmation of members of the charity is required. Therefore, members are asked to confirm at this meeting the change of main title, (agenda item 5). All assets have now been transferred to the CIO apart from the transfer of property ownership, completion of which is awaited.

The Board of Trustees have met on eight occasions since the last AGM, with Chris Spinks as Chair.

Day to day management of the theatre is delegated to the Executive Committee (EC), who have met on 15 occasions since the last AGM, with Mike Palmer as Chair. The other members are David Rankin, Chris Spinks, Shaun Hughes and Tony Bannister. The EC are appointed by the Board and are directly accountable to them.

Shaun Hughes is continuing as Artistic Director, and David Rankin is Premises Manager.

After an extensive period of development, a new electronic membership scheme has been introduced, allowing members to join and renew directly on-line. It has been generally well received. The development team remain on hand to assist with transition. The Board are very grateful to them, as they are to the former Membership Secretary, Nigel Sharpe, who has now stepped down.

The Board have approved a further increase in ticket prices for 2022/23 to £12 for members and £18 for non-members. We feel these prices continue to represent good value, and the significant discount is a strong incentive to promote membership. Membership rates remain unchanged.

The theatre's Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Inclusion policies are being regularly reviewed, with Chloe Holland taking lead responsibility.

Rowan and Co are the theatre's legal consultants, and Mentor UK our consultants on Health and Safety.

2. Appointment of Trustees

The Board are of the view that all trustees should bring particular areas of expertise and experience that will be of value to the organisation. There are three trustee appointments to be confirmed at this meeting.

Chloe Holland was coopted by the Board in April 2022 to a vacancy not filled at the last AGM. The Board recommend Chloe's appointment for a new, three year term. She brings valuable expertise in the area of disability awareness and training, as well experience of governance and management in the voluntary sector.

The second vacancy is created by the departure of James Meikle under the six year rule. The Board recommend the appointment of Tony Potter, whose extensive legal experience as well as a long association with this theatre, will be of great value.

Finally, Mike Palmer is coming to the end of his first, three year term. He is eligible to continue for a new term, and is prepared to do so. Mike gives tireless service to the theatre, not least as Chair of the Executive Committee, and the Board recommend his continued appointment.

The Board are grateful to James Meikle for his six years of service as a trustee. He will continue to work closely with the Board in his capacity as Publicity and Marketing Manager.

3. The route out of lockdown

The 2021/22 season, which opened in October 2021, was our first season of unrestricted performances since December 2019. A socially distanced production had been staged in July, and a number of the audience management procedures used then were carried forward into the new season, in view of the ongoing concern about Covid transmission. For example, the auditorium was opened earlier, to enable patrons to take their seats on arrival rather than gather in the foyer. Refreshments and programmes were offered without charge (although donations were welcomed), to reduce the need for queueing and the handling of cash. These proved popular, and were continued throughout the season.

Production	Author	Seats sold	%
The Chalk Garden	Enid Bagnold	480	38.96
The Railway Children	E Nesbit adap Hughes	635	51.54
Getting Through to Harry	Philip Ayckbourn	455	36.93
The Importance of Being Earnest	Oscar Wilde	706	57.31
Hay Fever	Noel Coward	586	47.56
A Midsummer Night's Dream	William Shakespeare	548	44.48

These figures are illustrative of the challenge facing many amateur theatres at the moment, and it is taking time to build audience levels back up to pre-pandemic levels. For us, the challenge is not only the regeneration of our traditional audience base, but also the need to attract the new audiences so necessary to our future growth. Our programme is carefully selected by the Artistic Director with the specific aim of delivering high production values, as well as the impact needed to attract and engage with audiences new to the theatre. Our new season for 2022/23, which opened at the beginning of October, is being backed up by an extensive review of publicity and marketing, headed up by James Meikle. This will cover every aspect including social and printed media, local publicity, advertising and a full review of the effectiveness and functionality of the website.

4. Buildings and Finance

The Board and Executive Committee continue to work hard to ensure that the theatre is an attractive, comfortable and safe venue for our audiences and volunteers. All electrical, fire and safety systems are regularly checked and upgraded. Before the theatre was reopened to the public last summer, the windows and exterior doors to the foyer were replaced, and security was upgraded. The auditorium was redecorated for the first time since the early 2000s.

Over the winter, leaks appeared in the dressing rooms and bar which confirmed that the flat roof over the dressing rooms required replacement. The Board took the decision to upgrade the roof to include full insulation, and the work was completed in the spring.

Following this work, an initial survey was conducted of the flat roofs over the wardrobe and workshop, and the remaining low level flat roof to the side of the building. This indicates that all are reaching the end of their useful lives and will require significant attention within the coming two to five years. An inspection of the slated pitched roof has indicated that it is also reaching the time when replacement will need to be considered.

Taken together, these works will require considerable investment. The Board have appointed a group comprising Chris Spinks, Mike Palmer and David Rankin to arrange a detailed audit of the work required in order of priority, the estimated cost of each phase, and the options available for funding.

The ongoing task facing the Board is the need ensure funding for building maintenance and repairs, whilst at the same time guaranteeing the Artistic Director the funds needed to stage a high quality programme. Strategic financial management is an increasingly important aspect of the Board's work, and they are fortunate to have the support of Bob Leeds, not only as keeper of the books, but also in providing quality advice.

5. **Recruitment and Training**

Within the last year, training in Health and Safety, and Disability Confidence has been delivered to volunteers in all departments by Darren Heather and Chloe Holland respectively.

The risk assessments drafted last year for all areas of theatre activity will be implemented progressively, with specific activity training if required.

One of the biggest challenges facing the theatre continues to be a shortage of active volunteers. The Board are embarking on a coordinated programme of recruitment and volunteer management aimed at introducing more active members during the coming season. All departments are affected.

6. **Future Developments**

The Board are establishing a 3-5 year plan identifying projects for future development. The first priority is being given to improving accessibility for non-ambulant patrons. Further information will be given as plans develop.

At the last AGM we reported on plans to operate the theatre car park as a paid public car park. Discussions with contractors have taken place but the project is currently on hold pending planning permission. Further information will be given when available.