

# YEOVIL AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 21 OCTOBER 2019 AT EDWARDS HOUSE, BUCKLAND ROAD, YEOVIL COMMENCING AT 7.30 PM

1 (a) Present: 52 members

**Members present:** M & J Rudd S Roberts K Taylor D Jamieson C Owen J Burt S Ball S Lowery C Jesty R Howell N Mountjoy P Warren S Hansford A Harris S Read R Pritchard B Rees T Wilson G & S Burgess L Thomas L Crane J Westaway N Lawton M Parker H Long S Andrew G Pamplin F Pamplin S Mathews E Darling-Finan L Stallard T Hillard C Bray C Longmuir R & G Bullock J Curry S Middleditch J Bailey L & F Whitchurch Z Welfare P Perry S Peaty N Toop N Riva P Budzynski D Hallett S Long G Thresh

**Patrons present:** President - C Clive-Ponsonby-Fane

**Visitors:** J Longmuir J Capes M Batterbury G Chant

(b) **Apologies** were received from: S McConnell D & M Burke M Ross-White M Hyde A Enticott F McLoughlin R Bartlett K Smyth C & P White P Withers D Wright A Hardcastle A Leadbitter V Whitchurch S Driver N Bussell A Thresh J Lock L Ward M Nichols J Bradford J Jesty M & L Francis

## 2 MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 22 OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (22 October 2018) had been previously read, confirmed and agreed as a correct record. (proposed R Howell, seconded L Crane, unanimous)

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

## 4 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Paula read her 31<sup>st</sup> report to the meeting.

### Appointees/Members/Friends

Judy Bradford was standing down as Assistant Treasurer and Paula thanked Judy for all her hard work; Judy had done a sterling job over the years in paying the bills and invoices. Hal had indicated that he was happy to undertake these tasks in the future.

Committee-wise, Lorna Murphy-Durran had stood down during the year as Business Manager owing to pressure of work and was thanked for all she had achieved in the post. Fortunately, Kay Taylor had come forward to undertake the job and was now settling in admirably.

Lastly, the Committee was very sorry to learn that Nigel Bussell would be standing down as Stage Director. Nigel was thanked for all his hard work over his time in the position and would be missed. Fortunately, Sarah Lowery would now be undertaking the job.

### Sponsorship/Charities/Funding

The Society's charity for '42<sup>nd</sup> Street' was MIND for which £732 was raised.

For 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' the Society digressed somewhat from the norm (being an Autumn show) by supporting a charity which was Fiveways School new play area and the Society would also be supporting them for 'The Sound of Music' season.

Chris Owen organised 2 superb Cabaret evenings and raised the princely sum of £2,000 for Society funds.

Funds had also been raised for the Society during the year through helping with car parking at the Hendford Hill Car Boots. This appeared to average £500/£600 per session. (The Society was helping every month). Thanks were extended to Lucy Crane for organising these.

### Awards

NODA awards presented during the evening went to – Julie Burt (10 year badge), Di Jamieson (10 year badge), Clive Jesty (40 year silver badge), Roger Bullock (50 year gold bar – Roger would use his Dad's

bar), Ken Nichols – 50 year badge) and Geoff Thresh (50 year gold bar – Geoff would use his wife Sylvia's bar).

### Edwards House

Edwards House continued to thrive under Nick Mountjoy's leadership. The hall had been decorated in the Spring and was used by various groups. There had been an increase in the hourly rate to £10 per hour for new users.

### Shows – '42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'

'42<sup>nd</sup> Street' had been an extremely happy show and thanks were extended to Sheila Driver (Director) and Gill Merrifield (Musical Director) for such a lovely dynamic show. Expenses for the show had come in lower than anticipated, and, hopefully the show will have made a small profit.

'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' had been a 'fantasmagorical' show, appealing to both young and old. Paula commented on how satisfying it had been to have full houses for the last 3 performances (the box office take overall had been 83%) Paula thanked Jeremy Tustin (Director), Kat Stevens (Musical Director) and Sheila Driver (Assistant) for giving the Society such a wonderful show.

### The Future

Old favourite 'The Sound of Music' had been chosen for Spring 2020 with Sheila Driver and Gill Merrifield taking the reigns. The Society had 'Chess' organised for Autumn 2020 with Jeremy Tustin and Kat Stevens taking charge again. After this, nothing had been decided and Paula asked members to let her have their thoughts and ideas.

Finally, Paula thanked everyone – appointees and assistants for everything achieved during the year.

Paula was thanked for her report and for all her hard work during the year.

## **5 TREASURER'S REPORT**

David Hallett gave his report.

He said that the last few years had shown a reduction in the net reserves of YAOS and show results had been disappointing, reducing the cash balance and needing decisions to be made regarding futures shows and financing.

The 2-week Spring show cost an average of £80k to produce at the Octagon. Question: Can the Society cut the costs without sacrificing the quality of the shows? Nothing could be done about the hire of the theatre costs that had crept up over the past few years. Also, if the Society wanted to do a karaoke style musical, the MD and orchestra were essential. Staging and costume costs could be adapted depending on the show, but could this be achieved and still produce the YAOS standard that the public expected? It would be the same with sound and lighting costs.

Other questions. Could the Society raise ticket prices again or would that put off some of the audience from coming to the theatre? Should the Society look at 'show fees', or increasing the annual membership fees? Hal believed that the Weymouth Operatic annual membership was now over £100.

In conclusion, Hal made a comment that it all came down to **Bums. On. Seats.** It was essential that the Society chose the right show. 'Sister Act', 'King & I' and 'Evita' had all made money as the tickets had sold well. 'JCS' & 'Top Hat' had not appealed to the public and had resulted in deficits, followed up by the financial disaster that had been 'Sweeney Todd'.

However, it was not all doom & gloom. The Spring 2019 production of '42<sup>nd</sup> Street' sold well and with the inclusion of the show raffle income (£1320) made a small & welcome profit. 'Chitty' was a monster of a show to produce financially, but based on the provisional figures had at least broken even and might even result in a small surplus - Hal would confirm this asap.

The show raffle continued to be a welcome source of additional funding for shows. In addition, this year the Cabaret evening organised by Chris Owen had been a great success and raised net of costs over £2000 for the Society. Well done to Chris and her team.

This year the funds had been boosted by cash from car parking duties at the Yeovil Showground car boot, raising almost £3k since May. The total would be included in the April 2020 accounts next year. Well done Lucy Crane and her team.

There were a few other things to note. The Edwards House results looked disappointing but the expenses included a couple of exceptional costs: full redecoration of the rehearsal space (£1850) and a new fire door (£1500).

In summary, costs needed to be kept under control and the Society needed to produce shows that the public wanted to see. The Society needed to continue to look at ways of raising funds to offset the expenses.

Hal was happy to answer any questions or provide more detailed financial information.

Hal was thanked for his report.

## **6 ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS (2018/2019)**

It was unanimously agreed that this set of accounts be adopted (proposed J Curry, seconded L Thomas, unanimous).

## **7 ELECTION OF AUDITOR**

It was unanimously agreed that Hugh Tayler (Chalmers & Co) be, once again, elected as the Society Auditor (proposed K Nichols, seconded R Bullock, unanimous).

## **8 ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

All Officers were elected en bloc, unopposed. Geoff Thresh – Chairman; Mark Rudd – Vice-Chairman; Paula Budzynski – Secretary, David Hallett - Treasurer, Kay Taylor – Business Manager and Sarah Lowery – Stage Director.

## **9 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE**

The retiring committee was thanked for all their help and support over the year. The following were elected to stand for the ensuing year:

Simon Ball	Lucy Crane	Erin Darling-Finan
Clive Jesty	Nick Mountjoy	Pauline Warren

## **10 EDWARDS HOUSE REPORT**

Edwards House Manager, Nick Mountjoy reported. Maintenance was ongoing – the fire door had now been replaced with a new PVC door. A new sound system had been installed in the hall.

The online booking system was working well and Nick thanked Lauren Francis for overseeing this. Ann Harris, as Edwards House Treasurer, was doing a great job ensuring all the bills were paid on time. Nick thanked Daisy Reid (cleaner) and Julie Burt for refreshments.

In conclusion, Nick said he was always on the lookout for help and if anyone had any free time then please contact him!!!

Nick was thanked for his report.

## **11 OLIVE EDWARDS AWARD**

The Olive Edwards Award was now one that members could apply for if they wished to further their abilities in a particular field of the arts. The recipient was then chosen by the Committee. Paula was therefore delighted to announce that this year's award was given to Ann Harris.

## **12 THE ANNE BAYES YOUNG PEOPLE'S AWARD**

Paula was delighted to announce that this year's award recipient was Callum Longmuir.

## **13 THE JOHN CURRY UNSUNG HERO AWARD**

John Curry was delighted to announce that this year's recipient was Chris Owen.

At this point Charles Clive-Ponsonby-Fane presented the 2019 Long Service Awards to the recipients named in the Secretary's Report.

## **14 TO DISCUSS THE CHOICE OF FUTURE PRODUCTIONS/MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION**

Luke Whitchurch felt that the Society should try and get an extra week in the Autumn and make 'Oliver!' the Autumn 2020 show rather than 'Chess'. 'Oliver!' had everything – children, iconic moments, memorable songs etc. This idea would be looked into by the Committee in the near future.

Geoff made comment that he had heard through the 'grapevine' that MTI would be announcing a big release in December – so he asked everyone to 'watch this space'!!

Discussion then took place regarding the Society subscription/Show Fee. John Curry felt that the subscription should be increased. Jenny Holland-Brewer commented that Wayfarers Pantomime Society in Taunton was £50. Geoff asked for a show of hands to ascertain members' feelings about a £50 subscription and it resulted in a huge majority being in favour of raising the sub to £50. The Committee would look into paying this by direct debit each month, thereby spreading the cost. Maybe a discretionary figure could be decided for those members who found it difficult to manage the amount of £50. Students and children could also pay the reduced rate.

Clive Jesty felt that members should be allocated a number of tickets to sell, as members were not selling tickets as they should be. Kay Ward offered to sell tickets at Leonardo's (the comment was made that tickets could be purchased for people who could not be bother to go to the theatre to collect them). Another comment was made that YAOS lost out on selling to the public by 'fencing off' prime tickets.

Hal agreed to deal with organising payment by card – people did not always have cash on them.

Roger Bullock made comment that older patrons still enjoyed G & S (which did not attract performing rights) and could be staged and orchestrated cheaply.

Jay Westaway suggested 'Footloose' and 'Curtains' as prospective shows.

'7 Brides for 7 Brothers' was also another possibility.

The Committee would discuss all these views.

## **15 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION BY THE NEW COMMITTEE**

### **(a) Card Payment for programmes**

This was something the Committee would discuss.

### **(b) Front of House Personnel**

Graham Chant asked how gentlemen working front of house could be identified as YAOS personnel? (Programme sellers wore sashes – could gentlemen wear coloured bow ties?)

### **(c) Future Murder/Mystery**

Geoff informed the meeting that hopefully a Murder/Mystery would be organised towards the end of November/beginning of December at Yeovil Conservative Club (£15 per head).

### **(d) Lottery**

There had been an idea from a Patron of running a 'lottery' based on the bonus ball lottery whereby members would be direct debited by £4.30 per month. This would be discussed by the new Committee.

### **(e) Charity**

Trish Perry thanked the Society for their help in raising money for Fiveways School new play area ('Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' and 'The Sound of Music'.)

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm