

YEOVIL AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024 AT EDWARDS HOUSE, BUCKLAND ROAD, YEOVIL COMMENCING AT 7.30 PM

1 (a) Present: 46 members

Members present: L & M Francis S Meldrum A Meldrum L Thomas S Long A Best P Withers K & M Nichols G & S Burgess J Jesty J Burt D Jamieson E Hooper C Hooper V Hallett M Batterbury L Capes N Riva N Toop Z Welfare L & F Whitchurch A Enticott T Denson S Lowery S Ball W Poulton L Gage H Long M Parker P Warren R Lodge S Hansford C & C Musgrave P Budzynski D Hallett M Rudd G Thresh N Mountjoy J Ayres R & G Bullock

Patron present: C Clive-Ponsonby-Fane

Guest: Garry Richardson

(b) **Apologies** were received from: C Jesty D Bourne P Perry T Rock A Lowder E Driver L Clark V Whitchurch N & T Dyke S Driver L Stallard

2 Welcome to the New President

The Chairman said a farewell to the retiring President, Charles Clive-Ponsonby-Fane and thanked him for his support over the last 3 years. Charles then welcomed the President elect, Garry Richardson who was introduced by Nick Mountjoy. Garry said a few words about his life on the stage and how pleased he was to be asked to be the Society's new President.

Presentation of Life Membership Scroll

Mark Rudd was presented with the Society's Life Membership Scroll for which he was delighted to accept.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 6 NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (6 November 2023) had been previously read, confirmed and agreed as a correct record. (proposed Louise Thomas, seconded Chris Musgrove, unanimous)

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

5 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Paula opened her report by thanking and saying 'goodbye' to retiring President, Charles Clive-Ponsonby-Fane who had supported the Society for the past 6 years. She then welcomed new President, Garry Richardson.

Paula reported that she had not been well over the past 6 months or so and thanked Lucy Capes for all her help and support.

Officers and Committee

Mark Rudd was now standing down as Chairman and she thanked him for everything he had achieved during his 3 year tenure. She was pleased to welcome Geoff Thresh again as Chairman and Nick Mountjoy as Vice-Chairman.

Lorna Clark was now standing down as Business Manager and Shelagh Meldrum was taking over. There were only 6 members putting up for Committee so there was no need for a vote this year.

Ray Bartlett

Ray had died almost 2 years ago and the Society would now be the beneficiary (along with Crewkerne Operatic Society) of the proceeds of the sale of his house and possessions. A lovely gesture indeed! So the updating and refurbishing of Edwards House had been the first thing on the Committee's mind to do and most of this had now been achieved. The Society also held a Celebration Evening in August to pay tribute to Ray and the Society also gave a donation to Montacute Church in Ray's memory.

Fund Raising/Awards

The Society was still involved with the Hendford Hill car boots which raised a very useful £3,826 during the year.

The Race Evening kindly organised by Sarah Lowery and Simon Ball was very poorly attended and there were no plans for another one.

There were no NODA long service awards to present this year.

Shows of the Year

'Oklahoma!' This show had been beautifully directed and choreographed by our own Sheila Driver but, unfortunately, only took 56.7% at the box office resulting in a loss of over £8,000. However, this was not as bad as the Society's previous Autumn production **'Into the Woods'** which lost almost £20,000.

'Oklahoma!' Show Charity £1,315.38 was raised for the cancer unit at Yeovil Hospital.

Concert The recent concert along with the Octagon Choir unfortunately also lost £753 partly because the orchestra was so expensive.

All these losses were down to not selling enough tickets and Paula emphasised that the Society must do everything possible to sell, sell, sell! It had never been more important to sell tickets.

Conclusion

So, a good year show-wise, but not so good financially. However, the Society still went on strongly and continued to educate and entertain the public.

6 TREASURER'S REPORT

Hal opened his report by starting with the figures for productions in the year. For every show a budget was prepared, aiming to at least a break-even point. Unfortunately, neither 'Into the Woods' nor 'Oklahoma!' were profitable shows, not for the want of trying, with great effort put into the promotion of the shows, especially on social media. In particular, 'Into the Woods' proved a financial disaster, with ticket sales under 50% of capacity. This highlighted the fact that putting on any production where the show was not well known or was in any way a niche market was no longer an option. The Society could not afford to make this level of loss on future shows. 'Oklahoma!', an old favourite, fresh from a West End revival, still failed to bring in the audience numbers to the levels seen at the Octagon.

The move from The Octagon brought with it additional issues, as it was not a theatre in the traditional sense of the word, the seats weren't particularly comfortable, and this might put people off attending and the Society needed to adapt productions to fit the space available. Westlands cost just as much as the Octagon to hire, despite having little in the way of dressing room facilities.

Great efforts had been made to reduce costs by building own sets where possible and sourcing costumes. The last 3 shows had come in under budget on costs but failed to sell sufficient tickets to break-even.

The Society could support a show making a small loss with the offset of fundraising activities such as the Car Boot parking plus member and patron subscriptions but need to look at other ways to raise and maintain funds. Bums on seats means attracting audiences young and old, and hopefully Charlie & the Chocolate Factory next March would prove a draw to all ages. Hal hoped that the audience demographic would be similar to that of last week's Elf the Musical, where the final 3 performances were pretty much sold out.

General Income & Expenditure: Fundraising continued to be a key area of income for YAOS and Car Boot parking activities at Yeovil Showground, the bonus-ball draw and show raffle income raised significant sums to contribute to the running costs of the Society and partially offset the losses made by the productions in the year. The generous bequest from Ray Bartlett means that the financial position was much healthier than last year, though the Society was keen to ensure that the money received was not wasted. A significant amount had been spent on the renovation and maintenance of Edwards House, and in the accounts Hal apportioned expenditure between general maintenance and property improvements as appropriate.

Finally, the Charitable Distribution Reserve in the balance sheet was increased to allow for future donations to local charities and good causes.

Hal was thanked for his report.

7 ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS (2023/2024)

It was unanimously agreed that this set of accounts be adopted (proposed R Howell, seconded G Burgess).

8 ELECTION OF AUDITOR

It was unanimously agreed that Chalmers & Co be, once again, elected as the Society Auditor (proposed N Mountjoy, seconded B Rees).

9 AGREEMENT TO AN INCREASE IN THE SUBSCRIPTION FROM £20 TO £25 (14-18 YEARS TO REMAIN AT £10)

This was unanimously agreed (proposed G Bullock, seconded L Whitchurch).

10 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

All Officers were elected en bloc, unopposed. Geoff Thresh (Chairman), Nick Mountjoy (Vice-Chairman), Paula Budzynski (Secretary), David Hallett (Treasurer), Sarah Lowery (Stage Director) and Shelagh Meldrum (Business Manager).

11 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The retiring committee was thanked for all their help and support over the year. Lucy Capes was presented with flowers for all her great help and support over the year. The following were elected to stand for the ensuing year:

Jack Ayres	Simon Ball	Matt Parker
Mark Rudd	Lucy Capes	Steve Williams

12 EDWARDS HOUSE REPORT

Edwards House Manager, Nick Mountjoy reported. Much work had been achieved over the past year to improve and refurbish Edwards House, thanks to the legacy received from the late Ray Batlett including decorating, new flooring, new chairs and new LED lighting. Nick thanked Vicky Hallett for all her help during the year and also Daisy Reid.

Nick was now standing down as Edwards House Manager and handing over to Jack Ayres. Jack then took over the final part of the report saying he hoped to maintain the high standards Nick had achieved. He said all bills were paid up to date and he thanked Jessamy Bowditch, Beatnik and YAPS who were all hirers of Edwards House.

13 OLIVE EDWARDS AWARD

Paula was delighted to report that this year's recipient of the Olive Edwards Award was Nick Riva.

14 THE ANNE BAYES YOUNG PEOPLE'S AWARD

Paula was delighted to announce that this year's award would be shared jointly between Charmayne and Elishia Hooper.

15 THE JOHN CURRY UNSUNG HERO AWARD

There was no award.

Presentation of NODA Long Service Medal

At this point Roger Howell was present with his 65 year NODA long service medal.

16 TO DISCUSS THE CHOICE OF FUTURE PRODUCTIONS

There was a general feeling that the Society should be looking at performing smaller cut-down versions of shows (or concert versions?). Looking at shows for next October 'Come From Away' with a small cast seemed a good choice but this show was not available at the present time. It also needed to be borne in mind that Westlands had no dressing room facilities at present. 'Sunset Boulevard' and 'Hunchback of Notredame' were also suggested as possible shows.

Different venues were also discussed including Ilminster Warehouse and Sherborne Girls School but would people be willing to travel outside Yeovil?

17 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION BY THE NEW COMMITTEE

(a) Price of Tickets for a Production

The cost of tickets, while at Westlands Entertainment Venue, was discussed. A short discussion took place. Luke Whitchurch felt that £20 was too much to pay at Westlands and the price should be less; Westlands was only an 'entertainment centre' and not a theatre. This item would be discussed by the Committee.

(b) Band

Would YAOS be better off not having a band because it was too expensive? This was another item to be discussed by the Committee.

In conclusion, Brian Rees added a profit must be made to survive!!

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm