

MINUTES OF AGM OF THE HASLEMERE PLAYERS
Held on Tuesday 19 June 2018 at the Haslemere Hall

Hamish welcomed 22 members to the meeting.

1.APOLOGIES:

Vicki Gavin, Maureen Shepherd, Mike Cubitt, Andy Boughton, Mary Coyte, Val Bishop,
Sally Barr, Rae Boxall, Mary-Lou Knox, Rachel Perkins, Carolyn Lane, Linda Donaldson

2.MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING, which had been displayed on Players' website and also available at the meeting, were taken as a true record of that meeting and duly signed by Hamish (President) and Pamela (Secretary)

3. MATTERS ARISING AND CORRESPONDENCE: Nothing relevant to report.

4.TREASURER'S REPORT:

Arry started by saying that she realised the Treasurer's report part of the meeting would not be the most scintillating, so she would try and keep the report brief. She intended to run through the shows quickly, the figures were in front of the members and questions could be asked at the end.

Arry then reported on Showstoppers 2017 which was Kim Seymour's first Showstoppers for Players and she did a fantastic job. Ticket sales were very good at 420. Unfortunately, behind the scenes helpers were thin on the ground. Vicki was not available and Sally away, so for the first time in many years, we had to rely on outside caterers for the evening food. Therefore, we had to pay about £8.50 a head instead of normally £3.50. Ironically, it transpired that the audience prefer basic ploughman's rather than the fancy food supplied by the caterer. Also, a new format of scones, cream and jam was tried but most of the audience were crying out for cake! The entire profit was therefore wiped out instantaneously. Arry confirmed that although the final figure for the show, at £49.97 looks slightly sad, it in no way reflected how the show was received by the audiences, the quality of the show, the tickets sold, or indeed any other costs being higher than usual other than the catering.

Arry continued that the next show in October 2017 was My Fair Lady – again directed by Kim. As this is a firm favourite, the committee felt confident that it would be a resounding success, which it was. Ticket sales were high at 1421 – the matinee sold well with some of our audience being from a number of the local residential homes and also being a child friendly production, a number of children watched at the matinee too. Costume and scenery expenditure was kept to a minimum and the only slightly higher than normal expense was the orchestra which needed one or two more players than normal. Arry reported an excellent final result of a profit of just under £1967. She expressed very many thanks to Kim for taking on both Showstoppers and My Fair Lady back to back, which is a huge commitment.

When Howard asked the committee if he could direct The Full Monty, we, as a committee, were initially quite divided – was it a bit risqué for Haslemere audiences and would we sell enough tickets? Howard was very confident it would be a huge success. The committee voted and it was a 50/50 for and against. Arry would not reveal who was in favour and who was against or who had the deciding vote but it was fair to say that we were not entirely confident as to its popularity. The Full Monty is not a show remembered particularly for its memorable tunes, although there are a few and Arry did not want to detract for one moment from Howard's excellent directing but she felt that there was possibly an element of "voyeurism" that helped boost the box office receipts! That said hats off, or perhaps, pants off, to all those who braved full nudity in the centre of this very small community – and huge thanks to Howard for taking the risk and achieving a very, very successful show. Arry reported that it was a mainly female audience and if she had known how popular the front row was going to be, she would have suggested we doubled the ticket prices for Row C! Ticket sales were good at 1468, show expenditure was mostly average – possibly the scenery was a little higher than normal and the costume receipts were unlike anything Mary-Lou or she had ever dealt with before – she just mentioned multiple red thongs in a wide variety of sizes and left it at that!

Arry continued that as always, she had to extend huge thanks to Mary-Lou and her wardrobe team who work very hard to keep costume costs down for each show and also to Steph and Alison and their Props team – they really are so conscientious and resourceful and it makes a big difference to our end results. Thank you all very much indeed.

Arry then invited questions or queries about any of the shows before moving on.

Membership and Patron subs. Arry reported that these do seem to be reasonably consistent at the moment but it has been noticed that on occasions, there have been some interested parties who turn up to presentations, only to be put off auditioning for principal parts by the up front membership fee that is charged. Therefore, following committee discussion, it is proposed to charge a £10 audition fee to new prospective members who wish to audition for principal parts, on the understanding that if they get a part in the production in any capacity, they will pay the balance of £20 for full membership. If they do not get the part and do not wish to be in the chorus, then they will not have to pay the balance but their £10 will not be refunded. This offer is only open to new members who have not been members of the Haslemere Players in the past and will take effect after CHESS this year if agreed at this meeting. Jane McMichael has kindly agreed, as Membership Secretary, to oversee the logistics of this new regime.

Arry requested that any member who has a Paypal arrangement or standing order in place to pay the membership sub automatically, to ensure that this has been updated to reflect the £30 membership fee for acting members and £10 for student and non-acting members.

It is also proposed to reduce the Show donation from £30 to £25 for our two main shows and this will take effect immediately.

Arry reported that she had some issues reclaiming Gift Aid. She and Jane McMichael intend to get together over the summer to re-evaluate this. She confirmed that they did not have signed forms for all of the members, patrons and life members of the Players and this must be brought up to date to ensure that the requirements of HMRC are fully complied with and the making of claiming Gift Aid a more straightforward process.

Arry reported that in terms of general finances we have had a fairly quiet year for large or unexpected expenditure. Socially the society has been reasonably quiet also. The wardrobe has continued to hire out costumes bringing in about £1200 over the year. Otherwise she did not have much to report.

Arry continued that she was slightly disappointed to announce an overall deficit this year of just under £500. This was mainly due to the unusually high expenses incurred in Showstoppers. We are also having to factor into the accounts now some new expenses, such as the professional accountancy fees for our end of year accounts and also ever increasing costs generally across the board. She hoped to get things back on track for this year.

Arry then said she would like to extend huge thanks to the people who helped her the most with all things financial. Pamela who collects the show fees, Jane McMichael, as membership secretary and also to Sally as her bank co-signatory. It is always reassuring to know that everything she spends on behalf of the Players is double checked by Sally. Finally, massive thanks to Hamish for his help with the end of year accounts and all his work this year on the GDPR policy and also the changing of the Players to a Company Limited by Guarantee. Both of these things required a lot of time and effort, so thank you very much.

Jane McMichael queried the item on the accounts of back stage drinks. Arry reported that this item also includes cast refreshments.

Very Foster also enquired about drinks and Arry confirmed that drinks for rehearsals are included in this item, which is one of the items covered by the show fee.

Kim enquired about the accountant costs and suggested he might like to advertise in a programme but Arry said that would not interest him as he is fully employed.

Hamish thanked Arry for her comprehensive and interesting report.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chris promised to keep his speech short. He reported on the slight loss for the year and said that this did not reflect on the shows that we produced and proceeded to give a quick review of those shows.

'Around the World in Musicals' was led by Kim Seymour and Chris Snelling, both making their debut with us as Director and MD. Kim agreed to take on this and our subsequent production. We also welcomed new members of the Society to the cast. 420 seats were sold.

This was followed by 'My Fair Lady' in October 2017 with Kim directing and Justin Luke as MD. Chris said this was one of his favourite shows with its memorable songs. It was beautifully staged and the scenery was a masterpiece. 1421 seats were sold.

Chris continued that March saw a first for both Haslemere Players and the Haslemere Hall when six men were seen to go 'all the way' in 'The Full Monty' sympathetically directed by Howard Bicknell with Lizzie Hales as MD. He particularly mentioned Sacha Blackwood, who had never been on stage before. The six were supported by a very strong principal cast and chorus. Although 'The Full Monty' was seen as a risky show, it was a success and 1468 tickets were sold.

Chris then mentioned the most recent show of 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' although this was not presented in the year covered by this AGM, in order to thank everyone who helped make this a successful production. In particular, Kim, Jonathan, Vicki, Lucy, Verity and Chris Snelling. 397 tickets were sold and £416 was raised for the Royal British Legion.

Chris went on to say that the process of choosing shows to present is not an easy one. Factors to be considered include:

Availability of show licences, availability and preferences of directors and musical directors, suitability of staging in Haslemere Hall, achievability of the set, appeal to the members and audiences.

Chris said that it is a juggling act and the committee may not always make the right decisions, although always for the right reasons.

Chris continued that with a diverse membership and audiences, not everyone can be pleased all the time but we try to please everyone some of the time. The choice of The Full Monty, Chess and The Gondoliers provides a wide range of shows which should cater for both our older and younger members and audiences.

Chris then turned to finance, stressing that we do need to try and make a profit with every show to cover the costs of rent, insurance, lighting, heating, etc. We do need to encourage new directors, members and audiences, but Chris said we need to be mindful of our existing and loyal members and audiences. We need to explore new shows as well as presenting the traditional ones.

Chris confirmed that, as a committee, we represent you, the members. He invited anyone with suggestions of what we could do differently or if anyone would like to help, please come and have a chat as we will be listening. We will keep you posted on shows we are planning in the coming year.

Next, Chris wishes to thank three members of the committee who were standing down: Debs Bowyer and Frances Cross for family reasons and Graham Ferris who needs to concentrate on fundraising for the Royal British Legion. In particular, Debs has agreed to carry on with her connections with the local press and other publicity. He thanked them all for their contribution to the society.

Chris then welcomed two new members to the Executive Committee: Lucy Loveland, who, as well as choreographing numbers, has taken on the role of social secretary and Verity Foster who answered his call for a younger committee member to represent the younger members of the society. Verity is the third generation Foster to serve on the committee.

Chris acknowledged that there were too many people who deserve to be thanked but he wanted to take the opportunity to thank some of those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to support the society:

- Hamish Donaldson who, as president, makes sure that we are compliant with requirements and acts as a conscience to me and the committee and, together with Adrian Stent, makes sure that we have some of the very best sets. I am aware that, on occasion, Hamish has spent time on his own getting sets ready for shows.
- Linda Donaldson for arranging all the Front of House volunteers and, until this year, all the waitresses and bar staff for Show Stoppers.
- Stephanie, Annie and Alison for making sure that we have all the right props available at the right time and place during shows.
- Arry for helping with the catering for Show Stoppers and for not having to cook the books.
- Sally, Pamela, Mary-Lou and Jane for all their support and ideas.

- All those who help with Stage Management, Lighting, Stage Crew, Scenery, Prompting, Catering, clearing up, etc.

Chris wished to apologise to anyone he had failed to mention and thanked them all.

Lastly, Chris wanted to thank all those present, the members, for whom the society exists and who the committee serves. He said that our society not only provides an opportunity to express artistic talent as a hobby but also provides a forum for friendship and fun.

Thanks were expressed to Chris for his full and interesting report.

6. SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Vicki has suggested as an addendum to her proxy form, that the system is unfair in that a single person pays the same as a family, with all members of that family, i.e. £20. Kim mentioned that the eight in her family could vote and influence the numbers, although Chris pointed out that any member had to be over 18, which would preclude her boys. It was decided that this could be discussed at a committee meeting.

Vicki also thought that the term 'lapsed member' on the proxy form, was ambiguous but Hamish thought it fairly clear.

All the proxy forms received were in favour of the present subs charged and the new idea that £10 only is charged to auditionees, instead of the £30 as at present with the balance of £20 being paid if the auditionee subsequently appeared in the show. Rachel Perkins was not in favour of this proposal. Apart from this, the motion was carried unanimously.

Otherwise, the subs will remain the same as for 2017/2018, which is:

Acting members £30, Students and non-acting £10, Patrons per family £20.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At present the officers and executive committee members are:

President: Hamish Donaldson. Chairman: Christopher Lloyd. Treasurer: Arabella Burwood.

Secretary: Pamela Depledge.

Debbie Bowyer, Sally Barr, Mary-Lou Knox, Jane McMichael, Verity Foster, Adrian Stent, Graham Ferris, Frances Cross.

Officers and committee members all re-elected and unanimously agreed by the members present.

8. AUDITOR: Mr Nigel Oldham has agreed to continue as our Independent Examiner.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Howard raised the question of an early audition on a Thursday. This is not encouraged as the audition committee members and readers in have to attend another session, sometimes just for one person.

However, Howard felt a positive decision should be made to make sure prospective auditionees are not discouraged. It was also felt that auditions could be arranged for a Saturday to avoid occasions such as Fathers' Day and Mothers' Day, which preclude some prospective auditionees. This will be discussed at committee but perhaps it should be made clear to members of an audition committee that they may be needed on a Thursday evening as well as the Sunday afternoon.

Jonathan wanted to emphasise all the hard work that Mary-Lou and Sue Farley take on to provide costumes for the shows and for hiring out. Sue mentioned that 30 loads of washing and drying had been done following the last show. She felt that they should be training someone to learn about the costumes and Hamish said he would ask Linda to put in a plea in the next Players Patter.

Hamish thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.25.