

# THE ROBIN HOOD THEATRE COMPANY LTD.

## Chairman's Report to

### The Annual General Meeting 10 December 2015



## Introduction

This report covers the company year from 1 July 2014 to our year end of 30 June 2015. I report on the running of the company; our production programme; ancillary activities; and developing the building with a forward look to the coming year.

## Running the Company

After the election of directors at the fourth general meeting of the company we assigned the following executive roles at our first meeting:

- Chairman – Geoff Morgan
- Secretary – Jean Baliol-Key
- Finance – Clive Harmston
- Artistic – Jean Lebeter
- Design – Jackie Rogers
- Technical – Dave Baliol-Key
- Business – Val Wilson
- Communications – Carolyn Drury

Brendan Haigh has continued as a non-executive member of the Board nominated by the Diocese of Nottingham and Southwell.

Val Wilson resigned from the Board for personal reasons in October 2014. The Board decided that we would also increase the number of Directors as the demands of productions and hirings plus the building development work was putting an increasing burden on the current Directors. We also decided that the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS - the licensee) should be a member of the Board as this was a critical post to the operation of the theatre. Accordingly we appointed Mark Lebeter to the Board as DPS, Rachel Repper as FOH Director and Michael Jeffrey as the Buildings Director.

Membership has remained good with 155 current members. We introduced the facility to pay subscriptions on line with the new membership year from July. This has proved increasingly popular.

We introduced a bi monthly newsletter to keep members informed of developments and changes as a more structured bulletin to complement the e-mail despatches used for more immediate updates, audition notices, production notices etc. The website has been continually updated and maintained as a key communication channel to members and the world about our activities.

## Production Programme

The programme for the last season included the following main productions:

Date	Play	Comments
October 2014	Educating Rita	Willy Russell's classic 2 hander which virtually sold out for 5 nights.
November 2014	Neighbourhood Watch	Alan Ayckbourn's 75 <sup>th</sup> play with very high audience figures. Very challenging script and setting.

January 2015	The Ladykillers	A stage adaptation of the classic Ealing Comedy. Very good audience numbers and response.
March 2015	Sense and Sensibility	A skilful adaptation of Jane Austen's novel – well received by slightly smaller audiences.
June 2015	Hi de Hi	A nostalgic romp great fun for the cast and audience alike with some comic additions and FOH entertainment devised by the director.

In addition we produced two new one act plays “Just Coping” and “A Matter of Misuse” written by Carolyn Drury as an addition to the programme as a Studio Style event in December 2014. Also we performed 2 Murder Mystery evenings for local organisations.

It was notable that audience numbers started to fall very slightly after the first four productions back in the theatre so we sought new, value for money outlets for our publicity which have been put into effect for the new season. Our most successful marketing is by word of mouth so all members can play a part in promoting our programme amongst friends and neighbours. In the meantime the Board are putting additional effort into quality control to ensure that we maintain our high standard of theatre.

### **Ancillary Activities**

During the year there were 29 hirings ranging from private parties to Dance School productions. This included hirings for a couple of hours for one room to the whole building for the week. This has contributed over £3,500 to our income for the year.

Our bar and refreshment services have all made a healthy contribution to funds both during productions and for significant hirings.

### **Developing the Theatre**

Last year I attached a schedule of consolidation works that we were working through after opening the theatre. I am very pleased to report that all the items on the list have been completed with the exception of fitting out the office/store room and building a new staircase to the rooms above the FOH area. This includes the addition of heating to the stage and backstage rooms which has also meant that the auditorium is much warmer. The permanent electrical installation to the backstage rooms was completed over this summer. Although this was just after the end of the year, it was a major effort by a dedicated group of members lead by Dave Key which saved us about £15,000 against quoted prices.

In February 2015 we had a spot inspection by the Notts Fire and Rescue Service. The inspector was impressed with our approach to fire prevention and had no recommendations for us. This was a pass with flying colours.

We are also grateful to Vodafone who have supported us through their volunteering and match funding schemes. Their volunteering days gave us teams of hard working helpers who cleared the garden areas, painted some of the internal areas and did other maintenance work. The match funding scheme has generated about £700 largely by matching the money we have raised from our Murder Mystery performances.

In April we appointed an Architect - Clive Brooks - to help us to plan the completion of the remainder of the building. He is working in short phases so that we do not over commit ourselves. He submitted a report in June of the likely stages we would need to go through to ensure that the partially completed extension building is made compliant with current building control standards. Then we can develop a plan for the completion of the building as a Studio Theatre. Many of the works needed to achieve compliance are relatively low cost and, like the electrical works mentioned above, we can do ourselves. This means we can save our major fund raising efforts for the task of achieving a significant objective – a new performance

space - rather than a series of small scale works that help but are not particularly inspiring of themselves. Clive and Michael Jeffrey are working closely with Newark and Sherwood District Council to ensure that everything we plan will meet with their approval.

## Forward Look

### The building

Over the coming year we shall be:

- Undertaking a maintenance programme of cleaning, painting, repairs and minor preventative works;
- Continuing to develop plans for completing the remainder of the building and identifying a fund raising target;
- Undertaking a programme of development work using members' skills and labour and modest withdrawals of reserves to improve the state of the buildings.

### The programme

The current season's programme is underway and comprises:

Date	Play	
Sept/October 2015	Abigail's Party	The classic 1970s improvisation play from Mike Leigh takes us back to the time of Demis Roussos, the summer of the Queen's Silver jubilee, the rise of punk rock and cheese & pineapple on sticks.
November 2015	The Pitmen Painters	Lee Hall's dramatization for the National Theatre of the true story of 5 miners from the north-east whose art appreciation evening class took them to greater things.
January 2016	Ladies' Day	Local author Amanda Whittington's feisty comedy of four fish packers who go to Royal Ascot in the year it was held at York. First performed by Hull Truck this is the ideal play for banishing winter blues.
April 2016	Gaslight	A classic Victorian thriller of psychological torment and flickering gas lamps that will thrill and intrigue.
June 2016	Brief Encounter	Kneehigh Theatre's production of Noel Coward's romantic drama becomes a multimedia challenge for our company to produce as a season finale.

We decided to seek the return of professional performers to the theatre by joining the Village Ventures scheme. This also means that we can enable the three local villages to benefit from this County subsidised scheme. We have been allocated a mixture of three musical and theatre events in December, February and March.

We are planning to produce a Music Hall show in May 2016 largely as a fund raiser but also as an enjoyable event both to perform and watch.

Tickets for all shows are available either through the website or by phone (when members can easily obtain their discount) which means that customers can book their favourite seats for the whole season.

Hirings are already at the level achieved for 2014-15 with bookings into mid-2016. We have welcomed Newark Operatic Society for the first time and Argent Theatre have made a welcome return after our closure period.

## **The Youth Group**

We have spent some considerable time getting ready to restart the Robin Hood Youth Theatre. After advertising we identified an enthusiastic and well qualified new leader – Shauna Dennett - who launched the group in early September. Ten new members are now working towards their first Christmas Show on 13 December and will then prepare a summer show in July.

## **Conclusion**

This has been a gratifyingly busy year. We have been able to build up our financial reserves whilst undertaking modest development work. The audience response since we re-opened has been strong but we cannot afford to be complacent in our programme selection, production quality or customer services. We are trying new ways to make the audience experience even better and contribute to the revenue. We are keeping production costs under control and managing our development programme cautiously. We have achieved our long held objective to re-establish the Youth Theatre and the front of the theatre building is looking better than it has done for many years.

**Geoff Morgan**

**Chairman**

**The Robin Hood Theatre Company Ltd**