

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FESTIVAL PLAYERS 2024

The ADC Bar, Cambridge, Sunday 17th November 2024 @ 5pm

Present:

Oliver Fisher (Chair), Fran Watson (Treasurer), Ana Sanderson (Secretary), Catriona Clarke, Matt Brown, Helena Cornu, Rich Evans, Michael Husband, Simon Adcock, Adam Pickles, Michael Broom, Davinia Fisher, Rupert Fisher, George Fisher.

Joining remotely: Warren Clark, Philippa Clark, Sam Kirby

Apologies:

Claire Lucas, Susan Sadek, Suzanne Emerson, Liz Milway, DeeDee Doke.

1) Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes were proposed by Helena Cornu and seconded by Matt Brown. Adopted.

2) Matters arising

None.

3) Chair's Report - Oliver Fisher

It was an honour, a year ago, to be elected Chair of Festival Players - a society that means so much to me and my family.

One of my first privileges in the role was to confer Life Membership to my predecessor Warren, after two decades of service to the group, on and off stage. Warren took over as Chair four months before the world came to a stand still, and navigated us through the COVID pandemic, KIPPS and then Kinky Boots, each of which brought its own significant challenges. Overlay a context of increasing competition - for actors, creatives, crew and musicians - increasingly ambitious production values across Cambridge, and the costs that follow, and the increasing social and cultural pressures in theatre more generally... well, he had quite the tenure! In the words of Richard Stilgoe, lyrics very familiar to anyone who shares Warren's excellent taste in rollerskate-propelled musicals: 'one rock-n-roll too many, takes its toll outta you'.

And, quite honestly, it is there that our Festival Players year began - feeling overwhelmed by previous years and the seemingly endless challenges they had brought with them. In the words of our Secretary, Ana, "this committee was on its knees". So it was with the final words of Warren's speech last year - "...to all future committee members who become temporary custodians of the society, please look after it..." - that we set to work.

Given that charity starts at home, we began reflecting on where we were as a committee - when and how we meet, how we communicate, and how we make decisions (some of them recently complicated and divisive). To my committee colleagues, I hope you feel - through a shared openness and determination - that we have made significant progress.

In January, we literally opened our books - publishing details of our revenue and costs, and the ongoing struggle to balance them which all societies face. We were pleased with the response it got from the

community - from 'well, I never knew that' through to impassioned pleas for investment in various areas of the budget. We're keen to invest in the right ways, while making sure the group's activities are sustainable. And at our last committee meeting of the year, thanks to some fantastic number-crunching from our Treasurer, Fran (and her excellent back office team), we have the start of a major Financial Review - our first in a decade - which will help us understand the society's money matters at depth, and enable us to make the right decisions in the coming years.

Famously, when John F Kennedy asked a janitor at NASA HQ what he was up to, the man was so aligned to his organisation's mission that he replied, "I'm helping put a man on the moon". Now, some might say that producing amateur musical theatre is considerably less complex than actual rocket science. We're not so sure.

So another key foundation was our agreement in the summer on a vision statement, our mission, a few words to guide current and future committee members as we go about our business, distilling what we aim to achieve for our member and non-member community of actors, creatives, musicians, technical crew, stakeholders, partners and audiences, through our productions and other activities. It's nothing particularly controversial, but a critical step in aligning behind, and then focusing on, what we can offer our community.

Sticking, rather pompously perhaps, with JFK for one more soundbite, early in that same year he had said "we choose to go to the moon, and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard" and it is with that thought that I would like to thank, without limit, my committee colleagues this year - Ana and Fran, Catriona, Helena and Matt, Claire, Suzanne and Susan - for their hard work and commitment to these discussions; their debate and their compromise. I think the work they do for this community is made particularly satisfying because it is sometimes hard. And I am personally (and I know on behalf of many others), extremely grateful for their contribution.

Each has done so much, and I believe it's unfashionable to pick out individuals but, as my son will tell you, 'unfashionable' rarely stops me! We say goodbye to Claire today, and I'd like to thank her for all her probing questions and enthusiastic ideas over the last year. Then, I believe that two of our team have particularly stood out...

First, Ana. Ana only joined the committee two years ago, but has become instrumental in its smooth running. On top of her day-to-day Secretary duties, she is thoughtfully plugged into the community, raising important financial and cultural issues for the committee to consider. She has an exceptional grasp on individuals' hopes and fears, and how Festival Players should respond. She is often the first to volunteer for any task that doesn't have an obvious home, and she is of course our resident musical expert, a role which we have missed since Tommy left the committee in 2017.

And second, Helena. As an individual, Helena has humanity and warmth like I have rarely known, coupled with a surprisingly wicked sense of humour. She has seamlessly and effortlessly taken over one of the most demanding roles on the committee, and has done so with incredible calmness and skill. At the end of her first show in June, she was given a Producer's Hat by the cast - an honour I didn't manage in fifteen years. He says, with limited bitterness.

The cherry on top is that both Helena and Ana, if given the chance, would quickly, and correctly, point out that this is a team game. And so it is. In fact the Festival Players team extends well beyond its committee. This is of course nothing new, but we are increasingly conscious of the range of skills and the hours and hours of commitment that our wider community puts into Festival Players productions.

This year we were delighted to have a number of new and returning creatives looking after our two productions. First, in January, we were treated to the little known musical farce *Lucky Stiff*, directed by

Matt Wilkinson, with James Harvey as musical director. It was a laugh-a-minute and as Berenice Mann wrote in her review: “credit to Festival Players for taking the risk and doing something different”. Then, in June, another romp, described in Susan Elkin’s review as “one of the finest non-pro productions I’ve seen in a very long time”. She went on to say that Mel Brooks satirical comedy musical *The Producers*, directed by Alan Hay, with our very own Ana Sanderson as musical director, “fizzed with talent”. Amongst a large number of performer highlights, we were also lucky enough to work with Mr Special Effects in Cambridge himself, Mike Rudin, and his remote control pigeons. What a coup...

Frances Sayer choreographed both shows, and is now one of the most sought after choreographers in Cambridge. Nat Davies, and Nick and Ali Hall, each plied their technical trades on both shows too. In total the two programmes list more than 50 contributors, who never appear on stage - sound and set, carpentry and costumes, musicians and make up, lights, photography and much much more. It’s not even a team game; it’s a community game.

So we are always keen to recognise some of those contributors through the year with our society awards. This year the Roy Braybrooke Award (for resourceful contribution to the main production) went to Luke Thomas for his 200 mile costume road trip. Never was so much, owed by so many Little Old Ladies, to so few. The Tommy Thomas ‘I’m Only In The Chorus’ Award went to Rory Lowings for his commitment and contribution to the *Producers* ensemble.

And I’m delighted to announce today that this year’s Tom Farrell Award (which is given to someone who has reflected Tom’s positivity, spirit and good nature) goes to the inimitable Sam Kirby. Sam’s humour and uplifting presence in a rehearsal room is exactly what we saw in Tom, a past member, who visited from Ireland to see our version of *The Producers* back in 2011. Congratulations and thank you, Sam.

In May, we joined forces with representatives of *Once Again*, *Letchworth Arcadians*, *Between the Bars*, *Plymouth Wranglers*, *Sweeney & The Todds* and the Haslingfield Primary School choir, to celebrate the life of our friend, and last year’s Tom Farrell Award winner, James Hayward, who passed away, coincidentally, on the night of Festival Players’ 50th Anniversary Dinner last September. Our cast was carefully chosen from current and past members who had worked alongside James - a diverse group picked from three main production casts and the two touring shows he directed for us, spanning more than a decade. It was a fitting tribute to a wonderful man - full of laughter, warmth, and great music.

And so to next year. 2025 is the 113th anniversary of the Titanic disaster, and we have lined up two incredible productions here at the ADC Theatre. ‘Titanic’ isn’t either of them. Rehearsals are already underway for January’s cult classic *Little Shop of Horrors*, directed by Kirsty Smith, with musical direction by William Davies and choreography by Charlotte Dargan. And then in June we feel blessed to have secured some of the first ever amateur rights for Andrew Lloyd Webber’s epic *Jesus Christ Superstar*, directed by Suzanne, musically directed by Sam and Joe Griffiths, with choreography by Laura Saunders. We feel very lucky to have such a fantastic group of creatives working with us again - some stalwarts, some returning, some new - and we wish them all the very best of luck.

As JKF... ok, ok, enough!

Whatever your interaction with Festival Players over the next twelve months - committee, creative, cast, crew, musician, or just coming to see one of our shows - thank you for your support.

Oliver Fisher, Chair November 2024

4) Treasurer's Report - Fran Watson

Festival Players Accounts

1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024

Account Breakdown

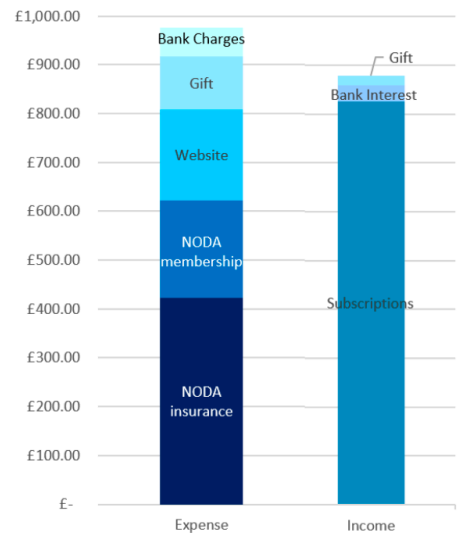
1. Main Account

Income		Expense	
Subscriptions	£ 825.00	NODA Insurance	£ 422.27
Bank Interest	£ 34.23	NODA Membership	£ 199.99
Gift ^{1.1}	£ 18.70	Website	£ 187.00
		Gift ^{1.2}	£ 107.50
		Bank Charges	£ 60.00
Total	£ 877.93	Total	£ 976.76
		Sum Loss 2023-24	£ 98.83

1.1 – The £18.70 income from a donation was made anonymously via the website

1.2 – The £107.50 gift expense was for flowers on two separate occasions

Main Account Breakdown 2023-24



2. Social

Income		Expense	
Hadestown Tickets	£ 1,260.00	Hadestown Tickets	£ 1,249.50
Total	£ 1,260.00	Total	£ 1,249.50
Sum Profit 2023-24^{2.1}	£ 10.50		

2.1 – The £10.50 profit is due to an additional 50p charge per ticket to cover admin costs and prevent a loss on these events

Social Breakdown 2023-24

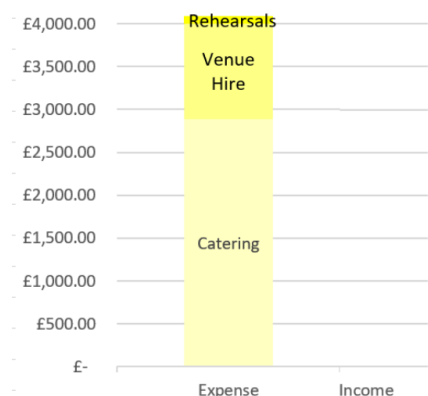


3. 50th Anniversary

Income		Expense	
		Catering	£ 2,891.26
		Venue Hire	£ 1,110.00
		Rehearsals	£ 90.00
Total	£ 0.00	Total	£ 4,091.26
		Sum loss 2023-24^{3.1}	£ 4,091.26

3.1 – The 50th Anniversary sum profit from 2022-23 accounts was £ 3,220, resulting in an overall loss of £871.26 for the 50th Anniversary celebration.

50th Anniversary 2023-24



4. Lucky Stiff

Income		Expense	
Tickets	£ 5,673.38	Production - Rights	£ 2,460.53
Performance Fees	£ 433.12	Rehearsals	£ 818.75
Sponsorship	£ 300.00	Band	£ 648.00
Merchandise	£ 177.48	Production - Lighting	£ 485.76
		Programme	£ 278.25
Total	£ 6,583.98	Merchandise	£ 210.06
		Production - Costumes	£ 199.05
		Publicity	£ 152.73
		Production - Sound	£ 43.00
		Total	£ 5,296.13

Sum profit 2023-24^{4.1} £ 1,287.85

4.1 – Lucky Stiff sum loss from 2022-23 accounts was £531.25, resulting in an overall profit of £756.60 for the Lucky Stiff production.

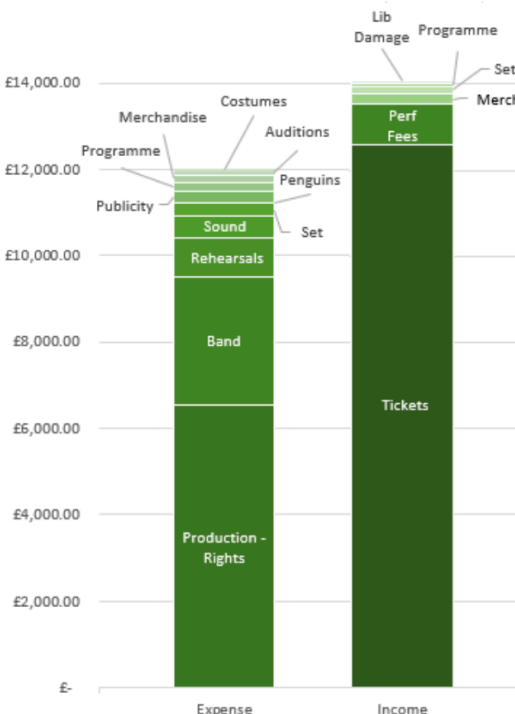
Lucky Stiff Breakdown 2023-24



5. Producers

Income		Expense	
Tickets	£ 12,609.52	Production - Rights	£ 6,538.89
Performance Fees	£ 920.00	Band	£ 2,952.00
Merchandise	£ 236.00	Rehearsals	£ 926.18
Production – Set ¹	£ 200.00	Production - Sound	£ 494.50
Programme	£ 63.65	Production - Set	£ 302.85
Lib Damage ²	£ 50.00	Penguins	£ 20.00
		Publicity	£ 243.65
		Programme	£ 212.16
		Merchandise	£ 186.84
		Auditions	£ 73.00
		Production - Costumes	£ 49.42
Total	£ 14,079.17	Total	£ 11,999.49
Sum Profit 2023-24	£ 2,079.68		

Producers Breakdown 2023-24



5.1 – Resale of set (red banner fabric)

5.2 – Lib damage x 2 – paid by cast members and included within ‘Production – Rights’ expense to MTI

6. JCS

Income		Expense	
		Production - Rights	£ 1,230.00
Total	£ 0.00	Total	£ 1,230.00
		Sum loss 2023-24	£ 1,230.00

JCS Breakdown 2023-24



7. Little Shop

Income		Expense	
		Production - Rights	£ 500.00
Total	£ 0.00	Total	£ 500.00
		Sum loss 2023-24	£ 500.00

Little Shop Breakdown 2023-24



Accounts Summary

CAF Cash Account

Main Account	- £	98.83
Social	£	10.50
50 th Anniversary	- £	4,091.26
Lucky Stiff	£	1,287.85
Producers	£	2,079.68
JCS	- £	1,230.00
Little Shop	- £	500.00
Net Cashflow	- £	2542.06

	Opening	Closing	Net Cash Flow
CAF Cash Account	£ 21,990.36	£ 19,448.30	- £ 2,542.06
CAF Gold Account	£ 4,804.48	£ 4,926.06	£ 121.58
Cambridge Building Society	£ 13,247.68	£ 13,735.28	£ 487.60
Total	£ 40,042.52	£ 38,109.64	- £ 1932.88

Closing Net loss £1932.88

This year's accounts reflect two profitable shows and a well-attended social trip. Thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy and hard work to promote the joy of collaborative musical theatre over the last year. And my particular thanks to Michael Darvell for kindly giving his time and expertise again to audit this year's accounts.



Frances J Watson
Treasurer, Festival Players

I have examined the foregoing accounts and balance sheet dated 1/10/24, together with the books of Festival Players, Cambridge and certify the same to be correct in accordance therewith.



Michael Darvell

Membership subscriptions

Membership fees will remain at £15 per year.

Changes to working processes

FW has introduced budget tracking forms for use by creatives on shows.

FW has also changed the process by which expenses are claimed for prompter communication and payment.

FW intends to create a membership form to be completed which will include a link to gift aid.

5) Secretary's Report - Ana Sanderson

Committee meetings

We moved to a more regular meeting cadence, including more frequent in-person meetings. We also revised our standing agenda to bring focus on important discussion topics.

During the year, the Committee held 9 meetings during which:

- * A review of the overall vision for Festival Players was begun.
- * Our January 2024 show, 'Lucky Stiff' was reviewed.
- * Our summer 2024 show, 'The Producers' was reviewed.
- * The FP contribution to the James Hayward Memorial Concert was planned and reviewed.
- * Our January 2025 show, 'Little Shop of Horrors' was approved and a creative team appointed.
- * Our summer 2025 show, 'Jesus Christ Superstar' was approved and a creative team appointed.

Additional activity

There was a group theatre outing to see 'Hadestown'.

Stats

We have:

Facebook page – 1.3k followers

Instagram - 530 followers

Newsletter subscribers - 572

Total membership - 64

Catriona Clarke proposed that all three reports be accepted.

Helena Cornu seconded the proposal and the proposal was accepted.

6) Election of Officers

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Chairman	Oliver Fisher	Fran Watson	Susan Sadek
Secretary	Ana Sanderson	Oliver Fisher	Fran Watson
Treasurer	Fran Watson	Suzanne Emerson	Helena Cornu
Business Mgr	Helena Cornu	Matt Brown	Catriona Clarke
Sponsorship Mgr	Suzanne Emerson	Ana Sanderson	Fran Watson
Publicity Mgr	Catriona Clarke	Helena Cornu	Matt Brown
Social Sec.	Matt Brown	Catriona Clarke	Ana Sanderson
Member	Susan Sadek	Oliver Fisher	Catriona Clarke
Member	Rich Evans	Susan Sadek	Oliver Fisher
Member	Joe McWilliams	Ana Sanderson	Suzanne Emerson

As there was only one nominee for each position all nominees were elected unopposed.
Therefore the committee for 2024/25 is:

Chair Oliver Fisher
Secretary Ana Sanderson
Treasurer Fran Watson
Business Manager Helena Cornu
Publicity Mgr Catriona Clarke
Social Secretary Matt Brown
Sponsorship Manager Suzanne Emerson
Members: Susan Sadek, Rich Evans, Joe McWilliams

7) Presentation of the Tom Farrell Award

This was awarded to Sam Kirby.

8) AOB

None

The meeting concluded at 5.41pm