People's Company Charity No. 1199022 Trustee Annual Report 2025/2026	

Purpose of the charity

The advancement of the arts and the education of the public in the appreciation and understanding of performing arts in all their forms, through the operation, facilitation and management of People's Company theatre for the public benefit.

Activities throughout the year:

The Artistic Director successfully pulled together a coalition of funders for Cherry Gardens TRA to produce the Bermondsey & Rotherhithe in Song Festival which took place throughout the year and in which PC played a significant part.

- **Bermondsey and Rotherhithe in Song Festival**

  This production of an animated and musical walk was based on research from Victorian times of local Confectionery factories, as the first part of the festival. Oral history and song portrayed past days of Bermondsey, with music specially written by Tyrone Landau and a Maypole dance choreographed by Susan Hayes (PC Trustee) and culminated in a trip to the old Peak Freans biscuit factory, now a museum. In beautiful weather, these tours were well-attended and obviously enjoyed by the audiences and passersby, who stopped in numbers to listen and watch. Feedback was extremely positive, with interest received from audience members in undertaking future research projects.

- An initiative of joining with University of the Arts (UAL) led to a filming project being undertaken, with short interviews by members and ex-members of PC. Mary Hayden led the project for PC and produced an excellent short film which has been loaded to the website.
  - Some of the members of the cast have also been involved in street theatre and animated walks, notably the soft opening of the new shopping area at the Elephant & Castle, where they dramatised a short skit on the life of Cecill Belfield Clark, after whom the area has been named.
- **Time Train**

  As a continuation of the Festival, we commissioned ourselves to develop a new play relating the history of Bermondsey, a project which has consumed the company for the past five months. It is an ambitious project for PC as a first to include new music and choreography, plus involving several writers from PC in developing the script. In a completely new venture, we have again joined with UAL, to produce graphics and animation to be shown as part of the performance, which will occur at the end of May at Southwark Playhouse.

We believe we have achieved our objective of providing a creative voice and platform locally and furthered such by partnering on two projects with UAL and their amazingly talented students, as part of our commitment to expand our involvement within the local community and continuing to work with other established groups within Southwark, promoting their interests via art and drama projects.

Also, just before the end of the last financial year, in conjunction with Southwark Playhouse, we received funding from Southwark Council for a Pride evening. As part of the Company's commitment to join forces with similar minded companies, this will be a combination of PC members, the Elders' Company and the Black Writers group, where readings of poetry and scenes from plays, plus new works commissioned for the evening, will be performed on a Sunday evening in June at the Playhouse. The evening will be free, with a charitable collection made for the Switchboard.

In the new financial year, we will also be running the Inspiring Elephant tours and workshops, which will involve some Outreach work with members of the local community. Unfortunately, we were not successful in our full bid for the Outreach sessions last year but will continue to seek funding year on year.

Operating Committee

As we moved into new ventures, it was decided to split the Deputy Chair role into two positions, one responsible for the new filming efforts, plus marketing, social media and website, and the other covering operational responsibilities. This will also free up the OpCom Chair, particularly in his role as Artistic Director.

Finance

These are difficult funding times, but finances are fairly consistent with stable costs and support by local Southwark funders or in consortia with other local groups from wider funders. Despite these hard times we have been mainly successful in our applications, thanks to our Artistic Directors' efforts.

Other

The 3-year strategy was reviewed and accepted. Difficult funding times makes our proposed strategy of longer-term funding rather challenging, but we continue to seek funding for individual projects, still with the longer aim in mind.

Trustees

The trustees continue in place with three Trustees agreeing to renew their roles, which will be minuted at the AGM in June 2026. One of our Trustees was directly involved in choreographing two pieces throughout the year, which was invaluable.

(People's Company Trustees

Annual report to the Charity Commission 2025/2026)

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