

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS HELD AT SOUTH SHORE METHODIST
CHURCH, MAYFIELD AVENUE, BLACKPOOL ON WENDESDAY 13TH
NOVEMBER, 2024 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: The President, Chairman, Secretary,
and 60 members

APOLOGIES: Mr. Neil Townsend, Mr. Steve Hook,
Mrs. Sherran Lawson and Mrs. Linda Lunn

MINUTES of the Sixty-Ninth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 4th October, 2023 which were sent out to the membership with the Agenda, were confirmed to be a true and accurate record of that Meeting and were signed as such by the Chairman.

Proposed by Miss Gillian Lee

Seconded by Mrs. Anita Bamforth and carried

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

WELCOME ADDRESS FROM MR. JOHN CHESTERS OUR PRESIDENT

It is my very pleasant duty to welcome you all to the 70th Annual General Meeting of Blackpool Operatic Players.

As those members who attended the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company will know, we have just passed through a traumatic period within the Company's General Committee, which I have to say was a great shock to us all.

However, knowing BOP as I do, and with the professional help of our Honorary Auditors and Solicitor, together with the total support of all our Committee members, our problems had to be resolved and difficult decisions taken. Mr. Ian Riding (senior Partner) and Mr. Andy Fisher of our Accountants John Potter and Harrison were going to be in attendance at the meeting, but unfortunately this was not possible. I

would like to thank them for all their hard work on our behalf, for which we are most grateful.

Although it has been a long, laborious and difficult process, changes and re-organisation have taken place and are ongoing for the future continuation of the Company and the benefit of the membership.

This process was continuing throughout rehearsals for 'Singin' in the Rain' and the Summer Concerts, but I have to thank all of you involved over the year led by both production teams for your enthusiasm and team spirit which each week made our efforts more determined.

Your success in all performances was so well deserved and the praise you all received well earned.

Finally, my very grateful thanks go to our Chairman, Secretary, and all members of the Committee for the unmeasurable amount of time and effort they have given on our behalf to ensure the future of this wonderful Society.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr President, Madam Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, fellow members of the committee and of course all the very important members of the Blackpool Operatic Players Family.

It seems such a long time since we folded our umbrellas and stepped out of the 'glorious feeling' of 'Singin in the Rain'. What a brilliant show. My personal congratulations go to everyone who made it such a success.

Being Chairman of this incredible society is an honour of which I am extremely proud. I realise that its not about putting on a badge and turning up at rehearsals.

Especially after the turbulent times of the last financial year, we must run the society as a professional business with charitable status. The time and commitment needed by every member of the committee has grown year on year since I was a social committee member in the 80's.

We must make sure that the Society is constantly looking at ways to raise funds to enable us to stage our shows each year. Sponsorship, Grants, Advertising Sales

and primarily, Ticket Sales are crucial. Please sell as many tickets as you can. It is vitally important towards making a profit on our show.

I personally want to thank each member of the committee for their dedication and hard work for this society especially during the last 12 months. You are all incredible and no show would happen without all your efforts in the background. To our amazing secretary Marian and our wonderful President John, a massive thank you for all the time and passion you both give to BOP. You really are two very special people and we are so lucky to have you.

Finally, Blackpool Operatic Players is so fortunate to be made up of the most talented, creative and friendly people I have ever encountered. You are what makes this society a family.

So, as we move forward, with rehearsals that are already looking on track and exciting, blow on those dice, don't sit down, lets rock that boat and enjoy staging Guys and Dolls in 2025.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. President, Madam Chairman and Members of the Blackpool Operatic Players.

In opening my 43rd Annual Report as Company Secretary, may I welcome you all to our 70th Annual General Meeting.

What a year we have had, but the Officers and Committee have all worked extremely hard to get us through this very difficult period, and I am sure now with all this effort and support, we are finally coming through.

You may have noticed my reaction at rehearsals both for Singin in the Rain and at rehearsals for the recent summer concert. I hope everyone realises my pride and pleasure at seeing our large company of established and new members working together and developing their talents, whether performing individually or as a group. The support for everyone is heart warming and an aspect of operatic life which makes everyone involved part of a well oiled and totally committed team. This does show in the performances, and over this last year the company has excelled in their delivery of our shows which I have to say gives me great pride and honour to be company secretary.

Obviously, a lot of this is dependent on our Production Teams with Neil, Julie, Chris and Kevin for Singin' in the Rain, and Frazer, Leanne, Jack and Danielle for

our Summer concerts. I congratulate them all on achieving fantastic results from the cast and members, and very well deserved plaudits from our audiences.

As always, I would like to thank everyone involved with Singin in the Rain starting with Pam, our wardrobe mistress, not forgetting her fantastic team of helpers. To Graham our Technical Adviser, who I always say knows the Grand Theatre stage like the back of his hand, and he is so valued by BOP for his knowledge and expertise, so thank you Graham. As always I never really wish to single out any section but would like to thank everyone concerned with the success of Singin in the Rain. We all enjoyed a wonderful week at the Grand Theatre, without getting too wet in the process !! Thank you to Danny and his team for organising the After Show Party, again held at the Layton Institute. It was good fun, and I feel sure everyone enjoyed the event.

Continuing with my thanks, firstly to Jane, our Chairman, who has worked very hard on behalf of the Committee following the disastrous year we have had, and to John, our President. As I always say, he is our biggest fan, as well as being a working President. Thank you John for just being you. I must give thanks to our committee. We certainly have had our work cut out this year, but as I have said previously, we are getting there !!

Many thanks to our two main Sponsors who have donated to BOP over many years, and for which we are very grateful. We also thank our page sponsors. To be a page sponsor it costs £100 and many donate in memory of someone, or just wish to sponsor us, and we hope that this will continue and give much needed support to our finances.

And now to BOP at the Musicals Part 2. What a fantastic show this was. Thank you again to Frazer, Leanne, Jack and Danielle for their hard work, and also to Danielle for the use of her studio for rehearsals. As you know, John and I attended every rehearsal (except when we were in Italy) and it gave us so much pleasure each week watching this show progress into what became a fantastic production. We even got our names in the programme for chief tea brewers !! I must also give a very big thank you to Chris Thornton for all his hard work in overseeing (and paying the bills, of course) which went massively to the success of the show. We had fabulous audiences and lots of excellent feedback I believe that arrangements are ongoing for BOP at the Musicals 3 and I do hope you will all join us once again. It is great to

see some of the new members in the concert now taking part in our 2025 production, Guys and Dolls.

And now for some lovely news for us all. BOP have been happy this year to announce the birth of three babies to members. Firstly, to Jade Maddocks and her husband Jamie. You will remember Jade who played Gingy in Shrek. Their little girl Harper Ruth arrived on 29th November, 2023. And then came along baby Theodore Luca Latimer-Delahaye to Alex Latimer and her husband David on 28th January, 2024. Finally to our Princess Fiona and her very soon to be husband, Mike, another beautiful baby girl, Evaleigh Bloom born on the 18th February, 2024. Congratulations to you all, and I feel sure we will see you at rehearsals during the coming months.

And now to our 2025 production, Guys and Dolls, which is a long time favourite of our President John !! We are pleased to welcome our new production team for this show starting with Steve Chesters (no relation) who will direct and choreograph the show, along with our Dance Captain Jenni Hicke. We also welcome Leanne Farrer as our Voice Coach who many of us know already and who was our Voice Coach for the concerts. We welcome back our longstanding Music Director, Chris Andrews, whose orchestra will be absolutely amazing !!

I take this opportunity of congratulating those who were successful with their auditions and are now busy rehearsing, and wishing each and every one of you a very happy and successful Guys and Dolls.

Thank you

Marian

TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT THE SOCIETY'S ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 2023/2024

The President explained to the membership that the accounts had only been received from the accountants at 4 p.m. today. These accounts have been printed and issued, but it was felt that a discussion on the accounts could not take place without any queries being resolved by our accountants. And so it was agreed by the company that they would study the accounts together with the Committee and any questions would be put forward for explanation before the accounts could be adopted. Toni Forshaw and Danny Hicke will take the questions back to our accountants, John Potter and Harrison, The Company are happy with this.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS 2022/2023

The Officers for the present year are Chairman Mrs. Jane Seddon, Company Secretary Mrs. Marian Chesters. Both Officers have offered themselves for re-election for a further twelve months. The Company Secretary not having received any nominations, both Officers were duly elected for a further twelve months.

ELECTION OF THREE MEMBERS ON TO THE GENERAL COMMITTEE.

To elect three members of the Society on to the General Committee for three years. Mr. Chris Thornton has offered himself for re-election, and Mr. Nigel Taylor has put himself forward for committee for three years. This now leaves one space for three years and one space for two years. Applications could not be taken from the floor.

TO APPOINT TWO MEMBERS ON TO THE PUBLICITY AND PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

To appoint at least two members of the Society to the Publicity and Programme Committee to serve in office for 12 months. Mrs. Karen Gray Thornton, the Chairman of this Committee has stated her willingness to continue, along with Mrs. Toni Forshaw. It was hoped that she would receive offers of help, but none were received from the floor.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees for the year 2024/2025 are confirmed as follows:-

Acting Member	£140.00
Non-Acting Member	£ 40.00
Student	£100.00 (on production of student card)

TO TRANSACT ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Company Secretary had received two items of Any Other Business from Mr. Neil Townsend.

While being unable to attend the AGM, Neil submitted the following question for a response from the Committee. Chris Thornton (Marketing Manager) provided a response which is outlined below the question.

Question:

The first one (Neil submitted two questions for the AGM) concerns ticket pricing, which I appreciate is very much in the hands of the Grand but I am very fearful that the hike in price and the way it's going is getting just too expensive and I suspect

sales will suffer. Surely this is an area we should push back on maybe working alongside BFLOC to campaign for a fairer deal?

Answer

I am unable to go into the full depth on a rationale on pricing strategy which has been developed over a 12-18 month period in discussion with the Grand. While the core strategy and approach are driven by the Grand, I have been actively involved in discussions on how to apply the overall strategy to amateur societies like BOP. However, I will try and summarise the approach.

Pricing involves two elements – structure and level. The objective is to adapt both to the ongoing challenge of finding the increasingly difficult balance between costs and income to maintain financial viability for our productions at the Grand.

There has been a change in structure which primarily involves the seat maps and price bands. There are now more price bands and seat maps (how price bands are applied to various seating areas/blocks) in use. The aim here is to give us greater flexibility on how seats are priced and to be able to refine different maps/bands for different days or even performances within days during our production. This should allow us to manage demand and occupancy more closely improving financial performance. It also offers the opportunity to react promptly to demand at different points in the sales cycle (from box office launch to 1st night) – again to maximum ticket sales.

As regards price levels. Yes, the Grand have, for a while, had a belief that we could (and should) target higher seat price, particularly at the 'premium' level. For the last 2-3 shows I've brought top ticket prices down, through discussion, from the level requested by the Grand. However, the evidence provided by the Grand on market pricing (again, at premium levels), the growing challenge on financial performance, plus the move to 'dynamic seat banding' (providing greater flexibility and responsiveness) led me to agree the current pricing (still a little lower than the Grand would recommend!).

Another factor to consider is our own view of the 'value' of BOP (how we are seen by others). The Grand are supportive of amateur companies but do not (and cannot) put on sub-standard shows for their own reputation and image. The most common review comment on our shows in recent years has been how they have reached 'professional level'. It is educational to look at the top ticket prices for professional

shows at the Grand. This puts our top prices in context as being 25% or more lower typically. This is often against 'middle of the road' professional shows with no big name draws. It reflects the Grand's views of the direction of theatre prices as a whole and provides a different picture of the value our top prices give for the best seats in the house.

As mentioned earlier, the above strategy has been complex to develop and agree and I can't outline all the analysis and research that has gone into it. With the flexibility and responsiveness comes a much greater workload in terms of monitoring and adapting and I'm working with the Grand to agree enhanced reporting and regular 'check-in' meetings to manage the process and get the best out of it. There are a lot of other strategic and market analysis factors around this which would take too long to go into here but which I am monitoring and planning against.

I acknowledge that this a 'first' for us this year and the element of risk is there. However, the tools to manage risk are also there. I have enough statistical information to estimate what our expectations on ticket sales should be and so can compare progress over time. This is an attempt to improve the financial performance of shows in response to the growing financial challenges to amateur societies.

Being honest, it's something we have to try to establish our optimum pricing strategy going forward.

I hope this helps the understanding for all.

So, wish me luck and I'll report back on how it goes!

Mr. Chris Thornton was able to confirm that we had signed up for Black Friday.

Mr. Andrew Holdsworth enquired as to whether the Grand Theatre are controlling ticket prices. This is how it appears to be.

His second question was as follows:-

The second concerns the decision taken to leave NODA. I am neither agreeing or disagreeing but would have thought that any decision should have been put to the membership to consider. I know that a lot of members are unhappy about the decision made.

The membership were informed by the Chair that this decision had been made for one or two reasons. Cost was one of the reasons because of the situation we found ourselves in. Also tickets had been booked for the Noda Rep to attend opening

night, and he did not appear, although we believed he did come to another performance. We changed our insurers also because we got a much cheaper quote than we had received from NODA. There is nothing to say that we will not re-join NODA. A full explanation had been given.

Jack Price felt that the membership should have been informed as he had heard from somewhere else.

Manda Fryer enquired as to whether we would be selling raffle tickets at the front of house during show week. The answer to this is no as we do not have enough help front of house to sell tickets as well as programmes.

Mr. Jack Price enquired as to why we had cancelled *The Wedding Singer*. First response was from the Secretary to say that the costs were spiralling. The cost of the scenery was going to be far more than we are paying for other shows. Mr Robert Baldock asked if we had paid out any money. £500 had been paid out to MTI, but we had managed to obtain a refund. He also enquired as to whether the Committee are looking out for shows. The answer to this is that the Committee are always looking for shows, but there are so many restrictions, especially as we perform at a larger theatre.

The Membership were informed that sponsorship forms are available and they were urged to try to obtain sponsorship if they could, or advertisements for our programme.

There being no other business, the Annual General Meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

SHOW ACCOUNT – “SINGING IN THE RAIN”

	2024	2023
	£	£
INCOME		
Blackpool Grand	42,964	80,690
Show Donations (sponsorship)	4,160	6,629
Ticket Sales (concert)	1,390	-
Programme Sales	2,921	599
Merchandise Sales	310	-
Score Monies	125	140
Friend of Grand	4,000	3,500
	<u>55,870</u>	<u>91,558</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Theatre Charges	17,900	26,803
Royalties	7,374	15,652
Scenery and Transport	7,340	6,313
Costumes	6,275	1,799
Rehearsal Charges (summer show)	4,716	1,490
Orchestra	3,600	4,600
Producer, Choreographer and Musical Director	2,300	1,800
Scores, Libs and Band Parts	320	1,477
Props, Make-up and Flowers	349	193
Promotion Cost and Advertising	5,669	2,683
Brochures and Programmes	1,146	1,479
Stage Crew Wages	6,022	5,987
Microphones and Sound	5,983	6,272
	<u>68,993</u>	<u>76,548</u>
(DEFICIT)/PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	<u><u>£(13,124)</u></u>	<u><u>£15,010</u></u>

BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS

GENERAL ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
INCOME		
Membership Fees	5,128	6,730
Sundry Income/Tea Money	1,324	-
Settlement	9,513	-
NODA	-	280
Bank Interest	393	62
	<u>16,358</u>	<u>7,072</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Insurance	554	567
NODA Expenses	-	852
Printing, Postage and Stationery	62	-
Miscellaneous	133	473
	<u>749</u>	<u>1,892</u>
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>£15,610</u>	<u>£5,180</u>

BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS

SOCIAL ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
INCOME		
Anniversary Ball	-	1,888
After Show Party	660	-
Afternoon Tea	-	217
	<u>660</u>	<u>2,105</u>
EXPENSES		
Anniversary Ball	<u>-</u>	<u>2,489</u>
PROFIT/(LOSS) FOR THE YEAR	<u>£660</u>	<u>£(384)</u>

BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 AUGUST 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
ASSETS		
Bank Account - Current	45,995	223
- Reserve	880	25,740
- 32 Day Account	10,253	-
- Cash in Hand	104	791
Deposit paid re Future Productions	1,300	5,356
Recoverable Deficit	-	23,276
	<u>£58,532</u>	<u>£55,386</u>

APPROPRIATION ACCOUNT

	2024 £	2023 £
Balance brought forward	55,386	35,580
Show Account	(13,124)	15,010
General Account	15,610	5,180
Social Account	660	(384)
Appropriation Account Carried Forward	<u>£58,532</u>	<u>55,386</u>

Adopted by all Members and Trustees 13/11/2024

Chairman

Jane Seddon

**ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT ON THE UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS
TO BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS**

As described on the balance sheet you have approved the accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 attached. In accordance with your instructions, we have compiled these unaudited accounts from the accounting records and information and explanations supplied to us.

John Potter & Harrison
Chartered Accountants
112/114 Whitegate Drive
Blackpool
FY3 9XH

BLACKPOOL OPERATIC PLAYERS
ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024