

Cahoots NI Limited

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Cahoots NI Limited
Charity registration number	NIC100710
Company registration number	NI042024
Principal office and registered office	Unit 3 Offices, 1st Floor Cityside Retail Park 100-150 York Street Belfast BT15 1WA

The trustees

George Bleeks
Padraig Coyle
Lynne Fleming
Rory Cowan
Aidan McGrath
Sarah Bell
Paula Cairns
Gillian McColgan

Key management personnel

Artistic Director - Paul McEneaney

Company secretary	Paul McEneaney
Auditor	Muir & Addy Chartered accountants & statutory auditor 427 Holywood Road Belfast BT4 2LT
Bankers	Ulster Bank Arches Retail Park Belfast BT5 4AF

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Structure, governance and management

Cahoots NI is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objectives and powers of the company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Cahoots NI continues to maintain good governance, using monthly organisational reports to record, monitor and review financial movement and company business on a monthly basis. Review of company policies is carried out as required and, apart from some updating to reflect changes to legislation, no major changes took place.

The organisation continues to expand the re-focus of direction set out in the previous reporting period in response to the prevailing economic climate, with emphasis on establishing new creative partnerships/co-productions to ensure continued growth, building a sustainable future and - while Northern Ireland remains the core audience - entry to the global marketplace with increased international touring.

The sustainability strategy involves -

- project led emphasis - reduction in core costs;
- re-focus on the large scale productions for which Cahoots NI has an established reputation;
- reduction in delivery of smaller projects such as ad hoc workshops;
- development of creative partnerships and co-productions to share resources;
- development of partnerships specifically to promote and realise extensive international touring;
- income from international touring will sustain the creation of new work for the local audience and in turn provide more product for touring;
- development of strategic, imaginative new operational practice conceived to grow capacity, sustainability and resilience, mitigating risk by enabling self contained experiences for several small groups at a time.

Objectives and activities

Cahoots NI is one of Northern Ireland's leading professional theatre companies. Since it was founded in 2001 it has been committed to producing original, high quality work for children, some of it staged in conventional theatre venues and some in purpose built or site specific locations. Its work concentrates on combining the visual potential of theatre with the age old popularity of magic and illusion. Cahoots NI continues to strive to be a major contributor to the NI children's arts experience through its productions and outreach programme. Each year Cahoots NI delivers an ambitious, innovative and challenging programme, and since its creation has interacted with 633,734 children and their families.

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Objectives and activities *(continued)*

The aims of Cahoots NI are -

- to produce high quality large scale work for children to our main stage spaces throughout Ireland and the network of international festivals specialising in childrens theatre;
- to produce work designed to fill the middle/large scale venues in the North of Ireland with a target audience of children under twelve accompanied by parents/carers;
- to capitalise upon the age old popularity of magic as an essential ingredient in the art of entertaining children;
- to use traditional and new techniques of magic and illusion to create theatre which is truly startling, where the complicit suspension of disbelief is unavoidably usurped by genuine astonishment;
- to use magic and illusion to fuel a theatrical experience which borrows from circus, dance and performance art;
- to maximise upon the unique 'live' nature of theatre so that the audience experience is as vivid, memorable and empowering as possible;
- to encourage appreciation of the arts and stimulate the artistic creativity of children;
- to present, promote, organise and manage plays of cultural and educational value for children;
- to encourage children to become actively involved in all aspects of the performing arts and provide training and educational facilities and services to this end;
- to coordinate with other providers of children's work in order to raise the profile and status of childrens theatre and ensure a strategic approach to its delivery;
- to develop working partnerships with venues and festivals so that the work is as fully integrated as possible into their annual programme.

Our Purpose

Through our theatrical magic, we inspire a sense of wonder, unlock imagination and nurture a love of the arts in children. In doing so, we create lifelong memories and joint family experiences that make a difference to their lives.

Our Mission

Protect and promote the right of all children to have access to high quality artistic experiences.

Our Vision

We seek to become a world leader in theatre for young audiences with our brand recognised for delivering innovative, exciting and high quality experiences whilst always reaching more children and young people.

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Achievements and performance

Cahoots NI continues to produce a body of world-class work over the financial period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023, strengthening the organisation's portfolio in their groundbreaking site specific work while beginning to reintroduce their large scale 'traditional' theatre productions post-pandemic. Each project is monitored and evaluated individually and evaluation reports are available on request.

The company's output delivered many opportunities for children and their families to experience high quality professional theatre, created specifically for them, presented in dynamic, accessible ways. In 2022-23 the charity engaged with 62,416 children and families in theatres, custom built, immersive sets and outdoor events across Northern Ireland and North America. In this period Cahoots gave 407 performances and issued 106 artist contracts.

In keeping with our core aim of making artistically excellent theatre accessible to the widest audiences, the company delivered work to children in Belfast who are marginalised by socio-economic disadvantage free of charge. Several local youth clubs and community members under the North Belfast Interface Network were invited to experience productions including 'The Ghost House' and 'Cinderella' free of charge. Cityside Retail Park staff and their families, many of whom are local to our North Belfast base, were also invited to a special preview performance of 'The Ghost House' free of charge.

In September 2022 Cahoots NI were shortlisted for several awards at the Arts & Business NI Awards, including Arts Organisation of the Year, Staff Engagement, Brand Storytelling and Creative Community Engagement (Winner), for their work with Savills/Cityside Retail Park and the New Sponsor Award for their work with Rushmere Shopping Centre. Savills also won the Special Recognition Award at the Property Management Marketing Conference in London in recognition of our partnership in March 2023.

In October 2022 Cahoots NI produced a radically innovative and artistically ambitious immersive experience, with a trailblazing walk-through production, 'The Ghost House'. The production proved a huge success and introduced theatre and dance to families who may not usually engage in the arts. 59% of feedback leaving audience members indicated they had never seen a Cahoots show before - a pleasantly expected decrease from the figure of 83% following 'The Grimm Hotel' the previous year, indicating increasing brand loyalty in our North Belfast base.

Also in October Cahoots NI produced a Halloween event at Hillsborough Castle, having previously created a small section of the popular annual event in 2021. This time Cahoots NI took on full ownership of all performance sections of the event, and feedback was hugely positive - "I have to say absolutely incredible. Loved every second!" Audience Member

In December 2022 Cahoots delivered 'The Elf's Christmas Emporium' at The Junction Antrim, in a custom converted disused retail unit. This was our fourth collaboration with the centre and feedback was highly positive - "such a lovely surprise and a really happy and magical event!" Audience Member

Cahoots NI also produced main stage musical 'Cinderella : The Midnight Princess' at the MAC, Belfast, their first large scale Christmas co-production since the COVID pandemic.

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Achievements and performance *(continued)*

The international touring programme which moved the charity into the global marketplace and provided the resources to create new work at home in Northern Ireland, continues to slowly re-emerge post COVID. Cahoots NI's 'Secrets of Space' went on a North American tour from February-May 2022, reaching almost 17,000 people. In January 2023, 'Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries' set off for its third North American tour. In the reporting period the show was seen by over 25,000 people and received hugely positive feedback from audiences and venue partners. Our relationship with our American agents Holden Arts and Associates continues to strengthen, with plans for future touring continuing into 23-24.

In March 2023 Cahoots NI's Artistic Director Paul Mc Eneaney visited the Segerstrom Center in Costa Mesa, California, one of North America's most respected multi-disciplinary cultural institutions. Orange County's largest non-profit arts organisation, the Center features six impressive venues ranging including a 3,000 seat theatre, a 2,000 seat concert hall, a 300 seat studio theatre and more. The Center have presented a number of our previous works and they are working towards commissioning a co-production with Cahoots NI for future delivery in Belfast and North America. Inspired by the Brother's Grimm tale 'The Musicians of Bremen', this is a funny but moving story about working together to overcome obstacles. The story features a band of characters, played by actor-musicians that have a distinct disliking for each other, until circumstances force them together to discover they have more in common than they ever knew. This type of co-production would be an exciting first for both parties.

Throughout the 22-23 period, Cahoots NI also held development sessions with contemporary dancers in Birmingham for 'The Ghost House' (7 artists engaged) and with Puppet Designer and Director Helen Foon for 'The Vanishing Elephant', which will be developed in Belfast before transferring to The New Victory Theater on the iconic 42nd Street in New York (5 artists engaged).

Overview of activities 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023:

No. Performances:	407
No. Audience	62,416
No. Artists:	106 artist contracts
Locations:	Northern Ireland (Belfast, Antrim, Hillsborough) & North America.

Artistic Programme -

Secrets of Space - Conclusion of USA tour of this engaging, educational piece which began in February 2022. Designed to encourage creative learning and understanding of STEAM concepts in an imaginative way. Three artists were engaged in the North American tour, and in this April - May section, the show was seen by 10,300 people in California, Las Vegas, New York, Pennsylvania and more. In total the tour was seen by 16,983 people.

The Imaginarium - In partnership with The Junction Retail & Leisure Park, Antrim, an inventive outdoor family performance in Antrim Castle Gardens as part of Garden Show Ireland. Supported by Arts & Business NI, the interactive piece was performed in Cahoots NI's circus tent. Feedback was highly positive and the performance was seen by 900 people.

The Ghost House - Cahoots NI's ground-breaking immersive theatre experience, performed in a custom built set in a previously disused 12,000 sq. foot warehouse for Halloween 2022, as part of the Belfast International Arts Festival. 3,617 people saw the performance (885 more than predecessor 'The Grimm Hotel' in 2021) and feedback was exceptionally positive. The project engaged 22 artists, as well as a team of volunteers.

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Achievements and performance *(continued)*

The Scarecrow Night Walk - Programmed by Historic Royal Palaces for Halloween at Hillsborough Castle following Cahoots NI's engagement in 2021. 18 Artists were employed, and over 5,227 people took part in the outdoor event. Feedback was hugely positive and Hillsborough Castle are keen to collaborate with Cahoots NI in 2023.

The Elf's Christmas Emporium - An immersive, interactive Christmas show for customers of The Junction Retail and Leisure Park, Antrim. This partnership, back by popular demand was created to bring seasonal cheer to schools and the local community using the shopping centre. Delivered in a custom converted, disused retail unit at The Junction, the project was extremely successful. The production engaged a total audience of 3,000 and employed 5 artists.

Cinderella - A Co-production with the MAC, Belfast, on their main stage for families at Christmas. The show was seen by 14,100 people and feedback was thoroughly positive. The large-scale musical production engaged 20 artists and positive partnerships with new collaborators.

Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries USA Tour - Seen by 25,272 people across North America between January-March 2023. The company of 2 cast and 2 crew members toured to 22 venues in this period, including stops in Florida, California, New Jersey, Texas, Michigan and Georgia. The tour continues into April 2023.

Financial review

The company is a non-profit making organisation. The results are set out in detail on page 13. The company had net incoming resources for the year of £48,118. The surplus of income over expenditure will be reinvested in the development of new projects to allow the charity to provide an extensive programme as the theatrical sector recovers from the impact of COVID-19.

Reserves policy

The directors have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the funding of the organisation. Unrestricted free reserves are currently £215,192, and this level of reserves would be sufficient to fund the organisation's running costs for a period of four months at current levels of spending. The directors consider this level of reserves to be adequate to meet the needs of the charity.

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Plans for future periods

In the year April 2023 - March 2024, Cahoots NI will offer -

- New, world class productions in theatres for families;
- Immersive, live performances;
- Spectacular outdoor/site specific performances;
- new writing for development and production;
- dynamic and unique outreach and education opportunities;
- international touring;
- established and new co-productions and partnerships;

Productions & Development

- Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries - Conclusion of North American Tour;
- The Musicians of Belfast (Working Title) - Development of new work;
- When We Were Wild - Performances of new work at the MAC, Belfast;
- The Vanishing Elephant - Development, Rehearsal and Belfast Community Engagement Previews;
- The Vanishing Elephant - Performances in the New Victory Theater, New York;
- Halloween at Hillsborough Castle - Outdoor event;
- Christmas at Cityside, Belfast, Development, Rehearsal and Interactive Production;
- Christmas at The Junction, Antrim - Interactive Production for schools and families;
- The University of Wonder & Imagination - 11 week North American Tour.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 6 September 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Paul McEaney
Charity Secretary