

**Cahoots NI Limited**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)**  
**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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 2024.

**Reference and administrative details**

<b>Registered charity name</b>	Cahoots NI Limited
<b>Charity registration number</b>	NIC100710
<b>Company registration number</b>	NI042024
<b>Principal office and registered office</b>	Unit 3 Offices, 1st Floor Cityside Retail Park 100-150 York Street Belfast BT15 1WA
<b>The trustees</b>	George Bleeks Padraig Coyle Lynne Fleming Rory Cowan Aidan McGrath Sarah Bell (Resigned 6 December 2023) Paula Cairns Gillian McColgan Marianne Crossle (Appointed 1 October 2023)

**Key management personnel**

Artistic Director - Paul McEneaney

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

# **Cahoots NI Limited**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 March 2024**

##### **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.

##### **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 680,831 children and their families.

# Cahoots NI Limited

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

##### **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 internationally;
- to produce work designed to fill the middle/large scale venues in the North of Ireland, including our home base performance space in Cityside Retail Park, with a target audience of children under twelve accompanied by parents/carers/teachers;
- 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 productions of cultural and educational value for children;
- to encourage children to become actively involved in all aspects of the performing arts;
- to coordinate with other providers of children's work in order to raise the profile and status of children's 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.

# **Cahoots NI Limited**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 March 2024**

##### **Achievements and performance**

Cahoots NI continues to produce a body of world-class work for children and families over the financial period 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024. The organisation's portfolio of site-specific and commercial partnership work continues to strengthen, with partners Cityside Retail & Leisure Park, The Junction Retail & Leisure Park and Historic Royal Palaces (Hillsborough Castle). Alongside this the post-pandemic reintroduction of their large scale 'traditional' theatre productions gains strength and momentum both locally (The MAC) and internationally (Off-Broadway and North America). Each project is monitored and evaluated individually, and evaluation reports are available on request.

The company's output in this period delivered many opportunities for children, their families and schools to experience high quality professional theatre created specifically for them, presented in dynamic, accessible ways. In 2023-24 the charity engaged with 47,097 children and families in theatres, custom built performance spaces and outdoor events across Northern Ireland and North America. In this period Cahoots NI gave 160 performances and issued 109 artist contracts.

In October 2023 Cahoots NI produced their most artistically ambitious theatre production to date - 'The Vanishing Elephant'. The production premiered off-Broadway, presented by the New Victory Theater, with an opening night reception hosted by the Northern Ireland Bureau. The production was named the 'Critic's Pick' in the New York Times - an incredible and rare honour for theatre for young audiences, hailing the production an 'alluring spectacle'. An audience member said, "...beautiful and sad and meaningful and powerful, the best theatre I've seen on stage in some time."

In the development of this piece, Paul Mc Eneaney travelled to Bangalore, India, (July 2023), to develop the theatrical movement language for the piece in collaboration with industry-leading Movement Artist Jayachandran Palazhy, Founder of Attakkalari Center for Movement Arts. Plans are in place to continue this collaborative partnership into 2024/25.

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, community members and Cityside Retail Park staff and their families, many of whom are local to our North Belfast base, were invited to experience productions including 'The Vanishing Elephant' free of charge.

In November 2023, Cahoots NI were shortlisted for several awards at the Arts & Business NI Awards, including Arts Organisation of the Year, Creative Community Engagement (with the Junction Retail Park) and Creative Communications (with Savills/Cityside Retail Park).

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 strengthen post COVID. Cahoots NI's 'The University of Wonder & Imagination LIVE' went on a North American tour reaching 26,018 people. The show received hugely positive feedback from audiences and venue partners. One audience member said, "I, as an adult, had as much of a blast as the kids did. The energy and creativity was phenomenal." Our relationship with our American theatrical agents Holden Arts and Associates continues to strengthen, with plans for future touring continuing into 2024-25.

# Cahoots NI Limited

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

##### **Achievements and performance** *(continued)*

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, California, one of North America's most respected multi-disciplinary cultural institutions, commissioned a co-production with Cahoots NI for future delivery in Belfast and North America. Cahoots NI's Artistic Director Paul Mc Eneaney made a number of visits to the Center to develop and cast the co-production, which will feature a diverse company of both Northern Irish and American artists. Inspired by the Brothers 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. The production was developed in September 2023 in Cahoots' theatre space with the Team from the Seegerstrom Center in attendance. Free of charge community previews will be delivered in Belfast in June 2024 and the production will open in California in January 2025.

Overview of activities 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024:

No. Performances: 160

No. Audience: 47,097

No. Artists: 109 artist contracts

Locations: Northern Ireland (Belfast, Antrim, Hillsborough), New York and Various North America locations.

Artistic Programme -

**Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries USA Tour** - Conclusion of a USA tour of this engaging, educational piece which began in January 2023. Seen by 8,074 people across North America in the reporting period and by over 33,000 across the total 13-week tour. The company of two cast and two crew members toured to six venues in the reporting period, including stops in California, Washington, and Oregon. Feedback from audiences and venues was very positive: "Your show was our highest-attended Education show this season. We saw lots of smiles and heard lots of 'thank you! that was great' as they were leaving. Thanks for coming and we look forward to seeing you all again!" (Mount Baker Theater, Washington)

**When We Were Wild** - Performances of new work at the MAC, Belfast from the 15th-18th June, seen by 630 people. Feedback was extremely positive "Absolutely amazing, possibly the best 45 mins of theatre ever. I had no idea it was going to be so emotive!" - Audience Member

**The Vanishing Elephant** - The show was seen by 280 people in Cahoots NI's free community previews in Belfast and then by 4,148 people in The New Victory at Stage 42, off-Broadway in New York. Featuring themes of migration, displacement, friendship and humanity's complex relationship with the natural world, the story is told through the eyes of a young boy from Bengal and his best friend, Janu, an Indian Elephant. The large-scale production engaged 21 artists from around the world, including India, America, Austria, Northern Ireland and UK. The show was named the 'Critic's Pick', in the New York Times, who hailed it an 'alluring spectacle'.

**The Scarecrow Night Walk** - Programmed by Historic Royal Palaces for Halloween at Hillsborough Castle following Cahoots NI's engagements in 2021 and 2022. Twenty artists were employed, and over 6,600 people took part in the outdoor event. Despite torrential weather affecting attendance, feedback was positive - "Enjoyed a third Halloween with Cahoots NI, thank you!!" - Audience Member

# Cahoots NI Limited

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

##### **Achievements and performance** *(continued)*

**Santa's Secret Showdown** - An interactive Christmas show at the Junction Retail and Leisure Park, Antrim. This partnership, back by popular demand, sought to bring seasonal cheer to schools and the local community. Delivered in a custom converted retail unit, the project was extremely successful, engaging a total audience of 1,287 and employing 14 artists. "Brilliant fun, something we were all able to enjoy together!"- Audience Member

**The University of Wonder & Imagination LIVE** - North American tour of a piece originally created on Zoom in COVID-stricken 2020, and now adapted as a live stage show - a significant success story for the creativity shown by Cahoots NI in the pandemic years. The show toured for three months, reaching 26,018 people. Lone Tree Arts Center in Colorado sent a message to Cahoots NI's theatrical agents Holden and Arts Associates to say "It was so, so, so good. We want them back whenever we can have them. If something else they're doing is coming, please let us know, we are in!"

##### **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 £51,635. The surplus of income over expenditure will be reinvested in the development of new projects to allow the charity to provide an extensive programme of work which is increasing in scale and international renown.

##### **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 £157,439, 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.

During the year transfers were made into several designated funds from the general fund, as detailed in note 16. The directors designate these funds for specific productions and activities to ensure that adequate financial resources are available for the planned activities of the Charity.

##### **Plans for future periods**

In the year April 2024 - March 2025 Cahoots NI will offer -

- new, world class productions in large scale theatres;
- spectacular site-specific performances;
- new writing for development and production;
- dynamic and unique outreach and education opportunities;
- international touring;
- established and new local and international co-productions and partnerships;
- projects that cross artform boundaries;

# **Cahoots NI Limited**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 March 2024**

##### **Plans for future periods *(continued)***

###### **Productions & Development**

- The Musicians of Bremen LIVE - development, rehearsals and free preview performances for Community Groups and schools in Cityside Retail Park Belfast, June 2024.
- The Vanishing Elephant - performances in the Grand Opera House, Belfast as part of Belfast International Arts Festival, October 2024. The flagship event of the prestigious Festival, and the cover image of their brochure.
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice - a spectacular Christmas production in Cityside Retail & Leisure Park, Belfast - Development, rehearsal and performances for schools and families in December 2024.
- The Musicians of Bremen LIVE - performances of the international co-production in the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, California, January/February 2025.
- The Vanishing Elephant 10 venue North American Tour - an initial East Coast tour of this large scale production in February/March 2025 followed by a run in London's prestigious Southbank Center in May 2025, an exciting first for the company.
- Development of 'Janu' - a new non-verbal puppetry and dance piece in collaboration with Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts based in Bangalore, India.

##### **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.