

TRUSTEES REPORT 2022

Belfast Operatic Company,
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The aim of the Society over the years has been to provide an avenue for members and the general public to perform in quality concerts and musical productions through the province. The company aims to educate both its members and the public, through production of musical theatre works, often new to the province. Ordinarily the company performs one major musical show each year and various concerts for the general public.

I am delighted to report that, whilst the AGM this year had been delayed until this month, this was due to much happier circumstances than the previous year - that we had a very busy season and a full events calendar!

We began the year with an invitation for the company to perform an outdoor concert in Magheramorne Estate, to an audience who for most would not have experienced live music in close to two years. For many of our members, the rehearsals leading up to this, and the event itself, would've been the first time singing in a room together with others. A glorious day in a stunning estate in an outdoor setting, the sun shone and the atmosphere was electric, and the sell-out event was a success for both company and venue - a real memory for the BOC history books, and Janes Kitchen kindly supplied the company with food afterwards.

The committee also made the decision to continue with planning for our production of 'A Christmas Carol', despite uncertainties and lack of clarity on part of the NI Executive office in relation to theatre. The show was cast and rehearsals began with a team of Wilfie Pyper, Timothy Bell and Adam Darcy at the helm. While the road to the Opera House was no easy task, the uncertainty continued with a new fire to fight each week with regards to Covid, however much to our relief, we eventually got the news that the theatre would be opening and the show could go ahead. Sales continued at a steady rate with a dedicated marketing team putting the work in behind the scenes. With a strict set of Covid protocols, rehearsals continued through the winter months with an ambitious sized cast, resulting in a successful production both financially and artistically. Finally BOC were back on the Opera House stage!

In the midst of this, plans for our annual Christmas concert 'A Night of Christmas Music and Song' were put in place, and the company welcomed the return of 1st Old Boys for the evening. Adam Darcy took the baton, with Stephen Cairns taking the reigns of the band. We also held a bucket collection for our charity partner, raising almost £5000.

That would bring us on to the next project, the committee agreed to take on another outside the box idea in 'A Night At Gatsby's'. This would see the company take to the "stage" of the Hilton Hotel in an immersive production, inviting audiences to join one of Gatsbys infamous parties. With a script written and directed by Secretary Gary Redpath, an immense amount of choreography and movement led by Kirsten Magee, and musical direction from Adam Darcy, the production set out to broaden BOCs horizons in terms of a different performance style, the show was in the round - also in a new venue - and a foray into dinner theatre.

The ensemble in particular bought in to the sheer amount of movement asked of them, and rose to the challenges presented. Bespoke productions such as this allow a wide scope of creativity, whilst incorporating something for everyone through the writing and development process ticking a lot of boxes in terms of company satisfaction. Though the process was still fraught with Covid protocols, concerns and cases, we staged a completely original idea in a new venue, and entertained two audiences who very much bought into the idea of immersive theatre, mostly coming dressed up, singing and dancing along to music from Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish and Meatloaf, all in a 1920's setting.

Following Gatsby, the company jumped straight in to rehearsals for 'Masquerade', our much anticipated 60th Anniversary concert. The idea of this was that it would be a celebratory concert in a unique venue, Stormonts Parliament Buildings. The event was kindly supported by Naomi Long. Adam pulled together a programme of music from 60 years of shows and music featuring everything from Gilbert and Sullivan right up to our next foray, 'Disney's Hunchback Of Notre Dame' to provide audiences with nostalgia and enjoyment, as well as allowing the company to perform styles which they may not get to do so often these days with moving trends in music. A thoroughly entertaining evening for those in the audience, and a great sing for those participating - this brought our performance year to an end.

Shortly after this, HUNCHBACK auditions were scheduled, and the new production team of Kerry Rodgers, Adam Darcy and Timothy Bell got to work with casting our next Opera House show, which will take to the stage in March 2023. The team were delighted with the sheer number of members who put themselves forward for audition. Rehearsals began in



September with a mix of music and floor, and the show promises to be something unique and challenging for the company. The company also held a family fun day at Crawfordsburn Scout Centre, providing BBQ and activities for all in attendance.

Throughout the year the company held various fundraisers and events - Carol Sykes organised a collection for Ukraine which produced several car loads of much needed supplies, Naomi Smyth abseiled for our charity partner Friends of the Cancer centre. The summer also saw some happy occasions, with a number of marriages amongst the ranks, and we wish those members all the best as they proceed to navigate married life.

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the loss of member Marion Taylor, only a few weeks after the loss of her husband. Marion was always heavily featured in the life of the company, only ever missing one show in her time with us, and her absence will be strongly felt. Our thoughts rest with the family, and with any others who have lost loved ones over the past few years.

Looking ahead to the future of BOC, we are of course planning one of our most ambitious projects yet in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame', which promises a new style for the company in terms of the acting, but also one of the largest choral and ensemble pieces we will ever tackle.

However, not to rest on our laurels, we have secured the rights to another very exciting show for 2024, a title which I am confident will be both enjoyable for company members to perform, challenging both musically and physically, and continue to push the boundaries of what BOC do, as well as ticking the important box of being 'sellable'. More on this at a later stage.

In closing I would like to thank the outgoing committee for their hard work and support this year - and in particular extend my thanks to Carole McClure and the production teams for their stellar work throughout Covid-19, ensuring members were kept as safe as possible through all of the above. What a delight it was to return to a newly refurbished Grand Opera House, and to return to performing to sold out houses. Long may it continue!

Financial review

In accordance with our accounts, this years show sold well and was budgeted accordingly, resulting in a profit. The committee proceeded with caution in all financial decisions given losses from previous years, and aimed to build on the financial success of last year. As a rule of thumb, we aim to add funds in to an account as a rainy day fund. As always, the risk of putting on shows from a financial point of view is high, a sizable budget is required to maintain standards at the Grand Opera House or similar professional venues.

Trustees

As nominated at the AGM, the trustees are advised of the Commission's public benefit requirement guidance, and the guidance on being a trustee. Decisions are taken by the committee with this guidance in mind. This includes management of any potential conflicts of interest, health and safety policies and issues, and risk assessments.

Signed by Secretary:

