

Theatre Managers report for AGM 2024

If I was writing this as a Chris Lane end-of-year report, I would say I've had another great year. Following on from the fun of creating the Equus set and horses heads, this year I got to create a multi-level set with trussing bridge and led-light steps for Company, a full-on adventure playground for pirate and lost boys and fire canons at the audience! for Pan, and got to help create contemporary sets for Big Spirit and Juniors with the latest in lighting fixtures.

It just shows what wonderful opportunities there are within our theatre when you choose to get involved, whatever your discipline.

What's the relevance of this?

The first two showed the flexibility of the space we own and the experience we have gained in our level of inventory of stock we hold. Peter Pan just about used all the platforms, legs and rails we own and managed to maintain a high audience capacity while delivering an exciting space to perform in. This achieved a recording breaking income for a show, which helps support all the shows throughout the year which can then be more challenging ones but maybe not such an audience draw. This is important tradition we continue to uphold.

Our investment in stock helps us to maintain a high level of production standard by recouping the cost over multiple shows even if one show bares the cost initially by returning a lower profit. This is the advantage of owning our own space, over performing in external theatres.

Continual investment in capital items in future will ensure we stay at the forefront of design for shows.

The second two shows above illustrate the recent advances made in technology and the benefit of investments.

As of last September, fluorescent lamps are being phased out, they are still available but not being manufactured. This means we are having to replace them with the current technology which is LED at the moment. We are continuing to do this around the theatre on an attrition basis as a fitting fails or the tubes give out. This is allowing us the spread the cost as we earn income rather than a large-scale replacement all at

once.

There are certain areas that will need a swap out all at once, the biggest being the auditorium, which I am exploring and costing at present ready for the inevitable.

The reason all these points above all come together is that the stage light fittings I borrowed for Laramie and Midsummers' Nights Dream, might be the future of LED development or they may just remain another variation of the list of fittings available, we have to wait and see.

The reason these fittings are different is that they are battery powered. We have got used to LED lamps being quoted as say 10x more efficient than filament, and that is a big saving, but they still use that energy at the time you want it illuminated and that can be at peak rates (especially for us), the reason battery powered lamps are different is that although they still need a mains power lead to them to charge up this can be down at a time of your choosing.

So it might be that if this form of technology takes off, it is not so relevant how efficient the LED fitting is, as to what rate you can negotiate for your off-peak electricity for the time you choose to charge the fittings, typically overnight.

I will be sounding out the industry over the next year to see which way the trend is going as this can significantly determine our form of investment in the general light fittings we choose as well as the stage lighting fittings which will also need replacement shortly, as the concessions of filament lamps currently in place for theatre will not last for ever.

Stage Lighting manufacturers are already conscious of this financial burden that schools, uni's and theatres like ours will have to bear shortly, and are designing ranges of lanterns that will be more scaled and affordable than the units produced for large theatre and stadiums. So at least the voice of theatre is being listened to in this country and impending impact on us understood.

So this year coming will be one of continual replacement on that front.

Change and investment is coming so we just need to be ready to make the best choices when it is required.

The theatre has been supported by its wonderful team of helpers again, Oksana has

continued with us on cleaning, Amanda has taken on the refreshing of many areas inside plus many other jobs, and Keith Swainston looking after the exterior grounds. We thank them all for their continued great efforts. Thanks also to members of the set and backstage team who have assisted with improvements around the theatre outside of their production duties.

I have managed to find a method of refurbishing the red auditorium chairs that makes them more robust for now and easily changeable in future when the untouched ones fail. When I have finished the last few of the broken chairs it will give us a stock of over 180, which means that we can consider storing row D in future if we want for shows and the potential increase in ticket sales at 181 seats.

We had the flooring repaired in the studio auditorium without complete replacement, and the team will be returning shortly to repair the section around the bins storage area.

In the first full week of August we will be having the tarmac replaced at the front of the theatre to improve our image on arrival. I will ask anyone without a direct need to use QMT parking spaces not to occupy them during this week to allow staff doing essential deliveries and collections. There will also be new lining and notices to accompany this as well.

Chris Lane