Theatre manager 2023 AGM report

We have seen another year with many changes. As reported by others, one of the biggest being the recent renovation of the foyer and bar area. This has been welcomed as a great improvement for the customer experience on entering the theatre.

World events have seen another change for us, as we found a cleaner to replace Liz in the form of Lyliya, who due to these events left her own country of Ukraine to work in this country. She was a family lawyer in her country, but as a theatre-lover asked us if she could help out by cleaning whilst here. As circumstances unfolded for her she had to return to her country, but she introduced us to Oksana, also from Ukraine, who was already cleaning for a commercial company but had time to split between the two of us. So we welcome Oksana into our fold. Because Oksana cannot cover all the occasions we need cleaning sessions, mainly weekends, our own Zoe has offered to fill in the required times. We thank them both for the great work they are doing.

Another change and good fortune too has been to enlist our own Amanda on part time basis to cover the role of caretaker/premises co-ordinator. This was the role that Keith Warren was developing, that was not just taking care of day-to-day matters in the theatre but to become the interface with outside bookings and users of the theatre.

This is an important role as it centralises all the elements that lead to and follow, a booking in the theatre, from the first show-round for customers to the preparation of the space and the liaison with other teams to ensure the support required for the booking. Even daytime lettings require supervising to ensure they are prepared following on from previous use of the space.

To help with these income streams and allow us to host these events regularly, which give us a greater visibility in the community, I ask that everyone continues to tidy up after their use of a space, mainly in returning tables chairs etc. to storage positions and the clearing of any rubbish. This helps Amanda and the team enormously.

By centralising the bookings with one person and that person having a good knowledge of our own requirements for rehearsal and performances it leads to a much more streamlined operation for everyone.

To compliment, and mirror, the work done in the foyer for customers, we are continuing to upgrade facilities backstage as well.

This August sees the banning of fluorescent lamps in UK and EU, so the replacement of these lamps will be no longer possible when stocks dry up. We will working through the theatre, so that when a fitting either fails, or cannot find lamps, to fit we exchange them out for LED equivalents. This has already started, and a number of areas already have LED, but we have many small rooms that will be effected in future. LED is generally more efficient than Fluorescent so there is a long term saving once installed.

We are also upgrading the backstage video relay with an extensive system that will cover both performance spacings. It will be controlled at the stage managers position in the main wings to ensure privacy is maintained. It will relay the video from the stage to dressing rooms, stage managers position and lighting boxes. It will also, on-demand, relay to the foyer for latecomers and the bar for monitoring. The dressing rooms and green room will be able to select either stage to watch and it will be possible in future to record and stream the video if needed.

The system will also use Infra-red transmitters so that backstage teams can ‘see in the dark’ and so better judge when the stage is clear and when actors are ready onstage in position. It also has a secondary zoom feature which will allow us to choose closer sections of the stage to see action more clearly when required e.g. an MD counting in a musical number or an actor entering through a door in the dark.

The video previously was of VGA quality, the best at the time, but now is relayed in HD quality. Due to the world shortage of components is has been, and is still, difficult to get equipment in short time periods, but we now have all the components to install this over the summer.

A temporary use of the system has already been trialled during company where we fed video for the stage to the Youth Wing, for the band, and in reverse relayed the MD to the auditorium for the actors cueing.

We have other enhancements we want to incorporate as well, to improve the workflow and quality of putting on a production, and will be discussing this with the committee in future. The purchase of a new digital sound desk in recent years proved its worth during Company as there were many elements to the sound requirements that could only be installed and controlled in a sensible time scale with a desk like the one we have now.

We look forward to another exciting season of shows and a solid team of support in all departments to see them through, I will not name individuals, as the support this year from *everyone* has been enormous, and the proof has been in the incredible standard of productions this year and that fact that we can incorporate a foyer refurbishment and follow it with a Gala night and not even break our stride! Thank you everyone.

Chris Lane