

Wells Operatic Society Limited
Minutes of the AGM and Members Social Evening
Friday 31st March 2023

7:30pm

Reception and drinks in the theatre bar

8:00pm

AGM held in the theatre auditorium. 29 full members attended and President of the society, Cllr Stuart Cursley Mayor of Wells.

Chairman, Ken Edmonds, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1) Apologies for Absence

Bobby Bass, Penny Bonnetti, Lisa Cope, Moira and Norman Cowell, Lois Harbison, Natalie Hope, Adam and Emma Lanfranchi, Lucy Plant, Annette and David Papworth, Elisha Webster, Glyn and Julie Webster.

2) Minutes of the 2022 AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 25th March 2022 have been shared with all society members and have been available on the theatre website for the past 11 months.

3) Matters Arising

None: The minutes from the 2022 AGM are agreed as a true record.

Proposer: Mike Scammell

Secunder: Sandra Marshall

KE will sign the minute book in due course.

4) Chairman's Report: Ken Edmonds

This is the 121st year of Wells Operatic Society Limited's existence. The society is registered at Companies House (registered number 1377655) and is also a registered charity (number 276308).

This last year has been our first complete year of productions since the pandemic with *Big Fish* in May, *And Then There Were None* in September, *The Wizard of Oz* in December and *Forget-Me-Knot* earlier this month, which Tom will report on later.

This year was not without some sad news as we lost another long-standing member of the theatre in Terry Delaney who passed away over the summer. He was a leading light of the theatre for many years taking leading roles in numerous productions and whilst he and I never shared a stage he continued to be involved with the theatre on the committee serving as the publicity officer for several years. He will be missed.

Besides the small matter of putting on shows, the committee has had plenty of other business to keep us occupied too. This building needs constant attention and among the improvements and changes made we have installed a new permanent billboard in the car park. The car park gate has been moved which has allowed us to keep the gate shut which has curtailed a lot of the people parking who shouldn't have been.

At our open day in July, we attracted a lot of new visitors to the theatre and the costume sale raised more than £950 which considering it was all the stuff we didn't want was quite remarkable, so thank you to everyone involved in sorting all the costumes both before and after the open day, that was a mammoth task but well worth it.

Among our other purchases we now have a brand new all singing all dancing sound desk. We received a very generous donation of £10,000 from a trust overseeing the estate of Alan Powell who used to live in Wells and wanted some of his legacy to be used for an arts project in the city. This we have used to purchase a significant number of new LED lights for the stage along with two follow spots and a new lighting board.

Following Richard's departure, we needed a new licensee for the bar and Emma Lanfranchi has taken on that role for which we are very grateful. We are also very pleased to welcome Julie Webster as our new box office manager, a role she has been doing for the past couple of productions.

Over the past year we have been running a trial whereby more than 6,000 flyers are sent out with Wells Voice for each production, and so far, we think this has been having a very positive effect on ticket sales and so we are continuing with this for the coming year. We also invited anyone wishing to direct a show here to put forward a proposal to us in February and because of that we have the next two years' shows planned. It is fantastic that we have so many people wanting to put shows on here.

This coming year is looking like being just as busy. We are planning a variety of works including updating the front of house toilets, putting gates across the Chamberlain Street entrance, insulating the roof above the workshop, new heaters for the dressing rooms and green room, re-roofing what was the divers hut so it can be used by us for extra storage and a new monitor system for backstage which can also be linked to the rehearsal room. To this end I got to see some parts of the theatre I'd never been in before last weekend as Nick, Adam and I were pulling cables through various roof spaces in preparation to have this system running for Avenue Q.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has served on the committee this year, because without them this group could not exist. So, to Pauline, Graham, Adam, Emma, Liz, Mike, Jo, Glynn, Tom, Bobby, Natalie, Caroline, and Lucy, thank you.

Now to something a little bit different, it is my honour to announce the awarding of Life Membership to two long-standing members of the society. They have both made a significant contribution to the society over many years both on and off stage - Norman Cowell and David Papworth.

As always, we need more volunteers for the bar, bar supervisors and front of house, particularly for big shows such as pantomime and musicals when a lot of the usual volunteers are on stage. Please remember that the Society cannot function without people volunteering to take on some extra duties whatever they may be, and it can't just be left to a few people to do everything. If anyone would like to get more involved with any aspect of the theatre, please see a member of the committee who will be delighted to help. We have a wonderful theatre here which offers friendship and laughter, among like-minded people, a community of all ages and ability, passionate about drama and all sharing a love of theatre.

5) Treasurer's Report for 2022 calendar year and Appointment of Accountants

It is recommended that Webb & Co remain as our accountants and business advisers.

Proposer: Pauline Perrin

Secunder: Ken Edmonds

2022 was a very successful year for the theatre as audiences, happy to leave Covid restrictions behind, came to support our productions in increasing numbers. Our first production was a programme of two one-act plays, Blood on the Canvas and Rude Awakenings followed by our usual Spring musical Big Fish which we had originally intended to stage in 2021. Ticket sales were good, and they made a profit more than £2000 and £2,800 respectively. In the Autumn we turned to Agatha Christie's And Then There Were None, another production that had been intended for 2021. This proved to be a huge success with our audiences making a magnificent profit of £8,200. The Wizard of Oz at Christmas again this proved to be very successful giving us a profit of over £10,000. Subscriptions, bar sales and theatre hire have continued to make valuable contributions to the running costs of the theatre.

Our total income for the year was just over £69,147 which included a £10,000 grant that was restricted to improving our lighting system. Our total expenditure was £49,157 giving us a net income of £19,900. At the beginning of 2023 we had just over £60,000 in the bank and another £41,800 in our COIF Deposit account. Full details of the accounts are on the Home Page of the website and members are encouraged to read them.

I commend the accounts to the meeting and propose that they be adopted

Proposer: Pauline Perrin

Secunder: Sharon Edmonds

6) Members' Reports

Show report: Tom Creswick on behalf of Adam Lanfranchi

We did it! Our first whole year of productions since COVID! A lot of important things have happened in the last year. We've had three Prime Ministers, COVID has started to become a distant memory and closer to home we celebrated 120 years since our society was founded.

We have had a good variety of shows, with new and returning directors.

Starting in May 2022, we had the larger than life musical 'Big Fish' from first time director Niamh McGrogan. Moving on to September, we had 'And Then There Were None', the theatre's first ever Agatha Christie play. I personally would like to thank everyone who helped bring this play together from the cast, crew and production team.

Tom added that the production was a big success and has won the NODA 'District Achievement Award' and has been nominated for the South West best production award. This is up against 6 other plays throughout the whole of the South West, and a small group will be going to Plymouth for the awards evening.

Christmas came around with The Wizard of Oz directed by Bobby Bass. A HUGE show on a tiny stage but it was pulled off nicely and one they should be proud of. To round the year off we had the comedy Forget-Me-Knot directed by Ken Edmonds. Truth be told I can't remember much about the play, which just shows the lengths the production team went to make it as immersive as possible. Well done to everyone involved. As a society this year is certainly one to be proud of and demonstrates the diversity of productions we can produce. What better way to celebrate 120 years!

Looking ahead we have Avenue Q directed by Mr Barlow at the end of April. If you like swearing and naughty puppets this is truly the show for you. This is followed by The Tempest in September by first time director Jonathan Sansam. Finally, we have our pantomime Puss in Boots written by Vicky Orman and directed by Glynn Webster.

Moving on to next year, the rights are bought and shows booked in so we can officially reveal our 2024 line-up. March will be The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams directed by our resident Ozian guard, Kevin. Next year's spring show will be Sister Act directed by our theatre diva himself, Tom. September will be Agatha Christie's Witness for the Prosecution directed by yours truly (Adam). And last, but not least, December will be Nativity! The Musical, directed by Sharon Edmonds. We hope you like this line-up and agree that there is something there for everyone to enjoy!

I will end this speech with a plea for assistance. For the theatre to continue making brilliant plays and musicals, it requires hard work both on and off stage. Please, if you can, try and find ways to help across all the areas. Front of house, backstage, set building, costumes, the lot. In an ideal world, each show should have a predominantly different production team. Try and bring new people into the society who might have the skills we are looking for. Help where and when you can, and I look forward to seeing another year of brilliant productions.

Social Report: Caroline Hoare

We have been pleased to be able to start holding social events after our enforced separation due to Covid. We started in September with a gathering to take a new group photograph to celebrate our 120th year as a society. This was followed with the highly enjoyable return of the Carnival Night social evening in November, and a Christmas Carols evening on 23rd December, with thanks to Phoebe Lynch for providing the music and leading the singing. We are now making plans for a summer social event, with the idea being to hold a family friendly picnic and social event, afternoon, and early evening, rather than a more traditional dinner dance. More details to follow. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions of social events that they would like to see happen, please let me know.

7) President's Address

Mayor of Wells, Stuart Cursley thanked the society for welcoming him and noted how the theatre continues to play an important part in the cultural life of the city. He was impressed that the society has been running for 121 years and noted he has lived in Wells all his life and remembers the theatre building being a school originally. Mayor Cursley also commented that it was great that the organisation has come through the pandemic with strength, and he looks forward to a successful future for the society.

8) Election of officers and Committee

There has been one nomination for each of the following posts on the committee:

POST	NOMINATION
Chair	Ken Edmonds
Vice-chair	Adam Lanfranchi
Treasurer	Pauline Perrin
Secretary	Liz Carey
Publicity Officer	Tom Creswick
Stage Representative	Graham Brown

There have been 7 nominations for the positions of Committee members:

Bobby Bass, Caroline Hoare, Natalie Hope, Jo Hartley-Scammell, Mike Scammell, Dave Palmer, Glynn Webster

It is proposed that all committee member nominations are agreed.

Proposer: Doreen Grant

Secunder: Kate Lynch

All were elected unanimously.

9) Date of Next committee meeting

Monday 17th April 2023 at 7:30pm

10) Any Other Business

There have been no other issues raised in writing to the secretary before the meeting and no additional questions.

Meeting closed 8:26pm