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**Minutes of
The Leicester Amateur Operatic Society
Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 4th December 2018**

Present: Lisa Heath, Jade Afflick, Shelley Henry, Kat Rooke, Nade Franklin, Chris Hall, Liz Kavanagh, Vaughan Ashcroft, Jackie Oddy, Nick Cox, Leeann Rana, David Bartram, Pip Illife, Jodie Blowfield, Nicole Lloyd, Anna Smith, Michael Christmas, Scott O Tomkins, Lianne O Connor, Sally Bruton, Kate Goodall, Mike Walker, Sarah Barton, Matt Barton, Beth Sly, Jack Ardron.

Apologies: Katie Ross, Samantha Bale, Debbie Longley, Gillian Kitchner, Chris Tarry, Charlotte Beaver

Agenda Item	Summary
Previous Minutes	Jackie opens the meeting at 7:36pm and welcomed all members to the AGM our life member: Chris Hall and our new members: Ollie, Chris, Ellen, Joe, Jodie, Imogen, Michael, Hannah, James, Rhea, James, Anna. The minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting were proposed by Leanne Rana and seconded by Liz Kavanagh



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Chairmans Report

Earlier this year the we were just about to sign on the dotted line to perform Legally Blonde this year when the offer came from MTI to have the opportunity to do Chitty in what was originally going to be its only year of release to non-professional companies

Was it too good an opportunity to miss?
Or too big a risk to take?

We were already potentially gambling on a theatre that might not have the technical capability to support a production on this scale.

I don't mind admitting that it caused a lot of debate on the Committee – and in the end had to go to a vote.

We ultimately made the decision, a difficult decision, to go with it.

On reflection, I'm not the one who should be the judge of whether or not it was the right decision.

Artistically I believe we did a really great job with a strong, well-judged cast. Lots of creative artistic decisions were made, had to be made, due to the relatively small size of the cast and the large lack of men!

Commercially, Vaughan will kill me if I steal his thunder again so my lips are sealed.

Technically – to quote Delores in Sister Act – “There are no words”. What I'd like to acknowledge and pay tribute to is how well the company of the show rallied together, against almost insurmountable sound issues to show the utmost professionalism and being the epitome of the old adage that the show must go on.

And thank you to the production team for providing the moral support that the company needed.

So what have we learned? Those of you who've been members for a while will know I like to talk about balance, yin and yang. The theatre wasn't ready – one of the consortium directors actually said to me, Nick and Vaughan after opening night “I wish we had another week”. But they will be ready next time. We've already had post show discussions about 2019 and know that we can bring in our own technical people if we wish to and work is already ongoing to source the right people.

Having children in the cast was a huge challenge – we've learned that we need to be better with fulfilling our safeguarding responsibilities. At this point I need to acknowledge the work done by Lisa to co-ordinate nearly 100 applicants, liaise with the parents of the 72 children that came to the workshop, and then co-ordinate the individual licensing of the 26 children who were selected for the cast.



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We've learned that some rehearsal venues don't work for our needs and we've done something about that.

We've learned that marketing – the right kind of marketing at the right time - is critical. My thanks go to Pip for the sterling work she did to really be creative with our marketing.

It's been one of the toughest years that I can remember – for everyone involved in the production of Chitty and I'm really proud of what we achieved, against all odds.

It's been said many times over recent years how much the membership would like the stability of knowing when and where we're going to perform and what the show choice will be. I've spoken before about the challenge of having to negotiate year on year during my tenure as Chairman with a succession of different producers at Curve and more recently the Haymarket Consortium. We're pleased to be able to tell you that, as far as Haymarket are concerned, we now have a standing arrangement to be in the main house in June every year.

You will recall at last year's AGM we were fully prepared to appear vulnerable and we asked all of the members what you want from your membership. A lot of what was requested we haven't been able to deliver on due to the demands of this year's show for everyone on the Committee whether we were performing or not. But let me say that the Committee is fully committed to the ongoing evolution of this Society and more will be said about that later on in the agenda.

Finally I have an appeal, actually two. We're all here tonight as we have a personal interest in the future of the Society. There is a dependency on all of us to do our bit to support the Society. I've spoken about some of the work that the Committee put in and I'd appeal to you all to consider that it doesn't necessarily need to be a Committee member who takes actions like organising a social event, creating marketing opportunities, bringing tea and coffee to rehearsal.

My 2nd appeal is a financial one. A lot was said about how much better it would have been to have had a pianist to support Steve actually being able to conduct earlier on in the rehearsal process. This is a fair comment but an expensive ask. Vaughan is very, very protective of the Society's money and has always made prudent, conservative decisions on our behalf. Having said that, Chitty was a really expensive show – the car alone cost more than some sets do and we ran out of money to pay the bills for Chitty (and the upfront ones for Shrek) before the show started. Vaughan and I personally subsidised the Society. What would have made a significant difference is if all membership subs and show fees had been paid when they were due and this will be an expectation clearly set to everyone. So.....before you go tonight, get your mobiles out, go on your banking app and pay your membership subs.



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**Musical
Directors
Report**

Sorry I can't be with you all tonight - I am genuinely busy but I can't help but wonder if any of you think I do this just to see if Jackie's impression of me (as she reads this verbatim!) gets better each year?

So, I thought Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was going to be a piece of cake; with its um-cha accompaniments and its traditional book musical harmonies. I couldn't have underestimated it enough. They have dragged this right into the 21st Century with the musical writing added to the show. The Chorus harmonies were more challenging than expected and the piano was just a nightmare for my potato endowed palms! This combined with my time limitations at rehearsals meant that this whole process was way more stressful than I ever expected it to be. Rest assured this is being rectified for Shrek and I am confident Shrek will be an incredible musical to be a part of.

We could go on for days about the technical difficulties that were placed upon us during show week- things beyond our control - that made us feel limited by what we could achieve. I think it's best to leave that alone and focus on what we did. We did have moments of brilliance in the show but do I think this was our best work to date? Regretfully, No. I think our expectations were not where they normally are; often distracted by the things that weren't right but couldn't do anything about. I think the amount of chitty car stage time with music was underestimated; the car was another actor on stage in its own right but lack of rehearsal time with the car and the music meant we were unable to properly gauge how we wanted this to be executed.

I have to say that the band did you very proud; they were truly excellent. And say whatever you want about the sound guy (make sure I'm not around because I will defend him in HIS field) but he made your band sound quite exquisite; regular comments like "We thought it was backing track..." filled me with confidence that "the pit" was doing its bit for you. I use the term "pit" loosely since we were in the studio. This was not a pleasant experience; being so detached from the cast came with its own difficulties which we will look to ensure don't exist for Shrek.

Looking to the future, I am very excited to be asked to MD for LAOS and Shrek is a superb opportunity for LAOS to do what it does and do what it does brilliantly! The work will be hard but I think it will be fun and enjoyable. The show is musically overwritten and quite obtuse at times BUT we will execute with gusto and bravado. The story is much like an onion with many layers... we will resent the shallow fun of the show but we will also explore the darker, more meaningful undertones of acceptance and tolerance. I am very keen to tell this musical story through this excellent music.

See you on January 7th x



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DIRECTORS REPORT	<p>Sally started by saying It was a privilege to do Chitty with Lianne. She went to the Haymarket as a child and fell in love with the theatre. Shy and retiring as a child. Getting the chance to be a director she was very grateful. Rehearsal schedule - Addresses that going forwards this needs to be done early. Very short time to put it together for the technicality of the show. A little more time for Shrek is needed. Haymarket was not prepared for us and despite the fact the plots were done the Haymarket were not ready. We will make sure we are ready for Shrek and sure Haymarket will be too. Steve is on board for the full rehearsal schedule. We are aware this is a hobby, we need to make it enjoyable for rehearsals and show weeks. We need the set plans early so we can be inspired. Shrek will be a great set and costumes.</p> <p>Positives - Amazing venue. Being part of the LAOS team. Incredible people to work with. Was really nice to do a family friendly performance. Nearly sold out in one performance. Think it will sell really well. Fab production values and prepared to invest in that with LAOS. Which is important as audience will have that expectation. Thank you for having me and having me back for Shrek.</p>
CHOREO-GRAPHERS REPORT	<p>Lianne thanks the committee for having her to do Chitty. Jackie advised her to talk about challenges and positives. We started late and we saw Chitty as a film and thought it would be easier than it was. The challenges to set routines in one evening. The Car, Kids, dog - The size of the stage. We had all the kids there and lifted the curtain and realised how vast it was. The biggest challenge was having no sound track. Rehearsing numbers without the correct tracks, but going forwards it will have the correct music from Steve from day one. Schedule meant learning dancing before learning the music. Going forwards we will make sure the songs are learnt first prior to setting the routines.</p> <p>Technically - Sound man was lovely but never done a musical before. But it's alright I just turn these mics up. No - you have to turn them on and off. The speakers were at the front of the stage. The monitors were with the band which meant we didn't have them on the stage. Cast were furious. In the auditorium they praised the cats and blamed the theatre. The production team were proud of the cast for getting on with it. Very challenging. We are confident going forwards that the problems will be fixed.</p> <p>Do I be truthful to myself as a choreographer - bring on the dancing girls. IF I think you will be in that number they will be in that number based on their strengths. Everyone should be included, and used to their strengths. One number per night was difficult but it worked. What it allowed was cast to focus video and practice. Costumes were brilliant. Everyone going on stage felt good. How people worked together was a pleasure to work with. They felt incredibly welcomed. Thank you and look forward to moving forwards on to Shrek.</p>



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**Treasurers
Report**

Vaughan handed out the accounts and talked through the main detail.

Starts with the comparison of Parade to Chitty:

Ticket Sales Parade was £18,264 and Chitty was £59,685

Discussing The sales - Total show income was £50,607

Staging cost was £20,600 - back page on staging costs discussed.

Expenses discussed -

Invested in advertising and publicity. Very worried a few weeks before the shoe. Hired the car for the day for £700. Sold three times that in ticket sales that day so was worth it.

Show expenses totalled to £51,048 so we had a loss of £440

Income and Expenditure -

When we entered into the agreement with the theatre. Jed was keen to make it work for us financially. We broke a deal where we worked out how much we needed to break even and agreed that is what we would pay. A lot of costs increased so looked to make a sizeable loss. We went to see Jed to discuss and he agreed to pay us from the ticket sales what we needed. I worked out how much from the ticket sales we needed to break even and worked backwards to come to the figure of £15,375 (our balance).

Balance sheet discussed - Society worth £20,877 (so broken even).

A positive outlook for next year - Shrek already sold £16,000 worth of tickets.

Accounts Proposed By: Jackie Oddy

Accounts Seconded By: Becky Valentine



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Election of Officers	<p>Vaughn read out the status of the committee detailing which officers were available/unavailable for re-election, who had been nominated to stand on the committee.</p> <p>Chairman Jackie Oddy was stepping down as chairman. Nick Cox is being proposed for chairman. This was proposed by Jodie and seconded by Scott O Tomkins.</p> <p>Treasurer Vaughan Ashcroft was available for re-election. This was proposed by Sarah Barton & seconded by Liz Kavanagh.</p> <p>Secretary Lisa Heath was stepping down. Matt Barton was proposed to take on the role. Proposed by Becky Valentine and seconded by Kate Goodall.</p>
General Committee	<p>Shelly and David have one year remaining</p> <p>Nade and Josh have two years remaining</p> <p>Pip has decided to step down.</p> <p>We had 2 members nominated to join the committee and both nominations were accepted. Liz Backes was nominated by Jade Afflick & seconded by Chris Hall. Lianne Rana was nominated by Scott O Tomkins & seconded by Nicole Lloyd.</p>
Auditor	Mike Walker



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<p>Final words</p>	<p>Nick steps up to say a huge thank you to Jackie - It has been a difficult time to be part of the committee. Three different venues in the last three years. Nick came on to the committee when this happened and it was difficult. Lots of changes in the committee. Jackie has been very pragmatic and calm. A huge thank you to Jackie from everyone for all her hard work.</p> <p>Jackie says a goodbye - I've been the chairman for the last 7 and been on the committee for 10. When I think where we were back then and asked to be chairman. I was asked for straight talking nature and financial background which would hold me in good stead. Thinking back of the plummeting lows, after the sister act first night and having to sack the sound operator. Horrible situation to be in. Simon furnace saved our bacon. One of the absolute lows. It has been said that we haven't been open and honest to membership but there have been purposeful decisions made to protect the performers from things they didn't need to know and protect them. Apologies if that was the wrong decision but I stand by that. Challenging decisions but offset massively by the pride I feel from what we are able to do and the name LAOS has and that 24 people came to audition last week with 16 successful is testament to the calibre and quality of us, which will continue. Every decision this committee has made and supported her have only ever been made with the society interest at heart. IT will continue with Nick. Looking forward to coming to rehearsals and going home without worries. Thinking back we have had financially struggled and had to raise money to do a show each year. We have gambled and taken risks. But generally believe that we want a hobby we love and entertain our audiences. Long live LAOS!</p>
<p>Any Other Business</p>	<p>NONE</p> <p>CLOSE OF MEETING</p>