

Trustees' Annual Report: 2017-2019

It is with great pleasure that I present the fifth annual report to the members of York Mystery Plays Supporters Trust on behalf of the Trustees. The report covers the period from November 2016, a longer time span than has been the norm, occasioned by the organisation's change of status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation during the reporting period.

Our thanks: I would like to thank all our members for their continued support during this time, to those of you who have volunteered your time, your skill, your enthusiasm, contributed goods and money to support our activities. It has been a very successful period in the Trust's brief history and the Trustees could not have done that without you. I'd like to thank my fellow Trustees for their unstinting dedication and hard work – it really is a pleasure to work with you. Our particular thanks go to Chris Gajewicz and Shelagh Loftus who stepped down from the Committee after six years' service since we founded the Trust and we wish them very well and look forward to seeing them at Trust events. We welcomed Maurice Crichton as Secretary and Colin Lea to the Committee during this period and their endorsement as Trustees will be put to the members at the Annual General Meeting on 18 February 2019. Our very grateful thanks once more go to Bernard Lyne for auditing our accounts which continue to be ably managed by Phil Turner, to Stewart Hildred who edits and produces our newsletters every six weeks from the south of the country and to James Eaglesfield who continues to provide technical guidance on our website.

Change of Constitution: during this period we changed from a Charitable Association to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the aim of creating greater flexibility with, for example, entering into contractual relationships and fundraising. With the change of status, we no longer have to elect a new Committee annually; instead Trustees will be asked to commit to a minimum two year tenure. There is a requirement for retirement of Trustees by rotation and for stepping down for at least 12 months after two terms of office. We can recruit new Trustees at any time for endorsement by current Trustees and members and we would welcome expressions of interest from anyone wishing to join the Committee or indeed to work alongside Committee members on specific projects without having the commitment of being a Trustee.

Wagon Play: 2018 saw our participation in the Festival Trust's pageant of 11 plays, directed by Tom Straszewski. We appointed Ben Prusiner to direct the *Harrowing of Hell* on our behalf, ably supported by Dave Bahrani Peacock and Simon Tompsett as Wagon Master and Producer and a superb artistic team. Who can forget the amazing costumes designed by Aurelia Puigdomenech! What a wonderful experience it was and the involvement of so many people as actors, props and costume producers, photographers and Front of House staff was memorable. It was so good to see Trust members taking part in some of the other plays as well. We were fortunate to be selected as one of the plays to perform at Shambles market for the first evening performance – one that will live long in the memory as a magical event. Our congratulations and thanks to all involved in the success of the production. We very much want to bring forth another wagon play in 2022.

Charity bid: In pursuit of a Trust aim to make the Plays accessible, we put in bids to local charities to obtain funding for 20 places at a performance for those physically and/or financially unable to attend the Wagon Plays. Led by Ged Murray, I am delighted to report that York Common Good Trust donated the

full £600 we applied for. This paid for transport to and from the plays, tickets at Kings Manor and the provision of afternoon tea at Belfry Hall, Stonegate. I think those of you involved would recognise the very hard work that went into making this a success for those attending and we would like to record our thanks to you for making this happen. The feedback from those attending was testimony to the wonderful time they enjoyed.

Fundraising activities: None of the above could have taken place without some dedicated fundraising. We had set at budget of £2000 for the Plays and I am delighted to say that, thanks to some generous donations and hard work at St Crux, we exceeded that total. Gary led our St Crux events, supported by Colin and Ged and a wonderful team of volunteers. Our fundraising effort during the period of this report from St Crux alone comes to £3063.17 profit. No mean achievement – and those of us who survived the unbelievable deluge of the day in November 2018 will not forget that in a hurry!

Stakeholder involvement: our annual meeting with our stakeholder group continues to provide valuable advice and support to the Trust. We are grateful for the support of representatives from the theatres, the Festival Trust, the Minster, York City Centre Churches, Make it York, the National Centre for Early Music, the Guild of Media Arts and the Universities. While the meeting was established to guide the Trust in its early days, it is now evolving into a forum for keeping the issue of York's Mystery Plays alive in the minds of the city and, importantly, that those organisations with a commitment to and interest in staging the Plays are aware of what each is considering and what the issues are. We are optimistic that there will be a community production based on the Plays in 2020 and that the Minster will again consider staging a production, subject of course to the view of the new Dean: the Rt. Revd. Dr. Jonathan Frost.

Policy update: we have not neglected the supporting infrastructure for the effective operation of the Trust. We have complied with the requirements of GDPR with a revised policy, completely reviewed our Health and Safety policy and developed a Firearms and Weapons policy. Importantly we have revised our policy for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, appointing a Safeguarding Officer to oversee our processes. Thank you to Maurice Crichton for taking on this role in addition to that of Secretary.

Website: our last report referred to our problems in updating our website. These still exist but to modernise the site we applied successfully for a student internship from the University of York St John. This fully funded initiative enabled us to appoint Melanie McLaughlan for a period of six months in July 2017 to develop a new website, migrating us to a different operating platform and carrying out some research to provide updated material. This gave her the opportunity to develop not only technical skills but to interview Damian Cruden of the Theatre Royal, the very Reverend Vivienne Faull, Dean of York Minster and Jane Gibson, CEO at Make it York, providing us with material for the site. Needless to say, we could do with a Melanie now to maintain the site and are looking at ways in which we can keep the site updated with current information about Trust activities and plans for the Mystery Plays in York.

The Future: we feel that the work we have undertaken in the last 18 months places us in a strong position to develop the Trust's activities throughout 2019 and beyond and trust that this meets with the approval of our members. We have ideas for an annual production, for expanded grant application and fundraising activities, for greater engagement with the city of York and for promotion of the Plays. As Michael Billington (2015) recorded on seeing the National Theatre's production of the Mysteries "for those of us present, it was a momentous encounter with the origins of English drama".¹ That's why the

¹ Billington, M. (2015) *The 101 Greatest Plays*, (p.44) London: Guardian Books

Trust exists: to maintain that community involvement and audience experience in the drama that is a jewel in York's cultural heritage.

Linda Terry, Chair, YMPST

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