



## Report of the Trustees for the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019

### Purpose and Objectives

York's Mystery Plays were first performed by the citizens of York in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Today they are considered to be the oldest and best-preserved example of this style of medieval English drama.

The York Mystery Plays Supporters Trust was formed following a highly successful community revival of the Plays in 2012. Its aim is to increase awareness and understanding of the Plays' importance as part of York's heritage, and to encourage regular stagings of the Plays by and for the people of York.

The Trust's objectives are:

1. Disseminating historical and contemporary information about the York Mystery Plays including by operating a website;
2. Supporting and promoting the performance of the Plays by and for the people of York;
3. Working to make productions accessible to all, regardless of age, gender, ability, race or belief;
4. Developing strong working relationships with the arts and culture sectors to support public access to performances.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities the Trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

### Activities and Achievements

In the period 2018-2019 the Trust engaged in a number of activities to fulfil its objectives:

**Objective 1:** Disseminating historical and contemporary information about the York Mystery Plays including by operating a website.

In 2017 the Trust had successfully obtained a funded student internship from a local university to redevelop the website. During this reporting period, the website was maintained by volunteers, managed by one of the Trustees, enabling us to provide not only information about the Trust and historical information about the Plays, but also up-to-date information about the 2018 Pageant of Waggon Plays and associated events. Following the production, images of the plays were posted to the website for the record and, working in partnership with the National Centre for Early Music in York, facilitated the creation of a record for the City of York Mystery Plays archive.

We have also renewed the domain name for a further three years.

Our e-newsletter was produced approximately every 6 weeks and issued to an audience of members and interested parties (some 1800 subscribers across the UK and abroad). Paper copies were also produced and posted to those without access to email. In addition, a second audience consisting of city organisations, press, local churches received specifically tailored news at appropriate times. The content and production of the newsletters is overseen by the Chair of Trustees and produced by a member of the Trust.

**Objective 2:** Supporting and promoting the performance of the Plays by and for the people of York.

The Trust was invited to take part in the 2018 Pageant of Waggon Plays performed in the city in September 2018 under the auspices of York Festival Trust. The Pageant involves a number of community groups each performing a specific play from the cycle – in our case *The Harrowing of Hell*.

Our members organised and participated in a number of fundraising events to help us raise the budget of £2000 to stage the play, including two of the Trustees participating in the York 10k run. This enabled the Trust to recruit a director, production team and cast from the local area to perform the play. The Plays were seen for free in the city centre by a large audience over three days in September. In addition, a paying audience was able to view the Plays from a seated auditorium.

As well as funding our own production we were also able to give a grant of £560 towards the running costs of the Pageant to the York Festival Trust which had seen its application to the Arts Council turned down.

A planned trip for members to see a performance of the Chester Mystery Plays had to be cancelled as there was insufficient interest to cover the costs.

**Objective 3:** Working to make productions accessible to all, regardless of age, gender, ability, race or belief.

Casting for *The Harrowing of Hell* was carried out through open auditions and our director's terms of reference included gender-blind casting. We also arranged for local authority approved chaperones to be available so that our cast could include young people. As well as performers we also sought to engage people with other skillsets such as photography, costume making, set building, and wagon pushing. A total of around 40 local people were involved with our production. Where we were unable to offer opportunities within our own production, we referred people to other groups participating in the Pageant.

We also sought to assist those who would not normally be able to attend a performance due to financial reasons or physical infirmity. We were awarded a grant of £600 by the York Common Good Trust which enabled us to provide paid seats, afternoon tea and transport for a group of residents from local care homes. They were looked after by volunteers from the Trust and for some it was their first visit to the city centre for many years.

**Objective 4:** Developing strong working relationships with the arts and culture sectors to support public access to performances.

The Trust works to maintain active networks within the city's artistic, academic, business and religious groups. It organises and funds an annual meeting of these stakeholders, which is recognised as a unique opportunity for different organisations with an interest in the continuation of the Plays to meet to share and discuss relevant issues. The meeting in 2018 expressed strong support for the Trust's idea to stage an annual community production of the Nativity elements of the Mystery Cycle in the city centre from December 2019; an

initiative which aims to bring the Plays to new audiences including visitors to York's Christmas Markets. Building on feedback given by the Stakeholder Group, we developed a more detailed proposal which was subsequently endorsed by Trust members at the Annual General Meeting in February 2019.

### Financial review

The Trust's total income for the year was £5,385, of which £2,085 were restricted funds (£1,770 in donations for the Waggon Play and £315 in deposits for the trip to Chester Mystery Plays).

The main sources of income were: donations (£1,770); two St Crux sales (£1,420 net of expenses); membership subscriptions (£930); and a grant from the York Common Good Trust (£600).

Total expenditure was £5,744, including £2,135 of restricted funds (£1,820 towards the cost of the Waggon Plays and £315 in refunded deposits).

The main areas of expenditure were: the 2018 Waggon Plays (£2,192 for staging *The Harrowing of Hell*, £654 to bring local residents to The Pageant, and £560 donated to York Festival Trust); and fundraising (£510 for hire of St Crux for 2 dates in 2018 and 2 dates in 2019, £203 operating costs for the St Crux cafe in 2018, £282 for branded t-shirts for use at publicity and fundraising events, and £80 for promotional banners). Administration costs (excluding insurance) were £257.

The Trust's funds at the end of the year were £3,834 with no outstanding liabilities.

### Accounting and reporting by charities

The Mystery Plays are traditionally performed once every four years and the Trust's expenditure is therefore higher in performance years than in non-performance years. Our policy is that income should exceed expenditure in non-performance years to ensure that we have reserves to help cover the additional costs incurred by staging a production.

This policy will be reviewed in 2019 in the light of proposals to put on an annual production of the Nativity.

### Structure, governance and management

Trust has been a Charitable Incorporated Organisation since December 2017 and is a registered charity number 1176113.

Contact address: De Grey House, Exhibition Square, York YO1 7HD

Website: [www.ympst.co.uk](http://www.ympst.co.uk)

The Trust has no paid employees and does not own property. It is run by a management committee of Trustees who meet monthly but carry out the majority of their duties in their own time and from their own homes.

The Trust determines its priorities for meeting its objectives through its planning and meeting processes. At the beginning of each year the Trustees hold a business planning event.

During this, the previous year's aims, objectives and financial performance are reviewed and evaluated, and actions, activities and funding agreed for the forthcoming year(s). Progress against the Plan forms part of the agenda for monthly meetings thereafter. Any changes to the activities and timescales in the Plan are subject to agreement by the Trustees. The content of the Plan is disseminated to members and supporters via the newsletter and members are invited to volunteer their participation as appropriate.

The Trustees at start of 2018-19 were: Linda Terry (Chair), Christine Gajewicz (Secretary), Philip Turner (Treasurer), Gary Bateson, Simon Tompsett, Ged Murray, Sheelagh Loftus.

During the year Christine Gajewicz resigned and was replaced by Maurice Crichton as Secretary, following his endorsement by the Trustees and subsequent endorsement by members at the February 2018 AGM. Also at the February AGM: Sheelagh Loftus stood down; and Anna Briggs and Colin Lea were elected as Trustees by the membership.

The Trust encourages members with an appropriate skillset to consider putting themselves forward for Trustee positions. Members seeking to join the Committee as a Trustee are advised to meet with the Chair to discuss the requirements and commitment needed for the role: this involves not only their personal aspirations but also an understanding of the time commitment required; an identification of the skills they can offer; and their fitness (as a Fit and Proper Person) to undertake the role. Applicants must complete an application form detailing the above, along with a signed declaration of financial probity, for consideration by the Trustees. References may also be taken up if appropriate. Applicants who meet the criteria may be co-opted onto the Management Committee during the year. However, they must retire at the next AGM and, if they wish, stand for election by the members along with any other potential new Trustees. Trustees are subject under the constitution to a given period in office and are required to step down at the appropriate time. The Trust has a timetable for managing this to ensure that key skills are not lost when long-serving Trustees retire.