



## Trustees' Annual Report for the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021

### 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 2020-21 the Trust engaged in a range of activities to fulfil its objectives though these were subject to regular review and updating as a result of the pandemic:

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

The Trust redeveloped its website as a specific project during the first lockdown from March 2020 - <https://ympst.co.uk> - simplifying the pages and updating the content and images with the aim of providing succinct and relevant information for enquirers and key documents for members.

Our e-newsletter continued to be produced approximately every 6 weeks and issued to an audience of members and interested parties (some 1300 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.

The Trust maintained its membership of the City Of York's tourist information service provider, Make It York (MiY). This was in anticipation of being able to stage a Christmas production of A Nativity for York, a successor to the initial production in 2019. National circumstances meant that the Trust was not able to produce this.

The Trust developed its YouTube channel during the period of the report. This hosts videos of previous performances (the 2014 and 2018 Wagon Plays, a Nativity for York 2019) and is updated with interviews of Trustees providing information about current activities. It is promoted via the newsletter, the Trust Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

The Chair of the Trust was invited by Viking Rotary in York to give a talk on the history of the Mystery Plays and the role of the Supporters Trust via Zoom.

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

As theatres closed, it became evident during the period of the report that the Trust's plan to stage A Nativity for York in December 2020 was not viable. A director had been recruited in the spring of 2020 but it was evident by the summer that an indoor performance would not be possible. The funding for the production was therefore ring-fenced to support a December 2021 production.

The Trust was approached by York Theatre Royal to sponsor a radio performance of the Mystery Plays created jointly by the Theatre and BBC Radio York. The Trust contributed £1000 to the production and promoted the opportunity for community actors to audition. A number of YMPST members were successful in getting parts in the production. The Trust promoted the performances via its newsletters and social media.

The Trust's staple fundraising options were not available as a result of the pandemic as groups could not work together to run events. However, the Trust Secretary carried out a dawn sponsored run on 11 June 2020, supported by a number of Trustees and raised a total of £1,000 for future performances of the plays. The run was repeated again on Palm Sunday (28 March 2021), from which pledges for a further £850 have been received.

A number of socially distanced and Zoom readings of the Mystery Plays were held during the year for members and supporters. The outdoor readings, limited to 6 people on each occasion, took place in Dean's Park at York Minster. Similarly members and supporters were made aware of an opportunity to participate in on-line readings and research as part of a PhD study into the Mystery Plays and the role of the community.

With indoor performances unable to take place, the Trust initiated discussions with York Festival Trust and York Minster to produce an outdoor performance of A Resurrection for York, an hour long performance focussing on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. A joint agreement was developed for this take place over the 2021 Easter weekend but lockdown restrictions led to the postponement of the production to the summer of 2021.

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

As part of putting a video of the 2019 *Nativity for York* on YouTube, the Trust added a full set of subtitles to make it accessible to those with hearing loss.

Within the scope of what was achievable during the period of the report, the Trust worked to provide opportunities for anyone to participate in the radio plays or to participate in its planned summer production in 2021. Its ethos remains the same.

**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 2020 was held on Zoom for a reduced number of participants, focussing on opportunities for performance. A representative from Make It York joined the meeting with a view to ensuring that the York Mystery Plays were recognised in the developing Cultural Strategy for the city.

**Financial review**

The Trust's total income for the year was £4,964, of which £2,091 were restricted funds donated specifically for the production of *A Resurrection for York*. This is slightly less than half last year's income, the decrease being primarily due to: the cancellation of the Christmas production of *A Nativity for York* with the consequent loss of ticket and refreshment sales; and our inability to hold any fundraising sales at St Crux.

The main sources of income were: two sponsored runs raising £1,459 between them to date; membership subscriptions of £890; general donations from members of £292; a tabletop sale raising £67; and Gift Aid on the donations and sponsorship amounting to £165. We also received a donation of £91 specifically for *A Resurrection for York* and a grant of £2,000 towards the production from the Passion Trust.

Total expenditure was £1,976, less than one third of that of the previous year due to our inability to stage any productions. Our most significant item of expenditure was a grant of £1,000 to sponsor the production of one of York Theatre Royal's Radio Mystery Plays. Other major items were: insurance at £393; membership of Visit York at £175.50 and a subscription to Zoom for £144. The Trust's general administration costs (excluding insurance) were £223 and fundraising costs were £41.

The Trust's funds at the end of the year were £11,120 of which £2,091 were restricted funds to be carried forward for the production of *A Resurrection for York* in the summer of 2021.

## Accounting and reporting by charities

The Trust's main area of expenditure is normally its annual Nativity production, performed for the first time in 2019. This production was funded entirely by fundraising and donations, with the intention that income from ticket sales and refreshments for the 2019 production would form the core funding for the 2020 production and that this model would repeat in future years. This ensures that if a future production were to run at a large loss, the financial viability of the Trust would not be at risk. As we were unable to stage a production in 2020 the funds from 2019 are being carried forward to A Nativity for York in December 2021.

Fundraising in 2020-21 and in future years will primarily be in support of the Trust's other activities, such as the Wagon Plays which occur once every four years, and developing new initiatives, as well as augmenting the core funding for the Nativity.

## Structure, governance and management

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

Temporary contact address whilst Coronavirus lockdown restrictions are in force: 14 Moor Lane, Copmanthorpe, York YO23 3TH.

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 normally 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.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the uncertainty over future activities the planning meeting for 2020-21 was cancelled. The Trustees continued to meet monthly by Zoom and the Annual general meeting of the Trust was also held by Zoom with around 30 members in attendance. At the AGM changes were made to the constitution to: enable future members' meetings to be held electronically where appropriate; and to allow Trustees to serve an additional term of office (increased from two terms to three) before having to stand down.

The Trustees at the start of 2020-21 were: Linda Terry (Chair), Maurice Crichton (Secretary), Philip Turner (Treasurer), Gary Bateson, Anna Briggs, Colin Lea, Ged Murray, Simon Tompsett and David Denbigh.

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. All recommendations for new Trustees must be approved by the members at the next AGM. 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.