



**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2021**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report

for the year ended 31 May 2021

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2021.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Jules Carey Paula Hamilton Cliona Roberts Deborah Samuel Jonathan Smith (Chair) Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow	
Company Secretary:	Esther Baker	
Company number:	04219146	
Registered Charity number:	1088692	
Synergy staff:	Artistic Director General Manager Learning & Engagement Manager (Adults) Learning & Engagement Manager (Young People) Learning & Engagement Assistant New Writing Manager Development Associate Development Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Denise Heard (until October 2020) Siân Henderson Karl Smith Neil Grutchfield Jo Cottrell Miriam Sherwood (appointed November 2020)
Registered office:	3Space International House 6 Canterbury Crescent London SW9 7QD	
Independent Examiner:	Robert McGinty Cintra Coley Avenue Woking GU22 7BT	
Bankers:	Triodos Bank NV Deanery Road Bristol BS1 5AS	

The trustees present their annual statutory report together with the consolidated financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2021.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

History

Synergy Theatre Project was founded in 2000, soon after Esther Baker won a Butler Trust Award for her pioneering work with theatre in HMPs Downview and Wandsworth. Over the 22 years since the company was formed, Synergy has developed a programme of artistic work that seeks to build a bridge from prison to social reintegration, prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system, and inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public.

Vision

Synergy believes that theatre can be transformative, change perceptions, and open up new possibilities towards a more positive future. We live in a world where some of the most disadvantaged are over-represented in the criminal justice system and are more likely to suffer social exclusion. Our vision is to work through theatre towards a fairer world where those within or at risk of entering the criminal justice system can discover alternate pathways, desist from crime, and become an integral and meaningful part of society.

Mission

Synergy seeks to create a ground-breaking, interrelated programme of artistic work which harnesses the energy, instincts, and life experiences of those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners, young offenders, and young people at risk of offending – gives them a voice and, in doing so, their dignity back. We want to inspire change by capturing the imagination and affecting the feelings, behaviours and attitudes of participants and public, whilst doing our part to influence the arts and criminal justice sectors towards systemic change.

Our work

Our work provides practical opportunities which develop beneficiaries' skills, capabilities and resilience, builds a bridge from prison to social reintegration, provides vital support to rehabilitation, and seeks to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. Our overall aim is to support desistance from crime. We do this through:

- **Producing** high quality theatre and film across prisons, mainstream theatres and schools that uniquely brings together professional artists with prisoners and ex-prisoners to create and perform urgent and authentic work, representing unheard voices on the stage;
- Offering theatre-based training for prisoners and ex-prisoners through **Synergy Studio** with its growing focus on skills accreditation, progression routes, and pathways into education, training and employment;
- Challenging mind-sets and offering alternate pathways for young people at risk of offending through our **Young People's Programme** of projects and productions that utilise the life experience of trained ex-prisoner facilitators;
- Offering ex-prisoner led roleplay through **Synergy Services** which provides training services for resettlement agencies and an effective and targeted way to contribute to systems change within the criminal justice arena.

Public benefit

The trustees have referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning future activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Much has been said over the past year about the social importance of theatre and Synergy's work with prisoners during the pandemic has been testament to this. The Stage 100

The last year has been like no other with the challenges of a global pandemic and its impact on the most marginalised in society, including those we work with – prisoners, ex-prisoners and vulnerable young people – while the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement shone a fresh light on racial injustice. Synergy was able to respond swiftly and creatively – through generous support from existing funders and new funding streams made available in response to the pandemic – to adapt our model to digital delivery, develop new programmes of work and ensure that we continued to reach and engage beneficiaries during ensuing lockdowns. In terms of artistic activity, we made a short film for young people focusing on county lines exploitation and, maintaining our focus on growing our developmental pipeline to test ideas and increase our producing output, commissioned a breadth of new work. Significant progress was made in relation to our strategic aim to develop our digital footprint across our programmes which involved devising a wide range of online activity including several projects in response to the BLM movement on both sides of the prison walls, a stand-up comedy pilot with longstanding partner, Soho Theatre, a national writing competition with resources for in-cell and online learning and digital correspondence playwriting courses for prisons

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 231 prisoners and ex-prisoners through our training, performance, work experience and employment opportunities. Through our programme for young people in mainstream education, young people at risk of exclusion and/or offending and those within the criminal justice system, Synergy engaged over 506 through performance and activity, all of whom took part in participatory workshops including 126 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects.

The announcement of the winners of 'The Stage 100' 2021 Award in January included Synergy Theatre Project under 'Serving the community', acknowledging and celebrating our commitment to ensuring provision and sustained engagement for beneficiaries during the pandemic. Synergy received a commendation at the Howard League for Penal Reform's Community Awards 2021 under the 'Policing and children' category for our one-to-one intervention work. We were recently shortlisted for the CJA Awards 2021 for our Lockdown Dramas national prison scriptwriting competition, as was our New Writing Manager for the Kenneth Tynan Award, the only one of its type in the country to recognise outstanding professionals working in the field of dramaturgy.

PRODUCING

I'm excited to be in the film and really look forward to going back into my old PRU to talk to the young people there about how far I've come. Young cast member of Dues

After the pandemic forced us to twice postpone the shooting of *Dues*, our short film by Ambreen Razia (BBC Talent Hotlist 2017 and creator of BBC3 pilot, *Hounslow Diaries*), this finally took place over a five-day period in May 2021. Examining the theme of county lines and the ways in which young people are targeted and vulnerable to exploitation and grooming by criminal gangs, we also shot a behind-the-scenes film which delves into both the content and the making of the short to be used alongside screenings of the film to young people to enhance engagement.

Involving a cast and crew of professionals alongside ex-prisoners, the film also features a young person who we worked with previously at Woodbridge PRU in her first acting role. This demonstrates an inspiring journey for one of our young beneficiaries and she also expressed an interest in taking part in some of the post-screening Q&As, particularly at her old PRU, which will allow her to talk about her experience and encourage other young people in similar situations to engage in creative work and make positive choices.

In addition, we commissioned two short monologues for different age groups – primary and secondary – exploring social media, cyberbullying and crime. These were filmed in March to provide a digital resource to utilise as stimuli for response projects with young people which have been very well received in both settings.

Synergy also commissioned Juliet Gilkes Romero (winner of the 2020 Alfred Fagon Award) as part of a wider Black Lives Matter project to write a play exploring racial inequality and the criminal justice system. As part of her research Juliet interviewed a range of ex-prisoners, prison staff and other criminal justice professionals and the play underwent a week's R&D in March. This culminated in a rehearsed reading online towards the second draft of the play for potential production next year.

Other works in development include a play by Evan Placey exploring the increasing population of older prisoners and their treatment, and a collaboration on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London exploring the experience of cancer patients in prison. As well as professional writers, Synergy has also seed-commissioned one ex-prisoner and has co-commissioned another with Soho Theatre.

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

It has been such a challenging year for everyone, and it was fantastic to read how you continued adaptation of your service provision to meet the needs of people in prison and ex-offenders during the pandemic. Funding Manager, City Bridge Trust

During the past year, access to the prison estate and partner organisations for face-to-face provision has been severely restricted on account of social distancing guidelines. However, we were able to react swiftly and shift delivery in order to offer a much-needed creative digital programme of opportunities for engagement with beneficiaries. This programme provided what many prisoners described as a 'lifeline' while activities including work, education, family visits and exercise ceased due to the pandemic and prisoners struggled to occupy themselves and faced chronic boredom, heightened anxiety and a deterioration in physical and mental health. Ex-prisoners were likewise severely impacted both practically and emotionally, but their feedback highlights that engaging with our activity significantly improved their mental health and reduced their isolation.

Our digital programme was launched with *Lockdown Dramas*, a national writing competition for prisoners and ex-prisoners calling for 10-minute plays responding to the first lockdown. This comprised four 'Introduction to Playwriting' video tutorials by award-winning playwrights screened via Wayout TV, an in-cell learning channel in 55 prisons with a reach of 35,000 prisoners and a course for ex-prisoners via Zoom. We received 104 entries and script-in-hand readings of the six winning scripts were recorded at Soho Theatre and screened live last November across our Facebook and YouTube channels:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtZ0KtJ8c9c>

Harnessing this success, we devised and delivered two subsequent playwriting correspondence courses in HMP Thameside and YOIs Cookham Wood and Isis which resulted in some great work from participants, particularly in the adult setting. While this remote learning package created legacy for our competition and opportunity for participants to further hone their skills, the pilot also enabled us to put this new offer to the test and identify areas for improvement. This has resulted in a drive to provide, where possible, a blended approach in delivery and to revise the remote model further in order to enable greater geographical reach in future.

In response to global events, and as the Black Lives Matter movement gathered momentum in the UK and our beneficiaries felt impelled to express feelings around the subject, Synergy delivered a series of projects with a specific focus on racial inequality and the criminal justice system. These comprised responses using playwriting and spoken word – two in prisons and two for ex-prisoners – led by experienced BAME playwrights and artists including Juliet Gilkes

Romero. These were highly subscribed and proved especially popular and resulted in live and recorded sharings of powerful and poignant work.

Collaborating again with partners including Morley College, Sara Putt Associates' Trainee Scheme and Soho Theatre, we delivered a host of online courses for ex-prisoners in acting for screen, film making, film production and introductory acting which all culminated in online sharings to invited audiences. We piloted a stand-up comedy course together with Soho Theatre which proved highly successful and one which we aim to continue as part of our ongoing offer.

In terms of supporting beneficiaries into further training, work placements and progression into work, particular highlights include:

- 12 gaining work with Synergy to support the delivery of 41 online one-to-one projects with young people referred by the Met Police, and face-to-face and group projects;
- 8 of the above also supporting our early intervention work in primary schools and a deep learning day in a secondary school;
- 7 gaining acting or crewing roles on Synergy's short film, *Dues*, focusing on the issue of county lines, to be toured to schools in autumn 2021;
- Three performed audio recordings for a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study collaboration with King's College London;
- Two performed recordings of poetry winners for the 2020 Koestler Awards exhibition;
- One ex-prisoner writer being seed-commissioned by Synergy;
- One being commissioned by The Big House theatre company;
- Three working as extras on film sets;
- One on a paid traineeship as shadow writer with STV Drama Productions on new series for Channel 4, *Screw*;
- Another Synergy alumnus winning a 2021 The Stage 100 Award under 'Putting on shows' for *Death of England: Delroy*, a one-man show at the National Theatre that opened and closed on the same night on account of lockdown measures.

In addition, Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 17 prisoner and 14 ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. This includes three writers in particular; one whose play was workshopped over two days towards a rehearsed reading online, another who has received both ongoing development and support to secure funding to tour his autobiographical play in 2022, and the last, following his success in our competition, has been seed-commissioned by Synergy to develop a new play. Synergy is committed to developing and presenting a range of unique artistic voices from people with lived experience of the criminal justice system and we believe that these writers are as essential to our mission as the professional writers we commission.

Synergy also partnered for the fourth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 55 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and subsequent judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development support by correspondence from our New Writing Manager.

Young people's programme

This [project] makes me happy and happiness helps you control your anger – it puts the anger aside so that you don't rage at people. Young one-to-one project participant

As the effects of lockdown started emerging, Synergy experienced a marked increase in demand for our work and received high numbers of referrals from partners and the Met Police of young people who have been arrested or come to police notice – many for the first time – because of anti-social and violent behaviour, involvement in robbery, cyberbullying with many at risk of gang-affiliation and grooming for county lines, all exacerbated by the pressures of the restrictions and increased online presence, with growing concern over their wellbeing and mental health. Our offer of online one-to-one projects with creative professionals using spoken

word, songwriting, playwriting, film and performance, each supported by our trained ex-prisoner facilitators, have proven highly effective in terms of young beneficiary engagement and retention, increased confidence and self-esteem. This body of continuing and growing work has also provided the ex-prisoner facilitators with an enormous sense of purpose and self-worth as well as some means of income at a particularly difficult time.

Of the 41 young people who completed these online one-to-one projects:

- 80% stated that their attitude had shifted towards the impact of crime on both themselves and their community;
- 80% felt they had increased in confidence;
- 70% felt more comfortable expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas;
- 80% felt that people listened to them more;
- 74% stated that the project(s) had taught them a new creative skill that they would like to use again;
- 70% felt more comfortable expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas by the end of the project.

While we have reached fewer numbers of young people this year, this has enabled us to be highly responsive and adapt sessions and tailor projects to meet individual needs and ensure deeper engagement. The development of these one-to-one projects has provided opportunity to further strengthen links with Early Engagement Police Officers to target young people at a point in their lives when a change of direction is vital, and also to build excellent referral pathways and trusted relationships with other youth organisations.

Where restrictions allowed, we continued to work through long-term relationships with key partners. This included face-to-face delivery of spoken word projects in response to our short film, *The Thief*, engaging one group of boys and one of girls at Jubilee Academy PRU from October to December. Interrogating key moments in the film, they created their own spoken word pieces to perform to peers and staff. Working again with the Wish Centre in Harrow, we delivered a spoken word and performance project to engage a group of young women aged 12-18 who were vulnerable to, or had experienced child sexual exploitation, introducing them to a non-judgemental, creative space where they could express themselves and speak freely. We also applied the remote learning package developed through Synergy Studio (above) in YO1 Isis, but found this approach less effective in terms of engaging the resident young offenders on account of pandemic-related challenges. This resulted, as aforementioned, in the decision to offer a blended approach in future, especially in this setting and where possible, to ensure better support and higher retention rates going forward.

Continuing our early intervention work which we piloted at the beginning of 2020, we delivered 6- to 10-week performance projects exploring cyber bullying in Grange, Harlesden, Norbury, Pinner Park and Uxendon Manor Primary Schools from November to May, engaging 50 young people.

In addition to our one-to-one initiative and work with existing partners, Synergy was approached in February by Hillingdon Children's Services to deliver an online spoken word workshop during half-term. This engaged young people aged 13-16, referred due to poor school attendance, low self-esteem and at risk of criminal activity, and used *The Thief* as a stimulus to focus on themes of decision making and identity. We also played a significant part in Archer Academy's Deep Learning Day in May. This involved the delivery of six drama workshops, again utilising *The Thief*, with accompanying Q&A sessions and testimonials from our ex-prisoners.

The video recordings of *Girls Like That* and *Blackout*, our productions for young people, alongside our short film, *The Thief*, have together gained an impressive 97,000 views to date on YouTube, clearly demonstrating an appetite for our work. We have developed digital learning packages to accompany two of these productions which include behind-the-scenes films, Q&As with the writer, actors, ex-prisoners and director, video workshops and written materials. These

packages offer in-depth exploration of the themes in order to enhance engagement and provide a more creative resource for staff working with young people.

SYNERGY SERVICES

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the earned income that we had built through course delivery in the prison estate and Synergy Services, our roleplay training initiative for the criminal justice sector. While this has been on hold on account of the lockdowns, we have resumed discussion over a potential contract with Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) – subcontractors of MoJ HR with responsibility for prison officer recruitment nationally – and completed a further security assessment as part of the next stage of the on-boarding process. We have been liaising with the Head of Government Assessment Operations over the logistics for a contract which presents significant potential where employment and strengthening progression routes for our ex-prisoners is concerned but also in relation to income generation.

Having previously forged strong partnerships with private probation companies, our roleplay training initiative has also been affected by the reform programme to bring all offender management back into the statutory National Probation Service (NPS) from June 2021. With this in mind, we completed the process to become a supplier on Probation Services' Dynamic Framework, an e-tendering portal, and have recently been in discussion with the Commissioning and Partnerships Manager for NPS London over future provision.

During the course of the year, Synergy was commissioned to provide actors, some of whom were ex-prisoners, for the creation of three public information films; two concerning Covid-19 safe practices for gyms and office working, the third on HMRC import and export changes post-Brexit.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What you have achieved is absolutely outstanding, I am truly staggered.
Wates Foundation trustee on Synergy's delivery during the pandemic

Covid-19 put charities under enormous pressure, particularly financial, and Synergy was no exception. However, the generous support of existing funders and the funding streams made available in response to the pandemic ensured that we were able to react quickly and extend the range of provision outlined above. Synergy secured over £150k in funding from Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund, BBC Children in Need Next Steps, City Bridge Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, London Community Response Fund Waves 2 and 3, and Harrow Coronavirus Giving.

In terms of further increasing the organisation's financial stability, we successfully appointed a new Development Manager in November, a role which we had struggled to fill since the departure of the last postholder in 2018. Our new team member took up the post in February 2021 and has a wealth of experience, particularly with trusts and foundations, from her development roles at Battersea Arts Centre and Clod Ensemble. Having a permanent Development Manager in post has increased capacity significantly while ensuring effective stewardship of funder relationships.

Synergy recognises the need to strengthen the company's infrastructure and we are committed to interrogating our equity, diversity and inclusion practices to ensure that our organisation is diverse at every level. Our Artistic Director participated in PACT (Power Accountability Connection Trust) Pioneers, a learning programme funded by Barrow Cadbury Trust and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation exploring how power can be shared and used more effectively within organisations, their work and civil society. To this end, we will be undertaking an EDI audit through Lloyds Bank Foundation's Enhance programme in the first part of 2022.

Synergy's Artistic Director, accompanied by our beneficiaries, gives regular lectures on theatre practice within the criminal justice system at educational institutions and at sector-related events although these were curtailed by national lockdowns. She did, however, take part in a panel discussion hosted by Clean Break in May, 'Women's homelessness: the issues, the solutions

and the art', and the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance Network Hangout in June to share Synergy's experience during the pandemic and shift to digital delivery. As a GLA Young Londoners Fund grantee, Synergy was selected as one of only 5 funded projects to feature in a short documentary in partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation. Showcasing our work alongside the other companies, the film will be promoted and screened across London during National Youth Work Week in November 2021.

We are nearing the completion of negotiating a lease for an office at the new theatre space, Brixton House, which is due to open in early 2022. With two theatres and 7 rehearsal studios this marks a very positive move for the organisation artistically in terms of potentially producing work there and collaborating on projects, but also with regard to greater opportunities for engagement for our beneficiaries, referral on to the venue's extensive range of creative provision and possible work placements and employment. The new office space will also enable us to offer staff a blended and flexible approach to working.

During the year we also undertook a review of our website, resulting in the construction of a new one including the integration of new functionalities in order to make our work available online and ensure that our digital resources are both fit-for-purpose and sustainable in the longer term.

FUTURE PLANS

Synergy is one of the few provisions we have worked in partnership with, in recent years, that has consistently diverted some of our high-risk young people from negative influences and anti-social behaviours in the community. Teacher, The Helix Education Centre

As an organisation we have managed to navigate the challenges of the last year effectively, but appreciate that we will need to continue adapting to further change and assessing how best to offer support to beneficiaries in the face of any emerging new variants of Covid-19. The most significant challenge in terms of delivery is within the prison estate although we have worked hard to devise and adapt models to extend and engage prisoners with creative provision. We are trialling our blended approach with an audio drama project in HMP Wandsworth and have been contacted by the Regional Lead for Learning, Skills and Employment from HM Prison and Probation Service to enquire about delivery as regimes begin to open up. We aim over the next year to offer a series of creative opportunities focussing on post-Covid recovery, mental health and wellbeing and these activities will bring together our strongest partners in theatre and the criminal justice system, our expertise in delivering high quality artistic engagement for beneficiaries and our learning from blended models which have extended our reach.

In terms of our developmental pipeline Juliet Gilkes Romero has delivered a further draft of her play exploring racial inequality and the criminal justice while Evan Placey's commission exploring the ageing prison population is at first draft stage. Our collaboration with King's College London and script commission will result in shooting a short film in 2022 to accompany their findings on the experience of cancer patients in prison to engage policy makers and the wider public with this issue. We have recently commissioned spoken word poet, Magero Otieno-Magero, to develop a script focusing on social media and its influencing factor on youth violence, highlighted as an ongoing issue from consultation with professionals and young cohorts. The production will tour to young people in March 2022. Our research into family courts continues with the aim of commissioning a play in the spring.

Having completed *Dues* in May, the short film toured to schools, alternative provision and youth organisations in Harrow, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Greenwich, Hackney, Hounslow and Lambeth from October to November 2021 with further screenings scheduled for 2022. Q&As featuring members of the cast, creative team and ex-prisoners accompanied screenings in addition to the offer of creative workshops. Having not been able to arrange a face-to-face visit to YOI Isis, we worked with a senior governor to make the short film available via the prison's TV network to enable the young offenders to view it. A recorded Q&A with cast and crew is available watch alongside the film in order for this cohort to engage with a discussion about its themes. The film is also being submitted to festival around the world.

Our work with long-term partners will continue in the year ahead, including YOI Isis as above, Jubilee Academy, Saffron Valley, The Helix and Woodbridge Park PRUs, alongside the ongoing offer of online one-to-one interventions which are in high demand as well as bespoke projects. The pilot of a Young Studio, based on our existing and highly successful model for ex-prisoners, will mark a new and exciting departure.

As far as the organisation is concerned, we will be undertaking an EDI audit in the early part of 2022 with a view to diversifying our governance through recruitment to include more Trustees who have lived experience of the issues we tackle and who reflect the demographic of our participants and ensuring an embedded inclusive workplace culture.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Synergy Theatre Project is a charitable company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 February 2001. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association all of the trustees shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting. Retiring trustees may offer themselves for immediate re-election. Trustees are recruited according to the range of skills and experience required to ensure the organisation's objectives are achieved. New trustees, alongside the existing Board members, apply their knowledge and expertise to Synergy's long-term strategic planning and implementation.

The following trustees were in office at 31 May 2021 and served throughout the year:

Jules Carey
Paula Hamilton
Cliona Roberts
Jonathan Smith (Chair)
Deborah Samuel
Gaby Sumner
Catherine Thornborrow
Company Secretary: Esther Baker

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a briefing on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisation

The board of trustees meets quarterly and determines policy. An Artistic Director and General Manager manage the day-to-day operations of the charity with support from the Learning and Engagement Managers (Adults and Young People), New Writing Manager, Learning and Engagement Assistant and Development Manager. To facilitate effective operations, they have delegated authority, approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and artistic performance related activity.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are the Board of Trustees who do not receive remuneration for their services and the senior management team (Artistic Director and General Manager). The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charity, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in other theatre companies of a similar size.

Risk Management

The trustees review the risks to which the charity is exposed on a regular basis. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Particular attention is focused on risk assessment of the charity's activities in schools and regulations and policies concerning the protection of children. A key element in the management of financial risk is the setting of a reserves policy and its regular review by trustees.

Financial review

The financial performance of the charity showed a decrease of £74,571 (14.8%) in total income and of £97,253 (19.4%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £26,450 in unrestricted reserves. These changes are attributable to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The principal funding sources were Arts Council England, Backstage Trust, BBC Children in Need, City Bridge Trust, Early Intervention Youth Fund (MOPAC), Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Harrow Community Action, Harrow Safer Neighbourhood Board MOPAC), Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Pickwell Foundation, Violence Reduction Unit (Home Office) and Wates Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks

The balance sheet on page 16 shows that, at 31 May 2021, Synergy held net current assets of £162,214 (2020: £135,764).

Reserves Policy and going concern

The charity operates controls that ensure costs are allocated to each grant supported project. Grant prepayments represent donations allocated to ongoing projects scheduled for completion in subsequent reporting period(s). The charity commences virtually all of its projects after obtaining and receiving grant funding. This means that the charity has historically always maintained high levels of liquidity. The salaried personnel, contracted performers and professionals are fundamental to the continued delivery of projects and also obtaining grant funding. The charity expends all grant income on the relevant projects and their strategy is to build up reserves from the unrestricted income it generates, largely from fees, and meet our target of 3 months' costs. However, given the current pandemic situation both the level of reserves held, and what should be the ideal level held for the charity, will be kept under constant review in the coming year.

The trustees are of the view that the charity is a going concern. Covid-19 impacted the charity as recorded in the Financial Review above. The Trustees have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has enabled all key and experienced staff to be retained. Income has remained steady. Services provided have, where appropriate, been delivered online. The continued progress of the vaccination programme has led to the easing of restrictions and the return of direct face-to-face provision of services. As the pandemic wanes activities will quickly revert to previous levels. Hence, overall Covid 19 is not expected to have a significant impact on the charity.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included in the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial information.

The trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enables them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Board of Directors, who are directors for the purposes of company law and trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 3.

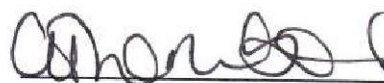
Approval

These accounts are prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and constitute the annual accounts required by the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 31 January 2022 and signed on their behalf by:



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Catherine Thornborrow
Director and Trustee

Independent examiner's report to the members on the unaudited accounts of Synergy Theatre Project

I report on the financial statements of Synergy Theatre Project for the year ended 31 May 2021 which comprise the Statement of financial activities and Balance Sheet with the related notes set out on pages 18 to 22.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 13 the charity's trustees, who are also the directors of Synergy Theatre Project for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed. The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and;
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below. Due to Covid-19 my examination was conducted remotely. The charity's accounting system was made available online and key management were available for interview by telephone and via Zoom video calls and I was provided with copies of documents requested. This made the process more time consuming but did not impair my statement.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 386 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Robert McGinty, FCA
Chartered Accountant
Cintra
Coley Avenue
Woking
Surrey GU22 7BT

31 January 2022

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Income:					
Donations	2	16,257	367,695	383,952	390,794
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		-	-	-	9,533
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		26,580	-	26,580	13,493
Fees		2,825	-	2,825	87,007
Theatre tax relief		17,500	-	17,500	4,641
Investment income		131	-	131	91
Total Income		63,293	367,695	430,988	505,559
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	42,977	42,977	42,261
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	36,843	324,718	361,561	459,530
Total Expenditure		36,846	367,695	404,538	501,791
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		26,450	-	26,450	3,768
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		135,764	-	135,764	131,996
Total funds carried forward		162,214	-	162,214	135,764

The statement of includes all gains and losses for the year.
All income and expenditure is from continuing activities.

Synergy Theatre Project

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	-	62,639
Bank Account		255,998	198,919
Total Current Assets		255,998	261,558
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(93,784)	(125,794)
Net Current Assets		162,214	135,764
Net Assets		162,214	135,764
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		162,214	135,764
Total Charity Funds		162,214	135,764

For the year ending 31 May 2021 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The notes on pages 18 to 22 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 31 January 2022 and signed on their behalf.



Jonathan Smith
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2021

	2021	2020
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	56,948	39,254
Interest income	131	91
Change in cash in the year	57,079	39,345
Cash at the beginning of the year	198,919	159,574
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	255,998	198,919

Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	26,450	3,768
Deduct interest	(131)	(91)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	62,639	13,762
Increase in creditors	(32,010)	21,815
Cash provided by operating activities	56,948	39,254

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2021

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined in FRS 102.

b) Preparation of accounts on a going concern basis

The charity has a sound financial position and maintains regular contact with its principal donors. The trustees have considered the requirement that the financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis, in particular taking regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. They have reviewed the expected level of activities for a year from the date of approval of these accounts and concluded that there is no material uncertainty to the charity continuing on a going concern basis.

c) Income recognition

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, there is sufficient certainty of receipt and so it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest on funds are recognised when they are received. Restricted Grants and Donations received in advance of performance or provision of other specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services

Donated services are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of the economic benefit from the use of the item by the charity is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. On receipt, donated services are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services of equivalent economic benefit on the open market: a corresponding amount is recognised in expenditure in the period of the receipt.

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is usually upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

f) Fund accounting

Unrestricted or general funds are available to spend on activities that further the purposes of the charity. Restricted funds are income which the donor has specified are to be used solely for a specific project or area of the Trusts work.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred. Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- costs of raising funds include salaries, direct costs and overheads associated with generating donated income
- Expenditure on charitable activities are the cost artistic productions, learning and engagement, training services and young people's projects undertaken to further the purposes of the charity.

h) Allocation of support costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, personnel payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts development programmes and activities. These costs have been allocated between the cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities. The basis on which support costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

i) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Individual fixed assets costing more than £5,000 are capitalised at cost. Depreciation is charged from the year of acquisition on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful life of four years.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

k) Cash at bank

Cash at bank represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the date of the acquisition.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably.

m) Pensions

The company established a defined contribution pension scheme during the year with The People's Pension. The pension charge represents the amounts payable by the company to the fund in the year.

n) Funds structure

The substantial majority of income is from grants from other charitable trusts. Other sources of income are fees from workshops, performances and courses as well as Theatre Tax Relief and donations.

Restricted funds are funds used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor or trust deed. There is a restricted fund for each donor.

Unrestricted income funds comprise those funds which the trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects. Unrestricted funds include designated funds where the trustees, at their discretion, have created a fund for a specific purpose.

2. Donations

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Arts Council England	-	35,000	35,000	13,500
Backstage Trust	-	-	-	12,000
BBC Children in Need	-	33,000	33,000	33,300
BBC Children in Need (Next Steps)	-	34,400	34,400	-
City Bridge Trust	-	-	-	47,650
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 2)	-	23,400	23,400	-
City Bridge Trust (LCRF 3)	-	38,830	38,830	-
Early Intervention Youth Fund (MOPAC)	-	7,000	7,000	9,000
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	10,000	-	10,000	20,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	20,000	20,000	-
Greater London Authority	-	24,000	24,000	48,000
Harrow Community Action (Coronavirus Fund)	-	10,000	10,000	-
Harrow Safer Neighbourhood Board (MOPAC)	-	2,500	2,500	5,995
Henry Smith Charity	-	12,500	12,500	25,000
John Lyon's Charity	-	20,000	20,000	25,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	33,000	33,000	34,000
Lloyds Bank Found'n Emergency Funds	-	6,000	6,000	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	-	-	75,000
Old Possum's Practical Trust (on behalf of Human Ensemble)	-	-	-	5,000
Pickwell Foundation	-	11,667	11,667	5,000
Royal Victoria Hall Foundation	-	-	-	1,000
Violence Reduction Unit (Home Office)	-	7,500	7,500	15,000
Wates Foundation	-	9,636	9,636	-
Others	3,257	1,345	4,602	14,790
Accruals & deferred income carried forward	3,000	37,917	40,917	1,559
	16,257	367,695	383,952	390,794

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Staff costs	-	42,977	42,977	42,261

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	30,026	-	-	-	30,026
Facilitator fees	-	32,615	2,130	61,415	96,160
Other costs	15,200	4,417	59	6,278	25,954
Support costs	38,135	79,597	5,185	70,561	193,478
Governance costs	3,142	6,559	427	5,815	15,943
	86,503	123,188	7,801	144,069	361,561

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	160,253	7,353	167,606	Staff time
General Office	33,225	1,524	34,749	Staff time
Fees	-	5,000	5,000	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,066	2,066	Governance
	193,478	15,943	209,421	

6. Employees and Staff costs and remuneration of key management personnel and Trustees

The charity considers the directors/trustees, Artistic Director and General Manager to be key management personnel.

No trustees received any remuneration in respect of their services in the year (2020: £2,500), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2020: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £98,915 (2020: £89,969).

Staff cost during the year were

	2021	2020
	£	£
Salaries and wages	193,883	197,035
Social security	12,668	14,958
Pensions	4,032	4,393
	210,583	216,386

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 4.6 (2020 5.2)

7. Debtors

	2021	2020
	£	£
Grants receivable	-	2,000
Theatre Tax	-	-
Other debtors	-	60,639
	-	62,639

8. Creditors due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Tax & social security	5,110	5,795
Trade creditors	29,697	20,105
Grant prepayments	58,977	99,894
	93,784	125,794

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2020 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2021 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	367,695	(367,695)	-
Total restricted funds	-	367,695	(367,695)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	135,764	63,293	(36,843)	162,214
Total unrestricted funds	135,764	63,293	(36,843)	162,214
Total funds	135,764	430,988	(404,538)	162,214

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	197,021	58,977	255,998
Creditors due within one year	(34,807)	(58,977)	(93,784)
Total net assets	162,214	-	162,214