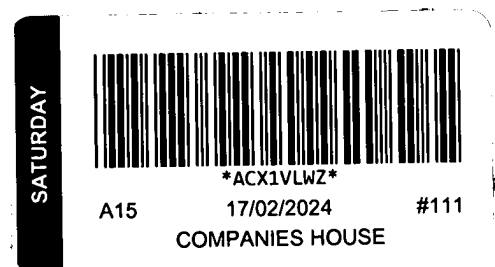


synergy theatre project

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2023



Brixton House, G.1 Carlton Mansions, 387 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8GL
Company no: 04219146 Reg'd Charity no: 1088692

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report

for the year ended 31 May 2023

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair) Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair) Tyrone Paul Alison Porter Ihsan Rahim Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Jonathan Smith (resigned April 2023) 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 Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Kit Withington Siân Henderson (maternity leave until April 2023) Danielle Baker & Alesha Pryce (maternity cover) Karl Smith Neil Grutchfield Julie Shaw (until January 2023) Nisha Oza (appointed June 2023)
Registered office:	G.1 Carlton Mansions 387 Coldharbour Lane London SW9 8GL	
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 2023.

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 23 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

What Synergy is doing is amazing! Director, Creative Circle Awards

Over the last year, and in the midst of the worst cost-of-living crisis in half a century after emerging from the pandemic and enforced lockdowns, Synergy has remained resilient and continued to offer a range of creative engagement opportunities while piloting and delivering new programmes in response to these challenges and producing acclaimed artistic work with partnering organisations, supported by longstanding and new funders.

These crises continued to have a devastating effect on the beneficiaries of our work and impacted severely on their wellbeing. In view of this, Synergy embarked on 'Comeback Comedy', a two-year programme of activity in both the prison estate and the community focusing on Covid recovery through comedy, promoting positive outcomes for mental wellbeing, social connections and building resilience. For young beneficiaries, we successfully piloted our Young Studio initiative, offering ongoing opportunities for creative training, work experience and mentoring.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 243 prisoners and ex-prisoners through our range of courses, performance, work experience and employment opportunities and reached prison audiences of 430. 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 2,500 through performance and activity, 301 of whom took part in workshops including 146 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects.

While continuing to navigate the challenging landscape, our work was shortlisted for the 2022 London Youth Awards, and our short film, *Dues*, exploring the issue of county lines was screened as part of the Chicago Children's and British Urban Film Festivals in November 2022. In July 2023 Synergy received three 2023 Creative Circle Awards (Gold, Silver and Bronze) for a promotional film about our work developed through the Media Trust.

PRODUCING

He Said She Said should be seen as a clarion call and is a play that as many young people as possible should see. ★★★★★ Theatre Weekly

As a result of his work on one of our previous ex-prisoner invitational courses with Soho Theatre, one of our writers of promise was commissioned by Paines Plough to write *One Off*, a play exploring the relationship between a prisoner and a night duty prison officer he never sees. We are hugely proud to have co-produced the play with Paines Plough and Live Theatre in Newcastle in November 2022. *One Off* received 4-star reviews in regional and national press including The Guardian and The Stage, the latter describing it as "a powerfully affecting, deeply humane production": <https://www.live.org.uk/whats-on/one>

Following the success in spring 2022 of *He Said She Said*, our young people's touring production by spoken word artist Magero Otieno-Magero, we revived the show after securing support again from John Lyon's Cultural Capital Fund. Using dialogue, verse and music, the play explores the impact of social media on youth violence and crime and proved hugely popular with young audiences. After a two-week tour to schools and PRUs across London from February to March, reaching over 1,300 young people and engaging them in accompanying Q&As and workshops, we performed daily as part of the inaugural Schools Week at Kiln Theatre, reaching a further 905. Having piloted our Young Studio programme there and also delivered a course for adults, this further strengthened our collaborative relationship with the venue, engaged new audiences and met our aim to maximise our touring work for young people.

In terms of commissions, Evan Placey delivered *Lifers*, a timely new play which holds a mirror to the crisis in social care by examining our ageing prison population. Synergy is in conversation with a number of venues over co-producing the play in 2024. Synergy also supported the ongoing development of *DisAble Me*, a new play about living with disability by a beneficiary

emerging from a series of Soho Labs, in addition to *Penned Up* by Danusia Iwaszko, inspired by her extensive experience of teaching playwriting for Synergy in prisons.

Synergy collaborated in the previous year on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London (KCL) exploring the experience of cancer patients. This resulted in *Cancer Cells*, a short by Evan Placey written in response to the NHS Trust's findings from the research. The findings are due to be published in *The Lancet* and the film screened at the House of Lords in May 2024.

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

I have recently come off anti-depressants, having been on them for four years. I genuinely put my improved mental health partly on being fortunate enough to access this course.

Comeback Comedy prison course participant

The year's activity began with the launch of 'Comeback Comedy', our national competition and call-out for 10-minute comedic plays, supported by a number of comedy playwriting courses and broadcast of recorded video tutorials through prison TV networks to provide essential tools and encourage entries. This programme of work, supported by Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund, marked the first time that Synergy has used comedy as the basis for its scriptwriting courses which produced some highly positive outcomes and where participants discovered a freedom to tackle difficult subjects through humour in a new way that was liberating and light. The programme also focusses on improving mental health and wellbeing and feedback indicated a 92% improvement in participants' mental health at the end of projects. Our competition winners' event at Soho Theatre in March comprised the winning scripts performed by professional actors.

During the year we have experienced some outstanding work from participants, particularly the high standard of scripts submitted and the performance project using *Road* by Jim Cartwright. This project and choice of script highlighted the impact of poverty on mental health, leading to addiction and depression. It felt particularly pertinent being performed by a group of individuals impacted significantly by the cost-of-living crisis. The project also established a new relationship with Chelsea Theatre, a community-based venue offering competitive charity rates for future work, and our wider Studio programme has strengthened Synergy's partnerships over the last year, increased our repertoire and network of industry professionals.

In collaboration with partners, Morley College, Sara Putt Associates, Soho and Kiln Theatres and The Lot, Synergy delivered 14 courses both within the prison estate at HMPs Belmarsh, Highpoint, Littlehey and in the community ranging from Introductions to Acting, Playwriting, Comedy Scriptwriting and Workshop Facilitation to Advanced Playwriting and family-focused projects. Engaging with families proved especially significant and we received much feedback expressing gratitude for the positive impact that working with Synergy had had on their family member in prison or outside. At some end-of-course sharings family members stood and expressed very emotionally how they felt hope for the future of the respective participants and would support and encourage them to continue their engagement with us.

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

- 13 working with Synergy to support delivery of our young people's programme;
- Five gaining acting and backstage roles on our production, *He Said She Said*;
- Three ex-prisoners gaining work with Synergy as role play actor facilitators to deliver training for Catch22 staff on Managing Challenging Conversations and Behaviour;
- 14 gaining work with Synergy as cast and crew on a promotional film for Synergy Studio, supported by the Media Trust, which received three Creative Circle Awards;
- Two auditioned for LAMDA, one of whom was awarded a scholarship on their Performing Arts Foundation course;
- The writer of *One Off* subsequently on commission with Orange Tree and Live Theatres and developing projects with BBC and Film Nation;

- Two working regularly as professional actors, another as a film extra, a fourth as a stage-hand with Connections Crew, and three gaining work as crew at Brixton House;
- Two gaining acting roles on an information film about prisoners and oral health for Dental Public Health and the Primary Care Institute of Dentistry;
- Three playing roles in The Brigstow Institute's short film, *The Wounds We Keep*;
- Two supported with subsidised places to take part in an external playwriting group;
- One working in script development at Netflix and seed-commissioned by Defibrillator;
- One co-producing *Going for Gold*, winning the 2023 Fuse International Best of Brighton Fringe Theatre Award; Best Production, Producer and Male Lead at the 2023 Black British Theatre Awards.

In addition, Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 27 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. Following on from the Advanced Playwriting Invitation group all nine participating writers received further dramaturgical meetings with directors, delivering full length plays and receiving further professional development advice.

Synergy partnered for the fifth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 28 entries to a range of readers for shortlisting and judging by a panel with written feedback sent to each entrant and the offer of future script development from our New Writing Manager. The winning plays were celebrated at script-in-hand readings by professional actors at HMP Wymott and the Royal Court Theatre in November.

Young People's Programme

It's given her confidence and the ability to make new friends and it has also helped with her anxiety. I've noticed that since doing course she's more determined to succeed in life it's given her an alternative which is hard to find being from a family that don't have privileges.

Parent of a Young Studio member

The year began with the culmination of a series of screenings of our short film, *Dues*, which focuses on county lines together with accompanying workshops to explore the issue in greater depth. The film, which Synergy made in the previous year, was screened as part of the Chicago Children's and British Urban Film Festivals in November 2022, enabling both greater and wider geographical reach. *Dues* has since been uploaded to our website as a free resource to accompany our education pack containing information around grooming, recruitment and exploitation and signposting to support wider learning around county lines.

Synergy continued working through embedded relationships with partners, Woodbridge, The Helix and Saffron Valley Collegiate PRUs, delivering longer-term creative projects in response to the revival and tour of our theatre production, *He Said She Said*, using spoken word, acting and filmmaking. The play encourages young people to think about issues relating to youth crime including social media, gang violence and grooming. Partner feedback noted high levels of students, often very disengaged, engaging fully with our projects and maintaining high retention rates. Staff comments included, "Synergy always manages to engage our learners and they look forward to sessions" and, "it offers them something different that they don't learn in lessons". 80% of the young people reported that their confidence levels had increased, and staff stated that taking part in the projects had made their students feel more positive about their learning with one teacher commenting, "Three of the participants felt positive enough to have joined the performing arts club at school as a result of their growing confidence on the project".

Attendance and retention rates were similarly exceptional at YOI Isis where we delivered a comedy scriptwriting course as part of our Comeback Comedy programme, particularly with one wing known to prison staff as the least likely to engage positively in education. The course garnered highly favourable feedback from one of the prison officers who commented, "To have that many guys in a room together, and for there to be no major incidents during the whole course, was impressive. The guards were all sceptical to start with... but the fact they engaged the whole time, they turned up each week and there wasn't any incidents really says something about what you do". One of the participants, dyslexic and permanently excluded from school 12

years earlier, entered his script and won our competition. Having recently been released, we will provide ongoing writer development support.

Our online one-to-one work continues to be highly effective and engaged 13 young people at risk of offending during the year, including a cohort at Park Lane Primary at a challenging point of transition to secondary school. These creative one-to-ones appeal directly to the most vulnerable young people who may struggle in group environments, have sporadic school attendance or simply benefit from more individualised work. End-of-project sharings celebrate participants' achievements together with peers, staff and family members and carers. One parent commented, "My daughter has had a wonderful time given the opportunity to work with Synergy over the last couple of months and has grown in confidence so much".

Project activity over the course of the year has had the following impacts:

- 80% of the participants demonstrated shifts in attitudes towards crime;
- 80% of young people reported that they had learned a new creative skill, improved their communication and increased their confidence;
- 70% of young people requested to be referred on to further creative projects.

In addition to our group and one-to-one work, Synergy was approached by Saracens High School to deliver a day of participatory workshops using *He Said She Said* as a stimulus as part of their School Arts Week in October.

Young Studio

Losing his place at college caused my son to get into trouble with too much time on his hands. So, the opportunity to work with Synergy came at the perfect time and changed the landscape for him. He regained his focus and put his energy into something really positive which he yearns to continue. Parent and beneficiary on his son's work experience on *Road*

The pilot of our Young Studio, following the format of our successful Synergy Studio model for adult beneficiaries, included the delivery of three group projects to engage young people at risk who have previously taken part in our programmes delivered in PRUs and YOTs or creative online one-to-ones. Supported by National Lottery Reaching Communities, activity had been focused mainly in Harrow where we have longstanding partnerships, but we extended the programme to Lambeth where Synergy is based. This enabled us to deepen our connections in the borough and engage with youth organisations not previously aware of our work and from whom we can take referrals for future projects.

The first of these group projects took place at Kiln Theatre in summer 2022 and explored themes of cultural differences, individuality and community and culminated in a celebration of monologues, spoken word, rap and music. The project had a significant impact on the group; working with a smaller number allowed the team to focus more of the young people's individual talents and find ways for them to express themselves. Two of the participants went on to join Kiln Theatre's Young Company, and all members have been receiving individual support from Synergy's team in looking at pathways and finding further creative opportunities.

Alongside our performance project, *Road*, we were able to offer work experience to a young person – and son of a beneficiary – who had been cautioned by the police but expressed a particular interest in stage management. He worked as part of a professional stage management team on the intensive two-week rehearsal period and performances; he was responsible for props, marking up scripts and liaising with actors on a day-to-day basis. The stage manager he shadowed with was full of praise for his work ethic and his ability and we intend to offer him further work on our 2024 young people's touring production.

SYNERGY SERVICES

Seeing the change in some of the participants over such a short time gives me tremendous pleasure and reminds me why I choose to do the job I do. We need more opportunities to engage with projects such as Synergy, the benefits of these projects are really tangible."

Learning & Skills Manager, HMP Wayland

In terms of the commissioning of our work and following the slow opening up of the prison estate in 2022, Synergy secured six commissions for course delivery during the reporting period at HMPs Highpoint and Littlehey as well as HMPs Belmarsh and Brixton, establishing new contractual relationships. Presenting a modest start to rebuilding both this area of our work and our stream of earned income, successful delivery at the establishments has since resulted in further interest from these and others including HMPs Gartree and Wayland.

During the course of the year, Synergy was commissioned to provide actors for the creation of two informational films; one concerning the DfE's reading framework and the other for the Dental Public Health and Primary Care Institute of Dentistry at Queen Mary University of London to improve *the oral health of community returners*. We were commissioned again by CAPA Global Education Network's London Centre to collaborate on a devising project over three months with their international students in response to Synergy's work and its beneficiaries' lived experiences, culminating in performances of each group's work in December.

Synergy was also commissioned by Catch22 to deliver programmes of role play training for their staff with our ex-prisoner facilitators on communication and interpersonal skills focusing Managing Challenging Conversations and Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We can't thank you enough for this amazing intervention.

Teacher, Ormiston Latimer Academy

Synergy undertook an EDI audit, led by Ngozi Lyn Cole of GLT Partners, in the previous year and this actively supported our drive to recruit new board members and commitment to ensuring greater diversity in our governance, including individuals of the global majority and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system, to better reflect the communities we engage through our work. Alongside our own call-out, we worked with BoardLead, in partnership with NCVO and Trustees Unlimited, to identify potential trustee candidates from the corporate sector. In September 2022, we welcomed four new trustees from a diverse range of backgrounds with diverse skills and experience including legal and corporate. We subsequently planned a programme of training with GLT Partners, engaging both staff and trustees, which offered practical sessions looking at EDI concepts (protected characteristics, intersectionality and anti-racism), unconscious bias, and inclusion involving discussion around gender and sexuality.

In terms of the funding landscape, we are acutely aware that the environment is fiercely competitive. Synergy appointed a new Development Manager who took up the post in June 2023, relieving pressure on both the Artistic Director and General Manager while providing near full-time capacity for the first time in Synergy's history and scope to investigate new sources of funding to diversify our income further with a view to strengthening the organisation's long-term financial sustainability.

FUTURE PLANS

The play's raw intensity, its barbed wire humour, its characters' mix of brutality and vulnerability, the hot blood coursing through its veins and its sense of despair infused ultimately with a shot of hope make this – well, a one-off. British Theatre Guide on *One Off*

During the coming year, and with our strategic aim to increasing our producing output in mind, we have a number of commissions coming to fruition and have recently introduced a dynamic group of artistic associates – 60% global majority and female identifying – in order to bring greater diversity in programming decisions and facilitate access to other creative partners and theatres in order to open up opportunities and raise our profile.

In terms of commissions, we are seeking co-producing partners for Evan Placey's *Lifers* and will be touring *Followers*, a new play by Sonali Bhattacharyya looking at the rise of online influencers who promote misogynistic rhetoric and the risk to teenagers, to schools across London in spring 2024. Dexter Flanders has also delivered his first draft of a play examining family courts.

Our Learning and Engagement programme for adults will comprise comedy-focused activity including a theatre production in prison, acting and playwriting courses in both existing partner prisons including HMPs Littlehey and Thameside, new partners HMPs Gartree and Wayland and delivery in the community with Soho Theatre, Dante or Die, Morley College and LAMDA. Building on relationships forged through our Young Studio activity, we intend to expand our work in the Lambeth borough where we are also based.

With a view to facilitating further growth in our young people's programme, we expanded our team and appointed a Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator in July 2023, a new role created to increase placement and employment opportunities for beneficiaries. We subsequently appointed a full-time Learning & Engagement Co-ordinator in September, an additional new post to both increase capacity and support our Learning & Engagement Manager who returned in April 2023 after maternity leave to work part-time. This expansion in our staff team represents a growth of nearly a third and is aligned with plans set out as part of our National Lottery funding. While we believe we foster a good and healthy workplace culture, we are aware with staff expansion of the need to review our existing procedures and policies and are in the process of doing so over the next few months.

In light of the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our beneficiaries and following discussions with our board in response to our EDI work, two trustees, both former beneficiaries are establishing an advisory group. We aim to host an initial meeting and engage a number of project beneficiaries and family members we have met during the course of last year's activities.

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 then 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 2023 and served throughout the year:

Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair)
Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair)
Tyrone Paul
Alison Porter
Ihsan Rahim
Clíona Roberts
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 within the agreed annual budget.

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 and is working on the creation of a formal risk register. 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 an increase of £22,583 (5.2%) in total income and an increase of £32,851 (8.2%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £21,776 in unrestricted reserves which is in line with the company's reserves policy.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon's Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Pickwell Foundation and Rayne Foundation to whom Synergy would like to extend its sincere thanks.

The balance sheet on page 15 shows that, at 31 May 2023, Synergy held net current assets of £216,034 (2022: £194,258).

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 6 months' costs. However, 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 and have determined that there is no material uncertainty that casts doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

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 15 February 2024 and signed on their behalf by:


Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee


Alison Porter
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 2023 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 17 to 21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and the independent examiner

As described on page 12 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.

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

15 February 2024

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income:					
Donations	2	18,533	372,775	391,308	383,227
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		1,483	-	1,483	-
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		-	-	-	3,038
Fees		49,050	-	49,050	47,041
Theatre tax relief		12,773	-	12,773	-
Investment income		1,412	-	1,412	137
Total Income		83,251	372,775	456,026	433,443
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	34,964	34,964	40,109
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	61,475	337,811	399,286	361,290
Total Expenditure		61,475	372,775	434,250	401,399
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		21,776	-	21,776	32,044
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		194,258	-	194,258	162,214
Total funds carried forward		216,034	-	216,034	194,258

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 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	23,046	42,550
Bank Account		297,801	310,564
Total Current Assets		320,847	353,114
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(104,813)	(158,856)
Net Current Assets		216,034	194,258
Net Assets		216,034	194,258
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		216,034	194,258
Total Charity Funds		216,034	194,258

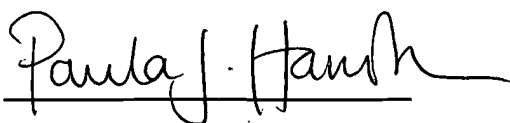
For the year ending 31 May 2023 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

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 17 to 21 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 15 February 2024 and signed on their behalf.



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	(14,175)	54,429
Interest income	1,412	137
Change in cash in the year	(12,763)	54,566
 Cash at the beginning of the year	 310,564	 255,998
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	<u>297,801</u>	<u>310,564</u>

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

	2023	2022
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	21,776	32,044
Deduct interest	(1,412)	(137)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	19,504	(42,550)
Increase (decrease) in creditors	(54,043)	65,072
 Cash provided by operating activities	 <u>(14,175)</u>	 <u>54,429</u>

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2023

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.

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 of staff 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 and governance 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 operates a defined contribution pension scheme. 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 2023 £	Total 2022 £
AB Charitable Trust	18,000	-	18,000	15,000
Arnold Clark Community Fund	-	-	-	1,000
Arts Council England	-	3,196	3,196	28,767
BBC Children in Need	-	33,626	33,626	32,800
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	500
City Bridge Trust	-	-	-	66,530
Comic Relief	-	64,687	64,687	-
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust	-	4,000	4,000	-
Field Family Charitable Trust	-	-	-	4,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Greater London Authority	-	7,500	7,500	46,500
Henry Smith Charity	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
Ironmongers' Company	-	-	-	9,180
John Lyon's Charity	-	35,000	35,000	34,500
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	35,583	35,583	33,000
National Lottery Community Fund: RC London and South East Region	-	43,825	43,825	-
Peter Sowerby Foundation	-	-	-	25,000
Pickwell Foundation	-	5,000	5,000	9,167
Rayne Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Build Back Better	-	8,000	8,000	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Supporting the Arts in Harrow	-	8,000	8,000	-
Others	33	-	33	2,692
Accruals & deferred income carried forward		34,358	34,358	9,591
	18,533	372,775	391,308	383,227

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Staff costs	-	34,964	34,964	40,109

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	44,777	-	-	-	44,777
Facilitator fees	-	61,786	5,120	35,538	102,444
Other costs	10,800	26,395	444	4,966	42,605
Support costs	35,522	83,831	4,744	74,983	199,080
Governance costs	1,853	4,371	247	3,909	10,380
	92,952	176,383	10,555	119,396	399,286

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	157,719	6,046	163,765	Staff time
General Office	41,361	1,586	42,947	Staff time
Fees	-	253	253	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,495	2,495	Governance
	<u>199,080</u>	<u>10,380</u>	<u>209,460</u>	

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 (2022: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2022: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £80,990 (2022: £84,366).

Staff cost during the year were

	2023	2022
	£	£
Salaries and wages	180,636	193,938
Social security	13,694	12,863
Pensions	4,399	4,119
	<u>198,729</u>	<u>210,920</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 5.7 (2022: 5)

7. Debtors

	2023	2022
	£	£
Grants receivable	3,196	7,500
Other debtors	19,850	35,050
	<u>23,046</u>	<u>42,550</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Tax & social security	5,375	5,813
Trade creditors	15,770	46,470
Grant prepayments	83,668	106,573
	<u>104,813</u>	<u>158,856</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2022 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2023 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	372,775	(372,775)	-
Total restricted funds	-	372,775	(372,775)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	194,258	83,251	(61,475)	216,034
Total unrestricted funds	194,258	83,251	(61,475)	216,034
Total funds	194,258	456,026	(434,250)	216,034

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	237,179	83,668	320,847
Creditors due within one year	(21,145)	(83,668)	(104,813)
Total net assets	216,034	-	216,034