

**synergy
theatre
project**

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 May 2024**

Synergy Theatre Project

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Synergy Theatre Project

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 May 2024

The Board of Trustees' presents its report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Trustees:	Keshina Bouri (Co-Chair) Paula Hamilton (Co-Chair) Tyrone Paul Alison Porter (resigned October 2024) Ihsan Rahim Clíona Roberts Deborah Samuel Gaby Sumner Catherine Thornborrow (resigned March 2024)	
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 Co-ordinator (Young People) Learning & Engagement Assistant (Adults) Progression & Pathways Co-ordinator (Young People) New Writing Manager Development Manager	Esther Baker Jennie McClure Kit Withington Siân Henderson Shane Wheeler-Osman (appointed September 2023) Karl Smith Olivia Fraser (until September 2024) Neil Grutchfield Nisha Oza (until August 2024)
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 2024.

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 24 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, ex-prisoners and young people at risk of offending through **Synergy** and **Young Studios** with a focus on skills development, 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 bespoke and commissioned work through **Synergy Services**, including ex-prisoner role play training for criminal justice professionals and a range of creative collaborations, drawing on our expertise to feed into research and education and contributing to systemic change and wider public debate.

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

I don't think you understand what this has meant to me. I suffer from depression, but this has made me excited to wake up. Prisoner cast member on *The Gut Girls* production

While continuing to navigate the cost-of-living crisis and an increasingly challenging financial landscape as a result Synergy has over the past year delivered a programme of activity which has engaged a range of cohorts and resulted in some outstanding work, from collaborating with the London Pathways Unit in HMP Brixton which provides services for offenders who have complex psychological difficulties (with or without a formal diagnosis of personality disorder), embarking on year-long drama provision at HMP Gartree for prisoners serving life sentences to producing our first play within the prison estate since before the pandemic with a group of women prisoners at HMP Downview.

Synergy delivered the second of its two-year 'Comeback Comedy' 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 our beneficiaries who continued to be impacted severely by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. For young beneficiaries, we built on the successful pilot of our Young Studio initiative in the previous year, offering ongoing opportunities for creative training, work experience and mentoring.

In terms of engagement during the year, Synergy worked with 186 prisoners and ex-prisoners (116 and 70 respectively) through our range of courses, performance, work experience and employment opportunities and reached prison audiences of 603. 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 3,300 through performance and activity, 527 of whom took part in workshops including 262 young people at risk and young offenders who took part in longer-term and bespoke projects and Young Studio.

Synergy introduced a new Associates initiative at the beginning 2024, placing five dynamic theatre-makers – identifying as 60% global majority and 60% female – at the heart of our work and meeting our strategic aims to broaden our programming and expand our networks. We are ambitious to produce more new work that speaks to universal concerns and challenges public perception of criminal justice and intend for this diverse group of talented artists to initiate and unlock creative projects to fuel our artistic programme.

During the year our work was shortlisted for two 2023 London Youth Awards while our commissioned play, *He Said She Said* by Magero Otieno-Magero, won the 2024 Off West End (Offies) Award for Theatre for Young Audiences (Writing), and our Synergy Studio promotional film won a 2024 Smiley Charity Film Award.

PRODUCING

It has reminded me that the arts are transformative, it provides hope and opportunities, and it changes people. Prison Governor, HMP Downview on *The Gut Girls* production

Synergy toured *Followers*, a new play by Sonali Bhattacharyya looking at the rise of online influencers who promote misogynistic rhetoric, the risk to teenagers and impact on criminal behaviour, to schools across London from February to March, supported again by John Lyon's Cultural Capital Fund, reaching over 3,300 young people through performances, post-show Q&As and accompanying workshops. The production, following our proven model, featured a cast and crew of professional creatives and individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice system, and Q&As provided young people the opportunity to ask questions about the play as well as speak with the company which garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Our production of *The Gut Girls* by Sarah Daniels marked a joyous return, following the pandemic, to producing theatre in prisons. The play traces the lives of women working in a gutting shed and examines issues of power, exploitation, class and gender in Victorian England and resonates for its reflection on the struggle for freedom and fairness today. The project created a real sense of community in the prison with prisoners and staff commenting on the excitement it generated in the run-up to the show and afterwards. This contributed to the

improvement of the women's self-esteem, helping them to feel humanised in the prison after previously feeling isolated and ignored.

Working with the women in HMP Downview on the production served as a reminder of the transformative effect of engagement with theatre on participants, in turn challenging and inspiring audiences and shifting prison staff's perceptions of both the participating prisoners and the use of the arts, creating legacy by paving the way for future creative projects and also launching the beginning of the institution's year-round performing arts provision. Staff from other prisons attending the performances, including HMPs High Down and Belmarsh have since requested similar work.

In terms of commissions, we finally found a home in Southwark Playhouse for *Lifers*, Evan Placey's timely new play which holds a mirror to the crisis in social care by examining our ageing prison population with the production programmed in autumn 2025. Dexter Flanders delivered the first draft of his play examining the complexities of family courts and Ambreen Razia was also commissioned to write our 2025 play for young people.

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Synergy Studio

Through this experience I have learnt to have more self-confidence, aptitude and self-respect as this has given me another skill which I didn't know I had within myself. I also think this drama programme should be rolled out to be taught in all prisons as it gives hope and faith in a very hopeless place. Prisoner participant, writing course, HMP Thameside

The delivery of the second of our two-year Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Funded 'Comeback Comedy' programme formed the main focus of Synergy Studio. The use comedy, an integral part of the programme, enabled exploration of often difficult subjects in a new way while also improving mental health and wellbeing. Those engaging with our activity have produced and shared some outstanding work during the course of the year as writers, actors and comedians, leading to some brilliant opportunities. Synergy plans to seed commission two to co-write a comic play for potential production, one of whom took part in our stand-up comedy course with Soho Theatre and is now performing on the comedy circuit, provided warm-up act for Dara Ó Briain and also reached the semi-finals of *So You Think You're Funny 2024*.

In collaboration with longstanding partners Morley College, Sara Putt Associates, Soho Theatre and Dante or Die, Synergy delivered 19 courses both within the prison estate at HMPs Brixton, Gartree, Littlehey, Thameside, Wandsworth and Wayland and in the community ranging from Introductions to Acting, Playwriting and Workshop Facilitation to Audio Drama, Spoken Word, Stand-up Comedy and Film Production. In addition, we delivered a performance project using *Smithereens* by Sean Buckley in the community as well as the full-scale production of *The Gut Girls* which marked our largest projects in scale, investment and resources during the year.

The wider impact of our work on beneficiaries' families has also been particularly evident during this year's programme of activity, especially from those whose loved ones engaged with the prison production and Young Studio, and their feedback has been heartfelt and insightful. Having witnessed this and spoken at first hand to family members over recent years, we feel compelled as an organisation to develop some form of creative engagement offer for these groups and plan to pilot a families project over the course of the coming year.

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

- 12 working with Synergy to support delivery of one-to-one and group projects as part of our young people's programme;
- Four gaining acting and backstage roles on *Followers*, our production for young people;
- One being awarded a scholarship on LAMDA's Performing Arts Foundation course;
- One working as a stage-hand for Connections Crew and three as crew at Brixton House;
- Seven completing a two-month regional tour as performers and crew members on Dante or Die's production of *Kiss Marry Kill*;

- One becoming a 'Soho Theatre Artist' after participating in Synergy's comedy course, and is building her career as professional stand-up comedian;
- One winning Best Producer for *Going for Gold* at the 2023 Black British Theatre Awards;
- One joining the BBC Voices, Royal Court and Hampstead Theatre's Inspire writers programmes with his first play due for production by BBC Radio and a commission for TV drama episode.

Synergy's New Writing Manager has corresponded with and provided mentoring and one-to-one dramaturgy for 30 prisoner and ex-prisoner writers, responding to their plays at every stage of development. A three-day play development workshop for a new play by one of the writers resulted in her obtaining artistic representation.

Synergy partnered for the sixth consecutive year on the Stage Play category of the Koestler Awards, circulating the 31 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 Littlehey and the Royal Court Theatre in December.

Young People's Programme

This has been the best project partnership I have done in 20 years of teaching. The [ex-prisoner] facilitator is an invaluable asset to your company. The way he speaks to the students, whether it being constructive criticism or giving them confidence, is brilliant. ALL THE STUDENTS LOVED HIM. His lived experience enabled students to understand that if you focus and put your mind to something, you can achieve it. Partner project staff member

During the year Synergy continued working through embedded relationships with partners, Woodbridge, The Helix, Jubilee Academy and Saffron Valley Collegiate PRUs. We delivered a range of longer-term creative projects using spoken word, acting and filmmaking in response to our touring theatre production, *Followers*, which encouraged participants to think about dangerous online influencers, misogyny and the impact it has on young people's criminal behaviour. Our remaining projects explored county lines using our short film *Dues*, knife crime and how social media can escalate violence, using the same artforms to interrogate the themes.

Partner staff commented that engagement with our activity ignited the young people's enthusiasm for learning, keenness to continue creative projects and one said, "The support you provided has helped students to make better academic progress as well as improving their emotional, social and mental well-being and development... they have been given the opportunity to try something new and we have recognised an 'I can do it' approach that is required in so many young people today. It has helped them to nurture their qualities and abilities in a safe space with adults who believe in them".

One of Synergy's partnering PRUs received an Ofsted inspection during one of our sessions and the headteacher reported that Synergy was referenced in the follow-up meeting with inspectors regarding personal development and arts provision and that the workshops were a positive reflection on the school's culture. The teacher said, "It was fantastic to showcase the great work Synergy offers to our young people... the inspector was really impressed with the team and the level of engagement the young people were giving".

Synergy's online one-to-one work engaged 14 young people at risk of offending during the year, again including a cohort at Park Lane Primary at a challenging point of transition to secondary school. This work continues to be highly effective for these young cohorts, many of whom are care-experienced, have unstable home lives or a close family member in prison, all factors which can affect their future aspirations. The one-to-ones culminate in end-of-project sharings to celebrate participants' achievements with peers, staff and family members and carers. One partner staff member commented on one of the young participants, "The way he's been carrying himself since doing this course [of one-to-ones] is notably different".

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

- 85% 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 again by Saracens High School to deliver another day of participatory workshops as part of their Deep Learning Day.

Young Studio

It was wicked to have the opportunity to see young men like me being represented... made me see things in a much more important way. Young participant

Building on the pilot in the previous year of our Young Studio programme we delivered group projects and engaged young people at risk who had taken part in our activity delivered in PRUs, YOTs or online one-to-ones. While provision had previously focused mainly in Harrow where we have longstanding partnerships and became a board member of Harrow Culture Forum, we extended the programme into Lambeth last year. Having located to office at Brixton House in 2022, we have gradually extended our networks in the borough and forged reciprocal referral relationships with organisations engaging young people including Ingeus, The Reach Out Project, Young Urban Arts Foundation and Mainz World. Being an active member of the Lambeth Made network has enabled us to spread the word about our creative programme offers and also identify potential progression pathways for local young people engaging with our work.

Forging a new partnership with Knights Youth Centre in Lambeth which actively encourages young people to take a positive role in their community, the first of our group projects engaged their young cohort in spoken word. Working with two professional artists and an ex-prisoner support facilitator and using *Dues*, our short film exploring county lines, the project culminated in recording participants' pieces and celebrating them in a sharing. During May half-term we worked again with Kiln Theatre and delivered a filmmaking project, engaging young people in intensive week-long activity and working towards an online premiere and screening. Our Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator worked one-to-one with each Young Studio participant to identify targets and goals and also reached out to parents and carers to arrange follow-up sessions with each family to look at pathways and further creative opportunities.

These opportunities within our organisation and beyond included:

- 10 gaining work on a collaborative project between Synergy, King's College London;
- One signing up for a programme to enable her to visit universities in New York over the summer to help her gain a scholarship to study medicine;
- One featuring in an advert for *Dove* following support to sign up to a film extras agency;
- Five engaging in one-to-one courses with Synergy, working with artists and ex-prisoner support facilitators to further develop their skills in acting, spoken word and scriptwriting;
- Two going on to write, produce and direct their own short films;
- One moving on to permanent part-time work.

We trialled work placements for young people as part of our production and tour of *Followers*, including the roles of Assistant Director, Assistant Stage Manager and Workshop Assistant, each shadowing the respective creative professional and gaining valuable practical knowledge and experience. The integration of these placements proved to be a hugely successful model and one which we intend to continue using going forward.

SYNERGY SERVICES

One of the most powerful things I have seen about healthcare in prison, ever.

Director of Research, EP:IC on *Cancer Cells* film with KCL

In terms of our work within the prison estate Synergy secured nine commissions for course delivery at HMPs Brixton, Littlehey, Thameside and Wayland as well as HMP Gartree, establishing a new contractual relationship to facilitate a 14-month drama programme. Building on the post-pandemic growth achieved in the previous year and restoring this stream of earned

income, successful delivery at the establishments has resulted in further commissions from these and others including YOI Werrington.

Synergy was commissioned during the year to provide 46 actors for the creation of two informational films; one for the Sentencing Council's innovative website, *You be the Judge* (<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/research-and-resources/you-be-the-judge/>), which provides insight into the sentencing process, and the other for the Department for Work and Pensions on physical security awareness to highlight safe daily working practices. 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 2022 Synergy collaborated on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded study with King's College London exploring the experience of cancer patients. This resulted in our production of *Cancer Cells*, a short film by Evan Placey written in response to the NHS Trust's research which was finally screened at an event at the House of Lords in May, and the findings published in world-leading medical journal, *The Lancet*, in June.

Synergy was commissioned again by King's College London to collaborate on a series of workshops involving groups of young people and practitioners working with young people interacting with the criminal justice system. These focused on their views on the use of data and how it may predetermine offending risks. The groups explored the findings of the research into early education and social services data and criminal justice data on repeat offending.

As part of their staff away day London Probation Service commissioned Synergy to deliver a presentation about our work. This included testimonials from three ex-prisoners on the impact that engaging with Synergy has had on their lives in order to inspire probation officers and demonstrate that the right support and referrals can redirect the lives of their service users.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Amazing. This is why I do the job I do. Learning & Skills Manager, HMP Wayland

At the beginning of the year, we successfully recruited a Learning and Engagement Co-ordinator who took up the role last September; this new full-time post was created to increase capacity in our young people's programme and support our Learning and Engagement Manager who returned to work part-time after maternity leave. This expansion in our staff team, following the earlier appointments in June and July of both a Development Manager and a Progression and Pathways Co-ordinator, resulted in embarking on a review, in collaboration with an HR consultant and former trustee, of our existing internal systems, policies and procedures towards ensuring a continuing positive organisational culture.

The inaugural meeting of our Associates took place in February with a second in June, and two members – Olivier and BBC Radio & Music Award-winners – have directed theatre productions for Synergy during the year; one directing *Followers*, our young people's show with a company of professionals and ex-prisoners which toured across London, and the other *The Gut Girls* with women prisoners at HMP Downview, enabling them to work within new contexts and demonstrating our commitment to supporting their ongoing artistic development.

In terms of our advisory network, we facilitated our first session with a group of beneficiaries to provide opportunity for reflection and discussion of ideas for future programming and wider organisational strategy. We intend to facilitate further sessions with professional facilitators and other cohorts impacted through our work such as beneficiaries' family members. These will feed into a wider review and help to identify current gaps in provision and areas for development.

FUTURE PLANS

Without Synergy, I don't know where I'd be today. I was introduced to playwriting through their course in 2018. In just under six years since, I've had two plays produced and two commissioned, gained a place in the BBC Writers Room and been given an episode to write on a series. Men and women from backgrounds similar to mine sometimes need lifelines to help realise their contributions and get started in the world. Former Studio participant

Looking ahead to the coming year, and still with the strategic aim of growing our producing output to the fore, we have a number of commissions in development and for production alongside fresh creative input from our Associates, and we intend to continue delivering our engagement programmes with longstanding partners and test new artforms, extend our offer to new cohorts and expand our pathways into training and employment for our beneficiaries.

In terms of commissions, we secured a three-day workshop at the National Studio to develop Dexter Flanders' play examining family courts and will be touring *Providers*, a new play by Ambreen Razia, to schools across London in spring 2024. The tour will culminate in our first week-long run at Brixton House, the venue where Synergy is based, and enable us to increase our profile, reach and engage young audiences and potential beneficiaries in Lambeth and neighbouring boroughs. This development will strengthen our relationship with the venue and its engagement team with a view to opening up more pathways and progression opportunities for our young beneficiaries in tandem with our increasing networks in the area.

Our learning and engagement programme for adults will comprise acting, stand-up comedy, playwriting and film production in the community in collaboration with longstanding partners, Morley College, Soho Theatre and Sara Putt Associates and, in direct response to beneficiary reflection and feedback, we intend to test courses using new artforms including podcasting and pilot a project, responding again to interest and demand, to engage prisoners' families.

Within the prison estate, we have several commissions for delivery in HMP Belmarsh, Brixton and Thameside, will near completion of the year-long contract at HMP Gartree and embark on an intensive programme at YO1 Werrington having been approached by the institution for creative intervention. We hope that the groundbreaking appointment of James Timpson, a consistent employer of ex-prisoners and Chair of the Prison Reform Trust, as prisons minister will bring positive change to the criminal justice system and for the beneficiaries of our work.

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 2024 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
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), Learning and Engagement Co-ordinator (Young People), Learning and Engagement Assistant (Adults), Pathways and Progression Co-ordinator, New Writing Manager 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 £109,099 (23.9%) in total income and an increase of £130,552 (30.1%) in total expenditure. This resulted in an increase of £323 in unrestricted reserves.

The principal funding sources were AB Charitable Trust, Arts Council England, BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief, Garfield Weston Foundation, Greater London Authority, Harrow Change Makers, 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 2024, Synergy held net current assets of £216,357 (2023: £216,034).

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 to 4 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 5 December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:


Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee


Gaby Sumner
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 2024 which comprise the Statement of financial activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of cash flows with the related notes set out on pages 14 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.

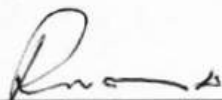
Independent examiner's statement

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

5 December 2024

Synergy Theatre Project

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 May 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Income:					
Donations	2	37,032	424,344	461,376	391,308
<i>Income from charitable activities:</i>					
Admission charges		-	-	-	1,483
Fees		85,701	-	85,701	49,050
Theatre tax relief		12,630	-	12,630	12,773
Investment income		5,418	-	5,418	1,412
Total Income		140,781	424,344	565,125	456,026
Expenditure					
Cost of raising funds	3	-	51,386	51,386	34,964
Expenditure on charitable activities:	4	140,458	372,958	513,416	399,286
Total Expenditure		140,458	424,344	564,802	434,250
Net Income/(expenditure) for the year		323	-	323	21,776
Reconciliation of funds					
Total Funds brought forward		216,034	-	216,034	194,258
Total funds carried forward		216,357	-	216,357	216,034

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 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	11,643	23,046
Bank Account		324,864	297,801
Total Current Assets		336,507	320,847
Current Liabilities			
Creditors due within one year	8	(120,150)	(104,813)
Net Current Assets		216,357	216,034
Net Assets		216,357	216,034
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds		216,357	216,034
Total Charity Funds		216,357	216,034

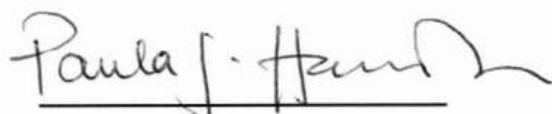
For the year ending 31 May 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

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 5 December 2024 and signed on their behalf.



Paula Hamilton
Director and Trustee



Esther Baker
Company Secretary

Statement of cash flows for year ending 31 May 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash provided by operating activities	21,645	(14,175)
Interest income	5,418	1,412
Change in cash in the year	27,063	(12,763)
 Cash at the beginning of the year	 297,801	 310,564
Cash at the end of the year - bank account	324,864	297,801

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

	2024	2023
	£	£
Net income for the year per the financial statement	323	21,776
Deduct interest	(5,418)	(1,412)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	11,403	19,504
Increase (decrease) in creditors	15,337	(54,043)
 Cash provided by operating activities	 21,645	 (14,175)

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2024

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 October 2019) – (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 into a separate entity. Once the contributions have been paid the company has no further payment obligations. The contributions are recognised as expenses when they fall due. Amounts not paid are shown in accruals in the balance sheet. The assets of the plan are held separately from the company in independently administered funds.

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 2024 £	Total 2023 £
AB Charitable Trust	18,000	-	18,000	18,000
Arts Council England	-	24,300	24,300	3,196
BBC Children in Need	-	25,093	25,093	33,626
Chesterhill Family Trust	500	-	500	500
Comic Relief Walkers Smiles Fund	-	89,438	89,438	64,687
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust	-	-	-	4,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	25,000
Greater London Authority	-	-	-	7,500
Harrow Change Makers	-	10,660	10,660	
Henry Smith Charity	-	40,000	40,000	40,000
John Lyon's Charity	-	40,000	40,000	35,000
John Lyon's Charity Cultural Capital Fund	-	40,000	40,000	-
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	-	-	35,583
National Lottery Community Fund:				
RC London and South East Region	-	91,584	91,584	43,825
Pickwell Foundation	-	6,659	6,659	5,000
Rayne Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	25,000
Supporting the Arts in Harrow	-	-	-	8,000
UK Online Giving Foundation	1,929	-	1,929	-
Young Harrow Foundation: Build Back Better	-	-	-	8,000
Donated Services	16,603	-	16,603	7,944
Accruals & deferred income carried forward	-	31,610	31,610	26,447
	37,032	424,344	461,376	391,308

3. Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Staff costs	-	51,386	51,386	34,964

4. Expenditure on charitable activities

	Artistic Productions £	Learning & Engagement £	Training Services £	Young People £	Total £
Production fees	70,055	-	-	-	70,055
Facilitator fees	-	45,556	19,580	47,834	112,970
Other costs	17,027	30,832	1,294	8,663	57,816
Support costs	44,270	119,424	5,465	92,142	261,301
Governance costs	1,911	5,152	236	3,975	11,274
	133,263	200,964	26,575	152,614	513,416

5. Support & Governance costs

	Support	Governance	Total	Basis of Allocation
	£	£	£	
Staff cost	223,389	7,069	230,458	Staff time
General Office	37,912	1,200	39,112	Staff time
Fees	-	300	300	Governance
Accountancy services	-	2,705	2,705	Governance
	<u>261,301</u>	<u>11,274</u>	<u>272,575</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 (2023: nil), neither were they reimbursed expenses during the year (2023: nil).

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year. The total remuneration of the key management personnel was £94,390 (2023: £80,990).

Staff cost during the year were

	2024	2023
	£	£
Salaries and wages	257,155	180,636
Social security	19,162	13,694
Pensions	5,527	4,399
	<u>281,844</u>	<u>198,729</u>

The average number of full-time employees during the year was 7 (2023: 5.7)

7. Debtors

	2024	2023
	£	£
Grants receivable	-	3,196
Other debtors	11,643	19,850
	<u>11,643</u>	<u>23,046</u>

8. Creditors due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Tax & social security	11,106	5,375
Trade creditors	20,470	15,770
Grant prepayments	88,574	83,668
	<u>120,150</u>	<u>104,813</u>

9. Analysis of movement in funds

	At 1 June 2023 £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	At 31 May 2024 £
Restricted funds:				
Donations	-	424,344	(424,344)	-
Total restricted funds	-	424,344	(424,344)	-
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	216,034	140,781	(140,458)	216,357
Total unrestricted funds	216,034	140,781	(140,458)	216,357
Total funds	216,034	565,125	(564,802)	216,357

10. Analysis of assets between funds

	General funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Current assets	247,933	88,574	336,507
Creditors due within one year	(31,576)	(88,574)	(120,150)
Total net assets	216,357	-	216,357