

Cotton Shed Trustees Report 2024



Chair of the Charity: Louise Parrish

Treasurer: Brian Miller

Trustees:
Victoria Foulds
Glyn Ellis
Corey Scott

Summary Report for the period April 2023 – March 2024.

Treasurer's Introduction

Cotton Shed Theatre Company has completed its 17th year of inclusive theatre workshops/sessions throughout East Lancashire.

During the last 12 months Cotton Shed has continued to focus on all activities within the Reaching Communities Bid and developed approaches to its delivery after the culmination of this funding.

This year we have engaged over 1000 people in workshops and shows through The Shed programme and they have performed to wonderfully appreciative audiences, often full houses. Feedback from members and parents has continued to be very positive, such as the following:

"Ollie struggles to attend most groups, and has had an unpleasant time at school recently. Cotton Shed is his safe space, and I don't know what we'd do without it. Ollie always leaves the sessions so happy and talks about all of his friends."

Parent comment

Without the long-term investment from Reaching Communities it is unlikely that Cotton Shed would have survived the hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is only because this funding was in hand, and the determination of long-standing participants that it is still in existence to deliver highly regarded, well-attended theatre workshops.

On behalf of the board, I wish to offer thanks to The Community Fund for this sustained support, together with our partners, Horse & Bamboo, our new artistic practitioners, our volunteers and our members.

Although the Reaching Communities funding came to an end in March 2024, with ongoing funding from The People's Health Trust and Lancashire County Council, we are confident that we can continue to deliver our workshop programme for the next year through to March 2025.

Partnership with Horse + Bamboo

Partnership with Horse + Bamboo to project manage the Reaching Communities bid delivery within its last two years and to consider strategic development and fundraising has bedded in during the last 12 months and remained a valuable connection for both companies.

This partnership has brought about new opportunities to engage further across the Rossendale Valley, offering workshop participants the opportunity to perform at This Here Festival in Bacup and at Horse + Bamboo's festival Waterfoot Wakes.

The contract between Cotton Shed & Horse + Bamboo is in place until July 2024 (based on 3-monthly review points at board meetings) and both organisations now share a trustee who sits across both boards. As we pass the end of this funding, we have achieved funding for all core workshop activity to continue until spring 2025 and Horse + Bamboo continues to work with the board on strategic review and recruitment.

Workshops

During the last period, workshops have been run for Beginners (4-8 years), Children (8-12 years), Youth (12-16 years) and Company 16+ years based on the following:

- Beginners - learn the basics of theatre skills, speech development and confidence-building in a nurturing and supportive environment. Cotton Shed employ a variety of EYFS methods to achieve this such as repetition, song and role play.
- Childrens - offers the chance for increased performance opportunity, and more collaborative learning. The children learn the art of devising and can experiment with the foundations of their theatrical skills. Within this group, Cotton Shed heavily focuses on emotional expression, identity, and social skills.
- Youth - takes a deeper approach to learning, focusing on the use of script and different theatrical practitioners. Many of our youth group articulated that they do not have the opportunity to complete a drama GCSE/further education at their schools, so they welcome and enjoy this learned method of workshop.
- Company - consists of all adults with additional needs. They are a strong cohort that work together to create art that they feel best represents them. Our company group is very much internally led, meaning that our practitioners interpret and oversee their work, but the practice is very much company driven.

Workshops are tailored to meet the needs and interests of members, ensuring that we focus on key development areas for individual age groups. Our main driving force continues to be inclusivity; guaranteeing that each member, regardless of need knows they are welcome, accepted, and respected. Cotton Shed continues to serve purpose to those who perhaps might not feel included elsewhere. Workshops offer the unique opportunity to truly belong without limitation, and wholeheartedly feel a part of something special.

A significant level of Cotton Shed Theatre Workshop members have additional needs, or some form of disability, equating to roughly half of Cotton Shed's total regular membership to theatre workshops.

As our theatre workshops have gained a loyal following, our focus has been on creating work that allows the members to feel they are in a 'cohort' of performers who work well together and make friendships along the way. Many members have begun to age-up into the older groups which has proved that our membership remains loyal and that our offerings of different age groups ensures that we are reaching as many people as possible. During the last 12 months, our practitioners are currently trying to grow our youth membership by offering taster sessions, and intend to soon be offering 'Arts Award'.

Performances & Sharings

Company Sharing - 'The Workshop'

Company group performed in an annual Christmas production that was created by the group and structured by the artistic practitioners. This year's performance was inspired by training from Chicken Shed, sparking inspiration for a performance with lots of comedy, moments of love and support, and also the feeling of monotony. The audience absolutely loved a hilarious take with members as Elves, and the style of performance gave lots of freedom to

members to improvise and have loads of fun on stage as the structure allowed for authentic moments to happen on stage.

Cotton Shed full performance - The Eras Tour

All groups were given the theme of 'time travel' in their workshops, which was used to create inspiration for a full cast performance. After workshopping ideas and exploring different eras throughout time, each group at Cotton Shed decided on their own era throughout time that they wanted to delve deeper into, and ultimately create a performance about. Beginners group explored Victorian schools, children's group looked at World War 2 whilst youth looked at auction halls throughout time, and Company of course chose the era of Mr William Shakespeare.

Each group took to the stage at Horse+Bamboo where a festival of events was hosted where the groups performed individually to their own audience.

This was a huge success as all of the other groups at Cotton Shed could watch each other and look at what they'd been working on in workshops. This social event was well received by the audiences including a raffle and a quiz; creating a fabulous sense of community!

Sign and Rhyme

Sign & Rhyme sessions took place on Mondays at Horse + Bamboo. The children and adults alike enjoyed being in the theatre space. The Tor View sessions on other days were more learned based, focusing on learning from the puppets. All Sign & Rhyme sessions retained a focus on signing through songs and different puppets, demonstrated by the performers. Cotton Shed practitioners learned a range of Makaton, BSL and baby signs, as a means of offering a variety of options to sign for parents, to suit their own needs.

Silver Shed

During the last year Silver Shed proved to be a vital part of what Cotton Shed has to offer. It's a project that remains popular, and in demand, with a large waiting list for Schools and care homes across the Rossendale valley. We are extremely proud of this project, and what it means to the participants.

This year Silver Shed consisted of elderly participants exchanging letters with a pen-pal who was assigned to them from a local primary school. Participants were carefully selected based on hobbies, interests and personality. These sessions were offered to care homes as a six-week block of recurring weekly visits, both for practicality and to increase the impact upon participants. Most importantly, it gave Artistic Practitioners a chance to work with residents in a more in depth and personal way, to really understand, translate and do justice to their stories onto the page.

Collaborations

Beware of The Doll (November 2023)

Cotton Shed Children's cohort worked closely with The Whitaker Museum to devise a performance based on 'The Cabinet of Curiosities'. On the 25th May 2023, the Children's group attended The Whitaker to gather inspiration for their own performance. They were able to sit where they wanted and write/draw about any inspiration that came to them from the museum space, or items situated within. These sheets were then gathered ready to use as inspiration in our workshops, bringing their ideas to life.

The puppet doll that resides in The Whitaker became the main source of inspiration for the children, and our poster design actually used one member's original concept. This event sold 70+ tickets and attracted members of the public who did not previously know about Cotton Shed. One spectator at the end even asked for the script to be sent over for her son to read, as he loved the story. That child now attends Cotton Shed on a weekly basis.

Overall, this project taught our children's group a huge amount about Theatre making. They developed their devising skills, chose their own characters and costumes, but most importantly they were crucial to the development of the story and its plot. The members all felt a sense of pride after this performance, and immediately requested a 'Beware of The Doll: Part 2'. This project strengthened our cohort and has solidified our Children's group as an essential part of Cotton Shed.

ICARUS (July 2023)

As part of the Waterfoot Wakes festival, our Company group devised and performed a physical retelling of the Icarus story. The festival's theme was 'elements' so we began exploring earth, water, air and fire through movement. We explored how our bodies might move to embody each element separately, and then we spoke about how we can assign narrative. During a discussion, a connection was made to Greek Mythology and its prevalence of the four elements, especially the way that God's and Goddesses exist as personified depictions of the elements.

This discussion led us on to the story of Icarus flying closely to the sun, and we quickly realised that the story involved all four elements.

Company used Greek choral devices to tell the story, and followed the beat of a single drum to keep time. This stripped back performance was very effective for a small scale performance at a festival, and excellent audience feedback was received.

Bacup & Stacksteads Carnival (June 2023)

Our Beginners & Children's group took to the stage at Bacup & Stacksteads carnival to perform pirate themed dances. The Beginners were actually invited to open the stage by the BASCO chair, by performing their dance from the 'Panto Puzzle' performance, they performed 'How far I'll go' from Moana whilst Children's group chose to perform as Pirates who were shipwrecked, to 'Under the sea' from The Little Mermaid.

Both groups performed to crowds consisting of over 100+ people, and had lots of fun whilst doing it. Cotton Shed even ended up at the front of the parade, which was an excellent opportunity for advertising and promotion. Our beginners group also appeared on the front page of The Rossendale Free Press.

Rossendale's Monologue Mash Up (April 2023)

This event was created in collaboration with two local drama schools: Footlights and Drama Llama, as well as Horse + Bamboo. The idea was to bring together local talent and to celebrate each other, rather than competition. This showcase allowed individuals from our Beginners and youth group to opt into a performance over the Easter Break, ensuring some activity ran throughout the school holidays. Members chose their own monologues, had a day to rehearse 1:1 with practitioners and then performed the day after. This style worked sufficiently well to plan the same activity to run again in 2024's winter season, solidifying this collaboration as an annual event.

COTTONSHED ACCOUNTS
01 JANUARY - 31ST DECEMBER 2023

	EXPENDITURE	RECEIPTS
Balance Brought Forward	correct with bank statement p346	£ 93,137.13
1 Salaries	£ 47,590.00	
2 Accommodation, Travel, Subsistence & trips		
3 Petty Cash		
4 Publicity	£ 12.46	
5 Communication	£ 709.37	
6 Insurance	£ 419.32	
7 Subscriptions/Membership		
8 Grants/Donations including Gift Aid & Virgin Money Giving		£ 32,576.41
9 Summer School		
10 Recruitment		
11 Training	£ 326.00	
12 Production Costs		
13 Production Income		
14 Resources	£ 6.80	
15 Sign and Rhyme		
15a Sign and Rhyme Parties		
16 Misc		
17 Friendshed (Active Communities)		
18 Near Neighbours		
19 Silvershed		
20 Cottonshed Room Hire	£ 3,405.00	
21 Shine Alive		
22 Audit of Accounts	£ 75.00	
23 Lotteries Registration		
24 Company Connect		
25 COVID-19 Refunds		
26 Sales		
27 Songwriting Shed		
28 Governance	£ 7,800.00	
29 Legal	£ 1,800.00	
	£ 62,143.95	£ 125,713.54
	correct with bank statement p	£ 63,569.59

Treasurer:

Julie Burton

Date

Examiner:

Natalie McMahon

Date



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Cotton Shed Theatre Company

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31/12/2023

**Charity no
(if any)**

1123037

Set out on pages

(If more than one page, please provide the page numbers on which the accounts are set out)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2023.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

22/10/2024

Name:

NATALIE McMAHON

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

N/A

Address:

14 HARLECH CLOSE, HASLINGDEN, ROSSENDALE B4 6TL

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.