



Registered Charity Number: 1150139

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2020

- **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**
- **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**
- **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Summary of Activities

TOPS On Stage have been staging Musical Theatre in Thurrock since the early 1960's and have gained a local reputation for producing high quality musical productions for the whole family.

This year has been an unprecedented year for TOPS On Stage as I am sure it has for everyone. I don't think that there has been a year when TOPS On Stage has not performed since it began in 1960 and in 2020 we nearly did!

We began the year in March 2020 with disappointment when our production of Oliver was cancelled on the Tuesday of our show week and theatres across the UK went dark. We hoped to get back to the stage on October 2020 but unfortunately the continued spread of the Covid-19 virus did not allow that and so we were unable to perform at all in this financial year.

So, we embarked upon a year of regular social quizzes and games via Zoom, we posted 2 fun performance videos across our social media channels and we also hosted a 'virtual' talent night.

In true TOPS On Stage style, the Executive Committee used this time to continue to further the aims of the group by launching a re-brand and re-organisation of the group to position us well when we are able to go back to resume our activities and go back to performing again.

We launched a brand new logo, a new website, and new social media channels to make us more accessible to current and prospective members and patrons in the local area and beyond. We now have our own Instagram and You Tube channel, in addition to our Facebook presence.

We also took this time to review and update our Governing Document (constitution) to ensure that it more closely reflects the aims and activities of our group in 2021. We re-organised the roles of the committee to ensure that the tasks involved with running the group were all accounted for. We also decided to change our Financial Year from April – March to January – December. The reason for this was to incorporate our two annual shows in the one accounting period and therefore provide more clarity around our financial management.

We were unable to meet for our AGM in May 2020 due to the virus and therefore we agreed to with the membership to hold our AGM in January 2021 where we would propose the changes to our FY and Constitution. I am pleased to say that these changes were voted on and adopted on 14/01/2021.

As we submit this report we are still in lockdown and unsure about the year ahead but remain positive and hopeful that we will be able to get back to rehearsals soon.

Chairman's Report March 2021

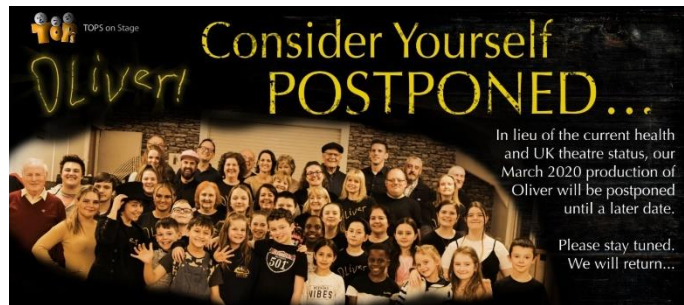
To say that the past 18 months have been eventful for TOPS On Stage is a huge understatement. We had no idea in March 2020 that we would still be facing this pandemic a year later, but here we are, locked down and still unable to get back to rehearsals and to perform in the theatre.

However, despite this lack of activity, to say that things have been quiet would be wrong. We have undertaken a re-organisation of the groups' management, constitution, membership and launched a re-brand. So even with no performances there has been loads happening.

In my experience, when you are faced with challenges or change, how you view these is often a determiner of how successfully you will overcome them.

We have had a number of setbacks, we have faced opposition, we have seen forced change in how we operate, we have had to learn things quickly – Zoom, remote socials, how to film ourselves, how to edit videos but and I am proud that the governing committee and the society at large have taken these challenges on positively and managed to find the opportunities in them to benefit the future success of TOPS On Stage.

Before we can even consider the future, you must reflect on the past, and if you can learn from mistakes, successes and objectively evaluate where the society are now in order to determine where we want the society to be.



When we were told to abandon 'Oliver', I must say the group really pulled together to support each other and I must thank you all for the way you dealt with the disappoint and the way you all comforted Mary who was so excited to play Nancy!

Of course, this was the right decision under the circumstances and TOPS on Stage will always put the health and safety of our members, crew, and audiences above everything else.

Thanks also to those who helped us get out of the theatre so soon the next day!

As a group, we decided that we have put too much work in and sold too many tickets for this show to simply abandon it and so thankfully we made arrangements to re-schedule the production in October 2020. As Oct 2020 approached we quickly realised that we would need to reschedule to March 2021 and as we approach March 2021 it is clear that we will once again have to rethink our options. We were humbled to find that 70% of our audiences have chosen to exchange their tickets for the new dates and so we have a ready-made audience of 738 people to perform to when we can.

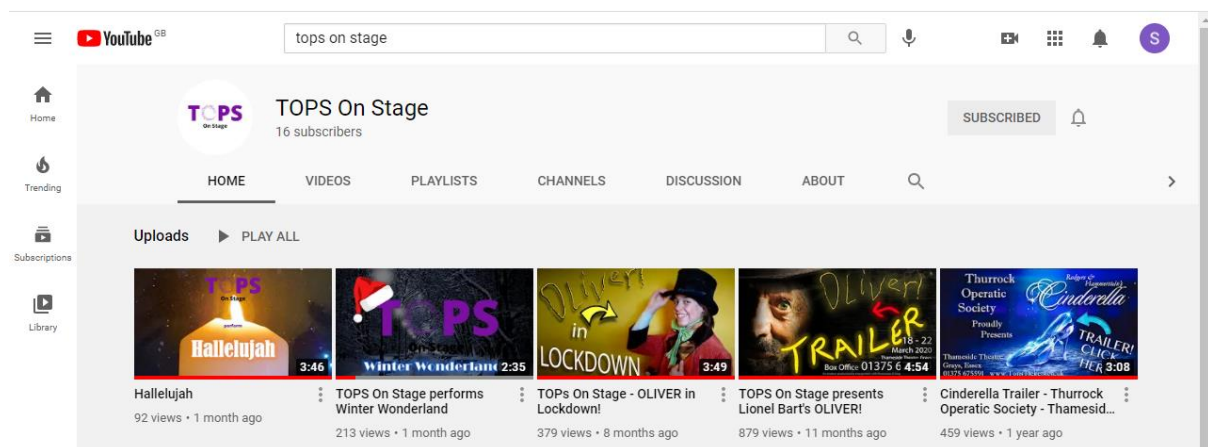
Like everyone at this time, TOPS on stage had to get creative and are doing what we can to stay positive and present for our members. We have enjoyed weekly social evenings where members have contributed online games such as quizzes, a panto quiz extravaganza, bingo, escape rooms and a game of 'Werewolf!' We even enjoyed a 'collab' game of Werewolf with Thurrock Courts Players!



We have also run several 'virtual' social meetings and have compiled several videos showcasing the talent in this group.

I must take this opportunity to express my thanks to everyone who joined us and contributed but I must give very special kudos to Mary – Not only has she been busy with a full time job and quietly plotting the downfall of anyone suggesting that Oliver will not go ahead – she has also masterminded all of our social zoom sessions and kept us all going during Lockdown – thank you!

As I said earlier, you often find success when you can turn challenges into opportunities and that is just what we have done. As we are entering a new era, this forced period of inactivity was the perfect opportunity to get busy with a re-brand. Thanks to the committee and to Emma and Mary for their work in developing a new logo, a new website and promoting us on our new social media channels – Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. We used the expert services of Davenport Web Design run by a friend and former member of TOPS On Stage – Amy Davenport.



We also took this time to get our house in order and position TOPS On Stage for success when we are able to resume our main activities. TOPS On Stage faced many challenges:

- Dwindling ticket sales
- Dwindling and constantly changing membership
- Dwindling finances
- Lack of support for social and promotional activities
- Structure in terms of tasks to be completed to ensure effective running of the group.

So, in response to these challenges the Executive Committee set upon revising the Governing Document (Constitution) and making some changes to our membership policies. It is hoped that these changes will result in TOPS On Stage being able to retain a 'core' membership regardless of whether those members perform in all, one or none of the productions throughout the year.

We also changed our Financial Year from April-March to January – December in order to allow both shows to appear in the same accounting period and help our financial management.

We held our AGM in January 2021 and was delighted to welcome more than 2/3 of our membership, our highest turnout for some time (must be thanks to lockdown!). We proposed the new Governing Document and change in Financial accounting period and was delighted that these changes were approved by the membership and adopted on 14/01/2021.

I must take this opportunity to thank the committee for all of their hard work, time, contribution, and friendship. You just have to look at the list of roles and responsibilities to realise how much work goes on behind the scenes to keep us running. They each bring something special to committee meetings, expertise, ideas, objectivity, wisdom humour and in Dawn's case Wine. Thank you.

We were sorry to see the resignation of three of our members during 2020. Mike Peat has been our Stage Manager since 1978 and Marion and John Hunting have been an integral part of the Executive Committee since 2009 and performed a lion's share of the work that needed to be done each year. We paid tribute to them at the AGM and I wanted to include those words in my report here:

Mike Peat

I think that trying to get the large Oliver set onto the Thameside stage was the last straw and unfortunately Mike Peat has decided to hang up hi backstage cans and torch and will be retiring. We have members and friends of TOPS that come and go and whilst we appreciate everyone's contribution there are just some that we need to make a big deal of – and Mike Peat is one of those people.

If you know Mike then you will know that he doesn't like to make a huge fuss, but Mike Peat first became a Stage Manager for TOPS back in 1978! I was one years old! He learnt all of his skills from TOPS and then took them to TTMS (a society I was also Chairman of for 10 years) where he also stage managed at the Thameside. So, it is going to feel very strange for me to perform at the Thameside without seeing Mike politely but firmly telling the cast to get out of the way! He has always been there for me!

He doesn't get paid (except in wine and beer) and despite popular belief Dawn does not 'make' him. He just likes to help, and he is there for every get in, every performance and every get out, and believe me it is hard work!! He is the master of hanging cloths, sorting out logistical set changes and the epitome of calm efficiency!

On behalf of everyone at TOPS On Stage, past and present we would like to formally thank you for everything you have done to support our shows. If we weren't locked down you would be getting loads of hugs and kisses from us all right now, but you'll have to make do with Dawn.

We will be delivering a very special thank you to in in a socially distanced doorstep visit in the next couple of weeks. Please join me in showing your appreciation for Mike!

John & Marion

John and Marion are another 2 of those members whose contribution to TOPS simply has to be celebrated!

John is just the man who can't say no – sometimes Marion has to do it for him. I'm just glad I got him to make my pallet staging for Oliver before he retired. Having the support of people like John and Marion when you direct a show is just wonderful. You can have a vision and they will make it happen. They both have such varied talents!

You just have to look in my shed which currently holds the Props storage to see a knife throwing board, sewing machines and a bed – a small selection of the remarkable props that John has made, and Marion has sourced. But that this the least of what they do. They are there at every rehearsal, they have their finger on every pulse, they run the box office, they help out with accounts, they gather and make props and set, they help with costumes, they store stuff, they transport stuff, they make tea and sell tuck, they help promotions, they serve on audition panels, they print marketing material, they apply for grants and fill boring forms out, they arrange insurance, they collect subs, they manage FOH and raffles, they run the TOPS library, they manage the charities commission and they accompany our NODA rep and Mayor at shows. I am so sure that I will have missed out some stuff too!

They then find time to go for walks, maintain a beautiful garden and look after chickens! I remember visiting them at home and Marion already had the script for our next production and was busy writing a props list! Do they make people like Marion anymore?

What will TOPS be without Marion & John? It will certainly feel very different, but we are lucky enough to be able to continue what we do with the example that they have both set.

I asked John to provide a few words

Prior to the year 2000 John & Marion had seen a number of productions on stage at the Thameside Theatre but John never had the chance to be more involved due to work commitments in London. His firm's relocation to Epping at about that time coincided with an article appearing in the Thurrock Gazette asking for anyone who might be interested in TOPS next production which was Ruddigore, March 2001 One phone call to a charming lady by the name of Jose Webb and that was that. I was made to feel very welcome amongst then strangers, apart from my brother Peter who joined at the same time. I've been in every production since, taking on both principal and chorus parts. The ones I particularly remember are playing the role of The Mikado when the scenery nearly collapsed on top of me saved only by quick backstage intervention. I reprised that role again later as a gangster in Chicago Mikado. Other roles I've enjoyed were Alfie Doolittle in My Fair Lady, Lillas Pastia in Carmen when I found myself crying on stage at the end death scene, the Kralahome in The King and I, which was the only time I've ever had a bronze body spray. Perhaps the most embarrassing was when I dyed my hair black for a part in Fiddler only to discover that it wouldn't wash out after the show. I received bemused looks for several weeks afterwards wherever I went. Apart from treading the boards there's been plenty to do behind

the scenes - building and making things when they weren't readily available - transporting scenery to and from the theatre - scouring boot fairs and eBay helping Marion to find props all of which has been fun thanks to good teamwork. In more recent times I've been responsible for processing Gift Aid claims on membership subscriptions via HMRC and also served as Vice chairman on the TOPS committee. There were also regular meetings with Thurrock Arts Council to ensure amongst other things that we could obtain council grants which were available.

Marion got involved immediately upon the sudden and unexpected death of Jose Webb in 2009 by taking on the responsibility as ticket sales co-ordinator. At that time, it was mostly in house activity until sometime later when a professional ticket agency (Ticket Source) was introduced. Countless telephone calls were recorded on our 24/7 system at home and it gave us the opportunity to meet and get to know many new friends and most importantly ensure that we got bums on seats.. The important position of Treasurer is essential for an organisation such as TOPS and when a former member departed, Marion was persuaded to take on this role in addition to her other duties. Much cash handling was involved especially around show time with heavy bags as well as many cheques being taken to the NatWest branch in Grays. The period around the end of March (yearend) was always a hectic and slightly stressful time until a balance was finally achieved. Having successfully fulfilled that role for a number of years Marion was somewhat relieved when someone else volunteered to take it over. Also, Marion acted as Front of House co-ordinator for many shows with her team ensuring that our patrons received a warm welcome and were gently persuaded to buy raffle tickets and a programme.

It's been a fun time for us both. We've seen many people come and go but are reassured to now see several fresh faces taking on the responsibilities of ensuring the continuity of what is now the only remaining musical theatre company in Thurrock.

Again, a socially distanced door stop gift will be delivered in the next couple of weeks. TOPS have made a contribution and Vanda managed to collect some donations back in March.

On behalf of everyone from TOPS On Stage, past and present we thank you so much for everything you did and you will be sorely missed, not just for the things that you did but for the people that you are.

We can't help but be positive for the future, we can't wait to finally bring Oliver! to the stage, we have lots of interest for The Addams Family and have already appointed a creative team – Vikki Purton and Clare Penfold and we also look forward to Legally Blonde and Betty Blue Eyes in 2022.

So when we return to normal, and we will, the future looks bright for TOPS On Stage and we are determined to enter a new phase of success for TOPS on Stage and I look forward to sharing this journey dominate the Thurrock Arts scene with all of our TOPS On Stage family.

Simon Lambert
Chairman
TOPS On Stage



Treasurer's Report for TOPS On Stage

Because of the change in our Financial accounting Year and because of the inactivity in our activities for period during this pandemic we have presented the accounts from 01/04/2019 – 31/12/2020 (21 Months)

The period has seen an overspend of (£2,398.87) which is 60% less than that which was reported on 31/03/2019 (£6,204.03).

Our postponed production of Oliver, as it stands, is showing a profit of £4,649.99 with the tickets already sold and transferred to the new dates.

We have paid licences for 'Legally Blonde' and 'Betty Blue Eyes'.

We currently have £13,826.47 in the bank (31.03.2019 £13,826.47)

Tops Financial Statement for the Year Ended 31st December 2020 (21 Months)					
£'s					
			Income		Expenditure
Break a leg message			45.00		
Business Premium Account Interest			106.16		
Grants			1,500.00		
membership & Show fees			5,810.00		
Ticket SALES			23,592.19		
Ticket refunds re oliver					-3,606.61
Gift aid reclaim			991.02		
T Shirts			173.00		
Raffle proceeds			332.00		
show programmes			200.00		
liberettos/Scores/Scripts			53.38		
Tuck Shop			705.76		
Insurance Claim-Oliver Abandement			1,818.00		
Music & Props					-532.47
Costumes					-3,526.77
Advertising, Publicity & Printing					-2,358.99
Show Musicians					-1,680.00
Audition & Rehearsal Pianists					-30.00
Sound Engineer					-2,230.42
Scenery					-1,000.00
TheaterHire					-9,907.20
Royalties/Licensing					-5,045.57
Show Directors Fees					-2,850.00
Musical Directors Fees					-1,219.92
Transport and fuel					-269.30
insurances					-452.41
Rehersal hall rent					-2,115.50
DBS Checks					
Membership of organisations					-200.00
Web site - Build design Maintainance					-250.00
Sundry items					-450.22
TOTALS			35,326.51		-37,725.38
The above shows that Expenditure exceeded Income by					-2,398.87

Statement of Funds Held by TOPS on Stage (formerly known as Thurock Operatic Society)

Registered Charity No 1150139

	1st April 2019 12 Months	31st December 2020 21 Months
Nat West Current Account	5.30	0.00
Barclays Current Account	696.35	897.11
Cheques issued but not presented	1,566.65	0.00
Paypal Charity Account	9.28	9.28
Virgin Money Deposit Account	13,813.92	0.00
Barclays Deposit Account		12,920.08
Petty Cash	133.84	0.00
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-2,398.87	
	13,826.47	13,826.47

Statement by Independent Examiner

I have examined the financial records of TOPS and hereby certify that the details represent a true and accurate record of its affairs during the past year.

Name Signed and printed:



Courtne Wright

Date:

13/1/2021

Due to current lockdown I have been unable to see supporting documents for transactions between March 2020 and December 2020. But have seen the bank balances.

not yet verified