



On Stage

Chairmans Report

Jan – Dec 2021

So, I ended my Chairmans report last year with the following:

‘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’

And we did return to normal, the future was and remains bright for TOPS and we are still planning to dominate the Thurrock Arts Scene with even more members of our TOPS On Stage Family!

What a year we have had, thankfully a year that saw us finally get back on the stage! Immediately following our AGM last year we were unsure when or even if we could get Oliver up and running again – our weekly Zoom sessions kept us going, especially our games of Werewolf – thanks to all those involved in keeping us connected remotely during these times! Thankfully Boris’ roadmap saw restrictions lifted in June and we were delighted to get back to rehearsals in July ready for our show week in October 2021 – 19 months after the show was closed on the Tech rehearsal at the outbreak of Covid!

I was so pleased to welcome most of the cast adult and kids back and was sorry to lose a few cast who could no longer commit.

To fill the gaps we held our first round of New Members Auditions on 25/7 and very successful they were too! We were fortunate to welcome Sam, Kirstie, Jenny, Cerys Wilking as our Bet, Charlotte Lake as our Charlotte, and a welcome back to Josh as our Mr Sowerberry. They were the icing on the cake to the already talented and dedicated cast of Oliver and it feels like they have been with us for years!

In what was becoming true ‘Oliver’ style, we had a few initial setbacks:

Setback One – we lost our rehearsal hall at United Reformed, somewhere we had rehearsed for years, but Alan Watts came to the rescue with this hall, which I already knew very well, and which I am pleased to say feels like home to TOPS now. Thanks Alan for all you do for us.

Setback Two – Musicscope, our rights holders went out of business during Covid, so we have to change the version of the show we were performing to the West End version – new arrangements, longer dance routines, but in my opinion a better show! The cast and especially the kids coped with this incredibly well.

Setback Three – The theatre hadn’t officially confirmed it was re-opening yet – we did not get official confirmation of this until 3rd September – we just realise that we had to get back to rehearsal if we were going to have the slightest chance of being ready on time for October.

Setback Four – 1 month into rehearsals the council announced plans to close the Thameside altogether – thankfully this did not affect Oliver but more on that later.

I really enjoyed the rehearsal period – I may seem outwardly like I am in a constant state of stress – but most of the time that's just my face – underneath I was enjoying watching all of you work hard to re-learn the moves and the songs and the additional cast just lifted the whole thing for us. My thanks go to Jeanette for keeping us fed and watered during rehearsals.

I was lucky in that I had already learnt a lot from the first run:

- 1) I knew what the set was going to be like, like how high the bridge was SL that if Chris Foale as Bill entered there then we would only see his knees!
- 2) I knew that I had to buy plastic bowls for the kids because they had a tendency to eat the polystyrene ones from before – these however were impenetrable to their ghashers!
- 3) I knew that we had to get Nikki's legs up higher if we were going to see her give birth
- 4) I knew that Dawn would scold Stuart from not grabbing her bum on time, so I did this bit first
- 5) I knew that if I did not give Mary her walk down again on the crescendo in her song that my life would not be worth living
- 6) I knew that I had no idea how I would kill Nancy and Bill on that set – but I am pleased to say they both died on stage nicely

What I did not learn:

- 1) I did not consider that lockdown would be so unkind to some people and their costumes
- 2) That kids grow in 19 months! Lucas could have doubled for Bill Sykes bless him
- 3) That the rescheduling of the show 3 times and then rebooking the entire seating plan to socially distance the audience would result in ticket sales becoming so complex that I ended up reaching for the bottle at 9am and not caring where anyone sat!

But all this aside, I was so pleased that we got to the theatre and what a show week we had! It was a special one this one, evidenced by the fact that I could barely hold it together most times! I was utterly blown away by everyone's hard work, collaboration and respect for each other and above all everyone's talent. The feedback I got from you guys on stage and the audiences was amazing.

It still remember how it felt, sitting at the back of the auditorium and seeing the kids really give it some in their first number and how this performance level permeated throughout the rest of the show and indeed the week. It felt like we had all achieved something special and for that I will be eternally grateful to everyone involved.

My thanks must go to Richard, our MD who stuck with us and got the best out of everyone vocally and to everyone behind the scenes, Darren, Will – who for the first time doing this was a total pro, Peter Jones, Pete Povey, Emma Christmas, Dave and Mike on Follow Spots who feared for their life if they did not spot Mary for her big number – sorry Mary, am I painting the wrong picture of you here?! – joking. Katharyn, Kirstie, Jeanette and the FOH team, Teresa and helpers for costume transport, John on sound, Mary and Emma for all of their hard work promoting the production and producing our promotional material and everyone else who supported that production.

A special thanks to go to Katrina who coped so well with the costumes, it was a big costume show – not helped by Marty splitting his trousers on stage! And to Ann Sullivan who helpfully re-supplied or altered costumes at late notice and to Jayne Crawford as Head Chaperone, who we honestly could not have done without – she had everything with the kids under control.

And the kids, utterly amazing, so much so that we are now making plans to offer a youth section of TOPS to give them an outlet for their talent.

Here are some highlights of what we achieved:

- Ticket Sales – TOPS sold 914 tickets and the Thameside Theatre sold about 150 so 1064 tickets sold in total which is the highest number of tickets sold since 2016 at least which is a great achievement
- As well as glowing feedback from our audiences we had 3 fantastic reviews with the Noda Rep calling it a professional looking and slick show, she felt the warmth from the whole company and could have seen it twice. One of Jess Pethers takeaways was how good the singing was, she said the chorus was strong and are clearly having a brilliant time! In fact how you all worked as an ensemble was a theme in everyone's comments.
- We got the show in the stage, setting a new version, in 3 months! Tough but we did it!

You will see when we come to the Treasurers report how we did unfortunately make a loss on this production and this was purely down to having to pay for certain things twice because of the initial closure in March 2020. So some sound, set transport, theatre hire, musicians, double rights payments meant tipped us from profit into loss, but not by much.

All in all a success for so many reasons, and what better way to celebrate than with the fabulous after show/foam party organised by Lisa. I think you will all agree it was a fantastic night, yes I caught covid like so many others from it, but it was still a great night enjoyed by us all!

We were sad to lose two of our members during this year. Both Ken and Gary had a huge association with TOPS on Stage and both were pivotal in driving the society forward during their chairmanships and both will be remembered fondly for their excellent performances on stage. The committee are still planning to honour their memory with a set of concerts, the arrangements for which are currently under discussion.

With almost no time to lose we got started on our present show Legally Blonde, again holding another successful round of new member auditions which brought us loads of new and returning talent – Charlotte, Nicola, Callan, Angela, Natalie, Lindsay, Martyn, Sydney, Fin, Renee, Maria, Ami, Sarah, Hollyanne, Barry, Jake and Nathan and then a successful cast audition which leads us to have the phenomenal cast we have in place for this show.

We were also very pleased to welcome Angelo as our MD and Emma and Karyn as our co-choreographers, their talent is such a welcome contribution to this fun but challenging show.

Rehearsals have been going very well, it's such a big show and there is so much to get through but we will do it and I am very excited to bring this show to our audiences. We now need to get selling this show and our recent promotional material will help, but it's like every year, 80-90% of our ticket sales come from our cast, so I would urge you all to get those ticket sales in. We have a cast of 35, this show will cost about £ and so if each cast member sells ? we will break even, if you all sell ? each then we will be in profit for the first time in a long time.

The committee again, have worked incredibly hard, meeting regularly throughout the year and 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 – not Vanda, humour – that's Vanda. Thanks team.

A special thanks to Teresa who has been our representative on the Save Your Thameside committee. They are fighting really hard to keep the Thameside open and it's all looking quite positive. There are plans for the Thameside to be handed to the community to run and of course if this happens then TOPS On Stage will look to be an integral part of that community through our membership of the Thurrock Arts Council. We will announce more on these developments as they become more definite.

I am so enthused about the future of TOPS On Stage. I'm loving all our new members and it feels like we are achieving what we set out to do , to attract a core membership and we will continue to do everything we can to keep everyone. We welcome your feedback any time though, please tell us what you want whether that's social activities, show suggestions, performance opportunities, ideas for how the society is run. It's not the committees group, it's your group and it needs to work for its members.

We will hope to shortly announce more news about a concert season, a kids show, some social activities, our belated 60th Anniversary celebration and the creative teams for our next 2 productions – Addams Family and Betty Blue Eyes. This will be a group with loads going on, something for all of our members.

Simon Lambert

Chairman

TOPS On Stage

TOPS on Stage Accounts @ 31.12.22

Sum of Total	Column Labels													
Row Labels	BWFD 01.01.22	Oliver	Legally Blonde	Adams Family	Betty Blue Eyes	Elf	Concert "Happy"	60th Party	Annual Membership	Charges	Sundry	Fund Raising	Transfer	Grand Total
BWFD 01.01.22	949.18													949.18
After Show Party			89.93	217.87										307.80
audition fee				360.00	330.00									690.00
Band			-3,040.00	-2,120.00										-5,160.00
Choreography			-720.00	-735.00	-90.00									-1,545.00
Costumes & Make up			134.45	-303.80										-169.35
Director fees			-1,500.00	-1,500.00										-3,000.00
Gifts			-355.76	-217.50										-573.26
Hall Hire			-1,765.00	-2,220.00										-3,985.00
Keyboard Tek			-305.13											-305.13
Music							-657.87							-657.87
Music director			-1,500.00	-1,300.00	-520.00		-900.00							-4,220.00
Photos			130.00	20.00										150.00
Pizza			11.26	-25.01										-13.75
Programmes			141.01	163.01										304.02
Props		-100.00	-338.22	0.00										-438.22
Publicity			-493.75	-80.83										-574.58
Raffle			646.50	758.00							-15.00			1,389.50
royalties			-4,612.53	-3,142.57		-500.00								-8,255.10
Scenery			-5,717.39	-1,634.12	-65.00									-7,416.51
Scripts			250.00	-36.80	600.00									813.20
Show Fee			1,730.00	1,750.00	780.00		580.00							4,840.00
Sound			-2,111.00											-2,111.00
Sundry			-6.50	-6.70							-10.00			-23.20
T shirts			-93.90	145.00										51.10
theater hire				-6,455.83			-1,024.52							-7,480.35
tickets		2,153.33	17,137.48	17,161.93			1,468.01	2,270.00						40,190.75
Venue Hire								-2,198.50						-2,198.50
Expenses								-165.17						-165.17
Annual Membership 2022									920.00					920.00
Art Council Membership											-20.00			-20.00
Grant											2,000.00			2,000.00
Insurance											-463.44			-463.44
NODA Membership											-185.00			-185.00
Storage											-120.00			-120.00
I zettle										-119.89	-34.80		-0.00	-154.69
DBS Checks											-34.80			-34.80
Auction												43.00		43.00
BBQ (SAM)												104.26		104.26
Tuck shop												170.00		170.00
Quiz												462.00		462.00
HMM Legally Blonde												31.05		31.05
Annual Membership 2023									20.00					20.00
Grand Total	949.18	2,053.33	-2,288.55	797.65	1,035.00	-500.00	-534.38	-93.67	940.00	-119.89	1,116.96	810.31	-0.00	4,165.94

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

Registered Charity No 1150139

	1st January 2022 12 months	31st December 2022 12 months
Barclays Current Account	949.18	4,165.94
Accruals /Refunds due		-6,288.00
Paypal Charity Account	9.28	9.28
Barclays Deposit Account	3,813.37	3,819.87
Petty Cash	10.62	10.62
Exceress of Income over Expenditure	-3,064.74	
	1,717.71	1,717.71

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

Courtne Wright

Date: 11th February 2023