

STEPPING



THEATRE

Annual Report 2024-25



FOYLE FOUNDATION



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION

NEWBY
TRUST

THE
NISBET
TRUST



“The work Stepping Out Theatre is doing should be supported by all interested in a society that is healthy. Stepping Out understands and does not shy away from the possibility that theatre, the ancient art of these islands North West of Europe, is a transformative and healing activity which brings joy into people’s lives. If you want to hear something true, go and hear what Stepping Out Theatre are saying. I only found myself in theatre, and I hear that Stepping Out is helping other people do the same. I have great hopes for this company and deep respect for what they are doing right now.”

Mark Rylance, Patron



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Graphic Design; **Ann Stiddard**

Photography by **Peter Hall and group members**

Reference and Administrative Details

‘Stepping Out Theatre’ is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose aims are benevolent and philanthropic. We have been registered as a charity with the Charities Commission since February 2007.

Charity Registration Number 1179310

The group’s name is sometimes lengthened to ‘Stepping Out Theatre Company’.

‘Stepping Out Theatre’ was founded in 1997.

Principle Charity Office:

Flat E, 3 Lodge Street,
Bristol,
BS1 5LR

Tel. 07896 684097
E mail; info@steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Bankers: Co-operative Bank, P.O. Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner of Accounts:

Dheera De Alwis, 12 Fry Close, Bristol, BS37 7JW



Mother Christmas



Mother Christmas

Structure, Governance and Management

Membership

Membership of Stepping Out Theatre is open to all local mental health service users and their allies with an interest in the work of the group. Involvement in any of our productions or activities confers membership. All members are entitled to attend our Annual General Meeting and vote for the election of a group of Trustees who are responsible for running the group. Copies of the group’s constitution with more information on all this are available from the Stepping Out Theatre office.

Governing Document

Constitution, amended and signed prior to Charity Registration 6th October 2006. Subsequently amended to assist with registration as a CIO in 2017.

Governing Body

A Board of Trustees, currently seven in number, elected in accordance with the Constitution at the Annual General Meeting

Staff

Project Co-ordinator (Part time, from February 2024) Mark Breckon

Music Projects Manager (Part time) Elliot Hall

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM for 2024 - 25 was held at 7.00 p.m. on 20th November on Zoom. The following seven trustees were either elected for the first time or confirmed to serve the three years for which they were previously elected.

Trustees 2024 - 2025

Geoff Innoles – Chair
Danann McAleer – Trustee
Emma Staddon – Secretary
Ravi Kullar – Treasurer
Maria Falzetti – Trustee
Mike Hindle – Trustee
Dr. Sue Chambers – Trustee

Trustees have generally been drawn from the existing membership, and we try to have a range of people who reflect the nature of the group – i.e. people who have used and / or worked in mental health services and people who work in theatre and the arts. Any group member can put themselves forward for or be nominated to be a Trustee. The group also regularly advertise for new Trustees to fill skill shortages that the Trustee group identifies.

Project Co-ordinator's Report

2024 - 25 was a more uncertain year following the end of previous three-year core funding.

The year's events included:

- A full production of 'Mother Christmas' written by Project Co-ordinator Mark Breckon involving a large number of group members. This built on some script-in-hand performances of the same show the previous Christmas. We performed in Bristol, Clevedon and Backwell, often to full houses, and the show was hugely enjoyed by audiences and cast.
- The world première in Bristol of 'Diary of a Ukrainian Madman' by Liudmyla Tymoshenko, who co-wrote 'Refugee Cats', the children's show we performed in 2023. This production was a great success with some sell out nights and a very positive audience reaction. It built on other Ukrainian work we'd performed since the war began. It led to connections with local Ukrainians who saw the show and have continued to engage with our work.
- A programme of workshops for group members including drama and improvisation, comedy, writing and art. In a year where we had only two full productions later in the year, these activities were important in keeping group members working creatively together. In addition, we continued to run regular subsidised theatre trips to shows in Bristol, Bath and one very sunny trip to London.



Stepping Out Chair Geoff Innoles who passed away in February 2025

- A programme of music activities (workshops, gigs and recording) in collaboration with long term collaborators and partners Mind Your Music. This included the sixth one day music festival run jointly by both groups where several different bands with a huge range of musical styles played in support of local mental health service users.
- We had some very sad news in February 2025, when our much-loved Chair, Geoff Innoles, passed away. He left this world to the sound of David Bowie with his daughters at his side. A sweeter, kinder person never graced our company. Geoff was an incredibly active and enthusiastic member of the group, while almost never setting foot onstage. As a professional printer he did all of our printing, rarely charging much if at all, he also videoed our performances. He came away with us to Edinburgh and other places and contributed a huge amount to these trips. He was a positive, stabilising presence in our group for several years. Thanks for everything you gave us Geoff, you were the best of us and will be sorely missed.

2024 - 25 was our twenty eighth year as a group and our eighteenth year of operation as a registered charity.



Diary of a Ukrainian Madman



Diary of a Ukrainian Madman

Progress on The Aims and Objectives of Stepping Out Theatre 2024 - 25

Our charitable aims and objectives as set out in our constitution are.

- 1) To relieve the conditions of mental health service users through the medium of theatre.
- 2) To advance the education of the public about mental health in order to raise their awareness, by producing plays which deal with this issue and counter negative stereotypes of people with mental health problems.
- 3) To advance the education and training of mental health service users and their allies to develop their creative talents, build supportive networks and produce high quality theatre on mental health themes.

As the Project Co-ordinator's report makes clear, we can claim to have made considerable progress towards these aims this year.

- 1) Mental health service users have been offered a diverse range of therapeutic creative activities, as well as individual mentoring to help with their own creative development. They have also been offered membership of a supportive network and a busy programme of shared activities.
- 2) We mounted a small number of individual productions this year, as in 2023 - 24, but both productions raised public awareness of mental health issues and challenged negative stereotypes. These productions were performed in front of large audiences in Bristol, Clevedon, and Backwell.
- 3) As well as producing high quality theatre productions on mental health themes, this year's work offered more new education and training opportunities to service users and their allies to build their creative talents in the way we do best – by creating good theatre.

Financial Report and Accounts
1st March 2024 - 28th February 2025

In the financial year 2024 - 25, the group received a total of £113,926.63 in income and spent a total of £128,440.36.

As in the previous year, a relatively low level of unrestricted reserves at the beginning of 2024 -25 was reflected in the amount of theatre produced – with two full productions this year.

As usual, the largest items of expenditure were salaries and payments to the freelance artists and service users involved in our ambitious programme of productions and workshops. These costs include redundancy payments to the former CEO and are likely to fall overall in 2025 - 26.

In 2023 - 24, our unrestricted reserves at the end of the year stood at £18,654.28. Our reserves were much lower at the end of 2024 - 25 at £4,354.61.

This was temporary, we had unrestricted funding due at this point, and we had just completed a production. Once this funding was received, from March 2025 onwards, we were on target with reserves in subsequent months.

Restricted funds cannot form part of Stepping Out Theatre’s reserves as the spending of these funds is laid down in the funding applications and signed contracts upon which they were granted. For this reason, although restricted funds may be carried across at the end of an accounting year, they do not constitute free reserves. At the end of 2024 - 25, the group carried across no restricted funds.

Section A - Receipts

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2024-2025	2023-2024
The People’s Health Trust	-	-	-	2,268.00
The Foyle Foundation (1)	10,000.00	-	10,000.00	-
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	-	-	-	27,500.00
Charitable Donations (2)	-	42,872.40	42,872.40	32,816.27
Box Office Receipts (3)	-	1,044.15	1,044.15	2,898.32
Small Grants (4)	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	8,500.00
Tudor Trust	-	-	-	33,364.50
Garfield Weston Foundation (5)	15,000.00	-	15,000.00	-
Newby Trust (6)	10,000.00	-	10,000.00	-
The Big Give Trust (7)	-	30,010.08	30,010.08	-
Interest and Refunds	-	-	-	886.26
Loans Advanced by Supporters	-	-	-	10,000.00
TOTAL	40,000.00	73,926.63	113,926.63	118,233.35

Stepping Out Theatre - Reserves Policy

‘Reserves’ or ‘free reserves’ is the term generally used to describe that part of a charity’s income that is freely available for its general purposes. Reserves are therefore the resources the charity has or can make available to spend, for any or all of the charity’s purposes, once it has met its commitments and covered its planned expenditure.

It is the policy of Stepping Out Theatre that any unrestricted income which the charity is in possession of may, at the discretion of the Trustees, be spent in any way which advances the causes of the charity. These free reserves may also be carried over between accounting years, for example when the group is trying to build up reserves in order to finance a large production or project such as the trips to Finland (2018) and France (2023) to take part in mental health theatre. Building up of reserves is sometimes a prudent measure but should not be seen as an end in itself, and for this reason, it is Stepping Out Theatre’s policy to have reserves set at a maximum of half of the charity’s annual income.

Section B - Payments

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2024-2025	2023-2024
Payroll	15,000.00	37,545.29	52,545.29	53,178.37
Rent (incl. Theatre Hire)	1,500.00	3,033.21	4,533.21	3,022.60
General Running Expenses	1,500.00	7,023.20	8,523.20	6,746.92
Miscellaneous Production Costs	3,000.00	4,636.04	7,636.04	1,474.75
Travel for Staff, Service Users and Volunteers	1,500.00	1,392.90	2,892.90	13,484.56
Subsistence	1,500.00	6,021.82	7,521.82	5,305.62
Theatre Trips	-	962.28	962.28	954.36
Charitable Donations	-	270.00	270.00	2,444.00
Freelance Workers and Artists	16,000.00	27,555.62	43,555.62	22,024.85
Fixed Assets	-	-	-	499.95
Loans Repaid to Supporters	-	-	-	10,000.00
TOTAL	40,000.00	88,440.36	128,440.36	119,135.98

Section C - Balance Sheet

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2024-2025	2023-2024
Bank Balance at Start of Year	-	18,654.28	18,654.28	19,556.91
Prior year adjustment (8)	-	214.06	214.06	-
Bank Receipts	40,000.00	73,926.63	113,926.63	118,233.35
Bank Payments	(40,000.00)	(88,440.36)	(128,440.36)	(119,135.98)
Bank Balance at End of Year	0.00	4,354.61	4,354.61	18,654.28
Cash Balance at Start of Year	-	-	-	-
Cash Receipts	-	-	-	-
Cash Payments	-	-	-	-
Cash Balance at End of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fixed Assets at Start of Year (9)	-	-	11,816.32	15,088.50
Purchases	-	-	-	499.95
Disposal (11)	-	-	(8,487.28)	-
Depreciation (10)	(2,954.08)	-	(2,954.08)	(3,772.13)
Fixed Assets at End of Year	-	-	374.96	11,816.32
Net Assets at End of Year	0.00	4,354.61	4,729.57	30,470.60

Financial Report and Accounts

1st March 2024 - 28th February 2025

Section D - Notes

- 1) Restricted fund grant received from The Foyle Foundation towards the production of new work by Ukrainian playwrights.
- 2) Donations include contributions from major donors, charitable appeals, fundraising events, and Gift Aid.
- 3) Box office receipts relate to all productions, including those staged in London and Bristol.
- 4) Includes a grant from the Quartet Foundation towards the Christmas production.
- 5) Restricted grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation towards the operational expenditure of the charity in furtherance of its objectives.
- 6) Restricted grant from the Newby Trust towards the operational expenditure of the charity in furtherance of its objectives.
- 7) Income raised from donations and matched funding through participation in Challenges run by The Big Give Trust.
- 8) An adjustment of £214.06 has been recorded under receipts to reconcile the opening bank balance reported in the 2023 - 24 accounts (£18,654.28) with the actual balance confirmed by the bank statement (£18,868.34). This adjustment results from a review of prior-year transactions, which identified minor discrepancies including duplicate and missing entries, as well as a small opening balance error. This correction does not affect the accuracy of income or expenditure reported for the current financial year (2024 - 25).
- 9) The charity owned a vehicle and a laptop. The laptop was purchased on 27/02/2024. In line with the charity's depreciation policy, no depreciation is charged in the year of purchase, and the asset should be charged for a full year in the year of disposal.
- 10) The charity depreciates its assets at 25% per year using the reducing balance method.

	Charity Vehicle (HX05HNF)	Laptop	Total
Opening balance 01.03.2024	11,316.37	499.95	11,816.32
(+) Additions	-	-	-
Depreciation charge for the period	(2,829.09)	(124.99)	(2,954.08)
(-) Disposal	(8,487.28)	-	(8,487.28)
	(0.00)	374.96	374.96

- 11) During the year, the charity settled part of the statutory redundancy payment due to the ex-CEO. The total redundancy payment was £19,290.00 As part of the settlement, the charity transferred its 80% of remaining share of the vehicle.
The vehicle had:
Net book value (charity's 80% share): £11,316.37
Market value of the vehicle (charity's 80% share): £11,200.00
The transfer resulted in a non-cash gain of £2,712.72 (Market value the net book value).
The vehicle transfer reduced the redundancy payment liability, leaving a remaining cash payment of £8,090.00, which was subsequently returned by the ex-CEO as a non-cash donation to the charity.

Section E - Approvals

Signed: **Ravi Kullar (Treasurer)**
Date: **9th December 2025**

Signed: **Dheera De Alwis (Independent Examiner)**
Date: **9th December 2025**

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Stepping Out Theatre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Stepping Out Theatre (the Trust) for the year ended 28 February 2025.

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 all 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 in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2) The accounts do not accord with those records.

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

Signed: **Dheera De Alwis**
Address: **12 Fry Close, Bristol, BS37 7JW**
Date: **9th December 2025**

