

Trustees' Annual Report

For period: 05/12/22 - 31/03/24

Charity name: We Are Hera
Also known as: Hera
Registered charity: 1201218
Address: 61 Cromwell Road,
Whitstable,
Kent.
CT5 1NN

The Trustees

- 1. Gweneth Ann Rand** Appointed 05/12/22 (for 2 years)
- 2. Allison Rosser** Appointed 05/12/22 (for 4 years)
- 3. Eliza Thompson** Appointed 05/12/22 (for 3 years)

Staff

Toria Banks, Producer & Joint Artistic Director
Linda Hirst, Joint Artistic Director

Structure, Governance and Management

Type of governing document: Constitution

Charity constituted as: CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Trustee selection:

Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees. In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

Governance issues:

The founding trustees have operated so far without specific governance roles. However, the charity wishes to expand the board in the coming year and believes that this will be best served by appointing a Chair of Trustees to lead the process. In addition the charity will appoint a trustee with specific responsibility for safeguarding, a role which has rotated from project to project until now.

Objects and Activities

We Are Hera's charitable objects are:

To educate the public in general in the dramatic arts, particularly the art forms of music and

theatre, to further the development of public appreciation and taste in the said arts, and to foster and encourage an understanding of and an interest in all of the arts and skills of theatre.

The charity's policy is to achieve these objects by presenting inclusive opera and music theatre by women and gender minority artists, online and on tour. In this way:

- The public are educated about the work of women and gender minority artists in the art forms of opera, music and theatre, both past and present.
- Public appreciation and taste, understanding and interest are developed and extended to include new forms and possibilities in opera, music and theatre.
- Members of the public are included within the experience of the art forms of opera, music and theatre who may face barriers to inclusion, or who may not otherwise be engaged by them.

During the period of this report, which as the first since its incorporation as a CIO in December 2022 covers a period of just under 16 months, the charity delivered the following projects:

- The digital project, "Houseplants: A Photo Opera"
Funded by a low cost R&D commission from The Space (a digital arts funder supported by ACE), the charity produced a 'photo opera' with artists and participants from Kent. Interviews with three women about their houseplants were edited into song texts and set to music by local composers working in a variety of genres. Audio-visual portraits were created using photographic essays by Kent-based photographers. The 'opera' was released online and promoted via facebook and instagram.
- The touring opera co-production, "Out of Her Mouth"
Hera co-produced its first genuinely touring opera with Mahogany Opera and Dunedin Consort, in a three way partnership brokered by Mahogany Opera. The project originated with Hera, and the charity had a significant influence over several elements of the production process. The show staged three of the biblical cantatas of Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, a female french baroque composer, and was performed in English in a new version by Toria Banks, and in a production with integrated captioning and audio description. An open call was held for one of the singers (casting Alys Roberts), one of the players (harpichordist Katarzyna Kowalik) and the director Mathilde Lopez. This meant that the production was female led, despite male artistic leadership at both of our co-producers.
- The concert tour, "On an Endless Road: Itō Noe & the Women Composers of her Time"
Hera took on the production of a UK concert tour, curated by the composer Francesca Le Lohe, after initial performances in Japan. The programme was unusual for Hera in including violin and piano music by three Japanese women composers, but culminated in the performance of Le Lohe's song cycle 'Itō Noe: On an Endless Road' by biwa player Akiko Kubota which was profoundly theatrical. Hera booked the UK tour (to London, Manchester, Huddersfield and Leeds), contracted the artists and promoted the tour.

In addition to these complete projects:

- Their previous, critically successful digital opera, "We Ask These Questions of Everybody" by Amble Skuse & Toria Banks was screened as part of DaDa Fest International (a prominent Disability Arts Festival) from October to December 2022.

- The charity continued and developed a relationship with artists at the University of Michigan State including composer Professor Alexis Bacon, which began in lockdown in 2021. During 2023 we developed a draft libretto of a new opera for Twitch and secured funding from MSU for an R&D workshop in July 2024. We also secured a local partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University to host the R&D.

The trustees have complied with the duty to have regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

Achievements and Performance

Hera achieved a lot in this period, despite a difficult funding environment and an ongoing pandemic. Its work was varied, ambitious, artistically successful on its own terms and achieved critical success. We continued to build a reputation as a producer combining creative boldness, political commitment and high quality performance.

- 'Houseplants: A Photo Opera' helped to cement Hera as a producer of innovative digital work after the success of 'We Ask These Questions of Everybody'. It used a small pot of R&D funding to trial a new idea. It also began a connection with our local area, by working with Kent-based artists and participants. On facebook, the three films reached 145k people, and achieved over 27k through-plays. However, more time and resources for PR and marketing could have increased the project's impact further.
- After the interruption of Covid-19, 'Out of Her Mouth' was Hera's first genuinely touring production. Partnering with Mahogany Opera and Dunedin Consort not only made this possible, but raised Hera's profile, and helped develop our reputation as an alternative, rather than a 'fringe', opera company, able to work with artists at the highest level including Anna Dennis and Carolyn Sampson. By initiating the project, Hera increased the representation of women composers in the work of Dunedin Consort, and were able to ensure that the ensuing production was explicitly feminist in nature, theatrically urgent and including integrated disabled access.
- 'Out of Her Mouth' achieved good audiences for performances at Findhorn, Glasgow, and Edinburgh as part of Dunedin's season, and at York Early Music Festival and Spitalfields Festival, where the performance sold out. The performance at York was filmed, and made available online. A follow up to 'Out of Her Mouth' is now in the planning stages with both co-producers.
- The critical response to 'Out of Her Mouth' was extremely positive. Some highlights:

"A revelation... they've unearthed a treasure and argued the most powerful case imaginable that Jacquet de la Guerre's work is no dry museum piece but a pulsing, vibrant slice of music drama...It's only seven performers in a small space, but it never once feels miniature. Instead it's raw storytelling and powerful drama, performed with gripping immediacy... It's made all the more immediate here by the use of Toria Banks's English translation... The four on-stage musicians scrape away the centuries to reveal Jacquet de la Guerre's music as lithe, agile and gripping."

★★★★★ Simon Thompson, *The Times*

"A neat musical and dramatic package" ★★★★★ Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

"I loved the boldness of this... Defiantly 'woke' – aware, accessible, generous – and unapologetically foregrounding social and sexual politics, this is opening the gate instead of keeping it. The libretto, which makes these disparate styles and channels of expression cohere seamlessly, is by Toria Banks of Hera. The language is witty and naturalistic, easy to follow and utterly contemporary... An endlessly rewarding, remarkable creation. I hope it has an ongoing life, on disc perhaps but even better, in future performances."

Adrian Ainsworth, Arts Muse

"A brilliant collaborative project by Mahogany Opera, Dunedin Consort and HERA... not only a highly enjoyable hour's music and drama, but a strong contemporary feminist statement."

Barry Creasy, Music OMH

- "On an Endless Road" represented the first tour which Hera has produced single-handedly, making it a useful experience without the pressures of being directly involved in artistic creation. The project involved several challenges, including booking a tour comparatively late in order to fit in with International Women's Day, and being turned down for an ACE projects grant. Nevertheless it ran to budget, in particular thanks to a large audience at the London concert at The Actors' Church. The performers received standing ovations in Manchester and Leeds. In Manchester (at the student-curated Musica Festival at the University) the response was particularly emotional.
- Recognising that collaborative opera projects can take several years to come to fruition, Hera has continued to develop long-term relationships. In this period this resulted in the writing period of a new opera for Twitch with artists at Michigan State University and the securing of funds for an R&D in July 2024.

Financial Review

Policy on reserves:

The charity has not yet been able to establish reserves, which means it is unable to commit to more than the bare minimum in ongoing organisational costs. Currently it runs entirely on a project to project basis. It is currently able to respond to any reduction in income by reducing activity and expenditure.

It is a key aim for the coming year to secure funding for core costs which will support ongoing overheads (including staff costs), at which point it will also become desirable to establish a reserves policy in order to make this sustainable.

Deficit: The charity is not in deficit, and has no funds that are in deficit.

Further financial information, including principal sources of funding:

The charity has secured one Arts Council England project grant for work in co-production. Other projects have been supported by smaller grants from charitable trusts and from earned income. This year's accounts include a grant from Michigan State University for work in the year 2024-5, and international collaboration could be a useful source of future funding.

Declaration

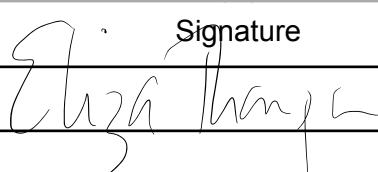
The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above:

Signature: 

Full Names: Eliza Miranda Waterhouse Thompson

Position: Trustee

Date: 9 January 2025

 CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES	We Are Hera CIO			1201218	CC16a
	Receipts and payments accounts				
	For the period from	12/5/22	To	3/31/24	
Section A Receipts and payments					
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grant Income	- 0	24,242	-	24,242	-
Earned Income from charitable activities	8,575	-	-	8,575	-
Donations	777	-	-	777	-
		-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	9,352	24,242	-	33,594	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
Cashflow loan (interest free)	500	- 0	- 0	500	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Sub total	500	- 0	- 0	500	- 0
Total receipts	9,852	24,242	- 0	34,094	- 0
A3 Payments					
Houseplants Opera	5,514	-	-	5,514	-
Questions Opera	425	-	-	425	-
Out of Her Mouth	- 0	11,002	-	11,002	-
On an Endless Road		3,770			
Grant Payment to Artist (Sasakawa F'n)	- 0	2,500	-	2,500	-
Other administration and overheads	435		-	435	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total	6,374	17,272	-	23,646	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Cashflow loan repayment	500	- 0	- 0	500	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
Sub total	500	- 0	- 0	500	- 0
Total payments	6,874	17,272	- 0	24,146	- 0
Net of receipts/(payments)	2,978	6,970	-	9,948	-
A5 Transfers between funds	- 0	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	- 0	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	2,978	6,970	-	9,948	-
Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period					
Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £	
B1 Cash funds	Cash in bank account	2,978	6,970	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
	Total cash funds	2,978	6,970	-	
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK	
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	
B2 Other monetary assets	HAR fee due for February performance	1,815	-	-	
	Hinrichsen Foundation grant due for OAER	-	2,000	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		-	-	-	
		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	
B3 Investment assets			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)	
B5 Liabilities	Artists fees payable for work already completed		4,351		
			-		
			-		
			-		
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name		Date of approval	
		Eliza Thompson		9.1.25	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees of	We are Hera CIO		
On accounts for the period	From 5 th December 2022 to 31 st March 2024	Charity no (if any)	12012218
Set out on pages	1 to 2		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the period ended 31/ 03 / 2024.

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 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.

Signed:  Date: 30th January 2025

Name: Richard Gosling

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): ACA qualified (membership number 1467220)

Address: 5 Ragwort Court
14 Lawrie Park Gardens
Lewisham, London, SE26 6HX

Section B

Disclosure

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.

None.