



# the zodiac

award winning musical theatre {est. 1968}

**Zodiac Amateur Operatic Society**  
**Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting**  
**7.30pm Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Frodsham Community Centre**

**Present:** Walter Yule, Mary Hyde, Jen Deakin, Vicky Jones, Ellie Stanfield, Tim Jones, Gemma Maddox, Jude Kenyon, Jessica Martin, Tracey Ellams, Carolyn Stratton, Barbara Worrall, Jess Rigby.

**Apologies:** Valarie Ball, Matt Weaver, Jean Williams, Carmel Middleton, Aaron Cawley, Andrew Lawless, Helen Owen

Vicky Jones, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the AGM

## **Minutes of 53<sup>rd</sup> AGM**

**Proposed by Gemma Maddox seconded by Mary Hyde** that the Minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> AGM be adopted. This was agreed unanimously.

## **Treasurer's Report - year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 – Carolyn Stratton**

The Zodiac Amateur Operatic Society accounts have been prepared by me, as Treasurer, for the year ending 31 March 2022. The accounts have been audited by Sally Hardwick and are deemed to be a true and fair view of the Society's financial position at the date above.

I present the following information:

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022:

Current account:	£19,053.18
High Interest account:	£158.87
Cash in hand:	£134.83
Total as at 31 March 2022:	£19,346.88
Total at 31 March 2021:	£11,703.15

Cash assets of the Society have therefore increased by £7,643.73 in the year.

Profit and Loss account for year 2021/2022:

Income:	£27,963.80
Expenditure:	£20,320.07

Profit for the year was £7,643.73, compared to a loss of £50.53 in the previous year.

We were overjoyed to be back performing this year, and Flashdance proved the perfect vehicle for our group – both in terms of lifting our spirits and lifting our bank account! The production itself turned a profit of

£2,863.26, thanks to the tremendous efforts of Production Manager Ste Jones and his Team in keeping costs firmly in check. Ticket sales were very strong, due in part to the fantastic efforts of the Committee Marketing Team – headed up by Matt Weaver. Everyone in the Society played their part in making the show a commercial success. The talent of those on stage and those leading the actors must be fully supported by the “back-office” effort of selling tickets, promoting the show and the Society and collecting in funds (both membership subs, show fees and fundraising). This year we have worked so well together, and I am proud of what we have achieved in putting The Zodiac firmly back in the game.

May I end by thanking our auditor Sally Hardwick who continues to support us by providing her professional services with no fee.

Many thanks

Carolyn Stratton.

**Questions:** None noted.

The Zodiac accounts for 21-22 have been **proposed by Tim Jones and Seconded by Jennifer Deakin** as being a true and fair reflection of the society.

### **Membership Secretary's Report – Gemma Maddox**

In the 2021/22 Membership year, we had:

53 paid up members (increase on the prior year of 12 members). Numbers this year increased following the pandemic and the attraction of Flashdance to the new members

10 Life members (unfortunately one of our life members, John Corcoran passed away during the year)

As many of you are aware, we also lost and long-standing, active member, Jeanie Brocklehurst, to cancer during the year.

In addition to the new members joining us for Flashdance (and hopefully for the long term), we have had 14 people expressing interest to join, some of which have been attending initial workshops for “Make ‘Em Laugh” and we look forward to welcoming them as members for the new membership year.

Each of the prospective members have been invited to attend the workshops and have been added to the friends list and have therefore been receiving the Friends version of the Zodiac newsletter so hopefully we will be welcoming some more new faces soon.

To have retained 41 members during the 2020/21 Membership year was an amazing achievement as that membership experience of online socials and dance sessions was very different to the previously experienced by us all. It is testament to the society that we have been able to retain those members and bring in new members this year through the appeal of the shows selected and the active social calendar.

#### **Gift Aid**

The Society is entitled to claim Gift Aid on all Membership Subs and show fees given that the Zodiac is a registered charity.

As long as you are a UK tax payer and are happy to complete the Gift Aid Form, I can do the rest and collate the necessary information to allow us to claim Gift Aid from membership amounts going back the last four years. (25p for every £1)

Many members completed the forms during show week of Flashdance and since, meaning that to date we have a gift aid claim ready for submission amounting to £496.25.

I have emailed all members with a copy of the form but there are some hard copies here if anyone wants to complete one this evening.

Given that the costs of putting on shows continues to rise, hopefully you agree that any extra funds that we can get for the society will be put to good use.

If you have any questions when completing the form, please let me know.

The data from your form will be stored securely and not passed on to anyone else.

### **Social Secretary's Report – Jessica Martin**

This was my second year as social secretary for The Zodiac, and I think I would describe it as a hybrid year. Although for most of the 12 months we have been able to meet up in person, (something we couldn't do for the majority of my first year) we have had to balance our excitement about being able to get back together with a caution, especially over the winter when Covid cases were once again on the rise, and we were mindful of keeping all of our members safe and healthy.

As we got into rehearsals for Flashdance, it was lovely to be able to head to the pub afterwards and spend time together, this was something members enjoyed over the summer and autumn when it became possible, after having to start rehearsals and workshops with social distancing and restrictions still in place around the number of people allowed to gather.

August last year saw the return of the Zodiac family BBQ, which Jen took a lead on in her role as fundraising committee chair. The weather didn't cooperate, but a few gazebos meant the rain didn't stop us having fun. There was good food, games for the children and a music quiz for the grown ups (thank you to Ste for helping with the quiz). Keep an eye out for this year's BBQ happening very soon!

In the Autumn it was lovely to be able to return to theatres in support of other local societies, with trips to see D&S Productions' performance of Shrek at The Brindley and KMTC's Do You Hear The People Sing in Northwich. This year there have been trips to see Tip Top's Cats at Theatr Clwyd and Mid Cheshire's production of American Idiot in Northwich. There are now many shows taking place featuring lots of Zodiac faces and it's great to see members organising trips amongst themselves to go and watch these.

A highlight of the year was being able to hold our Christmas Party in person again. We decided on a more casual approach this year, meeting at the Community Centre in our Christmas jumpers and taking part in various games, quizzes and of course a Christmas singalong. Thanks to Jen for winning a graze board in a competition and donating it to us for our catering! Thanks also to Gemma, Val and Ellie for helping to run the activities.

After Covid took out several company members and forced the postponement of Flashdance, we were cautious about organising large events in the run up to the show, but we were able to enjoy lots of socialising during show week, with Curry Night on the Friday (thanks Jen and Jude) and drinks in the bar at the theatre on the Saturday night before the Get Out work began in earnest.

The most recent social event was the return of GooseChase. 19 of our members split into 3 teams and there was fierce competition over 2 weeks, attempting to complete a total of 335 missions on the GooseChase app whilst accumulating as many steps as possible. It's a fantastic way to socialise with fellow members without having to be in the same place at the same time and to get the family involved too. Thank you to all who participated with such enthusiasm, making it a really fun 2 weeks. I will definitely bring it back in the future – when I've chance to think of some more missions!

The thing that's stood out to me this year is the genuine joy people have felt at being able to spend time together again, and the enthusiasm of all of our members for organising social events both formal and informal. Covid forced us to be creative in the way we socialise, and I hope that we can carry this forward and continue with a great blend of activities to suit everyone.

Thank you all for a great year – and here's to the next 12 months with lots of fun and socialising to be had.

### **Fundraising Committee Report – Jen Deakin**

An other successful year for the Fundraising Team. This year we have managed to raise a total sum for the year of £2,027 through various ways, so I will provide a breakdown and brief overview of the activities.

In August we ran an Olympics sweepstake with members paying for a country and the top 3 countries winning their money back! Thanks to Jess Martin for helping with this one and all those who took part – we raised £170.

A number of members braved the cold on the 4th and 24th December and stood outside Tesco Helsby for a few hours entertaining shoppers. We had a brilliant response to this with lots of shoppers passing on positive comments and we made a handsome sum of £260.

Thank you to all those who bought a Christmas Raffle ticket which was drawn at the Christmas Party. We raised £250.

We ran a Flashdance the Musical backstage raffle with various Flashdance themed items that raised £80.

In March we played host to Kingsley Players who performed 'Allo 'Allo with The Fundraising Team and helpers putting on food, a bar and decorating the hall beautifully. Thanks to all those who came and help especially Valarie for organizing all the food and managing to get all the Cheese for free from Nick the cheese man! Thanks for Eve for the decorations, Bev for sorting the glasses and Jude/Matt for sorting the tickets! The event raised less than the previous time we ran this event for a number of reasons including a reduction in audience numbers (Covid), higher outgoing costs such as the Hall Hire and alcohol, paying for ticket source services and also this year we were required to pay Kingsley Players a performing fee whereas last time it was free of charge. We raised £800, which was a fantastic amount, and we really couldn't have done this without help from member so huge thank you.

In early December on a cold and very wet evening, a group of members volunteered to help the Helsby and Frodsham Rotary Club Santa float. It was so lovely to see all the kids get excited to see Santa and it's an event we have already got our name down to help again this year. Vicky and I attended the Rotary Club meeting in January to accept a cheque for £250 for our help, which was a very kind donation. Another Raffle this time 'Easter Themed' with each raffle square being chocolate bars! Thanks to all who bought a square we raised £150.00. The 'Easy fundraising App' has been another free fundraising tool we have been pushing the comms and seeing our usage of the application increase thanks to marketing the benefits. Unfortunately we didn't win any of the Christmas Advent doors again but we have raised a £67 with another amount due in May. This is free money and more adverting will be done as a reminder for members and their family and friends to use it.

We have also registered for Amazon Smile so please all make sure it is your Charity of choice, which you can do when you log into your Amazon account. Although this % is smaller than the easy fundraising, it is free money and we have raised £25 since October.

Thanks to members who work for Lloyds Banking Group, we were given £952 in Dec 2021 for the work their employees have contributed to a charity. My thanks go to all of you if you have bought one of our lottery squares or if you have stood outside Tesco and sung or if you donned a beret and assisted with Allo Allo. I appreciate all these fundraising events are asking members for their time and money, partly because Covid has prevented us completing wider fundraising events, however the Team are hugely grateful to you all and there is a hope we can mix things up more this coming year. Huge thanks specifically go to the team who make it all possible and have brilliant ideas – Valarie thank you for all your contacts to various companies asking for permissions, creating set lists, asking for free cheese! and overall contribution. Eve, you have done a brilliant job in looking after the Easy Fundraising and Amazon Smile accounts and promoting these constantly. Bev – your ideas and creation of the lotteries have been brilliant. Olivia and Tom thank you for all your overall input and encouragement during meetings and on social media.

Up and coming events:

- ☐ Musical Quiz Night
- ☐ Santa Rotary Sleigh 2022
- ☐ Christmas Tesco Singing
- ☐ A few more also on the list so watch out for details

As I have been the Fundraising Coordinator for 3 years, I have decided to take on other responsibilities within the society and therefore will be stepping down from this role. We are actively looking for someone to take over who has the enthusiasm for creating fundraising ideas and seeing them through with a brilliant fundraising team who all take on various jobs so nothing is too much to manage. If you would like to join the team in any capacity, please send me a message – the more the merrier and more we can raise for our society. Thank you.

### **President's Address – Mary Hyde**

Having had two virtual annual meetings, it's lovely to see people in the flesh here at our AGM. Although the health situation has improved enormously and cases of Covid are lessening, there is still the underlying

questions .... "will we still be able to go on holiday?" "will I still be able to see that show?" "will we be able to stage that show?" I think most people are assuming yes, with some slight reservations. Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's learning to dance in the rain – just get on with life! It's been quite a year – a gradual return to normality, the excitement of rehearsing for Flashdance, with the performances scheduled for November, followed by the disappointment of postponement and subsequently the thrill of finally performing in February. I'm sure Vicky will have all the details, but what a roller coaster of a year!

All of you here will have felt a deep sadness at the death of Jeanie. She was such a lively, cheerful and vibrant member of the society – a true inspiration. John too was active in the society and we do hope that, in time, he will feel able to be involved again. Just before Christmas we heard of the death of John Corcoran, who was one of the founding members of The Zodiac in 1968 and was Chairman of the society until 2005. Using Vicky's words in the newsletter.... During his time with the society, John directed in excess of 50 shows and played many lead roles. He was pivotal to the running and success of our society for many many years and is remembered fondly for his love of musical theatre and his significant contribution to the Zodiac.

John was always keen to spot new talent within the society and encouraged members to push themselves at auditions and take on new challenges. Many of our members benefitted from John's nurturing and encouragement, going on to regularly play principal roles with the Zodiac, other local societies and professional companies. Valarie and I have been helping John's daughter, Catherine, in removing some Zodiac-related items from his house. Vicky is kindly going to store several waistcoats, men's hats and red feather boas in her attic. Noreen and Walter Yule used to compile photo albums for every show. You can imagine the selection! I've brought just a few here this evening. We are hoping to organise a reunion day late summer – it will be an opportunity to meet Zodiac friends. The albums will be on display too. There is a motivational quote ..... "Dreams don't work, unless you do." To finish – I'd like to say a huge thank you to Vicky, the committee and all society members for making the dreams work!

### **Chairman's Address – Vicky Jones**

Thank you everyone for attending our AGM.

I'd like to start by thanking the committee for their hard work this year. We've had some very challenging matters to navigate and their hard work and support has been invaluable.

This year we lost our dear friend Jeanie. I know I speak for everyone when I say we were devastated to lose Jeanie and we continue to miss her smile, enthusiasm, knowledge and wonderful Alto voice. There have been a few occasions since we lost Jeanie where we, as a committee, have asked ourselves 'what would Jeanie have done or thought'. It has been a comfort to think in this way.

Unfortunately, we have also this year lost John Corcoran and Roger Booth. John was so instrumental in the life of Zodiac for so many years being Chairman, Director, Production Manager and often all whilst playing the lead role. Roger was our very capable lighting technician for many years always there during show week and part of the dedicated team that just made things happen. Both John and Roger are remembered fondly by those of us who've been around for a few years!

During the last year and despite the restrictions from Covid we have been quite busy. Despite two false starts we finally staged Flashdance, and what a success it was. It's heart-warming that the show was an almost sell out and moving to The Grange for our production worked so well for us – a testament to the hard work and stoicism of all those involved in the production. The committee decision to delay the production from November to February was not taken lightly and was a huge risk, but the right one to take under the circumstances at the time. Very well done to all involved in Flashdance. Looking back I'd hope we would all agree that the move to The Grange was a success and this, and the hard work put into Flashdance, has left the society in a much healthier position financially. Thanks must go to the committee members who championed the move and made it happen.

During the last year we were also able to host a good number of our usual activities including the summer BBQ at Carolyn's, Christmas singing at Tesco, helping out with the Rotary Christmas Float, our Christmas Party held here at FCC and more recently another GooseChase (which I hope we will add to our annual calendar). A huge thank you goes to the Fundraising committee headed up by Jen and Jess our social secretary for their hard work in arranging all of these activities, which were both social and fundraising opportunities for our members. The fundraising team continues to do fantastic work for our society raising significant funds so that we can keep going and keep our costs to members low and reduce the financial risk we take on for each show we stage.

More recently we've also hosted Allo Allo and arranged a number of singing and dance workshops. The workshops were arranged in recognition of the unusual length of time between two shows (due to Flashdance being done at the beginning of February) as an opportunity to keep members meeting and give you something for your membership fee. We also worked towards a concert for Chester WI which was so very well received and enjoyed by all.

Rehearsals have now commenced for Make Em Laugh and it's great to see Ellie put herself forward to develop and direct this. It's wonderful to have the opportunity for members to develop their skills and want to take on extended roles. The committee will support and encourage anyone who would like to do this and we are fortunate that we have several members who can guide and mentor.

I wanted also to let our members know what we've been discussing during the last year. Our constitution, and society mission statement, is that we exist to bring theatre to the local community. The move to The Grange was successful, both in terms of show success, cast enjoyment and audience numbers which was wonderful. Audience numbers translate to profit. One of the aims of the committee over the last couple of years has been to bolster the society bank account so that we are secure going into future shows. There is a lot of stress involved in committing upwards of £17k when you don't have that in the bank and you don't have guaranteed income. Flashdance and The Grange have helped toward our aim and we'll continue to use The Grange on the back of this to continue increasing the bank balance. This doesn't mean we'll stay at the Grange indefinitely, but for now, this is our plan. We're also still recouping losses from DRS of £2,246.

We've also spent time discussing member and show fees. Moving forward our aim is to set show fees based on the individual requirement of each show, to recoup costs for rehearsal venues and other fixed rehearsal costs. Society membership fees and fundraising efforts will cover other non-show related fixed costs and bolster reserves, so that we have a financial buffer in the event of a loss making show. Going back to our constitution, to bring arts to the local community, and aim should be to keep ticket costs low where possible to keep art accessible in our local community.

And finally, I want to pass on a huge thank you to Ellie as she steps down as secretary. Ellie has put a lot of time and effort into executing the role brilliantly and she has done so with a happy face and can do attitude for many years. Thankfully Ellie is not going anywhere and she's certainly got more hard work ahead of her going into Make 'Em Laugh but I'm thrilled that Ellie is taking on this challenge. Thank you Ellie.

### **Election of Officers**

President, Mary Hyde, and Vice-Presidents, Barbara Worrall and Tim Jones, are happy to continue in their roles for a further year.

President, Mary Hyde, **proposed by Carolyn Stratton and seconded by Jessica Martin.**

Vice-President, Barbara, Worrall **proposed by Mary Hyde and seconded by Jude Kenyon**

Vice-President, Tim Jones, **proposed by Jess Rigby and seconded by Gemma Maddox**

**Vicky Jones handed over to Mary Hyde for the election of Chairman**

### **CHAIRMAN**

Vicky Jones is happy to remain in the role of Chairman.

**Proposed by Ellie Stanfield and seconded by Barbara Worrall**

**Mary Hyde handed back to Vicky Jones for the election of officers and committee members**

### **VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Ste Jones has stepped down from the role of Vice-Chair and from the committee.

Vicky Jones noted a vote of thanks to Ste Jones for his time in this role and on the committee.

Vicky Jones confirmed that the role of Vice-Chairman will be filled by a current committee member, to be decided at the next committee meeting.

### **TREASURER**

Carolyn Stratton is happy to remain in the role of Treasurer.

**Proposed by Jessica Martin and seconded by Jess Rigby**

### **SECRETARY**

Ellie Stanfield is stepping down from the role of Secretary.

Note of thanks to Ellie for her time in the role.

Jennifer Deakin has put herself forward for the role of Secretary.

**Proposed by Vicky Jones and seconded by Valarie Ball**

Unanimous vote for Jennifer Deakin as Secretary.

### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

Gemma Maddox is happy to remain in the role of Membership Secretary.

### **SOCIAL SECRETARY**

Jessica Martin is happy to remain in the role of Social Secretary

**Members of the General Committee** who are happy to serve again; Aaron Cawley, Paul Brownbill, John Denny, Tracey Ellams, Ellie Stanfield and Matt Weaver

Leaving a vacancy for 1 general committee member.

Jude Kenyon has put herself forward for the role of General Committee Member.

**Proposed by Gemma Maddox and seconded by Carolyn Stratton**

Therefore, the following members were duly elected as the 2021/22 committee:

**Chairman:** Vicky Jones

**Treasurer:** Carolyn Stratton

**Membership Secretary:** Gemma Maddox

**Vice-Chairman:** TBC

**Secretary:** Jennifer Deakin

**Social Secretary:** Jessica Martin

### **General Committee Members:**

Aaron Cawley, Paul Brownbill, John Denny, Tracey Ellams, Jude Kenyon, Ellie Stanfield and Matt Weaver

### **Confirmation of Society Trustees and Bank Signatories**

As a registered charity the Society needs Trustees. It was unanimously agreed that the Society's Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary continue to be the Trustees. Carolyn will take the necessary details and make arrangements for the change in signatories and transfer of information accordingly.

**Jessica Martin proposed to accept, and Tim Jones seconded.**

### **Appointment of Auditor**

Mrs Sally Hardwick has agreed to continue as Auditor. This was agreed by a unanimous decision.

It was also noted by both Carolyn Stratton and Walter Yule that Sally Harwick has audited the society accounts for many years. A general vote of thanks was given to Sally for her services which are very much appreciated.

### **AOB**

None noted.

**Vicky Jones closed the meeting.**