

OUTBURST ARTS FESTIVAL

DIRECTORS' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019)

Objectives and activities

The company is established exclusively for charitable purposes, namely for the production of the annual Outburst Queers Arts Festival in Belfast.

Outburst Arts Festival (Outburst) is a charity organisation and community platform for sharing and exploring queer experiences stories and ideas through theatre, film, music, writing, workshops, visual art and other creative disciplines. Our aim is to challenge, to entertain, to surprise, to support and develop new talent and raise awareness of queer experiences through the Arts in Northern Ireland. We are particularly interested in bold new ideas and engaging voices, offering a platform for innovative new that is not available elsewhere.

The directors have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

Achievements and performance

2022/23 saw Outburst's first full year since 2019 of working beyond covid related restrictions, leading us into newly invigorated but also deeply altered arts and business landscapes. Changing audience demographics and behaviours, a diminished arts workforce and new priorities for funders all created new challenges. Despite this, Outburst saw an increase in business interest, partnership development and fresh opportunities for strategic growth with a newly appointed Executive Director leading on business development.

A new business relationship with Bullitt Hotel enabled us to secure a hotel partner for the first time in six years, also offering physical space for us to run our new Salons and other small gatherings throughout the year.

We secured funding for our first formal tour of Outburst-produced work (Richard O'Leary's *Border Fairies*) through the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund, while an exciting new support partnership with Jerwood Arts enabled us to run our first dedicated Artist Development programme. Both helped us to fulfil a long-standing strategic target around sustainable development for queer artists.

Building on our year-round work, we continued with our innovative Transforming Stages programme for trans writers. Our new one-to-one artist clinics were an instant success, with artists able to avail of support and practical advice from our arts team through online appointments. We also started our new Salon, a regular open space for critical discussion and sharing ideas. This too was an instant hit, with plans to develop the programme through skills building in 2023/24

Along with ongoing development with established arts partners like QFT, Black Box and Queen's University, we developed new creative partnerships and relationships with PaperXclips Bookshop, St. Joseph's Church venue, Queer History NI, Catalyst Arts and many more.

Working with organisations in the LGBTQ+ sector, Outburst led on Belfast City Council-funded research into arts and culture provision for LGBTQ+ people in the city, the findings and recommendations of which will aim to lead to more strategic and equitable provision in the city.

OUTBURST ARTS FESTIVAL

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

International Research, Development and Partnership

With the British Council International Collaboration Fund support secured in late 2021, throughout 2022 we developed our T-Kuir collaboration with Risco festival in Brazil and FAQ in Argentina, with three artists and producer residencies in Brazil, Argentina and NI and a performance of developed work at Outburst Queer Arts Festival 2022.

Following on from our British Council EU festival delegation in 2021, we were invited to Transform festival in Marseilles, France, to meet with the delegation again and further explore future networking and co-development possibilities between European artists, festivals and companies. European connections continued to expand beyond British Council, thanks to our presentation to a wide range of cultural ambassadors, agencies and attaches at the EUNIC UK network gathering in Belfast. This led to initial partnership conversations with embassies in Lithuania and Finland that will be further developed in 2023/24.

Juntas, our ambitious Nebula-funded international partnership with ILGA and CFFP to explore trans and feminist solidarity building through the arts with policy makers and activists, began in late 2022 and will continue until the end of 2023, leading to ground breaking research, performances and gatherings in Brazil and Northern Ireland.

The 2022 festival saw participation and delegations from Palestine, Argentina, Brazil, Turkey and Ukraine, with Ukrainian artist Anton Shebetko supported to exhibit work through the British Council's UK/ Ukraine Season.

Organisational Development and Wider Participation

A milestone in organisational development was reached in April 2022, with the appointment of the company's first Executive Director, Sarah Williams, through PHF support. Recruitment for this post was delayed through the covid crisis and the appointment has enabled us to finally move forward with ambitious strategic business planning.

The appointment supported us to finalise our new organisational strategy, to be released later in 2023, along with updating of policies and procedures and building on business development.

In other staffing developments, our Assistant Producer Marc Gregg resigned in January 2023 to take up a new opportunity, which enabled us to review and renew the role and anticipate recruiting an experienced event producer early in the new financial year.

It was a busy year for wider participation beyond Outburst's own work, with strong interest in the organisation for participation in external events. As part of the Unboxed programme's Our Place in Space, our artistic director hosted a conversation with artist and environmentalist Daniel Lismore, also programming some works for Gaze International Film Festival. We also participated in events for the Arts & Business company network.

Our Director also supported the development of other arts leaders, through ongoing informal mentoring for Kate O'Donnell (Director, Trans Vegas) and Naoise Callan (Programming and Outreach, Northern Ireland Mental Health Festival).

OUTBURST ARTS FESTIVAL

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Financial review

The directors consider that the unrestricted funds of the charity have sufficient resources and assets available which are adequate to fulfill their obligations.

The results for the period are as set out on pages 11 to 26. The charity returned net outgoing resources of £86,295 (2022 - net incoming resources of £45,329) of which there were net outgoing unrestricted resources of £446 (2022 - net incoming resources of £8,331) and net outgoing restricted resources of £86,295 (2022 - net incoming resources of £36,998). At 31 March 2023 the balance of unrestricted reserves were £73,074 (2022 - £73,520) and restricted reserves of £66,511 (2022 - £152,806).

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's expenditure. The directors consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

The directors have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity for tax purposes.

The directors who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Ms K McAleese

Ms E Murphy

(Resigned 17 August 2022)

Mr M Eaglesham

Ms C McCusker

Ms C Campbell

Ms F Carolan

Mr D Codling

Mr E Dara

Key Management Personnel Remuneration

The Board consider the board of directors and the artistic director as comprising the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling the charity and running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All board members give of their time freely and no board remuneration was paid in the year. Board members are required to disclose all relevant conflict of interests and register them at each monthly board meeting and in accordance with the charity's policy withdraw from decisions where a conflict of interest arises.

OUTBURST ARTS FESTIVAL

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Statement of directors' responsibilities

The directors, who also act as trustees for the charitable activities of Outburst Arts Festival, are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102)
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the directors has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies' exemption.

The directors' report was approved by the Board of Directors.

Mr D Codling

Director

Dated: 28 September 2023