

acta Community Theatre Ltd

Report of the trustees for the year ended 31st March 2012

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act, submit their annual report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2012.

The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

Reference & Administrative Information

Charity name: acta Community Theatre Ltd

Charity number: 800174

Company registration number: 2157661

Registered office:-

acta centre
Gladstone Street
Bedminster
Bristol
BS3 3AY

Council of Management:-

Graeme Riley Chair
Colin Clothier Treasurer
Alice Hunt
Katie McKeogh
Rita Rich
Stephen Fenton

Senior management team:-

Neil Beddow, Artistic Director
Helen Tomlin, Programme Manager

Auditors:-

Dick Maule FCA, 10 - 12 Picton Street, Bristol BS6 5QA

Bankers:-

CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

Public Benefit

All of our work exists for the benefit of the public. We are committed to engaging people who would not normally get involved, to create their own original theatre and arts. We provide a wide range of arts opportunities to increase self-confidence and self-worth, bringing people together to share their stories and celebrate their communities.

The Company continues to deliver high quality community arts and theatre projects, delivering nine different projects and programmes of work this year, with close to a thousand local people, including the creation and performance of 16 original new shows and more than 750 participatory workshops.

We review our aims & objectives on an ongoing basis throughout the year, to ensure that our activities are developed in accordance with our stated charitable purposes. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims & objectives and in planning our future activities; (see page 6 for aims & objectives). We continue to develop our programme across the City in line with our core values of:

- **Participation**
- **Access**
- **Quality**
- **Diversity**

Review of activities

Touring community theatre, existing youth theatre and family learning projects have remained a strong focus for the Company through this year. However, the year was also significant for the addition of *Coast*, a new international community theatre cooperation project, as well as the launch of a new four year programme of work in the local Bedminster area, *Get Together*. These project initiatives, alongside core funding support from the Baring Foundation, have also enabled the Company to develop further its work with migrant communities.

A review of our main projects this year follows below:-

1) Community Theatre

1.1 The Advance project – *Mother Iceheart*



Our high-quality community-touring group of non-professional community performers, known as the *Advance* group, developed this original family show to tour Bristol neighbourhoods in November &

December 2010. Following last year's successful performances in Lawrence Weston, Upper Horfield and Withywood, the show was brought back for a week at the acta centre, 7 – 10 December 11.

The headlines from the audience analysis were as follows:-

- 4 out of every 5 audience members were not regular theatre-goers
- 35% of the audience never or rarely attend the theatre
- 98% rated the show excellent or good
- For more than half of the audience, it was their first ever acta show

"another first class theatrical experience" audience member.

1.2 Malcolm X Elders



Following a fantastic Caribbean Revue evening in May, members of the Elders' Forum, based at the Malcolm X Community Centre in St Pauls, began work on their fourth **acta** show, *We Have Overcome*. The show is based on their personal stories of growing up in the Caribbean, and moving to England in the sixties, and was delivered as part of acta's *My Generation* intergenerational project, which creates opportunities for older people to tour original community theatre to schools. The show was previewed at a workshop during the Coast international festival of community theatre on 28 March.

"..(they) told us stories of their world, and they did it in a very loving kind of way.."
audience member.

"It is important for the younger generation to know where we are coming from."
Cast member.

1.3 Somali show, *Tahriib Haajiraad*



Back in Summer 10, **acta** hosted an original community theatre show from Rotterdams Wijktheater, created & performed by a small group of Somali women, *Hooyo Maan*. The show attracted a new Somali audience into the **acta** centre, after which a small group of Bristol Somali women expressed an interest in working with **acta** to create a show based on their story of migration and settling in Bristol. This new show, *Crossing Borders*, performed twice at the **acta** centre in June 11 to packed and delighted audiences.

".. a lovely exploration of the tensions between generations, cultures and traditions in the Somali community." Audience member.

1.4 COAST, Community Oriented Arts & Social Transformation



The two year COAST international cooperation project, supported by EU Culture Fund, started in Summer 11, providing an opportunity for acta to share learning with partners in Germany, Poland and Holland about the process of creating community theatre to explore stories of migration. The project provides opportunities to create & present new community theatre, and share our learning through a series of gatherings and secondments.

On 26-29 March, acta hosted the COAST international festival of community theatre in Bristol, a celebration of the unique role of community theatre in exploring, examining and presenting stories of transition and the meeting of different cultures.

The Festival aimed to:

- examine and celebrate the methodology and applications of community theatre in a variety of global settings;
- attract new audiences from diverse communities of Bristol and region;
- bring the best of international practice in community theatre to Bristol;
- value, celebrate and champion community theatre as an integral and important part of theatre practice.

It included:

- two performances of each new play from each of the three international partner companies (Rotterdams Wijktheater, Teater Grodzki & Expedition Metropolis);
- two new acta shows (Crossing Borders & We Have Overcome), and two performances of a new show (Down With The Dictator) from a UK-based community theatre company (CAN Manchester with Afrocats);
- seminars to discuss the performances;
- practical workshops, including one from each company on their approach and practice;
- discussion and debate around practice and philosophy;
- links with academic partners, including Exeter University and University of Bristol, who worked closely with acta to provide a volunteer documentation team, to feed into evaluation of the project;
- full documentation, using film, a photographic record and volunteer note-takers at each event. (There will be a narrative & film documentation of the festival available later this year, and a Coast book and dvd available at the end of the project.)

2) Youth Theatre

2.1 Go North



This project to support our youth theatre network in North Bristol, with funds from Big Lottery Fund, has now begun its third and final year. The programme engaged 147 young people within the first two years, supporting them to make the first steps towards significant positive change in their lives. Through the regular weekly youth theatre sessions, *Go North* has raised aspirations, supported cultural attendances and secured 30 youth arts awards. A total of 73 young people have been part of local public performances, which in this year focused on a youth theatre festival at Oasis Academy Brightstowe (Shirehampton) in April. The Zest Youth Theatre group from Avonmouth performed their new show, *On The Run*; Ace Youth Theatre performed a show called *Cloned by Chocolate*; Ace Invaders presented, *The Fate of Greenwood*; and LDubbers brought back their *Time Will Tell* show. Later in the year, Ace Invaders created a new show, *Down On The Farm*, which they successfully toured to local primary schools in November, and LDubbers focused on an intergenerational show, *The Years Between*, in partnership with Blaise Weston Court, which performed at the sheltered housing scheme for older people in February 12.

2.2 Bedminster youth theatres

For details about our work with children and young people in Bedminster, please see *Get Together* project review below (3.1)

2.3 Young carers



Following the end of project funding from Bristol City Council for this area of work, our service for young carers this year was secured by grants from Lloyds TSB Foundation, BBC Children in Need and Quartet Community Foundation, enabling us to develop further the two weekly youth theatre groups, based at the **acta** centre. The younger group, known as Laughing Panthers, produced their third original show, *I Spy*, at the **acta** centre in September. The show double-billed with the latest performance from the older young carers group, known as Who Cares? Youth Theatre, *Moving Reflections*.

This vital area of **acta**'s work with vulnerable young people secured a three year grant from Henry Smith Foundation towards the end of the year, to enable us to extend opportunities for young carers aged 11 – 16 yrs. We are also working to ensure that older young carers have opportunities to move on to engage in other **acta** groups in future years.

3) Neighbourhoods

3.1 Get Together, Bedminster



This new four year project, funded by Big Lottery Reaching Communities, was launched at the **acta** centre on 6 June, and offered a series of outreach projects and short courses over the summer, many of which had an intergenerational focus and aimed to engage potential participants for weekly groups which started in September, as follows:-

- Two youth theatre groups, Bedminster Kids and Emergency Exit youth theatre, both creating annual productions to perform in summer term.
- A daytime Older People's Arts (OPA) group met April – December.
- An evening community theatre project for all ages, creating their first ever show to perform in July.
- A Saturday morning group for families has met periodically, with a focus on preparing for local events.
- A community choir for all ages began in January, performing for the first time at the Coast festival launch night at end March.



In addition to these weekly **acta** centre groups, the major focus for this first year of the project was the Legends In Light event in December, involving nearly 400 people in the procession around local streets on the night, with an estimated audience of around 2000. The event successfully raised the profile of the project throughout Bedminster, and brought together all the different groups of people currently engaged. Local people were left enthused to consider how they can work to ensure this becomes an annual event for the local area.

A total of 421 local people of all ages have participated in project workshops in this first year, which have included a series of outreach projects in addition to the regular **acta** centre workshops. The project is beginning to capture evidence that participants have an improved understanding of local people from different cultures and generations, as a result of bringing people together in weekly sessions, and for events.

Get Together receives partnership funding from the Baring Foundation, for **acta**'s My Generation programme of intergenerational work, which funded the OPA group's *Sherbet, Snails and Pinky Fruit* show in this year. The show first performed at the new museum for Bristol, M Shed launch event in May, before touring to local older people's groups and schools throughout the summer and autumn terms. Towards the end of the year, the show was developed as a partnership with the after-school children's drama group that we delivered at Parson Street primary school, bringing the two groups together to create a revised performance of the show in December. Outreach projects have also been delivered with other groups of isolated older people in the area.

3.2 Open Circle



This was the third year of Open Circle, a four year project delivering weekly participatory arts workshops with families in North and South Bristol, funded through the Big Lottery family learning fund.

The project was extended to involve new families through partnerships with new schools in North Bristol, and in South Bristol, delivered a new project with mums and their children at the Witywood Teenage Parent Project, as well as developing two very popular family learning sessions for pre-school aged children and their parents at the **acta** centre.

Our Aims & Objectives

The charity is a charitable company limited by guarantee and was set up in 1985. It is governed by a memorandum and articles of association, which describe our objects as follows:-

- Instigate and supervise drama projects for youth & community groups
- Provide all sections of society with the opportunity to participate in theatre
- Supervise drama sessions with people who are encouraged to create & perform their own production
- Identify (in conjunction with others if necessary) areas and communities in which theatre activities are lacking and to remedy deficiencies identified as a result
- Design projects which emphasise the educational aspects of workshops and the personal and social development of individuals within a group
- Supervise projects which are designed to assist community development.

Reserves and Risk management

The trustees have continued to work closely with the Artistic Director to manage the budget, and have achieved a general funds surplus in the year, so that our revised general funds accumulated surplus increased to £76,269 by the end of March 12.

The trustees have reviewed their policy on free reserves, taking advice from the auditor and consulting Charity Commission guidance, and agreed that the Company should aim to build up further its free reserves to three months' operating costs, circa £90,000.

The Company accounts are reviewed by the trustees on a quarterly basis to ensure annual targets will be met.

The trustees work closely with the Artistic Director to ensure that all possible areas of risk are considered in the management of the Company, and to develop all opportunities available. Each project is assessed before the charity makes a commitment to the work, and is then monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that any risks are minimised.

The Company has successfully worked to diversify its funding sources and activities over recent years, with a view to minimising the external risks to funding. It will continue to ensure a wide range of funding sources and activities in future years to keep these external risks to a minimum. The Company is responding to the current economic climate by investing into a new fundraising and income-generating strategy, which is being developed through a period of organisational development in 2012, supported by the Arts Council. The Company has also secured a new funding agreement with Bristol City Council for the 2012-15 period.

Internal risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects, to ensure consistent quality of delivery for all operational aspects of the charitable company. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they still meet the needs of the charity.

Governance and internal control

Company and charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

- stated whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis.

The trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that the charity has appropriate systems of controls, financial and otherwise. They are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which 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.

There were no changes to the Trustees in this year, except the appointment of Graeme Riley to the position of Chair, who took over the position from Stephen Fenton, after many years of service in the role.

Volunteers



The Company works with up to 2,000 participants each year, who volunteer their time to take part in our community and youth arts projects. Of these, there are about 20 students and other people who work to help facilitate and manage projects, who we term volunteers. There is a volunteer co-ordinator who works to ensure all volunteers are appropriately supervised. We are grateful for all the efforts of our volunteers involved in service provision over the year.

Employee involvement and employment of disabled people

Employees have been consulted on issues of concern to them through regular company meetings and e-bulletins, and have been kept informed on specific matters directly by the senior management team. There is regular communication between management members and employees, both through the senior management team and a system of staff reports to management.

The Artistic Director liaises with the trustees on the annual job review process for each employee.

The charity has implemented a number of detailed policies in relation to all aspects of personnel matters including:-

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Volunteer policy
- Health & Safety policy

In accordance with the charity's equality & diversity policy, the charity has long established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of disabled people.

Full details of the above policies, and also:

- Business Plan
- Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults policies
- Education policy

are available from the **acta** centre.

Auditors

A resolution proposing that Dick Maule be re-appointed as auditor of the charity will be put to the AGM in Autumn 2012.

The Council of Management approved this report on Monday 9 July 2012.

..... (Graeme Riley, Chair)

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