

ATTIC THEATRE COMPANY (LONDON) LIMITED

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Organisational structure

The charity is managed by a Board of between three and eight Trustees who meet quarterly. The Trustees are also directors under company law and, as shown on page 1, the Board remained the same during the year.

The existing Board may appoint any member of the company as a Trustee. The Board are informed of training courses and development opportunities.

None of our Trustees receive remuneration or any other benefit from their work with the Company. Any connection between a Trustee or Senior Manager of the Company with any employed artiste or production company is disclosed to the full board of Trustees.

In the current year the Artistic Director has been working with her husband, Tom McNab, during the production of the stage play *1936*. The Board of Trustees approves of the project and is fully aware of their partnership.

Jenny Lee remains Artistic Director and Victoria Hibbs, General Manager. Our young assistant director, Mel Hillyard remained in post until February 2011. Rachel Sears was engaged on a freelance basis as our Many Voices Project Leader in September 2010 and remained with us for a year. All posts are part-time.

Freelance: Madeleine O'Reilly delivered drama workshops on *1936* during the tour of the play. We had eleven freelance Many Voices workshop leaders, and one placement.

Related parties

The charity has developed relationships with Merton and Morden Guild, Asylum Welcome in Merton, the Afghan Association Paiwand in Brent, Springfield Community Flat and the Refugee Council in Lambeth as well as Refugee Youth in Croydon to further its charitable objectives.

Risk management

The Trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

Governance

All our Policies and contracts have been updated in line with the requirements of the Charities Commission. ATTIC is mindful that our activities are subject to personal taste and may cause offence. We take the views of our participants and beneficiaries very seriously and have a comprehensive set of policies and company procedures in place such as a Diversity policy, Child Protection policy and Vulnerable Adults Policy. All staff are made familiar with these policies and their adherence is a condition of employment. Feedback from beneficiaries is collated on a regular basis, analysed formally and presented for review to the board of trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The charitable object for which the company was established is to advance education for the public benefit through the promotion of the arts with particular, but not exclusive, reference to the dramatic arts.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance on public benefit and fee charging. The charity relies on grants and other income from fees and charges to cover its operating costs.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Significant activities

Attic Theatre Company (London) Limited (ATTIC) mounts and tours productions of excellent text-based new work and revivals of re-worked classics. It has performance-based community projects for the elderly and vulnerable. The charity also runs a programme of drama and music workshops for young refugees and asylum seekers.

ATTIC has two strong elements to it that work in tandem: the Mainstream Programme and the Community Programme. The same actors and directors work in both areas, maintaining the company's standard of work in both fields.

Mainstream Programme -, involving the development of new writing and production of 'roots' plays - plays exploring cultural heritage - and the nurturing of new talent,

With its high reputation as a production company of quality it is essential that the producing arm of the company is maintained and funded, as weakening this element would alter the balance of the company and lose the essential purpose for which it was created.

Our Community Programme requires a strong funding base to enable us to meet the demand for our work with young refugees and asylum seekers and maintain our programme for older people in the London communities.

All activities are provided either free of charge or at a subsidised rate at point of delivery. Activities are open to UK residents irrespective of income, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, political or religious belief. ATTIC positively promotes and encourages social inclusion and strives to achieve a wider community impact through both its community and mainstream activities that are of public benefit.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Research and development

Business plan:

Following the creation of the business plan in 2010, Jenny Lee reaffirmed the Artistic 'Vision' of the company. The Business Plan and accompanying Action Plan are reviewed at each Board meeting and the Trustees monitor the adherence to these documents.

New plays:

1936

The full production of the play with Arts Council backing for the tour started in March 2010. In April it had its premiere and a three week run in the Arcola Theatre, followed by two weeks of the tour. Two schools drama workshops on the play were run during this period. The play had excellent reviews.

The script is part of the Vintage New Writing programme supported by London Councils.

Mel Hillyard, as Director in Residence researched and read new plays for ATTIC for the New Plays development strand, and worked with playwright Jamie Griffiths on his play REUNION. It was given a week's rehearsal followed by a staged reading at the Theatre 503 in Battersea.

Creativity:

Ma Kelly Goes to the Games, the play tackling healthy living, exercise, and intergenerational issues by playwright Jane James was developed through went to two further drafts, following the focus group workshop in 2009.

Many Voices:

Our freelance Project Leader co-ordinated and developed the three strands of the project.

The Brent workshop leaders worked researched the writings of the famous Afghan poet Rumi, and worked for a term on the material with their group, culminating in performances.

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ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities

New Plays and Touring:

1936 by Tom McNab

1936 was given a full mounted production, opening in March 2010. The play had its premiere and London run at the prestigious Arcola Theatre in Hackney in April 2010. It had a terrific cast and production values and received excellent reviews: "*a powerful, thought provoking, richly rewarding piece of theatre*" What's On Stage (four stars).

There was a further two-week tour of London and the South East supported by the Arts Council. Madeleine O'Reilly wrote a 1936 education pack and delivered workshops.

The profile of ATTIC has been raised considerably by this production at the Arcola.

Many Voices:

Through the commitment of Rachel Sears, the Project Leader and our workshop leaders, the Many Voices Project has developed and strengthened.

Merton: John Morales, the lead facilitator for the last two years continues in post. He and his co-facilitators have formed a strong and supportive relationship with the co-ordinators at the LINK. The group this year has been particularly challenging, with racial tensions and disruptions. However, the workshops have helped all the participants to trust and respect each other, and increased their confidence and communication skills to such an extent that three young people are working towards gaining an Arts Award accreditation. The group also created a film for fellow refugees who were entering the country which was shown as part of refugee week in June at Asylum Welcome in Wimbledon. '*ATTIC gives everyone their moment in the spotlight, their chance to shine, no matter how weak their English. Every single one of the young people who has had the 'attic experience' has benefited in immeasurable, but nonetheless noticeable ways.*' Rosemary Demin, Bishopsford LINK Co-ordinator

Lambeth: Work in Lambeth with the Refugee Council has been varied. Led by David Baker from the Lyric Hammersmith and the C12 Dance Company, the summer term project was successful. But even so, the nature of the Centre and the time slot we were allocated worked against a cohesive group being formed. Nevertheless the creative and funny film made by the participants was enjoyed by all.

After a further term we felt our work was not being given the time and support it needed from our partner at the Refugee Council considering ATTIC funded the project in its entirety. We researched into where we could deploy our funding for '11 - '12 more effectively, in Lambeth, as there are many groups in need,

Brent: The workshops on Saturdays with the Afghan Association Paiwand have developed, particularly through written and devised work based on their own aspirations. They took part in a performance at the Arts Depot in Barnet in Refugee Week along with diverse other young performers and enjoyed the experience and then presented their work to the school at the prize-giving. The all female group showed a marked increase in confidence and achievement. This has inspired other students and the group increased in size. In September we had two new facilitators. Danielle and Hannah have worked productively with the group and produced exciting work increasing their drama skills.. They were asked to provide a piece based on the writings of Rumi to celebrate an Afghan Festival in February 2011 at the Arts Depot, which was very successful. By this time the group had grown to fifteen and included several boys. When asked what they enjoyed most about the drama sessions, they said without exception - '*writing our own material and performing*'.

All three groups have been taken on theatre visits, and received Jack Petchey Achievement Awards. These recognise the progress of one individual from each group and enable them to choose how the group will spend the grant from the award.

Creativity in Older People:

Going for a Song: The singing group for over 55 year olds, led by choirmaster Paul Crompton continued throughout the year with a core group of regular attendees. The workshops take place on Wednesday afternoons in Vestry Hall, Mitcham with refreshments provided afterwards. The attendees come from all different backgrounds. We have a mixed race and ability group, with several people physically challenged. They performed five times throughout the year, including to the Euro Asian group in Sutton, at the 'It's The Ritz - Take 5! performance and as part of Merton's Celebrating Age Festival, in September. It was a great multicultural event attended by around 200 people at the Hub in Tooting.

It's The Ritz - Take 5! was staged at the Charles Cryer Theatre, in Carshalton in partnership with Merton and Morden Guild in February 2011. It involved all their fitness groups, the Afro Caribbean Elders, the Asian Elders and the Goan Elders, ATTIC's Singers together with the rock band XS Baggage, plus individual performers of all ages. With over 70 performers it was a truly intergenerational and multicultural community variety show, and a great time was had by all.

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ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities - continued

Home Safety:

Ma Kelly's Doorstep: We gave a one off performance for a conference in June in Bromley and then toured in September - October for two weeks, covering eight London boroughs, reaching over 800 people and March '11 in six London boroughs reaching over 500 audience members. While the enthusiasm and demand for the show is undiminished, funds are tight for the bookers, and we need to fit in more shows to break even. Many more would book the show if we could offer it free, Ma Kelly has an excellent reputation among the community safety teams.

"We have received a great response from our local residents who were present on the day of the show. Comments have been made in regards to the quality and high standard of the live performance, a great visual message delivered by the actors and a wonderful written script, that many people could relate to and hopefully spread the message of keeping themselves and their property safe." PCSO Kerry Johnson, Havering.

Ma Kelly Goes to the Games: This was the launch of the new show, supported by Merton and Lambeth. It was followed by refreshments and participatory line dancing workshops. The whole event was greatly enjoyed, there's wit and humour in the play, movement and singing, as well as a clear message. We gave 6 performances in Merton and Lambeth to an audience of over 300 people. *"Very educational, I need to start exercising more or I will be old before my time. The kids enjoyed it too"* Audience member

Activities since 31 March 2011

Financial

As a result of Government budget cuts, our revenue London Councils Funding was brought to a premature end, on August 15 2011, along with hundreds of other arts and culture organisations across London.

Much of the period to September has been spent on forward planning, budgeting, fundraising and submitting end reports to London Councils to cover the two and a half years of the two project strands.

We have submitted a programme and budget to Merton for activities in the borough to 2013 and have had meetings with our Granting bodies. It has been agreed that the ring fenced repatriated funds from London Councils be assigned to ATTIC for Aug '11 – Mar '12, This was ratified by Merton Council at a meeting of Cabinet on 19 September. The funding award includes an additional contribution to help sustain the core costs of the company, and guarantees stability to April 2012. Further discussions are in motion regarding funding for 2012 – 13.

We have raised £67,000 in sponsorship to mount 1936 in the summer of 2012 and have negotiated a sponsorship agreement. This is a terrific boost for the ATTIC in these times of uncertainty, and allows us to look forward to and plan a major production to coincide with the Olympics. The sums involved will no doubt enable us to lever in more funding.

Staffing

ATTIC's key personnel remain the same. We retained Rachel Sears as Project Leader of the Many Voices programme until August, when funds for the post came to an end. Our key freelance Many Voices workshop leaders are still in post.

Mainstream

1936

We are planning to mount 1936 for three weeks July – August 2012, backed by our sponsors, so we have been budgeting, researching venues in central London and negotiating with one particular venue. The production will be the most ambitious we have mounted, and raise the profile of ATTIC.

In conjunction with 1936 there will be a debate after each performance, and seminars on the history of the Olympics to schools.

New Writing

In October ATTIC is taking part in the Wimbledon book Festival. Jenny Lee is on the panel of judges for a short story competition and we are presenting a staged reading of Tony Kane's new play *The Plot Thickens*, after a period of development between Jenny and the playwright.

We are working in partnership with Lightning Ensemble on the development of a play about dementia.

Community

Many Voices:

We continued running workshops in Merton at Bishopsford School for the summer term. The group made a film called *Helping Hands* which they presented to an audience at Asylum Welcome, Wimbledon in June 2011 for Refugee week, and were also invited to present it at Asylum Welcome in Wandsworth

Three of the young people worked hard towards Arts Awards and have been awarded their Bronze Arts Award accreditation.

The workshops will recommence in November and continue until April, provided the Merton funding is ratified.

The workshops with the Afghan Association Paiwand continue on Saturdays. They gave a devised performance of their own writing at the Granville Plus Youth Centre, Kilburn in June '11 for Refugee Week, alongside other young performers and enjoyed the experience. It was a terrific leap forward in their abilities to make up and tell a story dramatically on stage. The mixed group of fifteen girls and boys worked very well as a team and they all were confident and audible in a difficult environment. For Afghan teenagers to integrate in this way on a project is a very good outcome and one that the parents are very pleased about. Farid Mall, of Afghan Association Paiwand, is very committed to the young people's development in drama and appreciative of our work with them. He has agreed to fund the ATTIC workshops for the next two terms, and we hope to find match funds to achieve full cost recovery on the project.

Having identified a new group, the youth drama workshops in Lambeth began in April. Working with Springfield Community Flat and local primary schools (Sir James Barrie and St. George's schools) twelve young people were invited to join. The sessions took place in a local adventure playground and focussed on creating a film as a starting point for storytelling. Rachel Sears, Project Leader had co-ordinated the project and led the sessions. She was really pleased with the outcome. The group now have access to the playground and have widened their social peer group. The parents came to see the film showing and were visibly impressed with the progress their children had made. The young people had increased confidence and learnt new skills in storytelling and presenting. We were able to promote the services Springfield Community flat provides to adults and families, increase the register for the playground and highlight the support networks for the young people. The termination of funding for this strand of the Many Voices project means that we are, at present unable to continue working in this borough, we will research other avenues of funding to repeat this successful series in the future.

Home Safety:

Following the successful premiere tour of **Ma Kelly Goes to The Games**, the healthy living show which took place in February 2011, we received funding from Awards for All to provide a further six performances in London Boroughs. Visiting four Irish clubs, a Merton community event and Age Concern we played to over 350 people. The show was very well received and recommended further.

'I have had a number of people seek me out to tell me how much they enjoyed it. Our keep fit instructor, Penny Smith, actually stayed on to watch it and thought it was excellent. Hopefully we can do something again in the future.' Failte Co-ordinator, Age UK Hillingdon

We plan to tour it annually and will look to raising funds from health organisations to support this.

Having delivered the distraction burglary show **Ma Kelly's Doorstep** over the last decade, reaching over twelve and a half thousand older people and their carers, the show remains in demand throughout London. We will stage tours as and when, to fit this demand and will submit applications to funders to support those grass roots organisations where the message is needed but the groups that do not have the funds to contribute.

Creativity in Older People

Going for a Song: We have a core group of members who attend regularly and have built up friendships and extended their range of activities through socialising after the session. We performed to the Sutton Stroke club in May to a very appreciative audience and hope to repeat this at Christmas to their South Wimbledon branch.

'I wanted to write to thank you for the wonderful performance that the Going for a Song workshop gave our stroke group last week. The group enjoyed your performance and really engaged with the music and songs that were chosen. I know some of our clients were interested in possibly joining the group. I hope that some will take it up.' Michelle Edwards, The Stroke Association – Merton and Sutton

The group is made up people with a wide range of abilities and from many different backgrounds. However they have developed their skills and are becoming more adventurous musically. The members are supportive of each other and are instrumental in deciding alongside the Choirmaster the content of the work they do. With this energy and drive from the group members we have been working to tighten the dynamic of the work and how it is presented. Being invited to perform gives a validation to the group, and increases their feelings of inclusion, self-worth, confidence and enjoyment.