



Cornwall Drama Association

a service to amateur drama in Cornwall

President: **Simon Williams** Patron: **Robert Duncan**

Notes of Cornwall Drama Association Meeting "Not the AGM" held online Zoom Friday 18th September 2020 at 7pm

Present: 8 committee members - Paul Arthur (PA) Chair; John Clegg (JC) Treasurer; Oriel Bennett (OB) Secretary; Sue Bell (S/B); Kathy West (KW); Mandy Rolleston (MR); Soozie Tinn (ST); and Bethany Lyne (BL)

And Carol Taylor (CT - Chief Moderator), Margaret Cortis (MC - Moderator)

Plus Society representatives - Aline Turner (AT), Andy Smith (AS), Meg Prater (MP), Paul Blaber (PB) and James Oliver (JO)

Apologies: Susie Bundy and Ann Lejeune

The Chairman welcomed the moderators and society members who had joined the meeting.

► BL outlined the proposed Theatre Day, (Saturday, 7th November) of online workshops planned to replace the traditional meeting at Hotel Bristol, Newquay and its evening awards ceremony, in the event that COVID-19 has made the annual event impossible this year:

To consist of up to eight or nine workshops, each of 45-90 minutes duration; open to all Cornwall's theatre groups, not just CDA members; KW noted that it was an interesting departure and might attract more participants because it is online; CDA approaching FEAST for funding to help cover incurred costs, i.e. trainers' fees, professional Zoom package, marketing costs.

CT asked how it would work - BL explained:

Promotion on Facebook; Eventbrite would take bookings (necessary to control numbers for Zoom participation); a URL link to be sent before the day; timings to be confirmed allowing for comfort breaks in between sessions; 10 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m.

Discussion surrounded the decision to make no charge for the day with concern that people might book and not turn up, depriving another of a place in the workshop. This contrasted with perceived difficulties of applying a fee. It was to be hoped that the word would be spread to be honourable - 'if you can't come after booking, please let us know'. The plan for this year's Theatre Day was welcomed by those present.

► PA mentioned nominations and asked CT to enlarge:

28 groups had already been adjudicated in the months leading to lockdown at the end of March; the four moderators would be meeting 10th October to decide the nominations so far; these nominations would be announced online during Theatre Day, 7th November, using a live Facebook feed; any shows between now and next September would have their nominations added to the current list for a Theatre Day and Awards Night next autumn.

CT stressed that all societies should be notified very clearly of the way the Festival would be run this year into next year.

► PA asked JC to explain the decisions taken by the committee regarding membership subscriptions:

The accounting year would be run from 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2021 - effectively a two-year

period with a 'hole' in the middle caused by the suspension of performances during lockdown and the difficulties societies will face getting back to rehearsals; with few outgoings in the way of adjudicators' expenses over the past few months and no Theatre Day at the Hotel Bristol to pay for the funds of the CDA can withstand the loss of income resulting from this decision.

The committee's decision was accepted without dissent.

►The committee had heard, at recent committee meetings, that Helston Theatre Company (HTC) is proposing to start performances as soon as possible and KW asked PB to share how the society is going to set this up. PB explained: Epworth Hall must be made a safe environment; reduced capacity; tickets would be sold in 'bubbles' of six; the shows would be low key/low budget with small casts; difficulties they face are the contradictory and confusing advice and guidelines currently, and the need to check the wording on insurance.

Questions included - (KW) would it be viable or would you be prepared just to break even?; (ST) how would it work for musicals if the director and MD are two of the six?; (AS) does the hall insist on the wearing of masks? This led to discussion on and anecdotes about the opposing views of whether or not singing is allowed, with masks, without masks, in church, in choirs, indoors or outdoors, all of which reinforced the difficulty of interpreting the inconsistent, complicated and frequently changing guidelines.

►MC asked if anyone had heard from Phil Barnett at Kidz R Us in St Ives. Her interest came from knowing that maintaining the St. Ives Theatre was very costly and concern at how he is managing financially in the current situation. KW added that other societies have their own premises too and this was a time when those that haven't are considering themselves lucky. Ex-Kidz who have turned professional have been back to perform at St. Ives and some shows have taken place on the island, which will have helped bring in some money. AT thought they should have been able to claim £10,000 from Cornwall Council, PB said grant funding was available for community halls; KW added that they might have access to the government's relief fund. Last time she had seen him he seemed 'upbeat'.

►PA asked if any societies had renewed their insurance recently and how the current situation may have affected it. No one had, but he asked PB to feedback to the committee once HTC had explored their policy.

►AT wondered if it was appropriate to ask about the rules regarding professional involvement in shows and the exclusion from the Festival that imposed on societies. CT explained that the moderators and adjudicators had circulated the rules, which were displayed on the website and, since all groups know them, there was no inclination to alter them. OB noted that the website had only a short paragraph on the subject not the more lengthy report available to the committee; perhaps more detail might be given. KW, as a long standing committee member, said this topic had been discussed more than any other over the years and that actually only a small percentage of groups have made complaints. Any changes might simply result in their coming from a different small percentage. No rule will please everybody but the current wording has been carefully debated. AT's view was that as CDA represents the societies in Cornwall, perhaps those societies might like to have some say in the rules that govern them.

PA assured that the committee is listening to its members and will look at this issue again very carefully at a future meeting.

►PA used the moment to tell everyone that the committee can co-opt at any time and invited anyone who felt he or she would like to step up to contact him. He also registered warm thanks to all the moderators and adjudicators who put in a lot of work, time and many miles. Anyone who aspires to become an adjudicator was invited to contact who CT, who added that the current list was ageing and consequently losing members through its being a demanding role, particularly having to drive miles in the winter months.

Thanking everyone for attending the meeting and for their contributions the Chair closed the meeting at 7.56pm.