

**Minutes of the AGM of the Friends of the Grand,
held on the Stage of Blackpool Grand Theatre,
at 2.00pm on Monday 4th April 2022**

Present: John Grady (Chair and Treasurer), Ann Royle (Secretary), Ken Bowe, Denise Carter, Trevor Denton, Geraldine Porter, Michael Prendergast, Marjorie Taylor, Christine Watkins, Lesley Wood, 24 other members.

In attendance: Helen Booth, Colin Johnston.

Apologies: Richmond Neale and Susan Walker.

Minutes of the Previous AGM

The minutes of the 2021 AGM were accepted as a true and correct record, proposed Michael Prendergast, seconded Dot Malone. There were no matters arising.

Chair's Report

John Grady explained the absence of events during the pandemic which had also resulted in several staff changes. He particularly thanked Robert Kearton for all his work for the Friends over several years. When volunteers return later in the year, they will come directly under the House Manager. Future fund raising will be discussed by the committee and the Trust Board, by which time the new CEO Adam Knight will be in place, Ruth Eastwood having left the Grand in March.

The committee are currently in discussion with Board members regarding the updating of our constitution in line with Charity Commission notes. Next February marks the 50th anniversary of the Friends of the Grand and planning for this and other events is in hand.

Secretary's Report

It has been difficult to arrange face-to-face committee meetings during the pandemic and we have at times resorted to Zoom, which has hindered forward planning; in any case coffee mornings cannot be arranged with speakers until we are sure of an available room. A particular concern has been that the Space cannot easily be accessed at present while the lift undergoes refurbishment. Once the position is clear information will be spread via a

newsletter and the website. In response to questions, it was emphasised that using the bars would not be possible due to lack of space and facilities.

Maria Carr asked why the cost of a newsletter appeared in the accounts when one had not been published in the past year. The Treasurer explained that this related to the previous year's newsletter which had not been charged to the Friends until 2021. She also asked why the Friends had paid towards roof repairs which should have been covered by insurance. Roger Lloyd Jones and Colin Johnston explained that the roof was the Trust's responsibility and was fully insured. The insurers had paid for some specific storm damage which could be related to a particular event but regarded other repairs as due to normal wear and tear, hence the request to the Friends for help.

Treasurer's Report

This year the Friends donated £10,000 to the Trust to pay for the new telephony system. Subscriptions were down, due to the theatre closure and staff changes which meant that reminders had not been sent. There were no legacies, but individual donations were up. Monthly direct debits showed minor change.

Helen Booth has joined the staff and will assist with FoG matters so she may be able to investigate the decline in renewals.

John thanked the auditors Chittenden Horley for their work and asked the meeting to engage them for another year. Proposed Tony Royle, seconded Geraldine Porter.

The meeting approved the accounts, proposed Christine Watkins, seconded Dot Malone.

Colin Johnston – Management Report

As deputy CEO, Colin gave a report on behalf of Adam, who was not yet available, and the management team. As with all theatres the Grand has faced a challenging landscape in resuming business in the wake of the pandemic, with producers cautious about financial viability. Many shows which have gone ahead have been popular, particularly music and stand-ups and several have even used the gallery. Other shows have moved to new dates but not cancelled so the theatre retains some income. Other highlights were a revival of the Grand's own musical *Around the World in 80's Days* and the pantomime *Snow White* which unlike pantos elsewhere avoided any covid cancellations and saw our largest audience ever. In recovering from the pandemic, the Grand secured a second grant from the DCMS (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport) (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport) Cultural Recovery Fund and a further Emergency Resource Support Fund grant from the Arts Council which are vital for remobilisation.

Adam attended the International Resilience conference at the Winter Gardens and was proud to see the notable contributions made by our Creative Learning team and local young people.

There was a promising forthcoming programme of shows including *Beautiful – the Carole King Musical*.

Adam thanked the Friends for their support, most recently in paying for the restoration of vital lift access to key areas. He was looking forward to meeting us and stressed how much

his career, starting as an amateur and volunteer before drama school, had given him a passionate belief that the theatre's place is at the heart of the community. He understood how much the Grand means to us all and looked forward to working together to create the next chapter in the history of the theatre.

Asked about the three government grants paid through the Arts Council, Colin responded that they totalled £1.4m and had put the Grand in a secure position for recovery.

Replying to a question about the return of volunteers Colin explained that the management were engaged in a fundamental review of the theatre's needs. The role of volunteers was being assessed and one of the first items on Adam's agenda would be to look at what skills are needed or available.

Roger Lloyd Jones – Chair of Blackpool Grand Theatre Trust

Roger expressed appreciation for all the financial help provided by the Friends in the recent past: the updating of admin areas of the theatre, the purchase of the shops and other original parts of the estate and the refurbishment of the lift. His term of office as Chair of the Trust Board ends this year and he thanked the Friends for all their financial support, friendship, and collaboration.

He temporarily took over the chair to propose that the existing committee be retained in the light of ongoing issues after the pandemic. This was agreed unanimously, proposed Maria Carr, seconded Anne Hoyer.

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 2.45pm.