

STEPPING OUT THEATRE

Annual Report and Accounts
2023-24



**Nark Rylance with Project
Co-ordinator Mark Breckon**

“The work Stepping Out Theatre is doing should be supported by all interested in a society that is healthy. Stepping Out understands and does not shy away from the possibility that theatre, the ancient art of these islands North West of Europe, is a transformative and healing activity which brings joy into people’s lives. If you want to hear something true, go and hear what Stepping Out Theatre are saying. I only found myself in theatre, and I hear that Stepping Out is helping other people do the same. I have great hopes for this company and deep respect for what they are doing right now.”

Mark Rylance, Patron

CONTENTS OF ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

- 1 Reference and Administrative Details**
- 2 Structure, Governance and Management**
- 3 Project Co - ordinator’s Report**
- 4 Progress on the Aims and Objectives of the Group 2023/24**
- 5 Financial Report and Accounts for 2023/24**

Graphic Design; **Ann Stiddard**
Photography by **Peter Hall & group members**

Reference and Administrative Details

‘Stepping Out Theatre ’ is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with aims which are benevolent and philanthropic. We are a registered charity who first registered with the Charities Commission in February 2007.

Charity Registration Number; 1179310

The group’s name is sometimes lengthened to **‘Stepping Out Theatre Company’.**

‘Stepping Out Theatre’ was founded in 1997.

Principle Charity Office: 13 Creedwell Orchard
Milverton
Taunton
TA4 1JY

Tel. 07790 980688
E mail; info@steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Bankers: Co-operative Bank, P.O. Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner of Accounts:
Achini Sankalpana, 72 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY



Structure, Governance and Management

Membership

Membership of Stepping Out Theatre is open to all local mental health service users and their allies with an interest in the work of the group. Involvement in any of our productions or activities confers membership. All members are entitled to attend our Annual General Meeting and vote for the election of a group of Trustees who are responsible for running the group. Copies of the group's constitution with more information on all this are available from the Stepping Out Theatre office.

Governing Document

Constitution, amended and signed prior to Charity Registration 6th October 2006. Subsequently amended to assist with registration as a CIO in 2017.

Governing Body

A Board of Trustees, currently seven in number, elected in accordance with the Constitution at the Annual General Meeting

Staff

CEO (Full time, Up Until February 2024)
Steve Hennessy (CEO Post abolished February 2024)

Project Co – ordinator (Part time, from February 2024) **Mark Breckon**

Music Projects Manager (Part time)
Elliot Hall

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM for 2023 – 24 was held at 7.00 p.m. on 20th November 2024 on Zoom. The following seven trustees were either elected for the first time or confirmed to serve the three years for which they were previously elected.

Trustees 2023 - 24

Danann McAleer – Trustee
Emma Staddon – Secretary
Ravi Kullar – Treasurer
Maria Falzetti – Trustee
Mike Hindle – Trustee
Dr. Sue Chambers – Trustee
Geoff Innoles – Chair

Trustees have generally been drawn from the existing membership and we try to have a range of people who reflect the nature of the group – i.e. people who have used and / or worked in mental health services and people who work in theatre and the arts. Any group member can put themselves forward for, or be nominated to be a Trustee. The group also regularly advertise for new Trustees to fill skill shortages that the Trustee group identifies.



Group meal in Vichy, France

Project Co - ordinator's Report

2023 – 24 saw the end of the three year cycle for our two remaining core funders, leaving considerable uncertainty over the next three years.

Highlights of the year included;

- A full production of 'Refugee Cats' by Ludmyla Tymoshenko and Marina Smilyanets, performed in Bristol and Clevedon. Billed as 'cat therapy for children and adults', this heartwarming children's play aimed to make the refugee experience more bearable for Ukrainian children. The production featured original music written especially for the play by Stepping Out musicians Steve James and Gerry Rowe.
- A programme of music activities (workshops, gigs and recording) in collaboration with long term collaborators and partners Mind Your Music. This included the fifth one day music festival run jointly by both groups where 7 different bands with a huge range of musical styles played in support of local mental health service users.

- Three years in the preparation, and twice postponed due to Covid, the group finally managed a trip to perform at the 'Water is Memory' theatre festival in Vichy, France. This Festival is hosted annually by Procédé Zèbre under their amazing Artistic Director Fabrice Dubusset. We performed 'Refugee Cats' at a World Heritage listed incredible Art Deco theatre in Vichy. We also put on four performances inside schools of a dance and movement interpretation of Oksana Grytsenko's haunting short piece about Russian war crimes, 'Just Tell No One.'
- Our traditional Xmas show was 'Mother Xmas' by Associate Playwright and Project Co Ordinator Mark Breckon. This was performed as a staged reading, with the intention of being followed by a full production in December 2024. The 2023 performances were at The Hen and Chicken in Bristol and Backwell Playhouse in Backwell.

2023- 24 was our twenty seventh year as a group and our seventeenth year of operation as a registered charity.



Progress on The Aims and Objectives of Stepping Out Theatre 2023 / 24

Our charitable aims and objectives as set out in our constitution are;

- 1) To relieve the conditions of mental health service users through the medium of theatre.
- 2) To advance the education of the public about mental health in order to raise their awareness, by producing plays which deal with this issue and counter negative stereotypes of people with mental health problems.
- 3) To advance the education and training of mental health service users and their allies to develop their creative talents, build supportive networks and produce high quality theatre on mental health themes.

As the Project Co ordinator's report makes clear, we can claim to have made considerable progress towards these aims this year.

- 1) Mental health service users have been offered a diverse range of therapeutic creative activities, as well as training bursaries to help with their own creative development. They have also been offered membership of a supportive network and a busy programme of shared activities.
- 2) We mounted a much smaller number of individual productions this year, but both productions raised public awareness of mental health issues and challenged negative stereotypes. These productions were performed in front of hundreds of people in Bristol, Clevedon, Backwell, Vichy and online.
- 3) As well as producing high quality theatre productions on mental health themes, this year's work offered more new education and training opportunities to service users and their allies to build their creative talents in the way we do best – by creating good theatre.



Mother Christmas

Financial Report and Accounts 2023 / 24

In the financial year 2023 / 24, the group received a total of £118,233 in income, and spent a total of £119,135. Corresponding figures from the previous year showed a remarkably similar income of £119,856 but much higher expenditure of £161,459. The higher expenditure in the previous year was mainly owing to many grants being paid late in 2021 – 22 and carried over to 2022 - 23.

The fall in restricted reserves at the beginning of 2023 – 24 was reflected in the amount of theatre produced – from four productions in 2022 – 23 down to just two full productions and a rehearsed reading in 2023 – 24.

As usual, the largest items of expenditure were salaries and payments to the freelance artists and service users involved in our ambitious programme of productions. Together, these accounted for well over 50% of all expenditure. Salary costs are expected to fall largely in 2024 – 25 owing to the redundancy of the CEO post owing to losing core funding.

In 2022 -23, our unrestricted reserves at the end of the year stood at £19,957. That figure stayed very stable, down to £18,654 at the end of 2023 – 24. This small fall was despite the extremely ambitious and expensive project of taking 14 group members to take part in a mental health theatre festival in France.

As in our previous year, the unrestricted reserves represented about 5 months operating costs.

Restricted funds cannot form part of Stepping Out Theatre's reserves as the spending of these funds is laid down in the funding applications and signed contracts upon which they were granted. For this reason, although restricted funds may be carried across at the end of an accounting year, they do not constitute free reserves. At the end of 2023 - 24, the group carried across no restricted funds.

Stepping Out Theatre - Reserves Policy

'Reserves' or 'free reserves' is the term generally used to describe that part of a charity's income that is freely available for its general purposes. Reserves are therefore the resources the charity has or can make available to spend, for any or all of the charity's purposes, once it has met its commitments and covered its planned expenditure.

It is the policy of Stepping Out Theatre that any unrestricted income which the charity is in possession of may, at the discretion of the Trustees, be spent in any way which advances the causes of the charity. These free reserves may also be carried over between accounting years, for example when the group is trying to build up reserves in order to finance a large production or project such as the trips to Finland (2018) and France (2023) to take part in mental health theatre. Building up of reserves is sometimes a prudent measure, but should not be seen as an end in itself, and for this reason, it is Stepping Out Theatre's policy to have reserves set at a maximum of half of the charity's annual income.



Section A - Receipts

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023-2024	2022-2023
The People's Health Trust (1)	2,268.00	-	2,268.00	6,805.00
The Foyle Foundation (2)	-	-	-	10,000.00
Paul Hamlyn Foundation (3)	27,500.00	-	27,500.00	27,500.00
Charitable Donations (4)	-	32,816.27	32,816.27	32,022.88
Box Office Receipts (5)	-	2,898.32	2,898.32	4,118.92
Small Grants (6)	8,500.00	-	8,500.00	7,171.75
Tudor Trust (7)	33,364.50	-	33,364.50	30,000.00
Interest and Refunds	-	886.26	886.26	2,237.82
Loans Advanced by Supporters (13)	-	10,000.00	10,000.00	-
TOTAL	71,632.50	46,600.85	118,233.35	119,856.37

Section B - Payments

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023-2024	2022-2023
Payroll	53,178.37	-	53,178.37	57,938.45
Rent (incl. Theatre Hire)	3,022.60	-	3,022.60	16,167.76
General Running Expenses	6,746.92	-	6,746.92	7,013.20
Miscellaneous Production Costs	1,474.75	-	1,474.75	7,975.70
Travel for Staff, Service Users and Volunteers	-	13,484.56	13,484.56	12,133.92
Subsistence	-	5,305.62	5,305.62	10,588.96
Theatre Trips	-	954.36	954.36	1,832.20
Charitable Donations (8)	-	2,444.00	2,444.00	7,796.11
Freelance Workers and Artists	6,709.91	15,314.94	22,024.85	40,013.02
Fixed Assets	499.95	-	499.95	-
Loans Repaid to Supporters (13)	-	10,000.00	10,000.00	-
TOTAL	71,632.50	47,503.48	119,135.98	161,459.32

Section C - Balance Sheet

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023-2024	2022-2023
Bank Balance at Start of Year (9)	-	19,556.91	19,556.91	61,159.86
Bank Receipts	71,632.50	46,600.85	118,233.35	119,856.37
Bank Payments	(71,632.50)	(47,503.48)	(119,135.98)	(161,459.32)
Bank Balance at End of Year	0.00	18,654.28	18,654.28	19,556.91
Cash Balance at Start of Year	-	-	-	-
Cash Receipts	-	-	-	-
Cash Payments	-	-	-	-
Cash Balance at End of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fixed Assets at Start of Year (10)	-	-	15,088.50	20,118.00
Purchases (11)	499.95	-	499.95	-
Depreciation (12)	-	-	(3,772.13)	(5,029.50)
Fixed Assets at End of Year	-	-	11,816.33	15,088.50
Net Assets at End of Year	0.00	18,654.28	30,470.60	34,645.41

Section D - Notes

- 1) Restricted Fund grant from the People's Health Trust towards a programme of new music workshops headed up by new Music Projects Manager.
- 2) Restricted Fund grant from The Foyle Foundation towards production of new work by Ukrainian playwrights
- 3) Third instalment of 3 year grant from Paul Hamlyn Foundation towards core costs.
- 4) Donations from major donors, charitable appeals, fundraising events and Gift Aid.
- 5) Box Office Receipts from all productions, including London and Bristol
- 6) Including the Quartet Foundation towards Xmas production, and The Nisbet Trust towards core costs.
- 7) Final year of two year restricted grant from the Tudor Trust towards core costs.
- 8) Charitable Funds raised through group fundraising events for others. The two main recipients were SALVE International, working with street children in Uganda,
- 9) Unrestricted Funds carried forward from 2022 - 23 towards core costs and projects in 2023 - 24.
- 10) Solely the charity vehicle. There has been 20% personal ownership of same vehicle maintained since 2015 with 20% cost and maintenance contributions.
- 11) Fixed assets purchase includes a laptop purchased on 27/02/2024. The charity does not provide depreciation for the purchase year and fully depreciates in the last year.
- 12) Net fixed assets (Vehicle) calculated after deducting 25% depreciation, representing 75% of the opening balance.
- 13) £10,000 loan given by supporters during cashflow issues and its subsequent settlement.

Section E - Approvals

Signed: **Ravi Kullar (Treasurer)**
Date: **20th November 2024**

Signed: **Achini Sankalpana (Independent Examiner)**
Date: **20th November 2024**

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Stepping Out Theatre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Stepping Out Theatre (the Trust) for the year ended 28 February 2024

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: **Beralaliya Gamage Achini Sankalpana**

Address: **72 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY**

Date: **20th November 2024**

