

The Annual General Meeting for the Cuckfield Dramatic Society was held on **Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018** in the meeting room at Ye White Harte Inn, Cuckfield.

Chair: Peter Bowman

Secretary: Paul Davey

**Attendees:** Peter Bowman, Paul Davey, Martin Sheldon, Harriët Sheldon, Shirley Coates, Joan Collins, Lesley Jenks, Kirsty Bishopp, Laurence Leng, Bill Collins, Peter Collins, Jane Bowman, Carole & David Park, Jason Ross, Paul Ruse, Isobel Holloway, Emma Gosling

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 19:30.

**Apologies for Absence:** Jane Leng, Phoebe Izzard Davey, Chrys Tarr

1. The minutes of 2017 AGM were accepted
2. Chairman's Report (see below)
3. Treasurer's Report (see below)
4. Update to the Constitution
  - a. Revisions were proposed by Paul Davey, seconded by Martin Sheldon and the new text was unanimously accepted (copy attached)
5. The Chair reported that the committee had asked Joan Collins to continue in the role of honorary President, and that she had accepted.
  - a. Joan commented on how happy she was to see such a particularly successful year for the society after a few difficult years and that she hoped it will continue to thrive as we approach our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
6. Appointment of Auditor:
  - a. Peter Tolhurst has agreed to continue as auditor, proposed by Martin Sheldon, seconded by Jason Redford-Ross & unanimously agreed.
7. Election of Chairman
  - a. Peter Bowman was proposed by Harriet Sheldon, seconded by Emma Gosling and unanimously agreed.
8. Election of Treasurer
  - a. Shirley Coates was proposed by Jason Ross, seconded by Paul Ruse and unanimously agreed.
9. Election of Secretary
  - a. Martin Sheldon was proposed by Jane Bowman, seconded by Harriet Sheldon and unanimously agreed.
10. Election of Committee
  - a. Peter Bowman proposed the nominations of Jason Ross, Paul Ruse, Kirsty Bishopp, Hazelle Woodhurst-White, Lesley Jenks and Paul Davey. This was seconded by Harriet Sheldon and unanimously agreed.
11. There being no other business the meeting was closed at 20:25

### **Chairman's Report**

2017 was another progressive and busy time for CDS with plenty on offer for all our members and audiences.

Continued success on stage saw our 2017 February Frolics sell out in record time with everyone enjoying our Jocular Journeys theme which offered ample opportunity to "poke fun at Southern Rail, airlines, Southern Rail, nervous passengers, Southern Rail, Food on Wheels, Southern Rail, Tourists, Pilots, and Southern Rail!"

Our October 2016 Murder Mystery, "Murder on Air" was reprised in April at which £600.00 was raised for the benefit of Hassocks Cancer Research. Thanks and congratulations should go the cast and crew for an

excellent production and for helping to raise the funds while representing CDS out of our area in a very positive way. Well done.

In 2015 the one act play for February Frolics was an offering written by Richard Willis and our own Paul Ruse. The story unfolds as an upwardly mobile would be councilor hosts an evening of bridge to impress newcomers to the area. The plot progresses when a couple of "swingers" also new to the area arrive at their house by mistake! This was a play fast paced and full of hilarious situations and innuendo and proved to be an immediate success. With laughter and encouragement from all ringing in their ears the writers set about turning this into a full three act play and in May 2017 we performed the world premiere of "Bridge to Farce".

If you haven't seen the play then you will have to go to see the next production of this 21st Century farce to find out what happens in Acts 2 & 3, suffice to say the plot thickens with a brilliant "twist" at the end. The play was directed by Sophie Bradshaw and such was the strength of the writing and cast this was again an immediate success playing to full houses each night.

Buoyed by the enthusiasm generated for this production CDS went "on tour" and in August we performed the same production over four nights at the Hurstpierpoint Players Theatre. Once more we played to full houses, thanks to the publicity team headed by Paul Davey, and once more Sophie was supported by the same cast and crew who should be congratulated for delivering this fantastic comedy and spreading the word locally for both CDS and the writers.

Such was the success of this production that it was awarded an Accolade of Excellence by NODA and shortlisted for the regional award; "Best New Show" 2017. The team was well represented at the awards ceremony where we were voted runner up to a production which was a revision of a production some years earlier!!! Not sure how this was a "New Show" however sour grapes aside hearty congratulation to all involved and in particular special praise for the writers. Richard & Paul. Great job gents.

Our autumn play was a real heavy weight in theatrical parlors, Uncle Vanya; written in 1898 by Anton Chekhov was a complete contrast to Bridge To Farce and some of our recent productions. This was our director, Emma Goslings first full play as director and her infectious enthusiasm delivered a very tender and thought provoking production. I was surprised to learn just how many things which troubled people in the late 1800's are still relevant today. Not just in human relationships but in other areas such as "green' issues and vegetarianism!!

Christmas Cabaret, now in its third year and a fixture in Cuckfield's event calendar, saw a collaborative team of Hazelle Woodhurst-White, Paul Davey & Shirley Coates produce two fantastic nights of entertainment themed on the 1960's with a narrative around James Bond and Austin 'Flowers'. One new innovation was the introduction of "live music' and congratulations should go to Hazelle for bringing it to the table, or should I say stage, and Kingsley and Luke for doing a great job on keyboard and drums.

This AGM is later than normal, only by a couple of months but as is the CDS way these days we've already had two productions this calendar; February Frolics and February Frolics Two, the second being performed in Wivelsfield Village Hall for the benefit of the local Rotary Club. However as they are 2018 productions I will leave those for next year's notes from the Chair.

We are being very successful and as a result have increased funds and it is the committee's commitment that we should spend any proceeds on the development of the society for the benefit of the community to be able to continue the progress made over recent years and improve our productions for audiences and participants.

So with that endorsement ringing in our ears things haven't stood still off stage either. We have delivered a much needed refurbishment of our raked seating at a cost of circa £1700.00.

For all our productions we used to hire in all our tech requirements and depending on the show this ranged from £500-1200 per production. The committee therefore agreed that it would be a good idea to buy our own equipment. However before we could do this we needed a couple of things to happen 1) the infrastructure in the Queens Hall needed updating 2) We needed some lights and 3) we needed to train people to use them!!

So we approached the Queens Hall and to cut a long story short they agreed to us updating the wiring, lighting bars etc and even agreed to help pay for it and paid 50% of the costs, circa £2200.00.

We then continued with our desire for training and development for all and put on a lighting workshop at Hurst Theatre delivered by Lance Milton with some 7 attendees, two from other groups. This training has been the trigger for more people to be in a position to provide lighting with Paul Ruse, Keith Moss and yours truly taking on the responsibility for Uncle Vanya, helping at Christmas Cabaret & this year's February Frolics.

We have also spent some £2,000.00 on our first batch of lighting equipment and more recently following the sad demise of Warninglid Players we purchased all their sound and lighting equipment at a further cost to us of £2,000.00. So hopefully we won't see a request for another light or sound desk for quite some time to come!!!

We also replaced all our stage blacks (£400+) during the year, well with all those new lights the old ones were looking a bit shabby!

However success does not always bring harmony like most relationships there may be a few bumps in the road and this year it saddens me to even have to bring this up at the AGM however I was so very disappointed with some "behind the scenes" antics creeping in to a couple of our productions, particularly Bridge to Farce at Hurst and Christmas Cabaret, that I feel I must. We all try our best, it is not a competition as to who thinks who is best. We all try our hardest to deliver and as a team we should all help each other to deliver even if we think we know a better way we must allow people the opportunity to do it their way. None of us has a blue print for success we should encourage and support in a positive way, you never know if you open your mind up you might learn something. The last thing anyone wants is to be usurped by comment behind their backs. We addressed this issue during the year and it pleases me that we appear to have moved on however I bring this up now for I fear if this is not wiped out then things could fester and be the downfall of CDS.

I don't want to finish on a low point particularly as we have had such great year but we do have to be honest to survive at a time when so many of our friends have or are falling by the wayside.

Theatre groups are a bit like swans with the stage being what everyone sees, actors serenely delivering word perfect performances when under the water, or should I say behind the scenes everyone is paddling like mad to keep it all afloat. In most cases these people are unsung but it should be recognized that although they may not be on the stage taking the plaudits the actors would not be there without their support. Using the old 80/20 rule I would like to think that we could buck that age old adage and would ask that we see more people step up to help deliver these productions in 2018. Our continued success depends on it.

Thank you to everyone for their support in making this a great year for CDS and in particular I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work.

Thank you.

Peter Bowman  
Chairman, CDS

### **Treasurer's Report - 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2017**

The Society has experienced an exceptionally busy 12 months with more productions than has been usual:

- February Frolics
- Bridge to Farce
- Bridge to Farce (Hurstpierpoint Playhouse)
- Murder on Air (various charitable organisations)
- Uncle Vanya
- Christmas Cabaret (due to fully-booked nights, the Thursday Dress Rehearsal was once again opened to 'walk-ins' at £5.00/person)

Some Members of the Society manned a CDS stall at the Cuckoo Fayre; advised/assisted with lighting/sound for Cuckfield's inaugural Bookfest (organisers donated newly-purchased headsets and a £220.00 donation); and participated in the Independent State Mayoral Parade (£275.00 donation received).

Our 31 December balance is £12,940.25 including total Box Office income in excess of £15,500.00 and £10,342.12 Production expenditure; however, income from bar, raffle, ice cream sales provides a positive balance.

As well as increased on-stage activity during 2017, CDS has embarked on purchasing equipment items in excess of £3,700.00 for sound and lighting, thus removing the necessity of regularly hiring such items; and, it is anticipated such purchases will continue. New stage Black Curtains, meeting H&S requirements, have been fabricated (£455.89).

CDS has collaborated with the Cuckfield Parish Council in sharing 50% costs (£2,213.00) associated with upgrading mutually-advantageous systems within the Queen's Hall (TSP Sound/Light Solutions).

The Raked Seating has undergone serious refurbishment costing in excess of £1,700.00 involving CDS work parties– this equipment has received minor attention as and when necessary; however, it is intended the work carried out should ensure the Raked Seating will stand in good stead for a number of years to come.

Continuing from the 2016 Acting School, this year the Society held a Training session for Lighting - as opposed to financial gain, invaluable profit has been gained in exposure/experience.

Opening Balance	1 January 2017	£10,630.66
Closing Balance	31 December 2017	£12,940.25

Shirley Collins,  
 CDS Treasurer