

Sedos AGM 2017

Tuesday 25th April 2017 , 7.30pm

Passmore Edwards Room, St Brides Foundation, Fleet Street, London

MINUTES

Present

Dawn Harrison-Wallace (Chair), Matt Gould, Stephen Beeny, Ryan Macaulay, Bob Stanex, Kimberley Barker, Debs Lean, Rebecca Chisholm, Karen de la Poer, Clare Harding, James 'Chads' Chadwick, Phillip Deppeler, Pippa Kyle, Nick Dore, Mark Zeffertt, Sylvia Finnimore, Freddie Byron, Thomas Brennan, Will Harrison-Wallace, Tm Garrad, Rebecca Kendall, Charlotte Price, Andy Hind.

Apologies

Chris de Pury, Steve King, Lizzie Draper, Gayle Bryans, Simon Hill

1. Chairman's welcome and report (Dawn Harrison Wallace)

"Welcome and thank you all for making the time to come along this evening.

And so to the main event - This evening was intended to be a play in 3 parts, with 3 featured roles however due to unforeseen circumstances a third of the cast is unavailable and therefore the role of Treasurer will this evening be performed by Matt Gould.

The evening will consist of the:

Act 1 – featuring myself – will be entitled a Review of 2016

Act 2 – The finances

Act 3 – Changing our constitution

Over the last year, as a committee, we have spent quite a bit of time discussing how we can ensure we listen to the voice of our members – so in the spirit of this – before I share my highlights of 2016. I'd love to hear yours. You have all been given a piece of paper – I would like to write down your personal Sedos highlight for 2016 – I'll then collect these in and share with everyone.

Member's highlights included:

The Stunning London Road

Christmas Party Santa (Any Mac) – x 2

Such Stuff – Possibly the most amazing this Sedos has ever done (From co-director Charlotte Price!!!)

London Road – Amazing too (also from Charlotte Price – cast member!)

Alecky Blythe doing a Q&A with the Cast of London Road

Membership Group Relaunch

London Road x 3

Seeing Such Stuff

Such Stuff!

Sedos Socials

Reefer Madness

After show parties at Dawn's place (pre 2016!)

Sunday Socials

Such Stuff opening night

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change

Hanging Baskets

Skilful subtle clean-up of The Accrington Pals Bathtub spill – early 2016 but pre AGM J

The London Road original cast & authors being so supportive of our show

Hanging London Road Screen

Candide Orchestra

Such Stuff

Going to the Fringe

Charles Price's move from immersive theatre super fan geek into Immersive Theatre director extraordinaire

And so to my take on 2016 -

Whilst preparing for this evening I took the time over the weekend to go through some of our 2016 reviews and I was very taken by this comment:

"I do admire how versatile Sedos can be – from stunning productions of musicals to clever, infrequently performed plays such as Pornography"

2016 showcased our versatility perfectly

136 actors were involved in 10 productions:-

- Pornography – rarely tackled
- I Love You, You're Perfect Now Change - took the risk of performing acoustically and it payed off
- Such stuff – a whole other universe built from scratch – nominated for Noda's innovation award
- Reefer Madness – semi-naked bodies wearing marijuana leaves
- Whose Life is it Anyway? – a classic – with its lead Dickon Farmer winning the District NODA "Best Actor" award and going forward to the regional awards.
- London Road – a musical so tricky few would attempt it, let alone nail it
- Frenemies – new writing, sell out shows and a profit in Edinburgh
- Ritual Slaughter – another, few would take on, but we did with aplomb
- 1 man 2 Governors – a newer "classic" that obviously made its mark with David Miller winning the District NODA award for Comedy performance
- Candide – with its wonderful cast, fabulous orchestra and wall of sound

But none of this versatility demonstrated on stage would be possible without the skills and dedication of those off stage. A rough calculation last night got me to around 200 people who made 2016 happen

But to focus just on the shows would be wrong – in 2016 Sedos was busy in many other ways:

We signed a new lease for BHG – yes in theory we are still on short notice but to have secured a new 3 year contract means we are confident we have good base for a few years yet (Thanks to Matt for assisting with this)

We started to make BHG feel a little more like home – thanks Sylvia and Andy and those who've helped out at weekends-

- We kicked off our Members group – with regular fun socials and the unexpected benefit of being a great spring board for recruiting FOH support– So thanks to Kim and her entourage.
- We introduced Wi-Fi at BHG (Thank you Michael)
- We continued dancing (Thank You Tom)
- We kicked off the development of new processes systems to make us slicker including membership, website, Box-Office – (Thanks to Mr Hussey & Mr Beeny amongst others)
- We signed a new 5 year deal with the Bridewell – (Thanks Matt)
- We said yes to Simprov!
- We donated £2,500 to 5 charities - Mousetrap, Half Moon, Cardboard, Chicken Shed, and Angel Shed.
- We kept Newsletters going, websites updated.....Thanks Pippa Stephen, Aileen
- We've organized cleaners, bought the loo roll and so the list goes on

And someone has also ensured we've paid the bills and submitted our returns – alongside paying expense as well as working out if we've made money or not - Thank You Steve

And before we move onto that part

What does 2017 hold?

2017 is another big year for Sedos – in terms of number of productions it might be slightly less ambitious but as a programme it still has all you'd expect from Sedos

It's rather odd (frightening?) that it's nearly May and we're only one show down – this time last year we'd just finished our 3rd..... however Accrington Pals – which kicked off season – clearly demonstrated that we – and those directors and actors who make us who we are – aren't frightened to take risks. And we should applaud those who are willing challenge the norm.

What Accrington Pals also reminded us that Sedos played and plays an important part in many people's lives. The fact that 8 cast members from our original Sedos production (performed alongside Journey's End) in 2002 were easily reunited for the night is proof I feel of that – even if it did end up in heated debate in the bar!!

Next week sees the opening of Drowsy and also the first public outing for Simprov.

And somehow we've then got to get another 6 shows out of the bag!!!

In terms of the organisation – I'll let Matt talk about what our plans are here but this is another demonstration of us recognising the need to constantly change to thrive. There has been a huge amount of work put into our plans – especially by Matt – so thanks for him for that.

We hear people talk about the Sedos Machine – and we need to keep that machine well oiled, maintained and fit for purpose – our plans for 2017 will hopefully do just that.

And within the next month or so I'm hopeful that we will finally have our not inconsiderable funds securely invested thus ensuring that, when those of you under 30 are my age you will still be able to enjoy all Sedos has to offer."

2. Treasurer's report (Matt Gould, in the absence of Steve King)

Sedos had its highest ever turnover in 2016 of £226k. This was an increase of £100k on 2015. Of that, 97k was show related income. The remaining income was donations relating

to Sedos' use of BHG and Capstan House, where Such Stuff as Dreams are Made On happened. Note that £95k of rates were expended in 2016, as opposed to £14k in 2015. This was due to the arrangement that was made to allow us to use Capstan House for Such Stuff.

Overall, Sedos' profit for the year was £11k. £4k of this was profit on shows performed. The remainder was the balance of donations relating to BHG after subsidising the Charity's running costs.

The Charities running costs contained some significant items, including waste disposal (£3k). The Charity spent some capital monies on equipment including washing machines, fire safety equipment a box office laptop (£2.7k). The "Misc" line includes £3,665 which was a sound charge where we incurred the cost but rehired to another Bridewell society, showing that Sedos continues to work with other Bridewell users and use our ability to negotiate discounts to benefit not only ourselves but also other societies.

The Show Profit & Loss show just how difficult it remains for a two-week musical to break-even, however our policy of performing plays as well effectively provides a subsidy for the musicals. It is difficult to see how we could reduce spending on musicals and overall. The show producers should be commended for maintaining a very strong control over the production expenditures, whilst retaining high production values. The issue with larger shows is not the expenditure line, but that the number of ticket sales is not sufficient. We need to give further thought how we can encourage more people to attend our shows! The Committee confirmed that it felt that ticket prices were as high as they could be.

Such Stuff was also commended from a financial perspective. The society took a very large risk, but was rewarded not only with an extremely successful show but also with a profit!

Sedos' assets increased by £11k to £490k. The Committee is aware, however, that it is not that many years since Sedos had no assets. It is only because of the deal with Bridewell and the arrangement at BHG (and previously at Ocean House) that the Society has been able to build up this asset base, combined with a legacy from Jeremy Lewis, a former President of the Society. We may lose BHG at the end of the current arrangement in 2020, and therefore may be required to draw on its assets to fund rehearsal and build space. In addition, the Jeremy Lewis legacy is designated separately in line with the terms of the bequest.

The Committee has determined to put £400k into a separate interest earning account to act as an endowment, outside day-to-day funds. These funds are designated:

£100k – Jeremy Lewis legacy

£300k – endowment to provide rehearsal/build space when required.

3. Proposed Constitutional Arrangements (Matt Gould)

Matt took the Members through the proposed constitutional changes as set out in the attached presentation and in particular:

- To set up a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation to become the new vehicle through which Sedos will operate

- To separate the Management Committee from Trustees with distinct roles and responsibilities (with the Management Committee set up by Terms of Reference as set out)
- To support the Committee's plan to further define the roles of Committee members and enhance the authority of the Groups.

The Members expressed unanimous support for the proposed new arrangements – proposed by Rebecca Kendall, seconded by Tim Garrad and approved unanimously.

4. Questions:

- Noted that generally the Trustees should be separate from the Management Committee, except for the Chair of the Management Committee to provide the formal link between the two bodies - Should the Finance Director (a Committee post) also be a Trustee? For the Trustees to consider further, but given that there will be a Trustee with Financial Responsibilities, not currently considered necessary.
- Noted that Sedos continues to operate without an Artistic Director. Commented that currently no proposals to change this. Artistic policy is a matter for the Management Committee collectively.
- How to ensure the "split" between the Trustees and the Management Committee. Noted that, apart from the Chair of the Management Committee, no-one else should be on both (unless felt necessary – eg finance director). The Terms of Reference of the Management Committee to be updated to reflect.
- Indemnity / Insurance relating to transfer of assets to the new Charity. Noted that this will only be done with Charity Commission consent. Also noted that the Society carries Trustees Indemnity Insurance
- Suggested that the Groups need more autonomy and budgets. Agreed that they should have. The Committee will work with the Groups to ensure that they are functioning as well as possible. Noted also that part of the work of defining roles of committee members was to enhance organisation of the Society.
- Charity of the Year. Noted that we don't have a Charity of the Year currently. Explained that this is because with show costs increasing, makes it more difficult – but agreed that at a Society level, we should continue to have a Charity of the Year – even if donation is determined separately from individual shows. Agreed that this should be a Trustee responsibility and the Trustees will be asked to look into this. Noted that whilst some directors are less keen on "charity presentations" it is good publicity for the individual charities – so a "Policy" on this would be advisable.
- Noted that we have significant assets and could make more money hiring things out. Noted that there is a manpower issue, but it is something that the Committee should consider further.
- Noted that on a number of occasions, now, shows that Sedos has wanted to perform but had the rights declined for seem to be available to other users of the Bridewell. A wonder why that is. A reminder that we rely on a "pitch-process" so applications come from members. Also an issue with organising our season generally well in advance, as some times shows become available at relatively short notice. Noted that Sunset Boulevard had been declined to us performing at the Bridewell. Geoids were later given the rights to perform it outside of Central London, but their venue fell through. The rights holders consented, in those circumstances and the Bridewell specifically asked Sedos whether we would object. Given the circumstances, the Committee felt it could not reasonably object. Also regarding

Evita, the rights holders had “Confirmed” that they would inform Sedos if the rights became available (they weren’t during the relevant pitch process). CentreStage applied during a short window when the rights became available before being withdrawn again. They had better luck! This is always a tricky one for a society. It was discussed with the Bridewell whether they would consider giving us a “veto” over any shows applied to be performed by other societies, but they do not consider that they are realistically able to do this although as was the case with Sunset, they did in fact ask before allowing another society to perform it. The general feeling of the Committee is that we have had some “bad luck” rather than anything else.

5. Election of Committee and Officers

Noting the intention to move to the new structure within a month, it was agreed to re-elect the existing Committee to serve until the new structure is put in place:

Proposed by Charlotte Price, Seconded by Phillip Deppeler and agreed unanimously:

Dawn Harrison Wallace (Chair)

Matt Gould (Secretary)

Steve King (Treasurer)

Kimberley Barker

Stephen Beeny

Lizzie Drapper

Sylvia Finnimore

Andy Hind

Ryan Macaulay

Michael Smith

Bob Stanex

Vaughan Watts

6. Timetable

Given the unanimous support for moving to a new structure:

- Nominations to stand as a Trustee or a Management Committee Member (including Chair) to be given by Friday May 12th.
- EGM to be held at the end of May (date TBA)

The meeting ended at 9.30pm and the majority of attendees repaired to The Harrow.

MG: 2/5/17

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Chair