



Mitre Players Committee Report 2019/ 2020

At the AGM in 2019 the members unanimously elected Colin Warnock as the new Hon. Chairman. They also elected Alan Bishop as Hon. Treasurer and Di Jones as Hon. Secretary. Julia Ascott, Megan Brown, Jon Lee, Jo Morrison and Ziggi Szafranski were elected as general committee members.

The Chairman thanked Mike Lilley and Charles Marriott for their hard work over the years they had served on the committee and also thanked Chris Backway for his help as a co-opted member, dealing with social media.

The following productions were staged during the last Committee year.

Bugsy Malone (Adult Version) at the Clubhouse, Sanderstead in July

The Apollo Theatre, Newport, Isle of Wight in August

Big Fish at the Mitre Theatre, Trinity School in October

Honk! (Junior Version) at the Clubhouse, Sanderstead in January

Our summer production, Bugsy Malone, directed by Jo Morrison, musical direction by Debbi Lindley and choreographed by Kim McEvoy, was performed both at Sanderstead and Newport, IOW. This was a new venue for us as it had become increasingly difficult to find accommodation in Dawlish. It was a gamble, but everyone involved was excited and keen to visit a new theatre and fantastic accommodation, in a riding school, a short distance from Newport. We were the only people staying on the site for 9 days, and the accommodation was arranged around a quadrangle in small houses, each accommodating four to eight people. In addition, there was one big bungalow, sleeping twelve, which had a patio that could accommodate the entire company for a BBQ lunch. The theatre was approximately the same size as the Shaftesbury in Dawlish, with a small staff and a group of volunteers who ran the bar and front of house. Ticket sales were a disappointment but did pick up towards the end of the week. We took part in a Carnival Parade, which gave us a chance to hand out flyers, and the cast danced their way around the town in full costume to promote the show. Despite losing money on the show we all felt it had been a great experience and one we would like to repeat. Jo, Kim and the cast did an amazing job and brought an adult “edge” to the production. The crew built a classy art deco set and the “Splurge team” found muscles they didn’t know they had cleaning the cast several times every night with cloths and towels, following the numerous slaughtering of different characters with splurge guns! We hope to return in 2022.

The autumn production, Big Fish, was performed at the Mitre Theatre, Trinity School to delighted audiences. Directed by Julia Ascott and choreographed by Jo Morrison with Shaz Dudhia holding the baton for the first time, the large cast told “tall tales” and executed magical routines as the story unfolded. Was the story true or just Edward’s vivid imagination? The audiences were left to make up their own minds. Alan Collins and his team created the stage magic and Karen Durrell and Mike Mackenzie were in charge of costumes for the first time. Congratulations and thanks to them all.

January 2020 saw two productions take shape. The first was the Junior Mitre Players’ production of Honk! at the Clubhouse. This junior version of the show was directed by Simon Long, assisted by Megan Brown, Jo Morrison and Ziggi Szafranski. Julia Ascott was in charge of costumes, Sue Long oversaw the props and Claire Ali coordinated the many chaperones needed for show week. This was a new and challenging venture as it was both rehearsed and performed in a month. The cast rehearsed for three Sundays and performed to full houses at the end of January. It was an uplifting production and both the young cast and audiences were honking with delight! Huge congrats go to Simon and his team for pulling it off and bringing sunshine to a gloomy January. We welcomed several new families into the Mitre Players and discovered new technical talents among both mums and dads. We look forward to our next Junior production in January 2021.

We had wanted to mount another joint production with Trinity for some time, the last being over ten years ago. Our chance came when Chris Chambers agreed to tackle the mammoth production of *Coram Boy*. Never failing to meet a challenge, Julia Ascott agreed to jointly direct the play. The Mitre Players would tackle the build and costumes and Trinity would provide the Musical director and musicians needed for the underscoring and incidental music. The cast, both adult and young people, came from both Trinity and the Mitre Players. Rehearsals began in January and everyone involved was having a great time. Rehearsals were held at both the clubhouse and Trinity. The set was being built and painted and costumes made. Props were gathered and music was introduced to rehearsals as underscoring was needed in many scenes. The MD, from Trinity was working hard on the complicated score and it was all coming together slowly but surely. Then two weeks before the production week, the Coronavirus struck, and we were forced to halt the production. We contacted the rights holders and agreed to postpone the production until autumn. This was a huge disappointment to us all as so many people had put so much effort into getting the production to the stage. We hope that the production will go ahead in October, but there is no guarantee that it will.

Our planned trip to the Minack this year has been postponed until August 2021, which is a disappointment but understandable given the current circumstances. We hope that everyone involved will be able to make the trip to Cornwall next Summer and we look forward to a sell-out run.

On the bright side, we had a successful Barbeque last summer and Bish's Quiz night last autumn, and finished the year with a spectacular New Year's Eve party, organized by Megan Brown, Jo Morrison, Anna Warnock, Ben Morrison and friends, catered by Andrew Brown with Karen Rapps' band entertaining, as well as a silent disco and much more. Thanks to all the organisers for their hard work and making the events so enjoyable.

Our annual dinner, in March, was as always organised by wonder women Anna Warnock and Julia Gibbs and was attended by over 70 Mitre Players. A thoroughly good time was had by all and Anna organised some amazing games as usual. Charles Marriott gave a great speech before proposing the health of the Mitre Players. This was the last time the Mitre Players would gather for the foreseeable future. Our thanks go to Anna and Julia for organising the dinner with such style.

Our thanks also to Jo Morrison and Megan Brown for their regular social media posts and to Alan Bishop for the new, splendid website. He has also compiled a database to complete the list of productions from the beginning of the Mitre Players to date. This is a brilliant record of all the productions, including directors, MDs and choreographers and will include memories of these productions by all involved. This will be available to all members very soon.

Whilst not being Chairman, Colin has organised many theatre trips for the Theatre Club. Since March, however, he has had the difficult job of getting refunds or postponements for shows that have been affected by the Coronavirus. We thank Colin for his continuing hard work.

Once again, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the core of members who support our society by coming to see our productions and volunteer with set building and painting, costume making, helping with front of house or the organisation of social events. Thanks again to our Box Office Managers and Lesley Bates, our long-distance Press Officer, who with Charles Marriott our photographer and film maker, continues to do battle with the Croydon Advertiser.

Social distancing, due to Coronavirus, has led to the AGM being postponed until a later date, and the committee will carry on for the time being. As the AGM date is already in the diary, we have come up with a novel way to see everyone anyway, via Zoom, for a new version of Bish's Quiz.

I hope that life will return to normal before my next report, but who knows? We have booked dates for the Junior production in January, a spring show at Trinity and a summer show at the Minack. We are optimistic and look forward to seeing you all soon.

Take care of yourselves and stay safe.

In the words of our Chairman, despite this pesky virus..... "We love it, we love it all".

Di Jones, Hon. Secretary