

Whetstone Drama Annual Business Plan 2020



Whetstone Drama

In association with Central England Co-operative Society

Vision

To bring the joy and excitement of amateur drama to our members and the wider local community.

Strategy

We intend to deliver this goal by:-

- maintaining a regular annual programme of productions
- programming productions with a strong audience appeal
- remaining inclusive and welcoming to the whole community
- taking a sound and balanced financial view of our activities
- developing the skills of our members, both on-stage acting and off-stage operations
- organising ourselves and subscribing to the principles of a co-operative society

Ethos

We enjoy producing and performing drama that can be enjoyed by a wide community audience with all the personal and social benefits that it brings, both to us and to those who follow us.

We are entirely voluntary and non-profit making and inclusive.

We embrace the 7 co-operative principles:

1. Open and Voluntary Membership – we welcome members from the whole community
2. Democratic Member Control – one member one vote
3. Member Economic Participation – members contribute to and democratically control our finances
4. Autonomy and Independence – we are independent of any external group or political affiliation
5. Concern for Community – we work for our members and the community
6. Co-operation with other Co-operatives – we work together with the wider co-operative movement and all adult members are members of the co-op
7. Education, Training and Information – we educate our members and the wider community about how our cooperative works

History

Whetstone Drama Group (WDG) was formed in 1962, from the members of three churches but very soon after became an entirely secular organisation. It is possibly the most successful amateur drama group in Leicestershire, having won a multitude of awards over the years and we continue to enjoy good audiences and a strong membership.

In 2019 we subscribed to the principles of a co-operative society in recognition of our association with the Central England Co-operative.

Aside from putting on 2-3 adult stage plays a year, we also have a thriving youth group, a bi-annual Christmas variety show and regular murder mysteries. Our murder mysteries are used by community groups to raise funds for a variety of projects. We perform at Countesthorpe College Theatre and The United Reformed Church Hall in Whetstone.

Governance

We have a constitution and are led by an elected committee comprising of 12 members including the chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. The committee meets six times a year and minutes are available on request. We have policies for health and safety and child protection, and we maintain public liability insurance.

Finances

Although we have small turnover, we maintain a bank account and a full set of accounts which are reviewed and internally audited on an annual basis.

Our full accounts are available on request.

Occasionally we seek grants for the purchase of significant items.

We receive an annual revenue grant from the Central England Co-operative to cover the cost of our rent of storage facilities.

Membership

Membership is open to anyone. There is no age restriction, and complete novices are as welcome as seasoned performers. We also welcome those who can contribute to our stage crew and in a host of backstage roles such as front of house, costumes, refreshments, and marketing. Acting members are asked to pay a small annual subscription of £15 (non-acting members: £5) and the sum of £1 at each rehearsal.

Prices

We maintain our prices at the minimum needed to cover our costs and provide us with a small reserve for the purposes of purchasing equipment, hiring costumes and protecting against occasional losses.

Social Events

Members finance group social events themselves including after production parties, garden parties, a new year's party, and occasional visits to professional productions. These are not funded out of the groups' budget. This year we have organised:

New Year's Party

Skittle Evenings

Attendance at the Annual Drama Awards

Review of 2019

2019 was another successful year made up of the following productions and many more murder mysteries.

- Play Parade directed by Sandra Sutcliffe and Norma Lawrence. This production consisted of three one-act plays in a new departure for the group. It was a success in covering its own costs as well as providing some new members with their first acting roles.
- Appointment with Death directed by Sandra Sutcliffe. A popular whodunit with a twist which made a good surplus.
- Blitz Club directed by Carrie Peters. This ' world-premiere ' was a hugely successful joint youth-adult production. The songs and script were written by members of the group (Derrick Stone and Mel Wale). It was very popular and made an excellent surplus.
- Whetstone Christmas Show produced by Carl Smith. Ever popular and once again very successful. It was sold out nearly a month in advance and made a good surplus as always.
- Murder Mysteries written and produced by Sandra Sutcliffe. With a new cast and new mystery plays this extremely popular strand of our activity is raising considerable amounts for charitable causes across the county and beyond.

These productions were popular and contributed to the all-round growth and improvement of the group. Our superb marketing, led by Ben Cutler-Thomas continues to go from strength to strength, as does our ability to attract new funding to improve infrastructure and it was also pleasing to have so many new members join the group. We have expanded and reorganised our storage facilities so that we now have two containers for stage,

props and costumes, in addition to our side storage room at the URC. We also have a new set of chairs, far more comfortable for our audience and easier to move than the previous ones and a whole new set of signage. Above all, we have significantly upgraded our lighting and sound systems with some extremely successful business management and grant raising work by our treasurer Steve Cutler. This means our audience experience is much improved and it is gradually becoming easier to construct and maintain sets and props.

This year, our continuing aim remains to adopt a more business-like approach to ensure that we continue to thrive and prosper and to fully embrace our new association with the Central England Co-operative. However, in particular we aim to:

- Raise funds for an LED short throw projector
- Purchase display boards
- Perform a musical
- Consider an additional adult production, possibly as a one- act play
- Consider charitable status

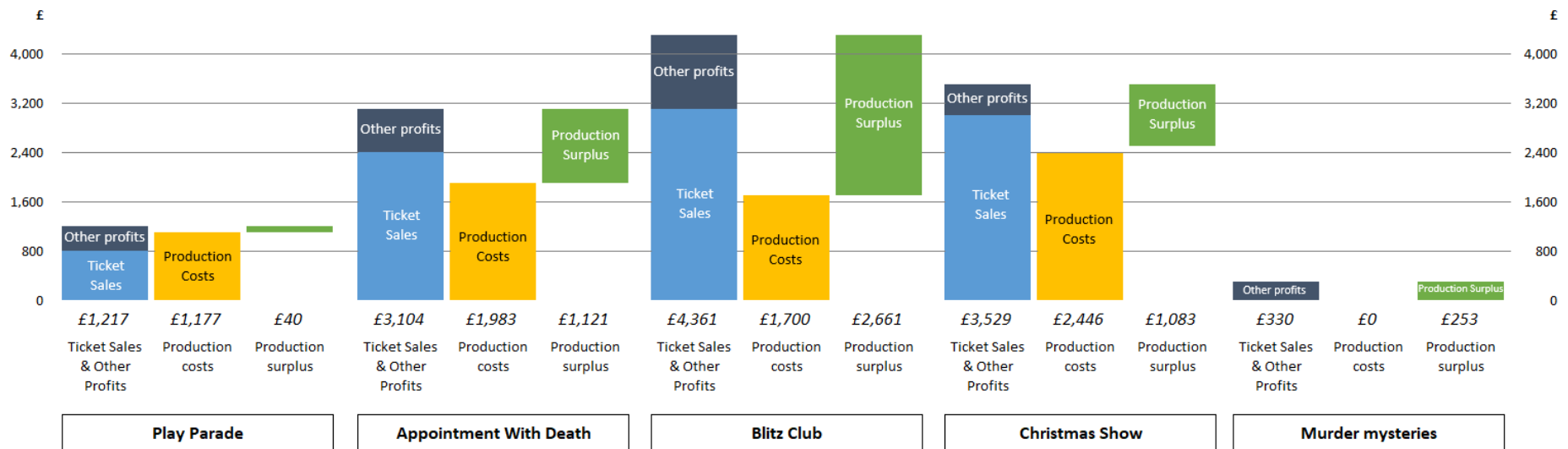
We recognise that our success could quickly disappear and we are aware of a number of major risks and threats which could undermine the group:

- Maintaining and possibly expanding our performance venue base
- General decline in audiences for amateur drama across the country and a reliance on certain major ticket sellers for the bulk of our sales

- Insufficient membership or not attracting new members of the right age and ability to continue to put on the standard and range of productions we would like.

While it is important to maintain our loyal support base, it is important we also explore new ways of engaging with our audiences and ensure that the group has a strong long-term future.

If we avoid the fate of several other local groups, which have aged and failed to broaden their appeal, we must look ahead, be innovative and offer what our audiences want to see.



Costs were relatively small for most productions since none were at Countesthorpe College or involved major costume and set costs and sales were good so surpluses were substantial.

At the end of the year we held an available cash balance of £5,666.

Ticket receipts have held up very well this year and all productions attracted good audiences but we are constantly reaching out to new people through

- Development of our website
- Enhanced presence on social media
- Increases online ticket sales
- Improved programmes and posters

The group has resolved to maintain minimum reserves of £3,000 to cover potential future losses and allow producers to select plays without fear of jeopardising the group.

Membership

Committee membership in 2019.

Carl Smith: Chair / Actor / Producer

Carrie Wale: Vice-Chair / Actor / Director

Steve Cutler-Thomas: Treasurer / Lighting and Sound

Jon Sutcliffe: Secretary / Actor / Prompt

Sandra Sutcliffe: Director / Youth Lead / Actor / Murder Mystery / Costumes

Ben Cutler-Thomas: Marketing and Sales / Actor / Director / Youth Lead

Graham Muddimer: Set Designer

Mel Wale: Actor / Writer / Director

Peter James: Actor / Writer

Nicky Voyle: Actor / Props / Costumes

Graham Ward: Associate Member & Set Construction

Awards and Nominations (NANDA Awards 2019)

Carrie Peters won Best Actress for “ The Actress ”

Jean Warner and Ben Cutler-Thomas won the award for Best Front of House.