The Harlequin Players Club

69th Annual General Meeting

held on Wednesday 20th July 2016 at 7.30 p.m.

at the Harlequin Theatre, Northwich.

NB: At 7.45 pm the meeting was 1 member short of a Quorum. Chairman Stephen Hoskins explained the situation to those present. The decision to go ahead with the meeting was supported unanimously, rather than re-convene. The meeting opened at 7.50 pm.

Attendance:

Stephen Hoskins (Chairman); Lesley Francis (Sec.)

Malcolm Barker; Roger Boultbee; Iain Bowley: Sue Curran; Gordon Hamlin, Julie Hoskins;

Kerry Hulme; Mike Kelsall; Anthony Kitchen; Ann Lloyd; Alan Lowe; Mike McDonald; Angie Orme;

Shelby Renhard; Keri Spellman.

**Apologies**: Adam Green; Rosie Haynes; Lee Jones; Simon Jones; Maureen Melville;

Mike Melville; Caroline Young.

**1.The Minutes of the AGM 2015,** having been circulatedonline, were taken as read.

Matters Arising: Roger Boultbee had noticed there was no mention of the appointment of Treasurer in the Minutes. Stephen Hoskins explained that the Minutes had been constructed from reports, as the 2015 Minutes had not been handed over on the resignation of the previous Secretary. In any case, the role of Treasurer had not come up for renewal, but it should have been mentioned in the summary of the new committee. Stephen would correct this omission.

Adoption of the 2015 Minutes was proposed by Roger Boultbee; seconded by Iain Bowley.

**2. Chair’s report – year ending 30th June 2016**

At last year’s AGM, we were hoping for more stability, after a couple of traumatic years and I guess that is what we have delivered.

We started off the season with “Stags and Hens.” It was originally due to be directed by Natalie Brierley, but, due to her personal circumstances, she had to withdraw. Fortunately, Julie Hoskins and Angie Orme stepped in to see it through and many thanks to their efforts to make sure “the show went on.” It had good ticket sales, particularly for the September slot, and one of the trashiest sets we have ever produced – intentionally, of course - with many of the audience popping down after the show to read the graffiti!

Second up was a recent, innovative adaptation of “The Birds,” directed by Angie Orme. Rather surprisingly, audiences were not big – we thought people would be intrigued to see how the story was delivered on stage – but was well received by those who did come and Kyle Preece was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the CTG awards.

In a complete change from usual, before Christmas, we decided to go with a tense thriller, “Aurelia,” with Malcolm Barker directing. Audiences were good, vindicating our decision, and the play itself met with good feedback and nominations for **Best Supporting Actress for** Tina Wyatt as Vera, Best Properties and for **Best Set Presentation, the last which we won at the CTG Awards, with Malcolm delighted, though somewhat flabbergasted, to pick up the Bramhall Cup.**

Again, in another change, we had this year slotted in our Juniors’ play in January, since it seemed the best time for a play of this type and what a good decision that was. Chris Finney directed an Ellie Hamer adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling classic “The Jungle Book” which performed to almost full houses and received one of the best adjudications I have ever seen, in junior or senior theatre. It led to nominations in every category at the CTG Awards, namely Craig Moore for **Most Promising Youngster (Male)** and both Penny Glover-Thomas and Ellie Hamer being nominated for the **Most Promising Youngster (Female.) We were also nominated for Best Lighting and Sound and Best Costume, but were pipped in all of these categories against very tough competition. However, we did win the two most prestigious awards, namely Chris Finney picking up the Award for Best Director** and “The Jungle Book” winning the overall **Award for Best Youth Production**. Many congratulations to everyone involved.

Back to the seniors and, as usual, we had a Malcolm Barker special in February. “It runs in the family” – a chaotic farce – produced the biggest audiences of the whole season and was also the most profitable. There is no doubt that there is strong audience demand for a comedy and it seems to suit this time of year, bringing people out of their homes. **The adjudicator also liked i**t and resulted in two nominations - **Best Actor for** Mike Kelsall and the Comedy Award, principally for the Mortimer (Mike Kelsall) and Lesley (Alyssia Jarvis) interactions, the latter which we won, with Malcolm stepping forward to pick up another cup on their behalf.

Chris Finney was back up to direct another play in April, this time a senior production of “Moby Dick.” Again, this was a very new adaptation for the stage, which dealt admirably with the difficulties of bringing such a book to the stage and was well received, with the auditorium generally around 2/3 full. It also received a nomination for Best Properties at the CTG Awards.

Finally, finishing off the season, was a superb production of the Agatha Christie classic “And then there were none,” directed by Yvette Owen, who brought her own vision and style to the play. Audiences were excellent, with two full houses, but just lost out to “It runs in the family” as the play with highest ticket sales overall. Strangely, the adjudicator did not seem to appreciate the play as much, although the Ten Framed Pictures were nominated for the **Vicky Lane Trophy for Dramatic Achievement** at the CTG Awards.

Attendances continued to grow on last year, with overall average attendance at 78% capacity (10% up on last year.) 67% of sales were via the online booking service, with an increased 27% via the improved telephone booking system and 6% on the door.

As always, thanks are due to the backroom crew for their efforts on sound, lighting, sets, props and costumes, often against tight deadlines and limited budgets and it was gratifying that this should be recognised in the CTG award nominations, but new assistance would always be appreciated.

I must offer a special vote of thanks to the leaders of the Harlequin Junior Players: Julie Hoskins, Angie Orme, Keri Spellman, Lesley Francis and the others who have helped out over the year, especially on the workshops delivered on sound, lighting and voice. Not only is it great to see the results on stage, with such a professional set of performances of the “Jungle Book” and some of the juniors also making it on to the senior stage, but it is also a significant contributor financially. A lot of people do not realise the amount of time and effort that is given by the leaders and other senior members of the club, to ensure that the group has thrived from week to week. We are increasing membership from September and yet still have a waiting list to join. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed and a warm welcome to two new members, who have indicated they will help out next year.

I would like to pay tribute here to Mike and Maureen Melville, who have dedicated many years of service both on and off the Harlequin stage. They are unable to be here tonight, since Mike has fractured his femur and suffered other damage, coming off his bike. They are due to move to Chester and, although Mike has indicated he will continue dealing with our Charity evenings, they are unlikely to do any more acting, so I would like a public thanks for all their efforts over the years.

In my first year as Chair, I would like to thank all the committee for their support and especially Lesley Francis for her secretarial assistance and hope that we will have an even more successful season ahead of us.

**3.Treasurer’s Report**

I have circulated copies of this year’s accounts, but will just pick out the more salient points for comment; I am happy to deal with any questions as they crop up.

2015-16 figures are on the right of the page, with last year’s figures on the left for comparison. We have had a second very successful season, financially, returning a surplus of £5,852, slightly lower than the surplus from last year.

Building costs are similar to last year. Of the building maintenance total, nearly £330 relates to the remedial electrical work, to obtain a new certificate and £102 for maintenance of the fire extinguishers. The PPL and PRS bills were much as previously, with the income the amount the Folk Club pays for the share of the costs relating to its bookings.

Membership subscriptions remain numerically much the same as last year, with senior members slightly down, at 70, but an increase to 31 junior memberships, who pay half rate.

Booking income is only slightly down on last year, despite the bookings from Kevin Dewsbury (“Ha Ha at the Harlequins”) ceasing during the year, with most of the previous bookings being repeated.

Fundraising income dropped this year, without any grant applications, but the majority is down to the regular raffles (thanks, especially to Ann Lloyd for her help on all of these.)

We received a couple of small individual donations and our second year of recovery of tax through the Gift Aid scheme benefitted us by £130.

Performance on the bar continues to show strongly, although overall income is down, with percentage profitability being maintained at 55%, but the cancellation of the Comedy Evenings will have an effect in future. Many thanks are due to Mike McDonald and Gordon Hamblln for organising and stocking the bar and all those who have helped out over the year.

The financial performance on the plays continues to improve, with the surplus up 18% up on last year, with profit stable at a respectable 62%. The licence, script and promotional costs remain the largest costs, at 56% of the total play costs. I think it is also worth pointing out that nearly £625 of the income comes from sales of programmes, teas and coffees, so thanks to all who help with these and the other FOH activities on play nights, especially Aurora for taking over organising it.

From a financial point of view, the stars were “It Runs in the Family” and “And Then There Were None,” which contributed 50% of the total profits between them, performing to more or less full houses each night. However, we must not forget the other four plays which showed that, by keeping costs low, we could generate healthy profits on lower ticket sales.

We continue to use the Ticketsource system, which enables us to incorporate all sales into the same report, which is very handy and gives us far better information on ticket sales.

The Harlequin Junior Players, as our Youth Group is now known, go from strength to strength, as you can see from the increase in membership subscriptions and the term performance fees and have, once again, made a healthy contribution to club funds. Thanks must go to the team that carried on after Natalie Brierley’s departure, notably Julie Hoskins, Angie Orme, Lesley Francis, Trish Barlow, Keri Spellman, plus those who have helped out on a less regular basis.

It is a slightly odd year for the Juniors, since we have ticket receipts for “Sleeping Beauty” but most of its costs were included in last year’s accounts, plus we have the proceeds from the very successful “Jungle Book.”

Overall, it is another excellent year. I would like to stress that we have repeated the same level surplus as last year, despite receiving £4,500 less in grants; virtually all this shortfall has been made up by the contribution from the Juniors.

Bank balances continue to improve and are, now, at the level I would like to maintain, being sufficient to pay our monthly standing orders for three months.

As in previous years, I filed our annual accounts and report online with the Charity Commission last August, ensuring that our public records have been kept up to date. I will file this year’s annual return and accounts, once these have been ratified at today’s meeting.

Assuming there are no other questions or queries, I would like to ask for formal approval of this year’s accounts.

Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Mike Kelsall; seconded by Mike McDonald.

**6. Setting of Subscriptions**

Subscriptions to be kept at last year’s amount of £20. Proposed by Gordon Hamlin, seconded by Angie Orme.

**7. Proposed Changes to the Constitution.**

No changes were proposed.

**8. Election of Officers and Other Committee Members**

**Standing down from the Committee:** Adam Green; Fran Hamer

**Standing down from** **Vice-Chair and Publicity Officer:** Angie Orme

The above were thanked by the Chairman for their efforts over the years.

Under the rotation system, the roles of Chairman and Secretary did not come up for re-election.

The other existing committee members agreed to continue for another year.

For the role of **Treasurer, Stephen Hoskins** was proposed by Ann Lloyd, seconded by Malcolm Barker. Stephen was duly re-elected.

**Malcolm Barker** was proposed as **Vice-Chair** by Roger Boultbee, seconded by Keri Spellman. Malcolm was duly elected.

Following due process, the following were elected as Committee Members:

Ann Lloyd – proposed by Julie Hoskins, seconded by Keri Spellman

Keri Spellman - proposed by Julie Hoskins, seconded by Gordon Hamlin

Kerry Hulme – proposed by Malcolm Barker, seconded by Mike Kelsall

This means that the new committee comprises:

Stephen Hoskins Malcolm Barker Lesley Francis

Iain Bowley Mike McDonald Julie Hoskins

Kerry Hulme Keri Spellman Ann Lloyd

A meeting will be called shortly, to allocate roles.

**9. Any Other Business**

**i) Publicity:** Angie Orme will pass on contacts and other relevant information to next Publicity Officer.

**ii) Trustees:** Roger Boultbee asked who the Trustees are, and if enough protection was in place for financial calls on them. Stephen Hoskins replied that the Officers of the Club are the Trustees. Keri Spellman asked for a description of the role of Trustee. Stephen replied that Trustees are a legal requirement of a Charity Organisation and are recorded with the Charity Commission as a point of contact in the event of problems. Stephen files a Trustee Report annually, as required. This is a lengthy document, covering activity, accounts, risk management and governance. It is posted online. The financial liabilities of Trustees are covered by Insurance. Gordon Hamlin stated that there is a considerable ‘buffer fund’ available in reserve and there is scope for the lease to be terminated without incurring any significant penalty.

**Facebook Page:** Angie Orme said that the Facebook page is complicated and messages are liable to be missed. Angie offered to revise the page, and Shelby Renhard offered to assist with this, and also the web-site.

**Redecoration of the Foyer:** Julie Hoskins said ideas had been formed; volunteers to carry out the work are needed.

**Props Room:** More volunteers needed for the sorting and re-ordering of the Props Room, preferably on a weekend in August. The date will be circulated.

**Deep Clean of the Theatre:** This has been discussed at recent Committee meetings and the decision to have a professional cleaning service has been made. Quotes are being obtained.

There being no further Business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm