

CAYMAN DRAMA SOCIETY
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 20TH JANUARY 2012

I must open by thanking my committee for the past year, who have worked very hard to ensure that 2011 was a success despite the initial empty schedule at the start of the year. I must also thank each director and their production team for a consistently high quality of productions this year, each of which has upheld the high standards for which CDS has become known despite being a wholly amateur Society.

I would not normally single out individuals in such a way, I must thank Paul deFreitas, Bill Mervyn and Niamh Hutchinson in particular for the huge number of hours they have put in this year on productions, maintenance/renovation and other work at and on behalf of the theatre over the past year, and Phil Pace for his contribution over the years as our bar manager, for being so helpful in effecting a smooth transfer to his successor and for his sterling efforts as producer and general dogsbody for Godspell. I cannot underscore what a vast contribution each of them has made.

As those of you who were present last year may remember we started the year with two very big sets of shoes to fill having seen the retirement of Penny and Peter Phillips from the committee. However, much of the previous committee did remain and this was of great benefit (a) as we were left with an excellent platform left by the work of the previous committees upon which to continue to build the Society's position, and (b) to me personally in being able to rely on such a strong group having been generously nominated and elected to a position that I had never before held.

As the production schedule was initially empty for the first four months of the year which left time for a dedicated and hard-working team of volunteers to undertake the following, not just in the first four months of the year but in between productions and events in the months following on throughout the year:

- renovations and redecoration to the Green Room and upstairs bathrooms following a donation of flooring and materials;
- a reorganisation of the props and costumes cupboard, part of which now sees the trailer being used for the larger prop items;
- a reorganisation of the electrical cupboard;
- repainting and redecoration of the foyer and the changing rooms;
- reflooring and repainting of the rehearsal space;
- the creation of a Theatre Manager's office; and,
- expansion of the car parking area and revision of the landscaping surrounding the exterior of the theatre.

I should note that much of the materials sourced and supplied during the above processes were either donated or sourced at a discounted cost thanks to the respective generosity and hard negotiating skills of a number of individuals to whom my wholehearted thanks goes out. As a result the Society has received a large amount of value while also continuing the Society's policy of thrift. While the expenditures, where made, were deemed necessary I believe they have reaped a benefit for the Society in that we now see many occasions where the theatre is now able to comfortably accommodate two different groups at the same time. The sweat and toil of the team mentioned above to help realise one of the Society's long term goals is indeed greatly appreciated.

As I noted earlier the year saw a change of bar manager with Bill Mervyn taking over the reins from Phil Pace. While Phil left big shoes to fill, he was most helpful in ensuring a smooth and steady handover and I am pleased to say that Bill has settled into the role with ease. Out thanks go out to Phil for his many years of service, and to Bill for stepping in to this necessary and key role.

We had a production meeting in mid April which was a move from its regular slot in the second half of the calendar year. This was primarily to accommodate forward planning for the entire 'production year' which runs across the financial year end. The production meeting therefore sought to and succeeded in filling the events calendar through until mid-2012. The meeting itself saw a number of interesting productions and events put forward, some of which have already been and some of which you will shortly see. To avoid giving too much away in advance, aside from saying that they will be highly entertaining, I will keep quiet and invite you all to come and see them for yourselves. Our next production meeting will be held in February so please come armed with your ideas!

The theatre's first public event of 2011 was the ARK charity evening, La Vida Loca, on May 7 which saw the auditorium and stage transformed into a nightclub atmosphere with different musical and signing acts on display. The event was very well attended and was enormously enjoyed by all those present. Most of the patrons did not want the evening to end! We look forward to hosting the ARK team again this coming year and hope for a similarly successful and enjoyable evening.

June saw the staging of a double header of plays by the Spanish playwright Lorca, directed by the creative and innovative director Nick Dereza who has sadly left the island and hence CDS for the happiest of reasons, to get married. This production saw another first for CDS being the staging of one of the two plays as theatre in the round. Having brought out the best in his actors over these two emotional yet entertaining plays, audience reaction was overwhelmingly positive, and the majority of the cast remain in touch with one another seeking another production that they can all participate in together.

August saw the annual liquor licence inspections which were passed thanks to the tireless work of the indefatigable Paul de Freitas.

September saw the staging of Godspell with the directorial debut of Teri Quappe. Her interpretation of this classic musical saw events transported to a much updated and familiar setting (well, for some at least!). Again, an engaging, highly talented and focused cast (band members included) created much of the energy around a hugely enjoyable and professional performance which in my opinion served to produce a spectacle that was easily the peer of any of its' professional cousins.

The NCVO Telethon staged at the Playhouse on 29 October was again an immensely entertaining as well as successful and professionally run evening. We donate this slot to the NCVO and we look forward to welcoming them back again this year.

The final production of the calendar year, A Midsummer Night's Dream, transported the play's events to a Cayman setting, a vision that worked incredibly well. With memorable and entertaining performances by many of CDS' student members the production was incredibly well received. Much praise needs to go to Alisa Bowen, Karie Bergstrom and Paul de Freitas for again ensuring a high standard of production from our student membership.

The year has been disappointing on the social and communications fronts, some of which I must bear responsibility for, and can only promise the membership improvements on those fronts during the year, should I be re-elected.

However, we look into 2012 with two exciting productions starting with Peter Kosa & Malcolm Ellis' CayTube Live which I must say, apart from being hilarious having seen the rehearsals, is an extraordinary creative effort having starting from a blank sheet of paper. Neil Rooney's direction of Hairspray which, in the same way as CayTube, has an immense buzz around the cast and crew, opens in March.

We have received enquiries for this year's La Vida Loca event for ARK, and for a musical to be staged around the same time in May. We are in talks as to how we can make these two things happen since unfortunately their chosen dates conflict.

In this coming year we will be tackling new in-house projects which our Theatre Manager will describe in his report. We are setting the date for the next production meeting shortly and have interest already shown in a powerful musical production of Jekyll and Hyde. We do need two shows for staging in September and November and any budding directors can be assured that there will be experienced directors around who will be happy to share their knowledge and experience.

I think that you can all agree that 2011 was a successful transitional year for our society. Your 2011 committee is prepared to stand again in 2012.

It only remains to thank you, the members of our society for your continued support. CDS cannot exist within a vacuum and your efforts to promote and support the Prospect Playhouse elsewhere help to ensure its continued success as the premiere provider of dramatic arts and entertainment in the Cayman Islands.

Richard Johnson
Chairman, 2011