

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE – 2021/22**

**INTRODUCTION**

This report reflects on the financial year 2021/22 of Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT), a registered charity managed by a Board of voluntary Trustees, including a CDC nominated Trustee, Judy Fowler. In March 2022 Chair of the Board, Sir William Castell, stepped down after 11 years and Mark Foster was appointed as CFT's new Chair. The theatre's executive leadership team of Kathy Bourne, Executive Director, and Daniel Evans, Artistic Director, jointly share the position of CEO.

CFT's Trustees' Report can be found within the Statutory Accounts, attached at Appendix 1, and expands further on the activities, achievements, challenges and outputs of 2021/22.

**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND and CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL GRANT FUNDING**

In 2021/22 CFT continued to receive funding from Arts Council England (ACE) as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) of £1,772,234 per year – funding at this level is confirmed for the financial year 2022/23. In June 2022 CFT submitted its application for the next ACE NPO funding round, the outcome of which will be announced in October 2022.

Chichester District Council's (CDC) grant of £187,500 provides vital support for CFT's community engagement activities.

During 2021/22 CFT was successful in applying for two grants from the Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF) receiving £953,264 in round 2 and £348,261 in round 3. This allowed us to reopen with confidence once restrictions were eased and establish clear Covid safety measures to ensure the protection of our companies and our audiences. We delivered a varied programme of work, engaged theatre industry freelancers, retained CFT's workforce and supported our community with on-going and new engagement and participation programmes.

**ON-STAGE: CREATIVE PROGRAMMING**

2021/22 began with extensions to lockdown regulations which resulted in two planned productions being cancelled and a delay to the opening of Festival 2021 season. The Season was therefore reduced in length but the scale, ambition and quality of our output was not diminished. While restrictions remained in place, we presented a weekend of socially distanced outdoor concerts, building on our experiences in 2020, welcoming people back together with over 3,500 people attending. We reopened the Minerva Theatre with weekends of cabaret shows, trialling socially distanced audiences in our smaller theatre.

The Festival Season finally launched with our summer musical *South Pacific*, reimagined for CFT's stage by Artistic Director, Daniel Evans, and initially opening to socially distanced audiences. The production garnered 4 and 5\* reviews and our stringent Covid-safety measures meant that we did not have to cancel a single performance. In addition to the live performances, online streamed performances sold 3,602 passes to individuals and households, 36% to local audiences and 64% beyond the Southeast, including to 39 different countries. We also offered a British Sign Language stream option and a captioned stream, enhancing further the accessibility of our work.

*The Long Song*, a new adaptation by Suhayla El-Bushra based on the novel by Andrea Levy, followed *South Pacific* into the Festival Theatre. Both productions demonstrated CFT's commitment to present inclusive and socially relevant stories on our stages.

In the Minerva, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, a co-production with the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith directed by their Artistic Director, Rachel O'Riordon, and *Home* by David Storey, directed by early-career director Josh Roche, received positive reviews and ensured we were supporting the wider industry through co-producing and supporting developing careers, while presenting challenging and provocative drama.

CFYT's Christmas show saw a welcome return of its 2020 production of *Pinocchio*, having been cancelled due to Covid restrictions after just 15 live performances the previous year. 68 young cast members, supported by technical youth theatre students, delivered the full run of performances.

An additional production, *Doubt* by John Patrick Shanley and directed by Lia Williams, was programmed in Spring 2022 having previously been cancelled due to restrictions in Spring 2021. It opened to strong critical acclaim however, unfortunately five performances were cancelled due to multiple Covid cases. We subsequently programmed an additional week to ensure all bookers could see the production.

The planned Festival Season production of *The Flock* was cancelled due to challenges with the script and concerns about the representation of the black British experience. ACE received a complaint in this regard and established a review, increasing CFT's risk monitoring to level 9 during this process. The review has been completed and the complaint closed by ACE, CFT's risk score is now level 6, the upper level of Minor and consistent with 2020/21.

Summer 2021 saw CFT's acclaimed production of *Singin' in the Rain* be relaunched at Sadler's Wells Theatre before a UK tour, and 2017's production of *Caroline, or Change* was one of the first productions to reopen Broadway following the relaxing of US Covid-restrictions in October 2021.

Our popular Winter season saw over 30 different touring productions and events, programmed with a focus on maintaining quality and variety. Shows ranged from the popular Christmas concerts, established touring musicals/plays, ballet, comedy, drama and family-friendly performances, all of which proved very popular, although nervousness around Covid did mean that we saw reduced audience numbers. 2020/21 also saw an expansion of community hires and use of CFT spaces, with CFT hosting: Chichester College's Star Awards; Chichester University cabaret course's final year showcase; Ovation Rock Show; Chichester Festival of Music, Dance and Speech, including the winners concert taking place in the Minerva.

#### **OFF-STAGE: COMMUNITY AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Our commitment to supporting our community, particularly through our Learning, Education and Participation (LEAP) department, has never diminished or been reduced by Covid. In fact, the offer and reach of LEAP's work has only continued to grow to meet the needs and address the impact of Covid on vulnerable and isolated individuals, young people and those facing barriers to engagement in the arts within our communities. Alongside this, we have prioritised supporting the wellbeing of our community, young people and staff and have invested in opening up our physical spaces to ensure CFT is a more welcoming and inclusive community hub.

Our Youth Advisory Board and young trustees took part in a broad consultation to ensure we hear and respond to young voices in the development of CFT, particularly as we reopened post-Covid. Their feedback directly fed into the development of an expanded events programme and upgrades to the Festival Theatre foyer, ensuring it is a welcoming space for students and young people.

Chichester Festival Youth Theatre (CFYT) has long been one of the largest youth theatres in the country with an average of 800 members. While a programme of sessions was maintained throughout Covid, inevitably membership reduced while activities were solely online. During 2021/22 a key LEAP priority was to reengage young people and encourage new and returning membership – membership increased to 650 by March 2022. Pleasingly, at October 2022, it is now higher than it has ever been at 898 members meeting weekly for sessions at CFT and 8 satellite locations.

Two large-scale programmes saw CFT support freelance Artists to deliver creative engagement workshops in schools across the District: Actors/Creatives Insight engaged 16 artists who delivered 100 workshops to 2,477 students aged 8-18 across 20 local schools with a focus on a wide range of creative skills; evaluation by participating students and teachers demonstrated the tangible enrichment of creative learning, acquisition of new skills and enhanced student confidence. As lead partner of Creative County West Sussex, CFT led Schools Wellbeing Activity Days, working in partnership with West Sussex MIND and WAVES Music Therapy – 265 students from 6 schools across the county took part and a short film was shared on the Cultural Education Partnership website.

As well as holiday activities for young people, a range of schools workshops and partnership engagements continued throughout the year, notably with New Park Cinema engaging 350 pupils aged 5-17 and Summer School workshops at Chichester High School where 140 pupils transitioning to secondary school used creative and teambuilding activities to explore devising and scripted drama.

CFT hosted a National Theatre (NT) Connections Festival online, enabling 7 companies and 147 young performers across the Southeast to showcase their work. CFYT's integrated company performed and filmed one of the NT Connections plays, *The Marxist in Heaven* by Hattie Naylor. The company combined members from our groups for young people with additional needs and members from our mainstream groups and developed acting for camera skills culminating in a short film.

We hosted our first online Creative Careers Day in June 2021, partnering with Chichester College, University of Chichester and Guildford School of Acting. 218 people took part through online panel discussions, talks and creative workshops. Topics included apprenticeships, theatre design and writing for the stage.

Our apprentice and trainee opportunities were retained throughout Covid and in 2021 two new apprentice opportunities were developed in partnership with Chichester College:

- CFT is the first and only theatre in the country to have a Production Management Apprenticeship, at Level 7 it is a brand-new, degree level, apprenticeship standard; and
- A new Cultural Learning and Participation Apprentice, within the LEAP department.

2021/22 Arts Award moderation resulted in 80 successful awards achieved by children and young people across holiday activities, CFYT sessions and productions, schools and traineeships. The moderator commented that one Gold Arts Awards was the most impressive she had seen to date:

*'A stunning portfolio... The level of reflection is noteworthy throughout, evidencing deep learning. It is clear that young people are provided with very rich Apprenticeship experiences at CFT. Congratulations' (Corrie Lunghi – Arts Award Moderation)*

Supporting older and isolated community members, we relaunched the Chatter Project for adults aged 65+ at risk of isolation, with two groups in Chichester and Selsey supported by an artist-in-residence undertaking PHD research on the impact of creative engagement. We also continued to support local Young Carers and celebrated National Carers Week with a day of creative workshops alongside a group of 16 local young carers, (aged 5 to 13 years) coming together to create their own short, animated movies working with a young film-maker and an actress, both of whom were CFYT alumni and former young carers.

We continue to deliver accessible performances for all Festival productions and *South Pacific* saw our first Dementia Friendly Performance and was a great success with 240 audience members attending. We delivered a Polish translation performance of *Pinocchio*, as well as a Relaxed Performance for young and adult audiences with additional needs. Significant upgrades were made to the backstage areas of the Minerva Theatre to make it inclusive and wheelchair accessible for artists.

Over 80 performers took part in making films for Digit-ALL (an online version of our annual FestivALL) – an inclusive festival with recorded films viewed by 60 households. Groups taking part included CFT's Friday Late group and 4 regional partnership companies, Chichester Down Syndrome Dance Crew, Delta 7, Stopgap Troop and Theatre INC, all of whom specialise in work for young people with disabilities. In addition, Separate Doors Theatre Company led a three-day residency in the Minerva, developing inclusive performance practice with professional learning-disabled and non-learning-disabled actors.

A new Heritage and Archive Coordinator was appointed in November, and the weekly sessions of CFT's heritage volunteers resumed in January 2022, supporting the development and upkeep of CFT's physical and digital archives. In addition, in partnership with the Archive Team at Stratford Festival Theatre, Ontario, CFT's heritage team began a research programme connecting LEAP's heritage volunteers with Stratford's 'Friends of the Festival' volunteers in a Pen Pals project to undertake research and explore the unique relationship between CFT and Stratford.

From April-June, LEAP employed a freelance Drama Therapist to facilitate weekly workshops to support CFYT members with mental health and wellbeing. The sessions presented the young people with a 'toolkit' and range of strategies to manage and support their wellbeing. A Winter Wellbeing Festival also saw a week of public activities including talks focused on topics from nutrition to mental health and the importance of sleep, and activities including knitting, goat yoga and singing.

A new strand of off-stage events launched with a focus on engaging younger and more diverse audiences, and promoting conversations on equality and inclusion. Fizz & Feminism has addressed topics such as Teaching Equality in Schools, Queer Theatre and Equality and Inclusion in the Arts as well as hosting a reception on International Woman's Day for local Women in Business. CFT Lates launched as a series of monthly late-night cabaret events, offering a more informal night out, and attracted 40% new bookers. CFT's Prologue scheme for 16-30 year olds has continued to thrive and now has 15,000 members who benefit from £5 tickets to all our shows and free supporting events.

In 2021/22 we made a community commitment to open our foyer and spaces more widely outside of performances to be more welcoming to the community. We relocated our café to connect with and embrace the green space of Oaklands Park and made aesthetic and infrastructure improvements to the foyer to provide more comfortable seats, wifi and power points for people working. We created a permanent family friendly space with toy boxes and opportunities to engage in craft activities, aligned with and supporting a wider programme of events for young children and families and the café now opens earlier on Saturday to welcome those taking part in Park Run. This has been hugely successful and sees the foyer now used by adults and babies, by students and staff working, and for meetings of community groups. In turn we have seen the café grow in popularity, supporting local employment and local suppliers.

Culture Spark, celebrating a Season of Culture in 2022 and led by a Project Board of CDC, CFT, Pallant House Gallery and the Novium Museum, launched in March 2022. Between January – March, CFT began the roll out of a District-wide engagement programme offering schools, specifically those who do not currently engage with the partner organisations, and community groups, free lantern-making workshops, led by local artists. Most activities took place in 2022/23 and will therefore feature more prominently in our 2022/23 report.

Appendix 2 details the share of total sales associated with LEAP's youth and community events from within the District, along with the geographical spread of CFYT members.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

In 2021/22 we continued to plan and launch initiatives to reduce our impact on the environment, led by our staff Green Committee.

- The Green Committee undertook Carbon Literacy Training and we intend to roll this out to all staff.
- We committed to replacing Opening Night gifts and cards with planting mature trees on Oaklands Park (16 trees planted by March 2022) and sending e-cards.
- We launched a pilot partnership scheme with UK social enterprise, Ecologi, to offer audiences the option to offset their travel at the point of booking theatre tickets. Car's travelling to CFT is the biggest impact our business has on the environment and while we recognise that off-setting is not a panacea, this scheme has allowed us to present our values of sustainability to all audiences and ask them to consider their impact when coming to the theatre. We are eager to explore options to develop more sustainable transport opportunities.
- In November, CFT worked in partnership with the Great Sussex Way to deliver a community event in support of the goals of COP26. This saw 180 people – CFT staff, CFYT members, our local community and councillors – form the word COMMIT on Oaklands Park, filmed by drone. The event was the lead story on BBC South News.
- Replacing and upgrading the Minerva Theatre house lights, through a Theatre Trust's Theatre Improvement Scheme grant, reduced the lights' energy consumption by 95%.
- Prompted by a member of technical staff, we signed up to a Covid-test and PPE recycling scheme; all waste is converted into usable manufacturing materials.
- We invested in and are reaping the benefits of a cloud-based asset management system for props, furniture and technical/engineering stock to better allow us to re-use and monitor props as well as increase the potential for hiring items out.

The Green Committee is developing a new Green Strategy and we will continue to advocate for a greener future.

## **FINANCE**

CFT's statutory accounts for 2021/22 are attached at Appendix 1, with a detailed financial review at pages 19-26.

As demonstrated within the accounts, ticket income increased from £437,231 in 2020/21 to £4,097,802 – but still significantly lower than £9,191,177 in 2019. Financial support through CRF, release of social distancing restrictions, enhanced Theatre Tax Relief and reduced VAT, alongside reduced costs due to on-going financial reviews and reduced number of shows produced and increased support from our loyal friends and donors, meant that the surplus before depreciation was £289,080 with an overall deficit after depreciation of £855,366.

## **CONCLUSION**

When preparing this report annually in October, it is always fascinating to be able to reflect on the previous financial year and consider how we have moved forward. Never has this felt so stark than over the past two years, as we review and reflect on years so significantly impacted by Covid. We look back with pride at the scale and scope of what has been achieved and, despite the circumstances, many positives were delivered – we have built new community partnerships, we produced high-quality and acclaimed productions and established new initiatives, many of which derived from a need to think creatively about how to sustain our audiences despite the pandemic. It is with some relief that I write in the closing weeks of our first full and uninterrupted Festival season since 2019, and yet we know that there will continue to be challenges ahead given the cost-of-living crisis and the financial impact

on our communities, audiences, industry peers and staff, alongside the on-going impact and fall-out of Covid-19.

There is of course change ahead too given our recent announcement that Daniel Evans will leave CFT at the end of April 2023 to take up the position of co-Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. It goes without saying that we will miss Daniel hugely. The recruitment of a new Artistic Director is underway, led by a sub-committee of the Board and industry leaders. The appointment will be announced in the new year, and I look forward to working with a new partner to continue to build on CFT's successes and ensure it remains a vital asset to the city, the District and the cultural landscape.

A highlight of the current year has undoubtedly been working closely with CDC to deliver the Culture Spark festival, and particularly the Carnival of Lights. We are excited to hear that there is potential for Culture Spark to develop further, working in closer partnership with CDC and the District's cultural partners to deliver more ways for our community to access creative opportunities. We are grateful to CDC for recognising the value of culture within the District and we extend our thanks for your continued commitment and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathy Bourne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Kathy Bourne**  
**Executive Director**  
**October 2022**

#### **APPENDICIES**

Appendix 1 – Statutory Accounts for the Financial Year 2021/22.

Appendix 2 – Statistical analysis of sales from within the Chichester District for 2021/22.

\*CFT has not produced an Annual Review of 2021/22 due to the unique nature of the year and cost implications. It has also not been possible to estimate CFT's Economic Impact, as submitted in previous years, given that 2021/22 did not reflect a usual year of operations.