

Lowestoft Annual Assembly Report 2022

The last year has been an interesting mix of challenges and successes as we continue to recover from the pandemic.

On the positive side, the Seagull has continued to be able to offer a full range of support services to the local community, with our dementia programme receiving ongoing funding from the National Lottery for the next three years. This has meant that our memory café, chair fitness class, sing-a-long group, Music for Wellbeing class and our monthly film club can all continue into the future. At Christmas it was lovely to see all of these represented in a small performance at the East Point Pavilion.

2022 also saw us creating a new Ukulele group which is free to attend, as well as being able to support the ongoing work of the Rogue Shanty Boys choir. Alongside these our Singing for Lung Health group continues to work with a small group of local people who experience issues with their breathing and lung function.

Our youth-oriented groups also thrived in 2022, with the youth theatre and musical theatre classes both being well subscribed. These groups also contributed performers for our very successful October production of the Addams Family Musical, which saw many full houses and rave reviews.

Our parent connect group for those responsible for young people with mental health or additional needs, has continued to support many families, whilst the arts and crafts group has also been invaluable for many young people as a source of support and enjoyment.

We have also enjoyed seeing our Squawk group for adults with learning disabilities, go from strength to strength with new members joining and making friends. The group has become a central part of the Seagull with their weekly singing and dancing extravaganza.

The early part of 2022 continued to be difficult in terms of our audience numbers for the commercial performances we showcase, with some shows having much lower-than-normal ticket sales. Thankfully this picked up considerably in the latter part of the year with a number of full houses and really enjoyable nights. Christmas though was more of a challenge, with the reoccurrence of covid and flu, sadly meaning we had to close one of our Christmas productions after just three performances. Luckily our other production, Santa's Adventures in Toyland, which is aimed at the youngest children, was still able to continue and was another great success.

This year we have been fortunate to be recognised by the Arts Council England as a venue of significance and offered the chance to join their national portfolio of organisations. This will mean in future years we are able to expand further the creative work we deliver, and hopefully will mean that more local creativity can be fostered

We have also been supported this year with capital funding from the Arts Council which has allowed us to start of our long-cherished renovation plans. We are building a brand-new

workshop to the rear of the building, along with a new toilet block. This will allow us to convert other spaces into a new accessible studio and improved box office. We shall also be fortunate in having a lift installed finally to improve access to the upper floor. This work will continue through 2023 with a view to completing by the end of the year.

2022 sadly saw the passing of our great friend Bob Blizzard and we were pleased to be able to continue his legacy by holding the annual Lowestoft Jazz Weekend once again. Looking ahead we have ambitious plans to enlarge this festival in 2023, taking on more venues and expanding the number of performances.

Last July we organised Lowestoft's first 1940's weekend in London Road South, which we were very pleased to see was well supported. In 2023 that event will be returning hopefully bigger and better than before.

Overall, we have had many lovely positive experiences this year and have seen many many happy faces in our building. We are so proud of our team of wonderful volunteers and freelancers who enable all of the great work to happen. There remain challenges around ensuring that audience numbers continue to recover and as always, there is more we want to do to transform our community through the arts.