



## AGM 2010 – Sunday, 25 April 2010 – Masque Theatre

### Annual Portfolio Reports 2009/10

---

#### Chairperson

*Rick Magnin*

\*\*\*

Ω

same as an incentive, i.e. they were considered 2010 members. At the same time, the subscription rate of R40/person per year went up to R50 – a modest increase, considering that the subs do not really cover all administrative costs involved.

---

#### Secretary

Incorporated in chairperson's report.

Ω

A letter to that effect went out to all members towards the end of the previous club year. But guess how many people did *not* read it (properly)? Neither did some pay attention to the renewal notice mailed at the end of the year ... But the club secretary is happy to deal with our members and friends [just gets her stomach into a knot when her telephone number is frequently used as the booking number – but that's *her* problem; this, by the way, explains why the secretary's number does not usually appear on the production notification cards anymore]. It usually is a pleasure to deal with our elderly folks (probably because I have joined *that* club recently) who are not always sure what's what and whether they've paid or not. The policy adopted for double-payers is to extend their membership to the end of the *next* year.

#### Masque Theatre Club secretary

*birga Thomas*

In 2009 Man.Com. contemplated and then decided on a change of the Masque Theatre Club year. Instead of running from 01 September to 31 August (which caused quite a bit of confusion among “old-timers” as well as prospective members), the club year now runs with the calendar year. This meant that loyal members got the benefit of three extra months (October to December 2009) on their 2008/09 subscription. Anybody joining during the last quarter of 2009 got the

Some members died (naturally) during 2009, a few did not renew their membership (got too fragile, moved away or couldn't afford it anymore), but most are still with us, and quite a number of long-term and newer patrons have now joined the Masque Theatre Club.

I have to thank our treasurer for his patience dealing with my queries and the chairperson who is keeping a keen eye on my weekly updates. Thanks is also due to all box-office volunteers as well as Celia Musikanth and Hayley Fargher who look after application forms and money coming in for the club – that made my job much easier during the year!

And I am proud to tell you that at the time of this AGM our 2010 numbers have about reached the closing number of members at the end of 2009 – and I hope to increase this steadily during the rest of 2010.

### **Treasurer**

See appendix please.

*Brian de Jager*

Ω

### **Marketing manager/P.R.O.**

*Celia Musikanth*

The year on the whole was not an easy one. It was sad to see that only four nominations by Cata for Masque Theatre shows won an award during 2009 This is worrying, since in the past we have received many more; so many in fact, that we were able to put up a beautiful laminated sheet with our awards on our notice board. Does this mean that our standard is flagging, or does it mean that others to the north of

the Masque were so much better? I personally was surprised that some of our shows were not even nominated, but we don't always know what we were up against. Perhaps we all need to make more effort to support our sister societies.

However, let's assume that we can improve and really hit it next year again.

### **The past year**

The year has been busy with lots of ideas, networking, meetings with prospective hirers' of the theatre, publicity, Ward 64 forum, Jungle Theatre board, False Bay Tourism and Business Association meetings as well as many, many telephone calls, attending visiting-show performances and the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, running and organising a Masque Theatre Festival and so much more. What can I say, that's what P.R. and marketing are about.

Audience levels hovered between very good, mediocre and poor. The recession has affected theatre generally, as it has become a luxury. Having said that, the big shows, viz. *Cats*, *Grease*, etc., have been well attended at very high ticket prices. But let's compare apples with apples ... We need to get a certain tendency out of people's minds: I was told the other day that a number of people had asked one of our media reporters whether the show at the Masque was another *amateurish* one? That is worrying! Yes, our theatre is an amateur theatre, and we need to fly this flag high, but in a professional manner in the way we are presenting our amateur shows – if you get my drift. We need to aim for excellence in every single show!

New people need to be exposed to theatre, but not at the expense of the productions which are attended by paying audiences. The new performers need to be trained by those who know how to train them.

Theatrically-themed members' evenings (with training) are the vehicles for them to learn initially. If a director is able to get a very good performance with good projection etc. out of new cast members, then that's fine, but if not ... remember: people are paying the same ticket price to see a below-average performance as they are to see a slick, sophisticated professional show. This is totally unfair to audiences *and* to our theatre.

Let's take cognizance of this and groom our people correctly.

### **Masque Theatre Speech and Drama School**

At this point let me say that we truly appreciate what Jean Glass is doing with her youngsters for our theatre at the "Masque Theatre Speech and Drama School". They are learning about all the disciplines of theatre, and she has achieved remarkable results over the past couple of years. Her classes have been growing from about 10 to between 50 and 60 young people. This is our future, and we need these young performers to learn from grassroots.

### **Audience development**

This is my pet goal and has been for some years. When I speak of audience development I do not mean that we have to have full houses for the relevant visiting shows (of course that would be the first prize), but to have *new* people coming into our theatre because of different types of shows – that is our aim.

We need to ask the question: "Where do we see our theatre in five years time?" What is the answer? – I had a meeting the other day with Debbie Turner who runs an extremely successful theatre and dance academy. She knows her stuff, and she knows that long-term planning is essential: Go for excellence and you will get the rewards. I intend

inviting her to chat to Man.Com. about some of her methods – I am sure we can all learn a lot from her.

### **Performance development**

We need to have a course in good projection, and this is on the cards. For energy and pace, projection is imperative, and a comment passed to me recently by a highly respected director is that a number of shows have lacked projection, and this means hard work for an audience.

Additional experienced and innovative directors need to be encouraged to join our family and bring fresh and exciting ideas as well as energy into our performers and shows. Possibly we could occasionally invite professional directors for this purpose, and if we have to pay them, so be it. Again, we ask the question here: "Where do we see our theatre in five years time?"

### **Photographs for publicity**

The last few batches of pictures were not exciting. This is not to say that they were not well taken, but they looked posed and uninviting. Photos must be "cheated" with expressive and energetic messages like "Don't miss this show", "Wow, this looks interesting", etc. The newspapers don't like to print unexciting pictures; but if they do, the readers won't be drawn in to see the show. Directors need to "direct" the photographer with props as well as interesting and inviting scenes. These are sellers for our shows, so let's try harder. We have, on occasion, had front-page publicity when a picture is exciting (even if the show was for one night only).

### **Masque Theatre on the map**

We were invited for the second time as the Masque Theatre to attend the Fleur du Cap Awards ceremony, and it was fabulous to see how many of the people there knew about our theatre, and how many had actually been on our stage and (hopefully) will be in the future. A direct link to this has been the attendance of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown.

The theatre must continue being exposed “out there”, and we must continue to see the shows, get ideas of what can and cannot be done in our space, and shows with substance must be put on our boards. Grahamstown is the largest festival in the country and an excellent place for marketing. Almost all theatres are represented there, talent scouts are everywhere, and the Masque too needs to act as a talent scout. I have to add congratulations to birga Thomas, her cast and crew for the excellent showing of *Hello and Goodbye* there – it was great seeing one of our Masque society shows right up there with the best of them!

This year productions by Wynberg Girls’ High School, Wynberg Boys’ bands, Ingrid Wylde, the Cape Performing Arts and Cape Town City Ballet are some of the shows which have directly come out of personal contacts by our theatre and the Grahamstown Festival over the years. Expenses are an issue at the Masque Theatre and must be kept in check. But “Grahamstown” should not be regarded as an unnecessary expense: It rather is an open door to our future. The question to leave us all with is repeated here: “*Where do we see our theatre in five years time?*”

There are many, many thank-yous due to our volunteers and others in every walk of the theatre, Man.Com., the Theatre Club secretary, editors of the quarterly programmes, front-of-house, the bar, backstage, lights and sound crews, the publicity and administrative

teams, the speech-and-drama school, art curator and exhibitors, cleaner, poster distributor, car guards, the media, audiences and so many more: You all know who you are, and Hayley and I thank you.Ω

---



---

### **Publicity Officer**

*Ruth Allsopp*

There have been no changes in our *modus operandi* this past year. Celia Musikanth, as marketing manager, continues to process the photographs of upcoming productions and keeps in touch with local and city newspapers.

Celia, Pam Ross and Ruth Jay (Allsopp) compile the texts for publicity in local papers, on websites and in newspaper columns as well as the more detailed texts for the city newspapers. This publicity is based on information supplied by the relevant officers of the four amateur dramatic societies and sent to Ruth. Thanks are due to the efficient way in which this information is timeously faxed through.

Reviews in the *Cape Times* and on the Fleur du Cap website (by Lieske Bester) as well as on Fine Music Radio’s “Cape Diary” are regular and provide publicity even when not completely “glowing”! Word-of-mouth is still the best means of publicity. We must aim for the highest standards so that this free form of advertising will be positive and the public feel that a Masque Theatre show is always worthwhile. Ω

---



---

### **Repairs and maintenance**

*Simon Sutton*

The scope of work attended to this year has been extensive, from

completely repainting the exterior of the theatre to replacing lavatory seats in the patrons' toilets.

Projects completed include (among other things)

### **Front-of-house**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>Box office</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experimented with gash carpeting from backstage in the box office</li> <li>Installation of a new computer system</li> <li>Servicing of cupboards and cables</li> <li>Relocation of battery-recharging facility to the lighting box</li> </ul>  |
| <i>Foyer</i>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Servicing of chairs and tables (ferrules, feet, lubrication, etc.)</li> <li>Servicing of doors, lubrication, locks and alignment</li> <li>Installation of dedicated perspex poster holders</li> <li>Relocation of A 0 signage board to the stoep</li> <li>Replacement of canopy down-lighting cabling</li> <li>Rehanging of patrons' board and other paintings</li> <li>Fitting tie-backs for balcony-door curtains</li> </ul> |
| <i>Kitchen</i>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Servicing cupboard doors and shelves</li> </ul>  |
| <i>Bar</i>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repainting in line with foyer decor</li> <li>Recoating of top counter</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Toilets</i>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repainting disabled toilet and gents' walls</li> <li>Curtains for toilets</li> <li>Replacing toilet seats</li> <li>Servicing door closers, washers and plumbing</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Balcony</i>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skirting and parapet-wall top, water-proofing</li> <li>Eaves treated and painted</li> <li>Air-condition unit treated for rust</li> <li>Unserviceable running lights removed</li> <li>Signage boards dollied-up and up-lights repositioned</li> </ul>   |

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Lighting box</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bolts and nuts lubricated</li> <li>General tidying-up</li> <li>Several control switches cleaned</li> <li>24-hour electrical power plugs installed</li> <li>Cable to green room laid</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Auditorium</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seats secured, lubricated and upholstery attended to</li> <li>Aisles repainted and cover strips secured</li> <li>Light bulbs checked</li> <li>Working-light fitting replaced</li> <li>Hand-rail ends attended to</li> <li>Safety tape checked on all uneven surfaces</li> <li>Doors and plugs checked</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Stage</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fly bars and winches serviced (# 1 lighting bar winch upgraded, but awaiting special securing plate)</li> <li>Legs and borders repaired</li> <li>Faulty lighting extensions repaired</li> <li>Front-tabs mechanism checked</li> <li>Middle traverse curtains sorted and repaired (rear traverse is missing three drops)</li> <li>Blues checked – one fitting replaced</li> <li>Donation of an industrial steam cleaner for the curtains secured</li> </ul> |
| <b>Green room</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sinks relocated</li> <li>Cupboards and shelves installed or repaired</li> <li>Most of the floor painted</li> <li>Flat bays secured, and flats reorganised</li> <li>Collapsible 450 mm rostra based replaced with 18 mm shutterply boards (300 mm still progress)</li> <li>Most contents of cupboards sorted</li> <li>Carpet replaced</li> <li>Donation of radiant heaters secured</li> <li>Fire extinguishers and hose checked and one</li> </ul>          |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
|                       | extinguisher relocated  |
|                       | Xanita board in mezzanine repacked                                      |
|                       | Scaffolding poles relocated to basement                                 |
|                       | Dimmer-board relays renovated (all 24 circuits now operational)         |
|                       | Special brackets for projection screen supplied                         |
|                       | 24-hour power supply for fridge installed                               |
| <b>Dressing rooms</b> | Curtains installed  |
|                       | Donation of chairs secured  |
|                       | All material and curtaining tidied up                                   |
|                       | Carpeting and dress rails sorted to a degree                            |
|                       | Lighting addressed  |
| <i>Toilets</i>        | Curtains made   |
|                       | Walls waterproofed and repainted  |
| <b>Basement</b>       | Cleaned and sorted  |
|                       | Extractor fan cleaned and lubricated                                    |
|                       | Lighting neatened   |
| <b>Exterior</b>       | Painted   |
|                       | Light fittings serviced   |
|                       | Bird spikes installed (experimental)                                    |
|                       | Storm-water pipe installed on south-east side of building               |
|                       | Down-piping modified  |
| <b>General</b>        | Pavement, plant mulch, station side chipped stone, drainage attended to |
|                       | Padlocks oiled, security fencing modified                               |

As far the folk involved are concerned, the list is long; mention must nevertheless, be made of (in alphabetical order)  
 Sue Bolton, Eve Carr, Ron Carr, Shirley Chipps, Brian de Jager, Bruce Edwards, ElectroWatts, Gary Fargher, Hayley Fargher, Andy and Sally-Jane Fletcher, Scott Gill, Wendy Goddard, Bob Goode, Kim

Harris-Dalla, Wally Hodges, Barrie Howard, Alison King and her sons (Christopher, Timothy and Andrew), Rick Magnin, Helen Mathers, John McConnell, M. Ryan Plumbing, Celia Musikanth, Brett Radloff, Michael Samuels, Wendy Thompson, and Ralph Thornley ... and to others who do not come to mind at present, my apologies.

Thanks must go to our trustees, Man.Com. and resident societies for their open-handedness in this exercise: It has cost a lot of money, but we can be confident that many essential and, perhaps, long neglected items have now been attended to. Ω

---

### **Stage manager**

*Scott Gill*

Shows for both auditorium and foyer continued to arrive at the Masque Theatre this past year in rapid succession. However, in winter we managed to close the theatre for two weeks to enable a major refurbishment to take place. A team of volunteers from the four societies, under the direction of maintenance manager Simon Sutton, gave the theatre its first large-scale overhaul since the rebuilding. The improvements backstage included stripping the Green Room of its contents to enable the floor to be washed, scrubbed and re-painted. The sink, originally intended for the Green Room, was finally swapped with the one from the paint room, and a small hot water cylinder was installed. Additional wiring now ensures the fridge no longer switches off when the master switch at the front door is turned off. The cyclorama was washed, holes were poly-filled, and the whole edifice was re-painted. The basement was given a cleanout at the time and again in November. Curtains were made for the windows of the dressing room, and a small lockable cupboard to store valuables was installed.

At the back of the theatre a trench was widened and deepened to convey rain water away from the building and hopefully eliminate flooding of the basement in winter.

A number of items were donated for backstage use by both societies and private members. These include a steam cleaner, a vacuum cleaner, new black plastic chairs for the dressing room, several ladders, a beige carpet, curtain rails, a dress rail and Xanita boards. An inventory has been made of the contents of the Green Room, dressing room and basement. The fridge however continues to be a problem. If a new seal is not the solution to the constant frosting/de-frosting it may be necessary to ask the societies to contribute to the cost of a replacement.

Recently, under Simon's supervision fifteen mini-rostra were constructed, specifically to be used in foyer productions. This will eliminate the need to carry heavy rostra from the Green Room every time a stage has to be built in the foyer.

I would like to thank all societies' members who have played a part in keeping the backstage area tidy and just request that more attention is paid to cleaning the paint room at the end of a production. One day I hope to be able to quote from *Princess Ida*:

Oh don't the days seem lank and long  
 When all goes right and nothing goes wrong  
 And isn't your life extremely flat,  
 With nothing whatever to grumble at!

Ω



## front-of-house: Refreshments

Helen Mathers

### Annual statistics

|                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| Net profit             | R20 167 |
| No. of shows           | 133     |
| Audience no.s          | 13 687  |
| Teas/coffees sold      | 3 581   |
| Sweets and juices sold | 4 022   |

Once again I have the pleasure of thanking all our loyal and willing FoH helpers, both the "old hands" and the new volunteers. A particular thanks to Jean Glass and her team for joining us and taking up the slack, it does help to spread the load, as Nola was away for a while but is hopefully back with us now. A special thank-you to Dawn Scholtz for her sterling work with the rosters – never an easy job! We have had to put our price up to R6, so I hope everyone is practising their 2 x tables! Chocolates and coffee have been very expensive.

The management committee and all our friends are truly grateful and appreciative of your contribution. We would indeed be lost without our volunteers, and the Masque would cease to function. The profits are down, but there is a recession, so we have not done too badly. Hopefully this year will be more lucrative. Thanks again to all, and I look forward to enjoying a happy and successful 2010 at the Masque Theatre with everyone.

