

Minutes of The Annual General Meeting of The Swan Theatre Company held at The Swan Theatre, 138 Park Street, Yeovil on Tuesday 28th April 2026 starting at 7.30pm.

Present: Sarah Ambrose, Sally Matthews, Andrew Middleton, Dick Bennett, Adrian Harding, Brian Williams, Mike Stanley, Steve Poolman, Annetta Broughton, Sheila Driver, John Snelling, Sandra Snelling, Peter Riley, Beryl Snadden, Terry Skedgell, Judith Payne, Liz Stallard, David Hallett, Geoff Kneller, Carys Clayton, Roger Chadbourne, Liz Holloway, Graham House, Andy Hastie, Anna Carter-Brown, Dan Warr, Helen Extance, Laura Claridge, Paul Extance, Mark Extance, Nicola Merralls, Jez Smith, James Gaylard.

1. The President, Beryl Snadden opened the meeting welcoming everyone and giving a personal and heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in the refurbishment work that has taken place over the past year at the Swan.

2. Apologies for Absence were received from: Robert Graydon, Mark Payne, Sarah Nias, Lynne Bennett, James and Jean Kneller, Denny and Mike Robbins, Andy and Elaine Taylor, Ann and Richard Rigby, Jo Simpson, Jim LeFeuvre, Vicky Hallett, Vivienne Evans, Mary Buckle, Ann Cook, Rachel, Ed and Grace Butcher, Patrick Knox, Beryl Garton, Paula Hadfield.

3. Minutes of last years meeting had been circulated to all members and were approved unanimously.

4. Functional Reports

a) Artistic Manager – Sarah Ambrose presented the Artistic report in Robert Graydon’s absence. Full text attached.

b) Marketing Manager – Adrian Harding presented his report. Full text attached.

c) Facilities Manager Dick Bennett presented his report. Full text attached.

5. Annual Accounts – Andrew Middleton presented the annual accounts.

a) The adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Andrew Middleton and seconded by Roger Chadbourne.

b) The appointment of Teresa Rodber of Read Accountants as examiner for the next financial year was proposed by Andrew Middleton and seconded by Dick Bennett.

6. Chairmans review of the year. Presented by Sarah Ambrose. Sarah thanked the Committee and the wider membership for the support and encouragement she has received during her first year as Chair of the Swan Theatre. She acknowledged the completion of the redevelopment and refurbishment of the theatre foyer and toilets which has transformed our front of house spaces, thanking everyone who had taken part in this but in particular to Mark, Annetta, Dick for leading the project and to Jim Lefeuvre for the beautiful bar. Sarah highlighted the importance of protecting and nurturing the quality of our productions whilst broadening audience demographic appealing to new and diverse audiences, satisfying loyal supporters, balancing quality, cost effectiveness and inclusivity. She acknowledged the outstanding number of nominations and awards received from Somerset Fellowship of Drama and The Rose Bowl in 2025. 2026 marks 50 years of success for the Swan Theatre with a dinner and dance to be held on 3rd July at Haselbury Mill to celebrate the occasion. We encourage everyone to come and join in the celebrations. Sarah thanked our audiences for their continued enthusiasm and support, a vital part of our success making all the hard work worthwhile.

Along with extending thanks to the Committee and all volunteers involved in our productions, Sarah thanked Brian Williams who is stepping down as Front of House Manager, for all his years of support and hard work and Robert Graydon who steps down as Artistic Manager. Thanking Robert for a very successful six years Sarah highlighted that with care, sensitivity, and outstanding work over the years, a balanced programme of entertaining, thought provoking and diverse theatre had been produced for our audiences. Sarah encouraged everyone to get involved as much as possible during the next years exciting programme and looks forward to another successful and enjoyable year ahead.

7. Election of Officers and Committee Members. Steve Poolman, Returning Officer, confirmed the election of Sarah Ambrose as Chair, Sally Matthews as Secretary, Andrew Middleton as Treasurer, Dick Bennett as Facilities Manager, Adrian Harding as Marketing Manager and Carys Clayton as committee member. Artistic Manager to be advised . All unopposed.

8. Open Forum

Liz Holloway requested that the coat hangers were put back up now that the refurbishment is completed. This will be done.

Liz Stallard requested that we look at putting a canopy over the stage door entrance at the top of the steps, to protect members when entering and leaving. This will be looked at.

Geoff Kneller asked if there were any plans for another door for disabled access. Currently not and ground floor access will be the main doors and the Fire Escape door in the Foyer.

Dan Warr representing Motiv8 Productions extended thanks to Ann Rigby our Box Office Manager for all her help, knowledge and hard work with the Box Office.

Motiv8 were thanked for their involvement and support at the Swan.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm

Sally Matthews

Secretary, Swan Theatre

Functional Reports

SWAN THEATRE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – TUESDAY 28th APRIL 2026

ARTISTIC MANAGER'S REPORT

The Swan's vision and my remit over the past 6 years has been to present a programme of 6 plays each year - one every 2 months. To keep our audiences happy and our members engaged, this programme needs to be as diverse, entertaining and representative of what is happening in modern Theatre as we can make it. Since the last AGM, apart from a scheduled break in the programme for essential building works, we have continued to be able to do this, along with regular offerings from the Civic Players and Motiv8. There have also been regular NT Live screenings and we continue to

host Cinemateque. Swan offerings alone have been 'Sleuth', 'Colder Than Here', 'Terra Nova' and 'Pressure'. We also made a change to our traditional offering in January to present over 2 weeks a variety of entertainment as part of our celebration of 50 years of the Swan. This consisted of a murder mystery over 2 nights, a quiz, an original film, a classical music concert, a drag show and 3 performances of 'Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell'. For the remainder of this year, we embark on a series of 3 comedies, 2 of them fresh to us and which we hope will please those who enjoy a good laugh. We round off the year with a return to Shakespeare, with Anna & Peter Carter-Brown's production of 'Much Ado About Nothing'. This will require a mammoth push by our active members and others, and I would urge you support what promises to be a thrilling, challenging but very rewarding experience. During the weekend of the final performance we will be hosting the Little Theatre Guild Southern Regional Conference. This will be an opportunity for us to showcase this amazing facility and invite delegates to watch the final performance of the year. I hope you will agree that this year's offering has been – and promises to be – as diverse and challenging as we could possibly hope. I believe there is something for everyone.

The Swan really is at the cutting edge of 'professional theatre produced by people who don't get paid'. Our reputation and output are unrivalled. And if you're into awards and trophies as recognition of that level of excellence, we are currently the holders of both the Rose Bowl and Phoebe Rees Competitions Best Production accolades.

Our programme for 2027 is yet to be decided, but the Artistic Team has already begun their work on researching a programme worthy of this theatre, including an emerging idea that we might showcase the Swan by going out of the theatre and into the local community. This will be my last report to an AGM as Artistic Manager; and so this time I will not be leading that work. The Team is at its strongest in terms of experience, expertise and commitment and I encourage you to support them and whoever succeeds me as their Lead. It has been a privilege for me to be at the heart of the Swan's artistic output for so long and I am grateful for the trust and the confidence I have been shown. But I am not blind to the notion that sometimes a fresh pair of eyes is required and that is why I have taken the decision to step away a year early. However, I stand ready to continue to support the artistic life of this theatre where I can.

In tandem with my role as Artistic Manager, I am also a Committee Member and trustee of the Swan. Although not on the 'Artistic' agenda as such I would like, briefly, to touch on something I feel is important as we move forward in progressing the future life of this amazing facility that we all enjoy. Currently a group of we lucky people are having a lot of fun rehearsing 'The Unfriend'. The cast includes 2 enthusiastic teenagers new to us – and therefore it is natural that we protect their wellbeing by considering what is required by the Swan's well-drafted and robust Safeguarding Policy. I support a 6-production programme, if - in all the circumstances - the Committee deem that practical. With wider and more active contribution we could potentially do more. But we should recognise that a large proportion of our technical, maintenance, building and support organisation is not as young as it was – and that will need addressing if we are to survive the next 50 years. There is a creaking strain on our resources, particularly our human resources.

But while we think about how to do that, my plea would be to safeguard the wellbeing of those who already contribute as much as they possibly can - and more. For the most part we do this well; we have all gravitated to this hobby because we have something in common and it is natural that we

form strong and lasting friendships. But please watch out for those who you may not realise are struggling or perhaps may be oversensitive due to the pressures they carry in their area of responsibility – however large or small their contribution. At the end of the day I'm pretty sure we all want the same things: to enjoy our pastime of choice, to produce excellent theatre, to have fun, to make our audiences laugh, cry and think – and of course to make money to enable the whole thing to remain on the rails.

To conclude, I would like to thank my team of Anna Carter-Brown, Graham House, Sarah Nias, Rachel Butcher, Sarah Ambrose, Mark Payne and Will O'Neill for their enthusiasm, their time, and the experience they bring to the Artistic Team. They are all fully briefed and fully engaged and need only a new Lead to continue their work. And I sincerely hope that Lead will come from amongst them. I reserve my most grateful thanks to my husband, Joe. His support to my theatre activities over many years has been unstinting and unquestioning. He has thrown himself wholeheartedly into my hobby and I could not have done this without his patience and encouragement.

Robert Graydon – April 2026

Swan Theatre AGM – Marketing Report, 28th April 2026

In our special 50th Anniversary Year, I'll start with some heartfelt thankyous.

Thank you to Angela Legg for taking the reins of the Marketing Operation for a few months and which gave me a break to focus on other activities.

Thanks to Mikey Foulerton and Richard Jones, who have created striking designs for the posters and banners in the past year in addition to my own, and Sheila Driver and Anna Carter-Brown who have already finalised their designs for forthcoming productions. Thanks also to Jim LeFeuvre and Pauline Dagnall for the exceptional professional quality of their photography that feeds our marketing campaigns and publicity material. And once that is done, thanks to Annetta Broughton for organising the distribution of posters.

My special thanks, as ever, go to Ann Rigby who manages the Box Office so tirelessly and efficiently. With an ear to the ground, and her intuitive understanding of our audience, Ann provides valuable feedback and analysis which informs our future play selections.

It has been another year of high-quality and popular productions, with an early one, Sleuth, having already been rewarded with 'Best Of...' awards from the adjudicators for two fine actors, special effects and sound. I'm sure that all the

more recent productions will be high in the running for this coming year's awards season. Unsurprisingly, several of this year's productions resulted in sell-out performance nights, which is always encouraging from a marketing perspective. The January Swan Festival 50 also went well.

Our Marketing activity takes the form of the Posters, Website, Banners, Facebook Pages, Programmes, Cue Lines Newsletter, Mailshots and Annual Season Catalogue. I know that there is more that can be done, and so I welcome the kind offer of assistance from Rachel Boote. Rachel will be able to add short film clips and other creative ideas for use on wider social media platforms, such as Instagram and Tik-Tok. This, hopefully, will attract a new and younger audience to augment our current army of loyal supporters. If any of you have new ideas for spreading the word or would like to contribute to the promotional effort or to Cue Lines, please let me know. Your contributions will be very welcome.

One observation that many of us have made is that our audiences are leaving it later to book their tickets, which gives us some consternation in the weeks leading up to opening night. As very few of our loyal Swan Members have taken advantage of the Members Discount initiative, we have considered the implications of dropping this as an incentive and replacing it with an Early-Bird discount to prime the pump earlier in the booking cycle. What do our members think?

And with that thought left hanging, let us all look forward to the remaining shows of 2026 (book early!), the announcement of the programme for 2027 later this year, and the continuing popularity of the Swan Theatre for at least the next 50 years!

Adrian Harding, Marketing Manager

Facilities Report for Swan AGM – 28th April 2026

We really have to start with the foyer redevelopment which has been the primary work on the theatre this year. You will all have seen the end result, and it has been universally praised by everyone. It has opened up the whole ground floor of the building, and finally means that everyone can find the bar! It has also made life much more civilized for people using the toilets, particularly the ladies. We did well with our selection of builder in Warmans, who did a good job the structural work, and thanks must also go to all the members who worked on the project,

particularly doing the decorating. However there are a couple of people who need special mention, Annetta Broughton who oversaw all the design and appearance aspects to ensure that we ended up with such attractive end result, Jim leFeuvre who built the bar, and Mark Paine who led the decorating and finishing work, doing much of it himself. We searched the building but never did find the camp bed these latter two must have been using judging by the time they spent here!

In parallel with the foyer work, the green room has been upgraded including a new kitchen, work led by Sian Spencer and Graham House, making it a more pleasant place for members to use. We have also taken the opportunity to clear out and rationalize some of our storage areas such as the area under the auditorium seating opposite the new toilets, and the garage area off the stage.

We recently discovered a problem with the drains which were showing signs of collapse. This has been sorted out by fitting a liner to the pipe.

We've had all the usual maintenance work done throughout the year on things like the stage winches and lighting bars, fire extinguishers, ventilation system etc.. We have set up a housekeeping group to help maintain the cleanliness and appearance of particularly the public areas, led by Lynne Bennett, who would be delighted to hear from anyone who would be willing to help.

I would like to thank all the people who have help and supported through the year, fixing, mending, meeting contractors etc.. the place couldn't function without your efforts.

Dick Bennett

May 2026