

Stepping Out Theatre
ANNUAL
REPORT
2015/16



www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk



The work Stepping Out Theatre is doing should be supported by all interested in a society that is healthy. Stepping Out understands and does not shy away from the possibility that theatre, the ancient art of these islands North West of Europe, is a transformative and healing activity which brings joy into people's lives. If you want to hear something true, go and hear what Stepping Out Theatre are saying. I only found myself in theatre, and I hear that Stepping Out is helping other people do the same. I have great hopes for this company and deep respect for what they are doing right now.

Mark Rylance, Patron

CONTENTS OF ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

2	Reference and Administrative Details
3	Structure, Governance and Management
4	Project Co-ordinator's Report
5	Progress on the Aims and Objectives of the Group 2015/16
6	External Evaluation
8	Productions 2015/16
10	Feedback from Audiences
12	Feedback from Performers
14	Reviews
17	Poetry Work at The Square Club and elsewhere
18	Gill Amphlett Social Fund
18	The Playback Theatre Group
18	Drama and Devising for Performance Group
20	Fundraising Activities - Stepping Out Sponsored Walk / The Big Give
20	Stepping Out Theatre Online
21	Other Work – Associated Groups and Co-Producers
23	Financial Report and Accounts for 2015/16

Graphic Design by Ann Stiddard

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Reference and Administrative Details

‘Stepping Out Theatre’ is an unincorporated association with aims which are benevolent and philanthropic. We are a registered charity who registered with the Charities Commission in February 2007.

Charity Registration Number; 1117912

The group was formerly sometimes known as **‘Bristol Survivors’ Poetry’**.

The group’s name is sometimes lengthened to **‘Stepping Out Theatre Company’**.

‘Stepping Out Theatre’ was founded in 1997.

Principle Charity Office: 19 Webb Court, Park Road
Shirehampton
Bristol
BS11 0FH

Tel. 01823 401075 / 07790 980688
E mail; info@steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Bankers: Co-operative Bank, P.O. Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner of Accounts:
Beverley Jackson, 220 New Cheltenham Road, Kingswood,
South Gloucestershire, BS15 4RP

Structure, Governance and Management

Membership

Membership of Stepping Out Theatre is open to all local mental health service users and their allies with an interest in the work of the group. Involvement in any of our productions or activities confers membership. All members are entitled to attend our Annual General Meeting and vote for the election of a group of Trustees who are responsible for running the group. Copies of the group's constitution with more information on all this are available from the Stepping Out Theatre office.

Governing Document

Constitution, amended and signed prior to Charity Registration 6th October 2006

Governing Body

A Board of Trustees, currently eight in number, elected in accordance with the Constitution at the Annual General Meeting

Staff

Project Co-ordinator (Part time) Steve Hennessy

Deputy Project Co-ordinator (Part time) Ann Stiddard

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM for 2015 – 16 was held at 7.00 p.m. on 3rd August 2015 in the Greville Room at the Hen and Chickens, North Street, Bedminster, Bristol. The following eight trustees were either elected for the first time or confirmed to serve the three years for which they were previously elected.

Trustees 2015 - 2016

Charles Thompson – Chair

Joanna Smith – Secretary

Olivia Ware – Treasurer

Tom Collis – Trustee

Danann McAleer – Trustee

Mark Breckon – Trustee

Tom Jones – Trustee

Emma Staddon – Trustee

Trustees are drawn from the existing membership and we try to have a range of people who reflect the nature of the group – i.e. people who have used and / or worked in mental health services and people who work in theatre and the arts. Any group member can put themselves forward for, or be nominated to be a Trustee.

Project Co-ordinator's Report

2015 – 16 was the most frenetically busy year in the eighteen year history of the group. We mounted the largest number of productions (nine!) and put on the widest range of activities ever in a single twelve month period. A full list of productions is included later. Highlights of the year included;

- Mark Breckon's fifth large scale play for the company 'The Square Wheel of Time' had a fortnight's run in Bristol and Bath with nine performances at The Brewery Theatre in Bristol and the Rondo Theatre in Bath.
- Four new productions funded by the Arts Council, including one of our most ambitious, difficult and expensive projects ever, Patrick Marmion's theatrical acid trip through the life of R. D. Laing, 'The Divided Laing.' This production had a four week run in London and earned some of the best reviews and audience feedback the company had ever received. As with 'Lullabies of Broadmoor' in 2011, and 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' in 2014, it showed once again that the company can mount massive, ambitious theatre productions where theatre professionals work alongside service users garnering critical and audience acclaim.
- Alongside these productions, we ran an expanded programme of dance and music activities in collaboration with Mind Your Music and Joyofdance, as well as our popular Drama and Devising for Performance workshop.
- The Gill Amphlett Social Fund laid on a busy series of theatre trips and a large four day summer outing to Cornwall where 20 members camped out for three nights and saw productions at the Minack Theatre and at Kneehigh Theatre's wonderful new Asylum space in the Lost Gardens of Heligan.

- A cabaret event showcasing short pieces featuring individual members was organised for the AGM in July.
- The Stepping Out / Chrysalis Theatre Playback Theatre Group continues to recruit new members and mount public performances.
- We mounted co productions with Dreamweavers, In Extremis, Nevertheless Productions, Tusentack Theatre, Cabinet of Cynics and Partisan Theatre.
- We continued to work with a number of poets towards a large scale event planned for 2016 when we will publish six new anthologies of poetry by local service users. The Director of the Cheltenham Poetry Festival and other local poets and writers are working with us on this project.
- We continued to achieve good audiences for our productions among people who use and work in mental health services as well as the general public.
- We are currently developing several new projects for production in 2016/17 including two more plays about R. D. Laing, an adaptation of Will Self's novel 'Great Apes' in collaboration with the writer and a new production of Sir John Vanbrugh's restoration comedy 'The Provok'd Wife.'
- We continue to help service users locally and across the country by setting up and supporting new theatre and arts projects initiatives such as Tusentack Theatre, Polar Bear Theatre and Joyofdance in Bristol, Arts Etcetera in Kidderminster and Coffee House Theatre in Plymouth.

2015 – 16 was also marked by two very sad deaths of individuals with long associations with the group.

In July, the musician Ernie Bell passed away after a long struggle with cancer. Ernie was deeply involved in Stepping Out for over ten years. He appeared in all of our large scale productions during that period, writing and performing a large number of songs for the shows which were recorded together on a CD in 2012. He also served as a Trustee for much of that period. Ernie went on to help set up and run mental health group Mind Your Music with Elliot Hall.

In September, a few days after delivering the final draft of a new External Evaluation of Stepping Out Theatre, Steve Onyett died suddenly of a heart attack while taking part in a fundraising bicycle ride in Palestine to raise money for MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians). Steve was just 53. Besides conducting two rigorous academic evaluations, Steve was a long term supporter of Stepping Out's work who provided personal support and coaching to group members as well as attending countless productions as an audience member over many years. He will be sadly missed. Group members have been involved in helping to produce a CD and organise a memorial event for him in 2016.

2015 - 16 was our eighteenth year as a group and our ninth year of operation as a registered charity.

Work on the two productions we are taking to the Edinburgh Festival in 2016 was well advanced by the end of the year.



The Bedminster Bigfoot

Progress on The Aims and Objectives of Stepping Out Theatre 2015/16

Our charitable aims and objectives as set out in our constitution are;

- 1) To relieve the conditions of mental health service users through the medium of theatre.
- 2) To advance the education of the public about mental health in order to raise their awareness, by producing plays which deal with this issue and counter negative stereotypes of people with mental health problems.
- 3) To advance the education and training of mental health service users and their allies to develop their creative talents, build supportive networks and produce high quality theatre on mental health themes.

As the Project Co - ordinator's report makes clear, we can claim to have made considerable progress towards these aims this year.

- 1) Mental health service users have been offered a diverse range of therapeutic creative activities, as well as training bursaries to help with their own creative development. They have also been offered membership of a supportive network and a busy programme of shared activities.

- 2) We mounted our largest ever number of individual productions this year. All nine productions raised public awareness of mental health issues and challenged negative stereotypes. These plays were performed in front of hundreds of people in Bristol, Bath, London and Frome.

- 3) As well as producing nine higuquality theatre productions on mental health themes, this year's work offered more new education and training opportunities to service users and their allies to build their creative talents in the way we do best – by creating good theatre.



External Evaluation

As part of our preparations for the next three year programme of work, 2016 – 19, Stepping Out Theatre commissioned a new External Evaluation of the group from Prof. Steve Onyett of Exeter University who conducted our last evaluation some years ago. This new evaluation interviewed 58 group members, and was conducted over a six month period. It is a substantial and detailed piece of research involving email, postal and online questionnaires, in depth interviews and several site visits to Stepping Out events, activities and productions. The Report was submitted to Lloyds Bank, the Big Lottery Fund, The Henry Smith Charity, the People's Health Trust and other funders. You can read and download a copy of the full Report by clicking on the appropriate link on our website.

The Executive Summary of the new Evaluation was as follows;

- The survey achieved a very positive response rate (58) from more than half of the potential population of people who might have responded. Six people were interviewed in more depth. The sample was very diverse, with 79% still actively involved with SOT. The average duration of involvement was seven years. Most people had multiple involvements in SOT with acting and going on social trips being the most frequent forms of involvement. 67% of the sample was current or past users of mental health services.
- Global ratings of the experience and outcome of involvement with SOT were extremely positive. Involvement appeared to have the biggest impact in expanding the range of friends and contacts creating a sense of belonging

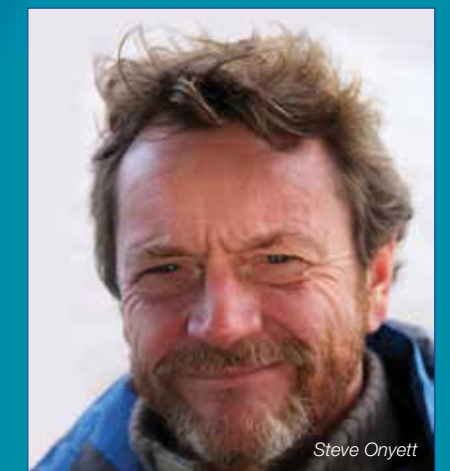
and significantly reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. This was created through the establishment of a highly accepting, safe and welcoming environment characterised by practical and emotional support.

- Another very significant area of impact was the development of increased confidence and self-esteem through the creation of opportunities to learn and practice new and socially valued skills. Almost the whole sample felt that SOT had helped them develop new skills to some extent.
- For many the non-judgemental and flexible approach taken to people's mental health problems was an important feature, both from the perspective of people deriving a new perspective on their own challenges, and in being able to offer support to others.

- A sense of achievement in creating a socially valued, intelligent and challenging piece of work that impacted on people's awareness and understanding of mental health issues was also important for some.
- 80% of participants reported that involvement had a positive impact on their mental health to some degree. For 27% this impact was judged to be "huge".
- The most widely reported improvement in mental health was in reduced depression. People felt that SOT had helped through providing human contact, friendships, and a chance to belong. It provided purpose and direction and a sense of being valued.
- 70% judged that there had been some positive effect on their use of mental health services with around 30% of those who had used mental health services feeling that there had been some preventative effect with respect to the risk of hospitalisation.
- Involvement also had an impact on participants' self-assessment of their ability to obtain paid or voluntary work, or educational opportunities, though to a lesser degree than the outcomes described above. It had also had a positively rated effect regarding physical health, reliability and use of forms of coping such as alcohol and drugs, though again to a more limited degree than the large impacts described above.
- Exploration of the effect of SOT involvement on feelings about oneself as a mental health service user echoed the findings above in stressing a sense of being part of something, and achieving a new level of confidence and self esteem that promoted an identity beyond being a mental health service user. Being creative among others experiencing mental health difficulties was experienced as empowering and validating.
- Inquiry into the effect on feelings about mental health services and the people that use them generated a strong critique of mainstream mental health services as overstretched, underfunded and often coercive. The importance of SOT as a non-stigmatising, creative, person-centred independent resource in this context was further highlighted. People also underlined the value they attached to deeper relationships with people with mental health problems, and the greater awareness of mental health issues that this had engendered.
- Where people were able to identify concerns or difficulties about SOT involvement these often centred on difficult interpersonal dynamics and issues surrounding challenging behaviours that risked compromising the experience for others. The dilemma of providing an alternative to mainstream services while also needing to maintain some duty of care to people at some risk to themselves and others was explored.
- In exploring hopes for the future of SOT, people clearly wanted the work that was already making such a significant difference to people's lives to continue while also urging significant expansion so more productions could be undertaken, in more locations and helping more people. People sought more publicity and recognition for this important and unusual work; unusual in that it brought together professional and non-professional actors and brings challenging high quality work to larger audiences. The need for increased and secure funding was strongly underlined to maintain and expand the range of activities.

- Internally there was a call for spreading responsibility among a wider staff group in order to reduce the burden on the Project Co-ordinator and to free up capacity for fundraising.
- The evaluation process itself was judged positively as comprehensive, easy, and well structured.

The group were delighted with the ringing endorsement of our effectiveness and our methods that emerged from this Evaluation. Funders have been similarly impressed with the conclusions that Steve Onyett's new research has come to and it has been instrumental in securing new three year grants for the group.



As mentioned in the Project Co-ordinator's Report, there was a very sad postscript to the evaluation process. A few days after delivering the final draft of his Evaluation, Steve Onyett died suddenly of a heart attack while taking part in a fundraising bicycle ride in Palestine to raise money for MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians). Steve was just 53. Group members have been involved in helping to produce a CD and organise a memorial event for him in 2016. Besides conducting two rigorous academic evaluations, Steve was a long term supporter of Stepping Out's work who provided personal support and coaching to group members as well as attending countless productions as an audience member over many years. He will be sadly missed.

Productions 2015/16



The Square Wheel of Time

Savernake forest. A dedicated band of eco warriors will stop at nothing to turn back the clock - calling each other by silly bird names, drinking ditchwater, even staying at the odd Travelodge in their quest to restore the once and future glory of . . . The square wheel!

This was the fifth full length large scale play written specifically for the group by Mark Breckon. After a four month rehearsal process involving about fifty service users, it was finally produced at the Rondo Theatre in Bath and the Brewery Theatre in Bristol in June – July 2015. There were 29 people on stage and many others taking part in the process leading up to performances. It was directed by Stepping Out founder member Cheryl Douglas. It received excellent audience feedback and reviews.

Girl Talk

For four nights only at the Alma Tavern Theatre, we revived this production from last year. A double bill of hilarious, moving and dramatic female monologues written by two of the country's leading writers at the peak of their powers, but a generation apart.

Alan Bennett's 'Her Big Chance' (1987) from the classic 'Talking Heads' series tells the story of Lesley, an aspiring actress whose

exciting new role in a film for the West German market turns out to be a little more than it first appeared.

Jack Thorne's 'Bunny' (2010) (Fringe First, Edinburgh Festival) describes an exhilarating coming of age for Katie, caught up in a terrifying white knuckle ride across a Luton council estate.

Performers Chrissie Harmer and Emma Staddon had both appeared regularly in large scale Stepping Out Theatre productions at the Brewery Theatre. Each was making a debut solo stage appearance in 'Girl Talk'. These two massive monologues would challenge any actor, let alone actors untrained and with no previous professional experience. This production evidenced the group's ongoing commitment to create the best possible opportunities for all group members to develop their talents and pursue their ambitions in professional fringe theatre settings. Like most of our productions, these two important performances were captured on video for our archive.

Insider

A spider scuttles across the ceiling of a psychiatric ward. But minutes ago this spider was a young woman. As memories of her recent stay crowd in she wrestles with the fact that she's once again trapped, and wonders if this is a magical transformation or supernatural malice ...

We have been working with Plymouth based writer Katherine Melmore for two years now and helped her to set up Coffee House Theatre. Following on from our rehearsed reading of her play 'Spell Me Slowly' last year, in 2015 we produced her monologue 'Insider' with Trustee Emma Staddon playing the young woman. This piece was performed at the Stepping Out AGM in 2015, and again at the Rose Theatre in London later in the year. It has now been further developed and will be touring to the Edinburgh Festival in 2016.

Midsummer Dusk

An intriguing place where poppies bloom on war graves and a red rose appears on a writer's tombstone each midsummer. Come and watch these true stories and more unfold ...

Our latest collaboration with Frome based groups Dreamweavers and Nevertheless Productions took the form of an open air piece of theatre at the atmospheric Frome Dissenter's Cemetery. Characters rose up, literally, from their graves, to tell a series of poignant and comic stories from Frome's past. The show sold out for two nights.

Anton's Shorts

Anton Chekhov is widely acknowledged as the world's greatest short story writer, and one of the world's greatest playwrights. So what happens when some of his best short stories become short plays in themselves? Anton's Shorts is what happens . .

Four of Chekhov's short stories received new adaptations in this acclaimed Arts Council funded production. Ten performances marked our return to the Alma Tavern Theatre for the first of four productions there in 2015. The performances were enthusiastically received by critics and audiences.



The Bedminster Bigfoot

Something wicked this way comes ... Eight feet tall with a taste for the finer things in life, the Bedminster Bigfoot robs from the rich to give to the poor. Austerity? Five more years? Not if Bigfoot has her way. A darkly comic tale for our times ...

Mark Breckon's political fable, shared a rep cast with 'Anton's Shorts' and like that production was directed by our Associate Director Marc Geoffrey. It ran for two weeks at the Alma Tavern Theatre and was again hugely well received.

The Most Effective Drum

Devised and created by Julie Nicholson and directed by Peter Clifford, this was a new type of production for the group. The Most Effective Drum was a theatrical presentation of poetry inspired by people's experiences of war throughout the world and throughout time. Representing the voices of victims, perpetrators, observers and survivors of war, it used verse from Ancient Greece to the present day to create a unique experience blending poetry, theatre, original music, movement and art.

There were 13 performances in total on a special set built inside Cotham Parish Church. This moving production tied in with the commemorations of the First World War. It was the second of our four Arts Council funded productions in 2015.

The Divided Laing

London, 1970. Experimental psychiatrist R.D. Laing is facing eviction from his pioneering asylum in the East End's Kingsley Hall. Local residents are up in arms - and To make matters worse, Ronnie's revolutionary colleague David Cooper is flipping out on the roof. With his personal life going down the pan and his mental state heading the same way, Ronnie takes an acid trip to the future. His mission is to save his therapeutic collective The Philadelphia Association, and secure his professional legacy. Will it be a one-way ticket to madness - or can breakdown sometimes mean breakthrough?

Patrick Marmion's provocative, freewheeling comedy, an acid trip through the life of R. D. Laing, ran for four weeks at the prestigious Arcola Theatre in London where it broke all Stepping Out Box Office records and received a record breaking number of national reviews for one of our productions, including some of our best reviews ever.

Toxic Cocktails

What if everything you thought was glamorous was actually deadly? What if it's the frivolous things that really matter? What if love is actually the cause of all the problems on the planet?

Three short plays to turn your world upside-down ...

The latest in our long list of collaborations with Frome theatre makers Crysse Morrison and Rosie Finnegan, and following on from last year's 'Media Monsters,' these three short plays had two performances in Frome and two in Bristol.

Cinderella – The Cillit Bang Years!

It's the evening of the Cillit Bang Cleaners Ball but Cyndi Shine won't be going. Cyndi helped her father build his cleaning company into the best in Bristol. But those happy glittering days are gone. With her father dead and her stepmother and evil twin sisters driving the company into the ground. Now all Cyndi ever does is clean. Can her only friend Henry (half hoover/half man) Buttons help? Not exactly but he knows a woman that can. And with Lily Surfaces, a 1970s Corrie St fairy godmother, on the case maybe Cyndi can go to the ball!

Pantomime has long played a part in Stepping Out's large scale productions, but this was our first full foray into the genre. Written, directed and performed entirely by group members, it had a sellout run at the Alma Tavern Theatre and the group decided to take the show up to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2016.



Feedback from Audiences

Here is a selection of what audience members said about our productions in 2015-16.



The Square Wheel of Time

THE SQUARE WHEEL OF TIME

"Brilliant show - yet again! The cast work brilliantly together, great family-like relationships that are fun to watch. Very effective mix of serious background story/meaning with lots of laughs."

"I'm always impressed by the ensemble spirit of the productions and thought that the company looked particularly supportive of all participants. We had new friends along to see the show and they were very impressed and entertained. Thank you."

"So nice to have a proper laugh with audience and actors - especially with the subject matter being mental health. Great job. Totally love the dancing. You guys are always a joy to see!"

THE BEDMINSTER BIGFOOT

"A brilliant, fast paced piece of theatre, superbly written, directed and acted, very funny and dramatic, but strangely beautiful and mythic at the same time. I found myself in tears during Frazzer's death scene - deeply political theatre, but even more deeply human."

"Another wonderful and thought provoking performance. Beautiful, powerful and heartbreaking: political theatre at its best. Great writing, directing and acting, especially Ben Crispin terribly affecting as Aaron, but great ensemble performance."

"Very well played, pacy and entertaining . . I loved the local references which added to the sense of relevance and I was moved by the powerful note of protest. The music and stage business added to the impact. The script was very funny. Real wit and imagination made the political diatribe palatable!"



The Bedminster Bigfoot



Anton's Shorts

ANTON'S SHORTS

"Thank you! What a great show! I thought it was a very polished and beautifully put together production. I really liked the set and simplicity and clean line of it. The music and lighting was spot on. The actors were graceful and a well executed performance The whole thing was very entertaining and enjoyable."

"Thought the plays were terrific! The actors were really in tune with bringing out the humour and I loved the whole production. It really worked."

"We realised right from the first moment of this energetic production that we were in for a treat. The plays were really well-adapted, skilfully directed and beautifully acted . . completely captivated from start to finish . . huge congratulations on a very successful production."

THE MOST EFFECTIVE DRUM

"A deeply moving and powerful production - James Helps' wonderful set design created a ruined church within a church. The music, lighting and choreography all added something."

"I was in Cotham Parish Church today for your remarkable, heart-breaking performance. It should be seen by every politician and shown in every secondary school."

"Such a refreshing and different way to remember the legacy of war. What an antidote to the hijacking of Remembrance Day by the war lobby! The rich and emotionally powerful musical soundscape was so beautiful, and the performers were outstanding. This was a heartbreaking, but vitally important piece of theatre."

THE DIVIDED LAING

"Congratulations to everyone involved in 'The Divided Laing'. A brilliant and entertaining event with powerful performances all round. And timely?"

GIRL TALK

"I thought the show on Sunday night was wonderful and as a professional actor who has performed a one-woman show (Shirley Valentine), I know the pressure of the responsibility of having no-one but yourself to create the scene, various characters, the single emotional journey, not to mention the amount of dialogue to learn and I would just like to say that I thought Chrissie and Emma did all of the above just beautifully. What a feat! Lovely performances and I can't say how much I was impressed that when a line was requested, neither of them flinched, it was a though it were part of the scene and they returned to the piece without the slightest wavering of confidence. That is quite amazing! I feel the work that 'Stepping Out' does is absolutely tremendous and I would like to thank all involved for a truly entertaining and lovely evening in the theatre."



Girl Talk

"Another great production from Stepping Out! The performances had amazing energy and characters! I loved it. Well done to both of you!!"

"A brilliant evening of theatre. Two unforgettable characters brought brilliantly to life with skill, subtlety and warmth by the two actors. I hope we see more of these two!"

The Square Wheel of Time



Feedback from Performers

A selection from some of the comments by service users who took part in our productions in 2015-16 about what they got from their involvement with Stepping Out Theatre

"From being in the show I've got more confidence. I've got closer to a few people and even went out for the first time in 4 years. If it wasn't for Stepping Out, I honestly wouldn't be here. I have friends!!!"

"Meeting new friends. New confidence from doing something that was both new and anxiety provoking. A sense of belonging to a group. A lot of fun from a new activity. The thrill of performing to a live audience. A natural high. A sense of achievement."

"The deepening of some existing friendships and the forming of new ones. The pleasure of seeing things come together after a long rehearsal period. The pleasure of performing to appreciative audiences and seeing the enjoyment that this gave the rest of the cast."

"What I got out of the play this year, most importantly, was the camaraderie of the group."

"Confidence, friendships, peace of mind, a feeling of usefulness, a means of breaking out of the psychotic loop. Thanks a lot to everyone!"

"I got a lot out of the play and I achieved a lot by having a BIGGER PART. It was very exciting!"

"I was tested to my limit, but I didn't jump ship and I started to really enjoy it once the run had started."

"I developed connections with other people in the group and felt part of something that was constant in a time that was difficult for me. It gave me a time to get out of the house and do something worthwhile and fun with interesting people. It has given me more of a sense of social life both during the play and afterwards."

"I got the chance to do what I love doing most, singing and acting, and a chance to show more of my abilities on stage. I enjoyed experiencing working with more different styles than usual."

"I was touched by the level of support from everyone. When anyone needed support there was always someone there to give it. One day I came in with cuts on my arms and no one made a big thing of it and that touched me too."

"It was touching and moving to be part of a unified group and get all the support generally, especially as a new member of the group."

"I had a nasty fall over the weekend while we were performing and I was feeling very vulnerable when we met again, but people were so very caring and thoughtful."

"I loved being involved in acting again. I wish I could have watched it too, but was so glad to be involved and I gained some confidence"

"Thank you for giving me such a terrific script to play with! Having a script which moves and inspires me every time I speak it is a Godsend..."

Cinderella



Reviews

A selection from some of this year's reviews

THE SQUARE WHEEL OF TIME

The 'big show' productions from this Bristol community theatre company are always zestful romps with dancing, song and magic tricks as well as wild comedy, bizarre characters, and a thought-provoking bite that lingers . . . More than mere diverting entertainment, these plays from Stepping Out invite audiences to take a realistic and critical look at the current 'medical model' of treatments. As the Square-Wheelers have learnt, chemical pills are not the only, or the best, way to return to health.

Plays International

ANTON'S SHORTS

The play told versions of regular interactions that are rarely given much social commentary but which we can all identify with. Who hasn't witnessed all of the above in one way or another? A customer complaining to staff, family tensions and bereavement, and the equivalent of match.com? . . . Overall it was an enjoyable evening and I have no doubt that the comedy and relevance within Anton Chekhov's stories will ensure they continue to be recycled and replayed for many years to come.

Theatre Bristol website

A madly flamboyant, vodka - soaked whirlwind of a production ... the female characters were the most vibrant in the production, with Joanna Smith as a petulant debutante standing out in particular. The riotous quality of the show meant that although it wasn't always easy to keep up with the storylines, 'Anton's Shorts' was a funny, endearing production, enjoyable for Chekhov newbies and afficioanados alike.

Helicon magazine



The Bedminster Bigfoot

THE BEDMINSTER BIGFOOT

Mark Breckon's new play *The Bedminster Bigfoot* is a magical fantasy told with fast-paced humour and reality-based anger, a Charlie-Brooker-sharp political parody and an absolute must-see show . . . Director Marc Geoffrey has a terrific team - set, lighting, and sound brilliantly enhance the show - and all four actors are superb . . . go if you can, tell your friends to go if you can't.

Plays International

THE MOST EFFECTIVE DRUM

The Most Effective Drum presents an alternative to how *Poppy Day* often plays out. It presents an opportunity to peacefully and meaningfully listen to the voices of war - soldiers, civilians and those left physically separate from the action but affected by it nonetheless - without hiding under this false veil of caring, as so much of the noise at the start of each November is . . . When the political commentators have stopped blabbering, the columnists have stopped typing and the cannons have stopped booming, all we have is one moment of pure, static silence. It's a silence we should all find a way to listen to, and one this production steps into with grace.

Exeunt Magazine

THE DIVIDED LAING

A deeply thought – provoking and funny play ... fast-paced throughout ... Alan Cox is a delight.

**** Dan English,
www.thereviewshub.com

An engrossing drama about batshit mental '60s psychiatrist RD Laing ... Fascinating ... a tense, blackly comic portrait of a community defined by barely-controlled chaos

**** Alice Saville, *Time Out*

Michael Kingsbury's vigorous production ... A warm tribute to a now under-rated thinker and an evening of fun and insights.

Aleks Sierz,
www.theartsdesk.com

Commendably ambitious ... Alan Cox captures all of Laing's complex charisma ... Michael Kingsbury's production does full justice.

Michael Billington,
The Guardian

Highly watchable ... Kevin McMonagle is an absolute knockout in a variety of roles ... At times, the piece recalls Joe Orton.

Alun Hood, *WhatsOnStage.com*

An enjoyably curious and carefree portrait of a conflicted individual and a maverick psychiatrist ... Marmion's writing fizzles with intelligence.

Fergus Morgan, *West End Frame*



The Divided Laing

A theatrical fantasia ... thought-provoking fun in Michael Kingsbury's ebullient production.

Claire Allfree, *Daily Telegraph*

It's laugh several times a minute ... Marmion's good ear for a comic cadence is perfectly shared by the play's brilliant cast.

Benjamin Mortimer, *East End Review*

An imaginative celebration of 1960s anti-psychiatry guru RD Laing that is both fun and thought-provoking.

The Stage

Always just on the edge of the surreal. Perhaps that's why it is so funny ... Marmion writes with exuberance and wit.

Howard Loxton, *British Theatre Guide*

A characteristically dedicated performance from the excellent Alan Cox.

Financial Times

Alan Cox brings louche charisma to his portrayal of Ronnie.

The Times

An accomplished piece which anyone with an interest in psychology or mental health would enjoy.

The Psychologist



Poetry Work at The Square Club Cafe and Elsewhere

Over recent years, our work at Fromside Medium Secure Hospital has focused on producing poetry anthologies by current and past Fromside service users. We have produced two anthologies with L.S. Kimberley and one with Thomas Glover. The first by L. S. Kimberley – 'Selected Poems' was launched when we took part in two days of a 'Celebrating Fromside' event where we invited local writers in to support L. S. Kimberley. On each of the two days of the event, we hosted a half hour poetry session for about 40 people – staff, service users and carers. These sessions were a great success. For the service user concerned, this was the fulfilment of a lifetime's ambition. We published his second anthology 'Picasso the Surrealist and Other Poems' with another launch at the Bristol Old Vic, supported again by local writers, along with a second anthology by Kehinde Obileye, a group member whose first anthology we also helped to publish earlier.



Our third anthology of poetry to come out of Fromside was 'Love's Gutter' by Thomas Glover which was edited by Crysse Morrison and launched in February 2014 with events at the Bristol Old Vic and the Square Club in Berkley Square. 'Love's Gutter' received this amazing series of endorsements from celebrity poets.

"There is painfully raw subject matter in these poems, but they contain it: using form, wry wit and even a kind of grave playfulness, with now and then a simile that makes you blink and see things anew, they are reaching towards the balance that art can offer, even when it is on a tightrope over a frightening drop."

Philip Gross, poet & playwright, winner of TS Eliot Poetry Prize 2009

"Thomas Glover's journey to wellness through writing is stark, truthful and moving. He catches hold of his disintegrating life through the strong power of turning destruction into creation, and reading his poetry, it seems that every word, every phrase, is first set down with the determination to tell his story, and then energised with the involvement of making - discovering joy in the process."

Rose Flint, internationally award-winning poet

"Poems with punch and verve that linger behind the eyes for hours."

Luke Wright, award-winning performance poet and broadcaster

"This is brave and startling writing. Thomas Glover is not afraid to tell it how it is."

Abigail Morley, award-winning poet and editor

"Suffering is shapeless and endless when we are in it. Once, however briefly, out of it we look to give it shape and meaning if only to map where we have been and might be again. Thomas Glover's poems are confessional in the sense that they speak out of direct personal experience but they are not confessions. A poem is an

object you can stand away from and these are poems, coherent, moving, dramatically composed and, strange as it may seem, independent of the life that made them. It is their dramatic beauty, their shaping, that constitutes their being. There is always something miraculous about such shapes. Hence the poems."

George Szirtes, award-winning poet and writer, winner of TS Eliot prize 2005

"Poems from the gutter of love that search for the starlight with candour, dry humour and vivid imagery"

Elvis McGonagal

Stepping Out Theatre and Mind Your Music members have had an increasing presence at the regular poetry event run at the Square Club, Berkley Square by group Trustee Charles Thompson. Several members have performed at this regular event.

We are currently working with Anna Saunders who is Director of the Cheltenham Poetry Festival and Stepping Out Trustee Charles Thompson who runs poetry events at the Square Club and the Landsdowne in Bristol to develop more opportunities for poetry with our group members. Anna has edited an anthology of poetry by group member Charlie Ekpalo who has performed at the Cheltenham Festival as part of her work with Anna.

Emma Staddon is currently working with local writer Crysse Morrison who is editing Emma's first anthology.

It is hoped to publish six new anthologies by poets L. S. Kimberley, Thomas Glover, Charlie Ekpalo, Chrissie Harmer, Nancy Frankel and Emma Staddon at a major poetry event in late 2016.

Copies of all of the anthologies mentioned here are currently, or will be shortly available from the Stepping Out office.

Thomas Glover's 'Love's Gutter' is also available on Amazon and as a Kindle download.

The Gill Amphlett Social Fund

The fund which enables us to offer subsidised and free theatre tickets and other social activities to group members comes from money raised by members during the Annual Sponsored Walk and Big Give Xmas Challenge. In 2014, this fund was renamed the Gill Amphlett Social Fund in memory of the group's first Social Secretary.

The group continues to run trips to the theatre, to listen to music, to visit art exhibitions and to share enjoyment of other creative activities together as a group. These activities are an important part of the service the group offers to its members over the course of the year. They are particularly important during the months after the end of a big production and before the next production gears up. They offer the opportunity for social contact throughout the year. They are a perfect way for people who are interested in joining the group to meet current members. They allow group members to see high quality theatre and other arts events which can inspire and inform our own work. They also allow service users on low incomes and benefits to experience a range of arts activities they might not otherwise be able to afford.

The highlight of this year's social calendar was a camping trip to Cornwall to see productions at the Minack Theatre and Kneehigh Theatre's amazing Asylum venue at the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Twenty group members camped out for three nights near Penzance and apart from the odd tent being blown away one stormy night, the event was a great success.

We ran our usual series of local theatre trips and a special coach trip to London to see our Patron Mark Rylance in the wonderful 'Farinelli and the King' in November. A group of members also went down to London to see the group's production of 'The Divided Laing'.



Playback Theatre Group

Playback Theatre has formed a regular part of Stepping Out and Chrysalis Theatre's work for many years. It was first used in the creation of 'Waiting for Wilmot' in 2010 and it was used in other work, including at Fromeside Medium Secure Hospital. These Playback Theatre workshops were run by Amanda Brown, Alison Fairlove and their colleagues from Playback Theatre South West, one of the leading Playback Theatre groups in the country.

In collaboration with Chrysalis Theatre, Stepping Out went on to set up its own Playback Theatre group, headed by Cheryl Douglas. This group is meeting regularly, accessing Playback training for its members, and working towards developing a Playback Theatre strand in the work of the group. This new initiative received a boost recently when Chrysalis Theatre successfully applied for an Awards for All grant specifically to fund Playback activities. For the last three years, Playback Theatre has formed the focus of the feedback evenings when members meet to talk about, share and write about their experience of being in the large scale productions 'Hermione Steel and the Island of Lost Minds,' 'Wallace Real's Ministry of Madness' and this year's production 'The Square Wheel of Time.'



Drama and Devising for Performance Group

For the first time in 2013-14, we ran a 'Drama and Devising for Performance' group, run by Stepping Out Associate Director Marc Geoffrey and Stepping Out Co – chair Kirsty Cox. It replaced the Dramatherapy group that had run for the previous two years. The group was such a success that it met again throughout 2014 – 15. The group has been meeting every Monday evening during the period between the end of our large scale production and before the next one starts. In 2015 – 16, the group devised and performed a new piece of drama in front of the Stepping Out membership. This popular and successful new group is scheduled to run again in 2016-17.

Cinderella



Fundraising Activities - Stepping Out Sponsored Walk / The Big Give



Stepping Out Theatre first took part in the Big Give Xmas Fundraising Challenge in 2011, and one of the activities we organised that year was the first ever Stepping Out Sponsored Walk. Members walked from Fromeside Medium Secure Hospital to the Alma Tavern Theatre in Clifton to symbolise the journey from mental ill health to healing through the creative power of theatre. The event has been repeated every year since and was run for the fifth time in November 2015 with our walk ending up at the Alma Tavern Theatre.

The Xmas Challenge has now become a vital part of the group's finances, and along with the sponsored walk, a regular part of the group's calendar.

Stepping Out Theatre Online

Throughout 2007 – 15 our website at www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk has been an increasingly important resource for group members, funders and those wishing to find out more about the group. During our busiest periods in and around production times, the website is updated daily and at all other times it is updated regularly. Postings are also made regularly on the Stepping Out Facebook page which can be found at; www.facebook.com/stepping.out.545.

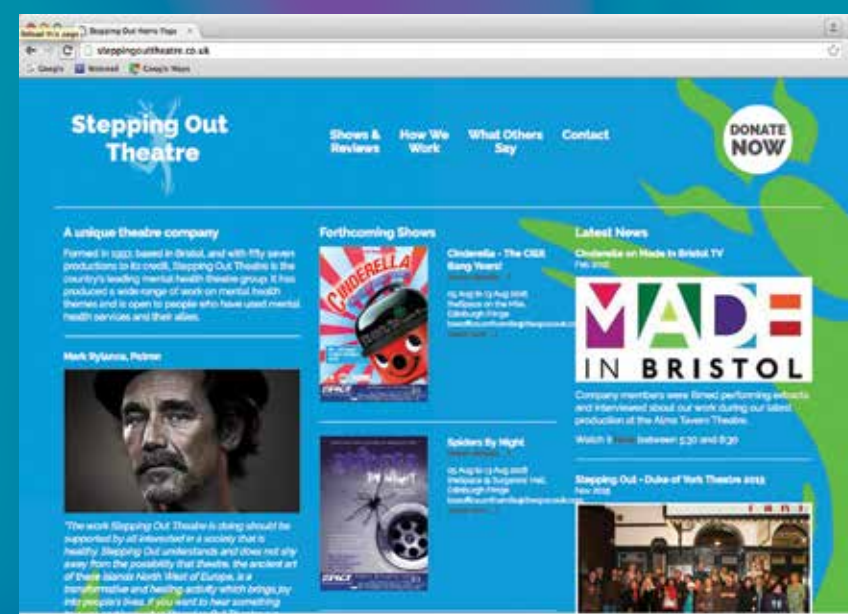
After 8 years with our previous design, in 2015 our website was redesigned and relaunched with help from actor and web designer Richard Warrick who has also appeared in Stepping Out productions.

The kind of information that can be found on the website and our Facebook page includes;

- An account of all the work we have done, what we are currently doing and future plans
- Details of all forthcoming social activities and how to access them.
- Rehearsal schedules and performance schedules for productions

- Feedback from audiences while a production is in progress – this is usually added daily
- Feedback from participants in a production once it is over
- Reviews of all our productions past and present, usually posted as soon as they appear in print, and occasionally before
- Feedback from other people using the group including mental health staff who take part in training days run by the company
- Notice of forthcoming Trustee meetings and the AGM
- Digests of the group's activities over the previous twelve months and its plans for the coming year
- News of projects and activities with other groups which members of the company are involved in
- News of funding successes

The website is attracting an increasing number of visitors all the time and this has resulted in us being contacted by many more people who are interested in joining the company, by writers whose work deals with mental health themes and by mental health staff who wish to refer clients to our group.



Other Work – Associated Groups and Co-Producers

Stepping Out Theatre has many members with a wide range of creative interests and an increasing part of our work has been supporting and assisting these people in setting up groups of their own and helping them to raise funding and to further their creative interests with other like-minded individuals.

Over many years now we have played an active role in helping to set up and support the following groups;

Chrysalis Theatre

Our 'sister' theatre company works with users of HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol services. It was originally set up by Stepping Out group member David Carter with support from Stepping Out Theatre and it now jointly runs a programme of workshops and productions involving service users from its target groups. To date, we have mounted fifteen co-productions with Chrysalis Theatre, and there are plans for others.

Mind Your Music

Eleven years ago, Stepping Out Theatre supported a group of members to set up a dedicated mental health music organisation in Bristol which is now one of the leading groups in its field. Mind Your Music offer a busy programme of workshops and gigs throughout the year in addition to organising concerts, touring and recording CDs. In 2013 they were successful in a three year application to the Big Lottery Fund which created the first ever permanent paid worker for the group. After a lengthy selection and interview process, former Stepping Out Secretary Elliot Hall was the successful candidate and he started work in the three year post of Music Projects Manager in May 2013.



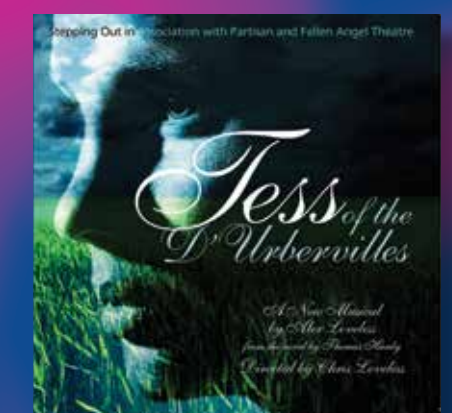
Mind Your Music were our main partners in producing a CD of music by Fromeside singer songwriter Jonathan Little, and in 2011, they co-produced a new CD of all the music written by Ernie Bell and used in Stepping Out's stage productions over the previous ten years. Copies of this CD 'Ernie Bell – Songs from the Stepping Out shows 1999 – 2011' are available from the Stepping Out office, or from Mind Your Music.

Dreamweavers

We helped former Stepping Out Treasurer Hazel Stewart to set up this Frome - based group which runs a number of different creative projects with people in recovery from illness and traumatic experiences. Dreamweavers has been a regular co-producer on many Stepping Out Theatre productions, and has also been particularly involved in collaborating with Stepping Out on the work at Fromeside Medium Secure Hospital. They were the main producer for 'Media Monsters' in early 2014 and co-produced both 'The Square Wheel of Time' and 'The Westminster Bigfoot' in 2015 / 16.

Fallen Angel Theatre

We helped Associate Director of Stepping Out Chris Loveless to get funding for his own company, Fallen Angel and they have been regularly co-producing work with Stepping Out ever since both in London and Bristol. Chris directed the highly successful productions of 'Moonshadow' and 'Ray Collins Dies On Stage' in 2009 and 'Stairway To Heaven' in 2010. He went on to direct all four of our Broadmoor plays in 2011. Our work with Fallen Angel has helped us to build links with Simon James Collier and his Okai Collier Company who have co-produced three London productions with us. In September 2014, we co-produced a new musical with Fallen Angel Theatre with Chris Loveless directing, based on Thomas Hardy's classic novel 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' at the New Wimbledon Theatre. The team behind 'Tess' are currently working on a musical theatre adaptation of Dickens' 'Great Expectations' with help from an Awards For All grant.





Healing Arts Unlimited

In 2013, Stepping Out were instrumental in setting up Healing Arts Unlimited, a new organisation whose mission is to nurture self expression, self discovery, healing and personal growth using an eclectic mix of different art forms, drama, dance and guided imagery. The group offers a chance to access the unique world of your own creativity, imagination and spirit for healing. Healing Arts Unlimited works with people in recovery from illness and traumatic experiences in Bristol and rural Somerset. In 2015 – 16 Healing Arts and Stepping Out jointly ran a series of mask workshop with spectacular masks made by service users. Healing Arts was a co – producer for 'Cinderella' at the Alma Tavern Theatre in February 2016 with the help of an Awards For All grant.

Arts Etcetera

Arts ETC ('Empowerment Through Creativity'), are a new community theatre and arts group based in Kidderminster who work with mental health service users and people with learning difficulties. We were instrumental in supporting and setting up this new group and their first production, an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's 'The Happy Prince' was a sellout success at the Kidderminster Arts Festival in 2014 with input from Stepping Out Theatre. This was followed up by a cabaret event for the same Festival in 2015.

Tusentack Theatre

We supported Associate Director Marc Geoffrey in setting up his own theatre company Tusentack in 2015. Tusentack co – produced 'Girl Talk' at the Alma Tavern Theatre in September that year.



Coffee House Theatre

Stepping Out Theatre has been working with Plymouth based playwright Katherine Melmore for the last three years. We supported Katherine in setting up her own mental health theatre company based in Plymouth. Katherine's first play received a staged reading at Plymouth Mind in February 2015 and we are working with her towards a full production of this play with her own company as well as co – producing two shows touring to the Edinburgh Festival in 2016 in a double bill called 'Spiders By Night'.

Financial Report and Accounts 2015/16

In the financial year 2014 / 15, the 2015 – 16 was the busiest year in the history of the group and this was reflected in our largest ever turnover. During the financial year, the group received a total of 336,475.44 in income, and spent a total of 309,418.79. One of our most ambitious and expensive productions ever, Patrick Marmion's play about the life and work of R. D. Laing, 'The Divided Laing' pushed up our income and expenditure considerably to produce these figures.

This was the third and final year of three year grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Big Lottery Fund and the final year of a two year grant from Comic Relief. The loss of these three funders at the same time represented the loss of most of our core funding in early 2016. A large number of funding applications were made to try and replace this funding and the group was successful in obtaining two and three year grants from three new funders – The Henry Smith Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation and the People's Health Trust. Together, these replaced about 80% of our core funding for 2016 – 19.

Private donations continued to grow, and to be our largest single source of income in 2015 – 16. During this financial year, we raised a total of £107.3k from donations (up from £77.4k the previous year). This was by far the biggest source of funding for our theatre productions and activities.

2015 – 16 also saw the group generate our largest amount of Box Office revenue ever (£37.2k) mainly thanks to the phenomenal success of 'The Divided Laing' at the Arcola Theatre in London.

The year also saw our largest amount of funding ever from the Arts Council (£30.8k). Four GFTA grants ensured four Arts Council funded productions taking place during the year.

As usual, the largest items of expenditure were salaries and payments to the freelance artists and service users involved in our ambitious programme of productions. Together, these accounted for almost 50% of all expenditure. Production expenses went up significantly reflecting the large number of productions, some of them very expensive.

In 2014 – 15, our unrestricted reserves at the end of the year stood at £14,995. These almost tripled to stand at £36,213 by the end of 2015 - 16. Restricted funds cannot form part of Stepping Out Theatre's reserves as the spending of these funds is laid down in the funding applications and signed contracts upon which they were granted. For this reason, although restricted funds may be carried across at the end of an accounting year, they do not constitute free reserves. At the end of 2015 – 16, the group carried across £31.1k in restricted funds towards core costs in 2016 - 17.

Stepping Out Theatre - Reserves Policy

'Reserves' or 'free reserves' is the term generally used to describe that part of a charity's income that is freely available for its general purposes. Reserves are therefore the resources the charity has or can make available to spend, for any or all of the charity's purposes, once it has met its commitments and covered its planned expenditure.

It is the policy of Stepping Out Theatre that any unrestricted income which the charity is in possession of may, at the discretion of the Trustees, be spent in any way which advances

the causes of the charity. These free reserves may also be carried over between accounting years, for example when the group is trying to build up reserves in order to finance a large production. Building up of reserves is sometimes a prudent measure, but should not be seen as an end in itself, and for this reason, it is Stepping Out Theatre's policy to have reserves set at a maximum of half of the charity's annual income.

Stepping Out Theatre Company
Accounts
1st March 2015 - 28th February 2016

Payroll Section A - Receipts	Restricted	Unrestricted	2015-2016	2014- 2015
Big Lottery Fund Grant (1)	30,001.00		30,001.00	50001.00
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (2)	15,000.00		15,000.00	20000.00
Arts Council Grant for the Arts (3)	30,800.00		30,800.00	19900.00
Comic Relief (via Quartet Foundation) (4)	15,000.00		15,000.00	15000.00
Mind Your Music Projects Manager Salary (5)	16,579.71		16,579.71	13471.40
The Clothworkers Foundation (6)	10,000.00		10,000.00	0.00
The People’s Health Trust (7)	9,480.00		9,480.00	0.00
Lloyds TSB Foundation (8)	24,000.00		24,000.00	0.00
Henry Smith Charity (2)	24,000.00		24,000.00	0.00
Big Give Xmas Challenge and other Donations (9)		107,320.35	107,320.35	77451.80
Box Office Receipts (10)		37,223.12	37,223.12	945.80
Payments for Performances		0.00	0.00	451.00
Interest and Refunds		1,057.81	1,057.81	1121.81
Santander Foundation		0.00	0.00	5,000.00
Co Producer Contributions		3,013.45	3,013.45	5,000.00
Members' Donations		0.00	0.00	300.00
Small Grants (11)		13,000.00	13,000.00	0.00
TOTAL	174,860.71	161,614.73	336,475.44	208,642.81

Section B - Payments	Restricted	Unrestricted	2015-2016	2014- 2015
Payroll	51,535.91	0.00	51,535.91	47,430.88
Rent (incl Theatre Hire)	15,000.00	167.49	15,167.49	7,345.42
General Running Expenses	9,000.00	5,871.59	14,871.59	10,269.84
Miscellaneous Production Costs	58,140.00	17,605.25	75,745.25	17,370.82
Training	0.00	7,500.00	7,500.00	4,298.00
Travel for Staff, Service Users & Volunteers	0.00	6,864.61	6,864.61	10,342.88
Subsistence	0.00	5,552.45	5,552.45	5,783.83
Promotional Materials	0.00	8,277.11	8,277.11	3,594.14
Theatre Trips	0.00	2,623.30	2,623.30	2,904.39
Charitable Donations	0.00	11,201.60	11,201.60	2,000.00
Workshop Leader Fees	0.00	7,000.00	7,000.00	3,196.50
Freelance Workers and Artists	27,341.00	61,013.48	88,354.48	80,438.33
Net Fixed Assets	10,000.00	4,725.00	14,725.00	0.00
TOTAL	171,016.91	138,401.88	309,418.79	194,975.03

Section C - Balance Sheet	Restricted	Unrestricted	2015-2016	2014- 2015
Bank Balance at Start of Year	27,341.02	13,000.59	40,341.61	26673.83
Bank Receipts	174,860.71	161,614.73	336,475.44	208,642.81
Bank Payments	-171,016.91	-138,401.88	-309,418.79	-194,975.03
Bank Balance at End of Year	31,184.82	36,213.44	67,398.26	40,341.61
Cash Balance at Start of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Receipts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Payments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cash Balance at End of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fixed Assets at Start of Year	0.00	477.68	477.68	477.68
Sales	0.00	-477.68	-477.68	0.00
Purchases	10,000.00	4,725.00	14,725.00	0.00
Depreciation @ 25% per year	2,500.00	-1,181.25	-3,681.25	0.00
Fixed Assets at End of Year	7,500.00	3,543.75	11,043.75	477.68
Receivables at End of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Payables at End of Year	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net Assets at End of Year	38,684.82	39,757.19	78,442.01	40,819.29

- Section D - Notes
- 1) Funds received from the Big Lottery Fund were treated as a restricted fund used only for the purposes stated in the original grant application. i.e. Employing two Project Co - Ordinators and some general running costs associated with the work of the group.

2) Funds received from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation were treated as a restricted fund used only for the purposes stated in the original grant application. i.e. Funding productions and core work.

3) Restricted Fund Arts Council grants for production of ‘Drum,’ ‘Anton’s Shorts’ and ‘The Divided Laing’ in 2015.

4) Funds received from Comic Relief via the Quartet Foundation were treated as a restricted fund used only for the purposes stated in the original grant application. I.e. Paying for work on the production of plays in 2014 - 15

5) Restricted Fund income from Mind Your Music for payroll services to MYM Projects Manager and Freelance workers.

6) Restricted Fund grant from the Clothworkers Foundation towards the purchase of a vehicle for the company.

7) Restricted Fund grant from the People's Health Trust towards a programme of new workshops headed up by new Development Worker.

8) Restricted Fund grant from Lloyds TSB for Salary of Project Co-ordinator 2016 - 17, carried over in full to that year.

9) Funds raised in charitable donations throughout year and through participation in The Big Give Xmas Challenge. Treated as unrestricted income but with a special remit to meet general running costs and extra production costs during 2014 - 15.

10) Box Office Receipts for all productions during the year.

11) Small Grants towards core costs, running costs and production costs from the Quartet Foundation, Healthwatch, the Goldsmith’s Company and the Trust House Charitable Foundation.

Section E - Approvals

Charles Thompson (Chair)
28th April 2016

Beverley Jackson (Independent Examiner)
28th April 2016



www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk