**ADEC (Babylon ARTS) AGM 17th October 2020**

**MINUTES**

The meeting was held remotely by zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic under an approval granted by the Charity Commission under section 105 of the Charities Act 2011 and began at 10.00am

**Present**

**Trustees**

Linda McCord (In the Chair)

Ted Coney; lain Downey (Company Secretary); Stuart Green, Catherine Harvey; Linda Holland; David Johnson; Mike Macey (Treasurer); Theresa Veith.

**Staff**

Claire Somerville (Chief Executive); Florence Rose (Head of Project Delivery)

**Other Members**

Diana Birley; Emily Chase; Simon Gilligan; Alysoun Hodges; Heather Howard; Anthea Lawson; Sheila Mitchell and Allison Morris.

**Apologies were received from**

Lea Gilligan; Pat Green; Ben Laver; James Rix (Accountant); Iwona Smyk and Daniel Soanes (Accountant)

**Introduction by Chair**

The Chair referred to her appointment by the trustees and that her first duty had been to collect a cheque from Cambridge Real Ale Campaign (CAMRA) at the Prince albert pub, but that very shortly afterwards, the Covid-19 situation had led to the lockdown and had meant that all of Babylon Arts’ (BA) operations had to be curtailed.

At her invitation, the trustees introduced themselves. The Chair also welcomed the Chief Executive and Florence Rose from the staff and others joining the meeting and set out the form and content of the meeting. She recognised that Covid had to be dealt with but reported that, prior to the outbreak, BA had, due to the efforts of the trustees staff and supporters, been in a very strong position. She felt that the picture was positive.

**Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive reported on the key highlights from 2019/20.There had been a full calendar of exhibitions during the year, with over 20,000 visitors to the Gallery, with a number of school visits. One of the highlights had been the East Cambs. Annual Schools Art Exhibition in January, sponsored by the Ely Hereward Rotary club and Tindalls. This had been well supported by 10 schools with 120 people attending the launch, and 1300 people attending the Exhibition and, although likely to be in a different way, the 2021 Exhibition would be held. She also mentioned some of the other exhibitions held; Pictorama, the Anglian Potters Exhibition and the Summer Open Exhibition.

At the Cinema there had been 87 screenings with 25 Theatre screenings from the National Theatre and Royal Opera House. She expressed her thanks for the continuing support of Ely City Council and mentioned the Save the Cinema Campaign which had raised £12,300 including £1000 raised by the tie-in with Riverside Bar and Kitchen. There had also been a Q and A session with actor Himesh Patel at the time of the screening of his film 'Yesterday' which had led to a lot of media coverage. The average audience size had increased by 12%. The Chair felt that this showed the strength of BA that such a campaign could be run. She also referred to the Market Day Matinees where subtitled screenings had been shown and to the connection with the Cambridgeshire Deaf Association which had led to positive feedback.

Two Faced Dance Company, in partnership with The Library Presents had delivered, as part of the Leap into Dance Project, a highly successful outdoor show, attended by over 700 people. Other dance shows aimed at younger children by Anatomical Dance Company, had also been held and we were looking to continue dance events. The Protein Dance Company's 'The Little Prince' had been due to be performed in March and was sold out, but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. It was now rescheduled for October 2021. These events showed the desire for this type of event in the city.

Florence had also led on a Creative and Cultural Futures project with schools, funded through the Local Opportunities Programme. An online menu, the Culture Catalogue, for young people had been produced through this Project. During lockdown the content had been reviewed to improve it further.

As regards the Market Place Project, the Creative People and Places Project had taken place in Fenland and part of West Suffolk, formerly Forest Heath, and 33 events had taken place. She also mentioned, for example the Graffiti event in Chatteris and the Art Exhibition in Brandon Country Park, which had led to the formation of a local arts group, the Brandon Creative Forum. There had also been an arts project based on henna art with Islamic women, who were working with a male artist for the first time.

The Chair referred to the breadth of events that BA were involved with. The trustees set the strategic vision for BA and she stressed the importance of BA being involved with other stakeholders, since this sort of work could never be done by one

organisation alone. Mrs McCord drew attention to the appointment of 3 new trustees during the year, with a young person also now being considered as a prospective trustee and to the increase in Arts Council and other funding. The events highlighted we’re looking to reach out to people not usually connected with the arts, as requested at 2019 AGM. BA had also celebrated its 25th anniversary in December, attended by 60 people. The future had, she felt, looked bright until the arrival of Covid. However, BA, although in a different way, had kept going through the pandemic and showed itself to be a viable organisation and she referred to the loyal commitment of staff, trustees members and supporters.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer presented his report viz.-

Mr Macey referred to his report and the absence of the annual accounts and confirmed that both the Charity Commission and Companies House had extended the time for the filing of accounts. It was important that our external accountants, Lovewell Blake, were able to report on BA as a going concern. An Extraordinary General Meeting would be held in due course to approve the accounts. During the year an external bookkeeping service had been appointed. The final draft accounts showed a surplus of £5806, our first surplus for 3 years. Our general reserves stood at £21,000 and he expected a similar level at March 2021. The carried forward balance of restricted funds was £77000. He referred to the grants obtained and, in particular the £60,000 obtained from the Culture Recovery Fund and felt that BA had reasonable resilience at the end of the financial year, although there had been a decline in footfall since the Gallery reopened.

**Formal Business**

The Chair then introduced the official business which the AGM needed to consider:

**A) Approval of Minutes**

The Chief Executive reported that Allison Morris had now been identified as the person who was only partially named and her full name would be inserted. She also had an updated list of apologies which she read to the meeting. Proposed by David Johnson and seconded by Linda Holland and RESOLVED that subject to those amendments the minutes of the AGM held on 19th October 2019 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

**B) Appointment of New Chair and Trustees**

Iain Downey reported that the trustees were recommending the formal appointment of Catherine Harvey, Linda McCord and Teresa Veith as trustees and that the trustees further recommended the appointment of Linda McCord as Chair of ADeC/BA and proposed these appointments. Mike Macey seconded the proposal. RESOLVED that the appointments recommended be approved and confirmed.

**C) Current and Future Plans**

The Chair referred to the role of the trustees and to the work undertaken during the unusual situation. She referred to the Comic Book Windows produced by Irina Richards, which was displayed at the Gallery during lockdown. She also referred to the success of the Postcards Project, which had provided a wonderful outlet for people. The Gallery had opened again on 1st August with the Summer Open Exhibition which had seen a 25% increase in submissions and over 100 pieces of work displayed with a wide range of art. BA had also teamed up with The Library Presents to provide Ely's first ''Drive in Cinema'' which had shown three films over the day and been a great success and received many complimentary comments. Further such events would be considered.

Linda Holland reported on MarketPlace and to Creative Conversations in a Time of Isolation. The lockdown had thrown up a lot of changes and uncertainties for the MarketPlace team and planned activities had been reviewed, with new approaches being developed. A call out had gone out to artists and 20 commissions had, as a result, been awarded to local and regional artists. She highlighted in particular, the work of Regina Ray with Chapter in our Lives, recording the experiences of 10 key workers in Newmarket during the pandemic; Kaitlin Ferguson who made a series of 4 videos on art in the Fens, launched to coincide with Celebrate the Fens Day in June; Lee Mason's Virtual Gallery which had worked with the Brandon Arts Society and the speaking tubes experimented with by Emily Godden, who had used these to record local comments and stories. In Mildenhall, a group of isolated women had been meeting with the singing events proving especially popular and Sally Rose had taken this singing facility online, with a live event having taken place in March in July. In 2021, the themes of Environment and the Local Landscape would be worked on. Phase 2 of Market Place would last until 31st October 2021 and a bid for Phase 3 would be made in due course.

The Chair confirmed that the trustees would continue to seek to ensure that our work was relevant, well resourced and of a high quality going forward. Working in partnership was very important. She referred in this context to the Window Wonderland Project with the Stained Glass Museum in October. BA had also sought to bring about greater involvement for young people with the Arts Council funded 'Young Curator' Project and she referred to the appointments of Olu Taiwo and Sid White-Jones to these roles. There had been 35 applicants and BA were keeping in touch with the unsuccessful applicants who were clearly interested in BA. As regards the Ely Cinema, it was hoped to open in a socially distanced way in February 2021. BA membership will be reset to ensure that members would not miss out and she expressed her thanks to the members for their cooperation and understanding.

**Questions**

The Chair invited questions from the members and the following questions/suggestions were received:

1 Heather Howard congratulated BA for their positivity during the Covid situation.

The Chief Executive thanked Heather for organising a fund raising with her neighbours in Cardinals Way and Cardinals Terrace, which had raised over £400.

2 Simon Gilligan commented that he enjoyed the form of the meeting. He asked about the late filing dates for accounts. Mike Macey confirmed that this would be 31st March 2021. Simon also wondered if Cineworld would be closing down. Mike Macey agreed that the situation may be promising for a reopened Ely Cinema but would be kept under review.

3 Anthea Lawson mentioned the possibility of a project linked with singing and wondered if BA could build on work done by such as Ely Choral Society. Mrs Somerville mentioned the choirs established by Kathryn Rowland and mentioned that she would be willing to consider this further.

4 Emily Chase referred to the possibility of partnership working with the local music hub. Singing was a big challenge for the hubs especially in relation to schools and they were looking to see how they could develop this side of their work. In response to the Chair, Emily commented that, while she was not there formally representing the Arts Council, she felt that the new ways of working and engagement should be looked at in a strategic way which could strengthen the organisation for the future and broaden its offer to communities. The Chair felt that the mapping out of stakeholders and partners was most important.

5 Ted Coney asked about the 2021 Isle of Ely Festival. The Chief Executive confirmed that BA were normally heavily involved in the Festival and at present, discussions were taking place as to what might be possible for 2021 and how the Festival might work safely.

6 Catherine Harvey asked if the Drive In Cinema would be continued even if the Maltings reopened. Mrs Somerville responded that while the Drive In was initially seen as a stop gap, it had been so successful that a further one was under consideration. However, due to the time of year, it was likely that this would now be in the Spring. Mike Macey commented that the subsidy from the Library Presents had been important for the event but agreed that it had been successful and a great way to raise the profile.

7 Claire Somerville reported that a socially distant study day on Dutch Still Life would be held on 27th November at the Maltings. Further Study Days would hopefully be held. Mike Macey referred to the benefits of the installation of the CRM system which had helped enormously with ticketing and communication.

The Chair concluded the meeting by referring to the learning curve which Covid had necessitated and thanked the attendees for their attendance, help and support.

The meeting concluded at 11.16

Signed by the Chair as an approved record of the meeting:

Date