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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE 2020 LTG AGM

Normally the Chairman's Report at the AGM is found in our Yearbook. This year is different in that our AGM has a virtual format and it is being held in September. That is of course the result of our National Conference and AGM scheduled for April having to be cancelled because of the Covid-19 lockdown.

The Yearbook Report is still relevant but I felt a supplementary report would be appropriate concentrating on LTG's response to the pandemic.

It goes without saying that every single person in the country has been affected in some way by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whether it be social isolation or distancing, shielding, furloughing from work or fighting the virus. Tragically for far too many it has resulted in death with their lives cut tragically short. Our own theatres have not been spared with some reporting deaths of long-standing members who made such a valuable contribution. To those, and all who died we offer our sincere condolences.

The contribution of the NHS staff has been immense and has rightly been recognised by the country. On behalf of LTG I would like to convey our deep appreciation and thanks for their heroic efforts in caring for all those afflicted by Covid-19. It will not be forgotten.

When the lockdown was announced we believed it was important for LTG to provide proactive support to our theatres. Our support was four-fold:

- 1) We wrote and telephoned all our theatres with details of the Government's Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. This provided a grant of £10,000 to theatres with a rateable value of up to and including £15,000 and £25,000 for a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000. A significant number of our theatres applied for these grants and received them.
- 2) We undertook a survey of all our theatres to check on their financial resilience to a prolonged closure. In total 73 theatres responded and the results while re-assuring provided no grounds for complacency. Just under 95% confirmed they had financial reserves and only 18% responded they were very concerned about their financial situation.
- 3) We have been engaging with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sports through our National Liaison Officer Eddie Redfern to explain and help them understand the problems faced by our theatres.
- 4) Regular updates by e-mail and on our website detailing the latest position and our response.

We know this work has been appreciated as many of you have been kind enough to write and thank us for the advice received and how much it was appreciated. I would like to place our record our thanks to Eddie who has done such a sterling job in leading our response so effectively.

The current guidance, while I'm writing this in late July, is that professional theatres can reopen with effect from 1 August 2020 provided they comply with the guidance conditions but not non-professional theatres who are required to abide to a maximum of two households indoors and a maximum of six households outdoors. We regard this differentiation as wholly unfair to our theatres and lacking in logic. We have taken this up with the Department and asked them to share with us the science that justified such a distinction. We will update you on their response.

It is fair to say that most of our theatres do not intend to open in the immediate future but do wish for a date for opening to be announced as soon as possible so that our planning and production schedules can be put in place.

Finally, I have been very fortunate in being supported by a dedicated and experienced national committee. Their great strength is that they all remain actively involved in their own theatres. This keeps us well grounded and very aware of what it is like at the "coal face". I would like to thank each and every one of them for the support they have given me and the work they have undertaken which has made being chairman such an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

I have been very fortunate to have as my Vice Chairman Jo Matthews from Questors Theatre. Many of you will know her and be aware of her undoubted abilities and knowledge of the theatre. I could not have asked for a more supportive and dedicated Vice Chairman. I have absolute confidence she will make an excellent Chairman.

I would like to conclude by wishing all our theatres every success in the future.

Michael Smith