

Jersey Opera House: Non - Executive Director Role Description

WELCOME

Hello and thank you for your interest in becoming a Non-Executive Director

Jersey Opera House (JOH) has been closed to the public since March 2020 when the Covid Pandemic hit. It has been hugely missed by the Jersey public – community performance groups, schools, artists, musicians and of course audiences. For a considerable period the staff team has been just three, it is now 4 with the appointment of Andy Eagle as Interim CEO who has been appointed to lead JOH in the interim to its re-launch.

Whilst being a treasured and beautiful Edwardian building, originally constructed in 1900, it has accumulated many operational challenges due to its age. The Jersey Government have committed £11 million + in recent months to rectify many of these long running defects through capital investment and improvement.

Currently tenders are public with the intention to appoint a main contractor over the summer and the “works” to commence September. At this point the staff team and JOH’s equipment, such as lighting and sound, will relocate to a new base from where it will operate until the capital development programme is completed and the building effectively handed back to the JOH team. This is anticipated to be December 2024.

During 2024 the plan is that JOH will present a programme of events and activities in St Helier and across the island under the title “JOH on Tour” (working title). When the JOH refurbishment works are complete and we are able to re-open, the main programme will transfer into the Opera House though we will continue to undertake learning and engagement work in the community and partner on special events and performances with colleagues from Jersey and beyond.

We are currently in the process of recruiting two new posts for the Executive team; Programme Manager and Marketing Manager to support the strategy for 2024, our re-opening to the public and ongoing development plans.

These are exciting times for the arts in Jersey with significant government support for arts on the Island as well as JOH. It is an opportunity the arts sector on the Island needs to respond to and embrace. At JOH we intend to pro-actively work with government and the sector to embed arts activity and creativity into the fabric of Jersey in a way that arguably, previously has not been the case.

What we are looking for

To achieve our plans we need robust and effective governance with a variety of skills on the board of the Jersey Opera House that can support the Executive, the Chair and board to ensure we are able to perform at our very best and influence wider debate and discussion on the Island. Ideally we would like reliable individuals who understand the legal responsibilities and duties of a Non-Executive Director, and can commit the necessary time to join the board. We are looking for the following skillsets:

- Artists or producers in either professional or community based environments
- Have experience in property development , contracts and or business development
- Fundraising, advertising and Marketing
- Experience in hospitality – especially on Jersey itself.

By joining the board now, you will in many ways be in at the beginning, shaping a relaunch that we know the communities of Jersey are greatly looking forward to.

We're looking for dynamic individuals who can bring fresh perspectives and insight through their lived and professional experiences. Our Non-Exec Directors are a vital part of our organisation and offer critical insights that help us to ask and answer questions.

You'll be passionate about art and artists, building community cohesion, and believe that care and equity should sit at the heart of everything that we do. We're looking for people who can help us continue to extend our reach, influence and impact.

You don't have to have previous experience as a Non-Exec Director or be from an arts or culture background. We're looking for enthusiastic and committed people who believe in the intrinsic value of arts and culture, and who can apply their skills and experience for the benefit of our organisation and our communities.

Dave Chalk **Chair – Jersey Opera House Board**

About Jersey Opera House

In 1865 Henry Cornwall built Jersey a new theatre which he named Cornwall's Royal Amphitheatre and Circus. This was located in Gloucester Street, St Helier where the Opera house stands today.

During his short ownership of the new theatre Cornwall employed actor William Wybert Rousby as its manager. In 1868 Mr Rousby bought the theatre re-naming it Theatre Royal.

William Rousby had many connections in the theatre world and managed to secure professional companies to perform from London and Paris. The programme offered was varied and included traditional harlequinade, comedy, drama, farce and grand and comic opera. As well as many local productions

After a period of some 30 years Mr Rousby sold the theatre to Sidney Cooper for a reported sum of £8,601.15 shillings. It was said at the time that Mr Cooper who came from the UK had a reputation for managerial enterprise and energy.

Sidney Cooper completely renovated the inside of the theatre including introducing an incline to the stalls. The theatre re-opened on Easter Monday 1898. Alas after only one year the theatre was destroyed by fire on the 28 March 1899.

Sidney Cooper then employed Adolphus Curry a civil engineer to design a new theatre. Mr Curry had been educated at Victoria College and had then moved to the UK to complete his training.

On his return to the island Mr Curry had been employed on Peel Villas, St Paul's Church and The Victoria Club in St Helier.

Sidney Cooper with his new partners the Channel Island Entertainment company re-named the new theatre the Opera House.

The Opera house opened its doors on the 9th July 1900 and in spite of certain areas of the building not being completed the show went on.

The grand re-opening performance was Sydney Grundy's 'The Degenerates' starring Jersey's very own Lillie Langtry who had curtailed her holidays to have the honour of being the first performer to tread the new boards.

The people of Jersey loved their new theatre and the railways even put on two specials a week to run after the last performance.

However only after a decade of live performances numbers began to diminish. The new 'electric pictures' as they were then known started to have an impact on theatre in general., Nevertheless in spite of the increase in cinema format shows the opera house continued to present an excellent variety of live plays, shows and recitals for the next 30 years.

Ownership once again changed in 1911 when the theatre was acquired by the Jersey and Guernsey Amusement Company and was being run by a company called Albany Ward who was connected to the Gaumont cinema chain.

Fire struck again in May 1921 when the auditorium was severely damaged.

Once again the theatre underwent extensive reconstruction which included the re fashioning of the upper circle and the removal of side boxes. These alterations made the theatre more conducive to the watching of films.

The opera house re opened in august 1922 with the musical comedy What's Next starring Six Brothers luck. Thereafter it continued to be used almost exclusively as a cinema showing the silent films of the day with traditional orchestral accompaniment

The arrival the talkie screened in other Jersey cinemas accelerated the decline in the Opera House as a place of entertainment.

However during the German Occupation an increase in live performances to one week in every fortnight and films on alternate weeks plus Sunday Charity events made the Opera House once again the place to visit.

Sadly this revival was only temporary and after the Occupation in 1945 the theatre became almost exclusively a cinema house with just two live summer shows each year.

By the mid 1950's The Rank organisation who had taken over Gaumont British Theatres and also owned the Odeon Cinema in St Helier put the Opera House up for sale for the grand sum of £70.000.00.

The last movie ever to be shown at the venue was Strictly for Pleasure starring Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh.

In 1958 Tommy Swanson bought the Opera House from The Rank Organisation.

With determination and passion Mr Swanson set about transforming the Opera House back into a theatre. As part of the refurbishment 16 new boxes were created, the theatre re opened with the Jersey Green room clubs version of Sailor Beware.

From that time professional and amateur companies alike took to the stage with performances. all to the delight of the Jersey audiences. Mr Swanson continued to refit and restore the theatre over many years in his attempts to bring it to its former glory.

In 1989 Tommy Swanson sold the Opera house to Dick Ray who was no stranger to the theatre. He had managed and operated the venue for Mr Swanson since the mid 70's and had carried on in the tradition before him of pantomime variety and summer shows.

At the time of purchase Mr Ray had secured a loan to improve the building and facilities .Work finally commenced in 1993. The first phase of work was completed by 1994 but the true size of the undertaking had become apparent during the year before so Mr Ray approached the States of Jersey with a view to them taking on the project.

In 1995 the states of Jersey became the new owner of the Jersey Opera House at a cost of £1.3 million. In January 1997 the theatre closed for a major restoration project.

A fund raising campaign was launched but it was clear after a year that it was taking too long and the people of Jersey wanted their theatre back.

A proposition was presented to the States of Jersey for a loan of £5.5 million to add to the £1.5 million that had been raised by the good will of the people and business community of Jersey. This was successful and this major programme of work started in August 1998.

After an extensive programme of rebuilding and renovation the new theatre opened its door on the 9th July 2000 exactly 100 years to the day when the first Opera House had opened its doors to the public of Jersey.

In many ways the situation the JOH finds itself in, in the middle of 2023 is similar to that experienced in the late 1990's that lead up to its re-opening in 2000. This cliff edge must be avoided again in the future. To avoid this, a sustainable business model that is supported by our main stakeholder, Jersey Government, is an imperative for the Board and Executive to establish upon re-opening.

PURPOSE OF ROLE

The Board

Since closure back in March 2020, the membership of the board has been reduced to 3. As we start a new journey to re-opening and the establishment of a new business model and vision, we need to increase the capacity and skills of the board.

It is important for new board applicants to be aware that the 3 current Non-Exec Directors including the Chair intend to stand down upon the re-opening of JOH. It is therefore the case that a new Chair will be sought during your appointed tenure. Your advice and support in this appointment will be required and appreciated.

All Non-Exec Directors serve in an individual capacity. They have a duty to support the work of the JOH as a whole, rather than to act as representatives of a particular interest group.

All members to be appointed are unpaid, non-executive Directors of the Limited Company.

Term of Office

The term of office is three years. Non-Exec Directors can stand for re-election to the Board for an additional one term.

We ask for attendance at six Board meetings a year and any additional extraordinary meetings, our AGM and annual away day. We also expect attendance at any identified training.

You may also be asked to contribute your particular expertise to specific meetings or sub-committees to be agreed on appointment and as required.

Non-Exec Directors are also asked to attend events, opening nights and other engagements, to gain a full experience of the breadth of JOH's work.

Specific responsibilities

The statutory duties of the Board are to:

- Ensure that the organisation complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Make sure that the organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.
- Contribute actively to the Board by establishing strategic direction for the organisation, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the reputation and values of the organisation.
- Ensure the financial stability of the organisation including the proper auditing of annual accounts.
- Protect and manage the property of the charity and to ensure the proper investment of the charity's funds.
- Oversee the establishment of a comprehensive lease between the JOH charity and Jersey Government regarding the operation of the Joh upon re-opening.
- Please note these roles are voluntary and are compliant with current States of Jersey governance legislation.

In addition to the above statutory duties, each Non-Exec Director should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board reach sound decisions.

This may involve:

- scrutinising board papers
- approving policy
- leading discussions or task and finish groups
- assisting in the recruitment of key senior personnel
- other issues in which the Non-Exec Director has specialist expertise

HOW TO APPLY

If you'd like to know more about the company and/or any aspects of the role you're welcome to speak with Dave Chalk - Chair of JOH or Andy Eagle – Interim CEO. If so, please get in touch Andrew.Eagle@jerseyoperahouse.co.uk and arrangements can be made.

All we ask is that forward a copy of a CV or resume that outlines your relevant experience in one or more of the areas of expertise we are looking for trustees to be drawn from. The deadline for submissions is Monday 21st August at 5pm.