



International Theatre Studio Marbella

The President's Report to the AGM Tuesday 15th March 2022
Mr Martin Curd

It is incredible to think that we have not met formally since February 2020, so it is great to see you all here tonight.

My report this year is quite different in that we have not had any spring or autumn productions, no auditions were held, no visits to El Candil Bar for meetings or rehearsals were made, there was no picnic in the Park in Benahavis, etcand yet we have a fully rehearsed play, Agatha Christie's "Towards Zero" ready for your enjoyment in two or so weeks' time. We have met regularly as a Board on online using Zoom, we have attracted more new members, and we produced 15 rehearsed play reading events since lockdown finished. It has been quite a time for all of us.

Peter Brooks, the director, and his talented (and slightly changed) cast of Towards Zero met each week online in 2020 to rehearse and they are still raring to go after all this time.

The search for a venue

Some things don't change and one re-occurring theme still high on our agenda is the lack of a permanent or even regular venue for our performances and activities. We feel lucky to be back at the El Paraiso Hotel for our main production. At one point we worried that they might not have re-opened. Sadly, we have not been able to use El Candil at all, as Alfonso's business has thrived since lockdown finished and he is now using the room upstairs that we used to have access to. Some venues came and went like the Diana Park Carvery which had to close in 2021. The management of Urban Chai changed so we lost that venue. We

use 90 Miles Restaurant but unfortunately, we always have to share it with their other customers which is tricky. We like El Trapiche even though it is not licenced for drinks. We are loving Keto Royale Kafe, and we are delighted to be here in El Paraiso golf club tonight, but even this is only possible if we have food as the restaurant is newly franchised. We still have ambitions to use El Ingenio in San Pedro and Atalaya Park Hotel again in their ballroom. The great thing is, that wherever we perform our audiences will support us and for that we are eternally grateful.

Rehearsed play readings:

As I mentioned earlier, up to the end of January 2022 we did 15 of these readings all with supper or luncheon and they sold out so fast that we had to keep adding extra performance dates. Over the last two years, these were directed by Peter Brooks, Laurie Passman, Paul Kloegman, Sheila Mellor, Jamie and Beverley Stonehewer, Bobbye Aaron, Miles Rendle, Hannah and PJ Lopez and myself. We were delighted that so many talented members stepped up to do these.

We were not able to audition or physically rehearse most of these plays as restrictions prevented group meetings, so initially, we relied heavily on two-hander plays performed by couples who live together!

The venues we used do like this kind of activity as they have a guaranteed audience on a quieter day with a set menu so it's a win-win situation and we deal with all the ticket sales.

These plays have been our sole source of regular income that pays towards the insurance and storage costs.

Donations

We are very grateful to those of you who made donations to ITS during the last two years to help us stay afloat, especially when we could not do anything due to the lockdown. Equally, we thank those members who paid in advance for their membership subs to assist with cash flow. Your generosity is much appreciated, thank you.

Play reading evenings

We only did one play reading, and this was directed by Miles Rendle at 90 Miles Restaurant. Unfortunately, the management had doubled booked their venue with their weekly quiz night so we had to vacate early.

Storage of equipment and sets

We had to reduce our storage space yet again and we now only have one unit. This made us rationalise what we stored and enabled us to reduce the monthly payments. I am grateful to Pat Kelly and Miles Rendle who helped me to move the things into one place. And we cannot mention storage without mentioning yet again, the fantastic work that Karl Maresz did for many years to keep everything so well organised.

Resignations from the ITS Board

Since the last AGM we have accepted resignations from Jane Cartwright, Pat Kelly, Sandra Sprawson, our vice president and Carol Woolnoth, a former president.

Jane and Pat both had pressing work commitments. Sandra and Carol are now heavily involved with the charity, Age Concern in San Pedro. We thank them all sincerely for their contribution to ITS and we hope that they will continue to support us.

New Board members

We were delighted to welcome Janet Barnett to the Board recently. She has offered to take on the role as Membership secretary. PJ Lopez, an existing Board member, took up the position as vice president following Sandra's departure. And Fiona Poole has agreed to join the Board too. All these appointments will be ratified later tonight at item **nine** on the agenda.

Membership

We have had several new members and many renewals of existing memberships which is great news and extends our access to more new talent. Sadly, due to the pandemic we have not been able to showcase all that we do or to involve new members in what we do. For example, without play readings we

could not give everyone a chance to read a part. We could not audition, so we could not give new people an opportunity to shine. But as things move on, we look forward to engaging more members in future events.

If you have not had chance to pay your membership fee yet, you can do it tonight. Just see Sheila on the membership table.

By way of thanking our members, we are proving tapas at the end of this meeting courtesy of ITS.

Obituaries

Tragically, we lost two wonderful members recently. Jeff Strange, Russell's husband, died before Christmas. Blane Burgess, Helen Davis' partner, died in early March. Both men were relatively young, loved by their families, charismatic and charming. We will miss them both greatly. Our thoughts and prayers are with their partners and families.

Special recognition for services to ITS

In 2019, which was our 44th year since we were established, we set up a special recognition system for the people who have gone above and beyond in their work for ITS. We already had life-time members, so we also set up long service awards and honorary members.

This year, in our 47th year, we are recognising the following two members:

Firstly, Carol Woolnoth.

Carol has been a member of ITS for many, many years and she was a Board member from 2012 to 2020. She was vice president to Diane Clarke and then ITS president from February 2014 to March 2016. She also did the membership secretary role from March 2016 to March 2019. Carol is best known for her acting talent and she has starred in many of our productions notably Misery in 2004, Dirty Dusting in 2013 and The Anniversary in 2014. Her last role in a major production was in One O'Clock from the House in March 2019. Carol is a great and versatile actor. She also won awards for Best Actor at the Gibraltar Festival.

For those of you who have been associated with ITS for more than a few years, you will know that she performed in a play with both her mother, the late Ann Shaw, and her daughter Sarah, (now known as Shadow). Three generations on one stage together, quite an achievement! Keeping it in the family, she also involved Geoff, her husband, to do the scenery and sets for us for many years. The original storage unit was found and secured by Carol several years ago. In conclusion, Carol has made a significant and substantial contribution to ITS over many years and so we would like to acknowledge and thank her by presenting her with **honorary membership**.

Secondly: Sandra Sprawson

Sandra has been a member of ITS since 2012 and she joined the Board almost immediately. When I took up the president's role in 2019, Sandra became vice president. Sandra's work for ITS has largely been backstage. As producer, she was always in demand by each director for her quiet and efficient can-do and no-fuss organisation. If she wasn't producing, she was stage managing or prompting. Sandra was the glue that held every performance and everyone together. If we needed props, Sandra could always find exactly what was needed. Almost every play we have ever done has Sandra's famous sofa on centre stage! Her connections locally meant that we could make good links with key people notably in the town hall of Benahavis for the Lark in the Park. Her generosity knows no bounds and she hosted many events in her own home for us. We had Board meetings in her sitting room. We had play readings on her terrace.

On one rare occasion, she did act for ITS in a Murder Mystery written by Diana but most of her work was hidden as she did everything for ITS backstage. For these reasons, we would like to acknowledge her significant contribution and show our thanks by offering her an **honorary membership**.

Communication

We have produced ten newsletters and numerous email messages to our supporters since the last AGM. These are vital to advertise what we are doing. Ruth, our secretary, writes them. PJ keeps the Face Book page updated and Nina, our brilliant

webmaster, keeps everything fresh on the website. I am grateful to them all for this super work; thank you to Ruth, PJ and Nina.

Thank you

As always, I have many people to thank as without them we could not function.

Thank you to our Board members for their dedication in keeping us alive in the memories of our members and supporters during the pandemic when, it was quite possible that we could have disappeared.

Thank you to Eileen Audas for all her work on the finances and accounts. Eileen was previously the treasurer and even though she stood down from the Board, she has continued to deal with financial issues which is invaluable for me as treasurer and president. Thanks Eileen.

Thank you to Peter Brooks for his constant volunteering to direct rehearsed play readings. He has done more than his fair share which has taken the pressure off others. Peter is a source of energy and fun coupled, of course, with good contacts and great directoral skills. We are looking forward to seeing Towards Zero very soon.

And finally, thank you to everyone who supports ITS in any way. We want to continue for another 47+ years providing high quality theatre.

Martin Curd, March 2022.