



## **CONSTITUTION**

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## **PART I - Definitions**

1. The name of the Society shall be The Reading Operatic Society.
2. In this Constitution:
  - (a) A reference to "the Society" shall be a reference to the Reading Operatic Society,
  - (b) A reference to "a Member" shall be a reference to a person who has fulfilled the requirements for membership of the Society,
  - (c) Words importing the masculine gender include the feminine gender, and
  - (d) Words importing persons include corporations.

## **PART II - Aim of the Society**

3. The aim of the Society is to:
  - (a) educate the public in the operatic and dramatic arts,
  - (b) further the development of public appreciation and taste in the said arts, and
  - (c) assist and further such charitable institutions and charitable purposes as the Committee shall from time to time determine.
4. In furtherance of this aim, but not otherwise, the Society may:
  - (a) promote operas, operettas and other musical and dramatic works of educative value,
  - (b) purchase, acquire and obtain interest in the copyright of or right to perform or show any operatic, musical or dramatic works,
  - (c) purchase or otherwise acquire plant, machinery, furniture, fixtures, fittings, scenery and all other necessary effects,
  - (d) raise funds and invite and receive contributions from any person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation or otherwise, provided that the Society shall not undertake any permanent trading activities in raising funds, and
  - (e) do all such things as shall further the aim of the Society.

## **PART III - Membership of the Society**

5. The Society shall comprise a President, Vice Presidents, ~~Patrons~~ and Members.

**(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)**
6. The names and addresses of the President, Vice Presidents, ~~Patrons~~ and Members shall be maintained by the Secretary or his appointed nominee and produced to the Committee as requested.

**(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)**
7. The President, and Vice Presidents ~~and Patrons~~ shall be elected annually at the Society's Annual General Meeting in accordance with Part VII. The President and vice Presidents are expected to further the best interests and general goodwill of the Society at all times. ~~Election as President, Vice President or Patron of the Society does not confer membership.~~

**(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)**
8. The name of a person may be entered in the register of Members of the Society provided he:
  - (a) is 16 years of age or over,

**(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)**

- (b) completes the Society's form of application,
- (c) makes payment of the appropriate subscription, and
- (d) is approved by the Committee.

**8A.** Exceptionally, where it is determined that the Society should perform a show which requires the inclusion of a child or children under the age of 16, temporary membership for that show only shall be granted to the child(ren) selected by audition in accordance with paragraph 81A.

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

**9.** The name of a person who provides technical or other services to the Society may be entered in the register of Members of the Society as an honorary Member:

- (a) by the invitation of the Committee, and
- (b) subject to annual approval by the Committee.

**10.** Any Member who is 55 years of age or over with 5 consecutive years of membership may, with the approval of the Committee, be admitted to life membership.

**11.** Each Member of the Society shall be required to sign at the time of his admission an agreement to be bound by the Constitution of the Society a copy of which will be provided to him.

**11A.** A person who wishes to support the Society may, on application, be accepted as a Friend of the Society ~~Patron~~ subject to annual approval by the Committee.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)  
(Amendment 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014)

**11B.** An annual fee shall be paid by all ~~patrons~~ Friends on 1 January each year in respect of the year beginning on that date at a rate determined by the Committee.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)  
(Amendment 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014)

**11C.** A ~~patron~~ Friend shall be entitled to priority booking facilities and to receive copies of the Society's newsletter. Acceptance of a person as ~~patron~~ Friend does not confer membership.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)  
(Amendment 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014)

#### **PART IV - Business of the Society**

**12.** The management of the Society shall be conducted by a Committee comprising Officers and Members in accordance with the following paragraphs.

**13.** The Committee shall all be Members of the Society.

**14.** The Committee shall be elected by Members at a General Meeting and shall comprise the following Officers of the Society:

Chairman,  
Vice Chairman,  
Secretary,  
Treasurer, and  
Membership Secretary,

and six other Members.

~~**15.** In the event of the long term indisposition of an Officer of the Society, a member of the Committee may be appointed with full rights to fulfil that Officer's duties by a majority vote of the Committee at its next meeting. The appointment shall last until the next General Meeting of the Society or until the indisposed Officer is fit to resume his duties, whichever is the earlier.~~

In the event of the long-term indisposition of the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Society a member of the Committee may be appointed with full rights to fulfil that Officer's duties by a majority vote of the Committee at its next meeting. The appointment shall last until the next General Meeting of the Society or

until the indisposed Officer is fit to resume his duties, whichever is the earlier.

**(Amendment 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1999)**

~~16. In the event of the long term indisposition of any member of the Committee the Committee shall have the power to co-opt in his place any Member of the Society to serve as a member of the Committee with full rights as if elected until the next General Meeting of the Society or until the indisposed member is able to resume his duties whichever is the earlier. If at the date of the next Annual General Meeting the member of the Committee is still indisposed the post will be declared vacant and will be filled by election at the AGM.~~

In the event of the long term indisposition of any Officer other than the Chairman or Vice Chairman, or of any member of the Committee the Committee shall have the power to co-opt in his place any member of the Society to serve as that Officer or member of the Committee with full rights as if elected until the next General Meeting of the Society or until the indisposed Officer or member is able to resume his duties whichever is the earlier. If at the date of the next Annual General Meeting the member of the Committee is still indisposed the post will be declared vacant and will be filled by election at the AGM.

**(Amendment 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1999)**

16A. In the event that a vacancy for any Officer or member of the Committee fails to be filled by election at the Annual General Meeting, the Committee shall have the power to fill this vacancy by co-opting any member of the Society to serve as that officer or member with full rights as if elected, provided that any person so appointed shall retire at the next Annual General Meeting.

**(Amendment 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003)**

17. The Committee shall meet when convened by the Chairman or at the request of six members of the Committee (excluding the Chairman and any co-opted Members). Written notice of any meeting shall be given to each member of the Committee at least seven days before the date of that meeting

18. A meeting of the Committee shall not be held unless there are sufficient members of the Committee present to constitute a quorum. A quorum shall be five members not including the Chairman.

19. The Committee shall have the power to make such rules governing the Society and its Members as are considered by the Committee necessary for the effective conduct of the business of the Society. Any such rules shall be promulgated to all Members at the earliest opportunity and presented to the following General Meeting of the Society for ratification.

20. Any matter for resolution by the Committee shall be determined by a simple majority vote with the Chairman not voting in the first instance. In the event of equality of votes the Chairman shall have the casting vote.

21. The Committee shall have the power to appoint sub-committees as it deems necessary. Sub-committees may comprise persons who may or may not be Members of the Society. The function of a sub-committee shall be prescribed by the Committee who may delegate responsibility to such sub-committee as thought necessary provided that all acts and proceedings of any such sub-committee shall be reported to the Committee as soon as possible. Members of sub-committees may from time to time be expected to attend full Committee meetings at which matters related to the sub-committee's work are to be discussed and to speak thereat but not to vote

#### **PART V - Finance**

22. The Society's financial year shall run from 1 January and terminate on 31 December the same year.

23. The Committee through the Treasurer shall be responsible for the collection of all monies due to the Society and for payment of all accounts for which the Society is responsible within the limits of the Society's existing or anticipated resources. Any further debt and or liabilities of the Society shall be the responsibility of all Members.

24. All sums received on behalf of the Society shall be recorded in the Society's books of accounts.

25. Accounts shall be held in the name of the Society in such reputable financial institutions as the Committee shall think fit. No money shall be withdrawn from the Society's accounts except on the signature of the Treasurer and/or the Chairman or other Officers in such proportion and to such limits as authorised by resolution of the Committee.

26. No Member, sub-committee or any other person may incur expenditure or make any commitment on behalf of the Society without the prior written authority of the Committee.

27. Any person appointed to work for or provide services on behalf of the Society shall be entitled to such fees and reimbursement of expenses as authorised by the Committee in writing.

28. All monies due and owing to the Society shall be recoverable at law in the name of the Secretary.

~~29. Subscriptions shall be paid on 1 October each year by all Members in accordance with the rates and methods of payments determined by a General Meeting of the Society. Honorary Members are not liable to pay subscriptions.~~

Subscriptions shall be paid by all members on 1 January each year in respect of the year beginning on that date in accordance with the rates and methods of payment determined by a General Meeting of the Society. New members joining the Society after 1 January shall pay pro rata to the number of full months remaining in the forthcoming year. Honorary Members are not liable to pay subscriptions.

(Amendment 8<sup>th</sup> June 2000)

30. A levy shall be paid by all Members performing in a production of the Society. The rate of the levy payable in respect of any production shall be determined by the Committee.

31. The Committee shall have the discretion to offer a person free temporary membership and exemption from payment of the show levy.

~~32. A new Member who joins after the Spring show shall only be liable for half of the annual subscription for the relevant year.~~

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

33. A Member's name shall be removed from the register of Members if his annual membership subscription is not paid by the first day of ~~January~~ April following the date the subscription becomes due, or he has not made a commitment to pay his subscription by instalments by the first day of April.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

34. No refund of subscription shall be made to or on behalf of any Member whose membership is terminated or suspended.

35. The Treasurer shall present a financial report and statement to all meetings of the Committee.

36. All books of accounts shall be ~~audited~~ examined annually by a person elected as an independent examiner in accordance with Part VII and the ~~audited~~ examined accounts shall be presented for adoption by the Society at the Annual General Meeting.

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

#### **PART VI - Insurance**

37. The Society shall take out public liability insurance, personal accident insurance and any other necessary insurance to cover its meetings, activities and its Officers, Committee or other persons acting on behalf of the Society.

38. The Society will not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to any person's personal property.

#### **PART VII - General Meetings of the Society**

39. At least 42 days written notice of the date and venue of a **General Meeting of the Society** shall be issued to all Members. The proceedings of a General Meeting shall not be annulled or otherwise be invalid as a result of a Member or Members not receiving notice of such General Meeting providing that notice of such meeting has been displayed at three consecutive rehearsals of the Society during the period expiring not less than 14 days before the meeting.

40. A quorum for a General Meeting shall be one quarter of the number of Members of the Society. ~~No General Meeting of the Society shall be held nor any business other than the formal adjournment of the meeting transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum is present.~~ If no quorum is present within half an hour of the time fixed for the start of the General Meeting no business other than the formal adjournment of

the Meeting shall be transacted and the Meeting shall stand adjourned to such time and place as the Committee determines. If a quorum is not present within half an hour of the time fixed for the start of the adjourned Meeting the number of Members present during that Meeting is to be a quorum.

(Amendment 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013)

41. The Chairman of the Society or in his absence the vice Chairman shall act as Chairman of the General Meeting. In the absence of both the Chairman and vice Chairman the meeting shall elect some other member of the Committee who is present and willing to act to chair at the meeting. The chairman so appointed shall have the same rights and responsibilities as the Chairman of the Society.

42. Resolutions for consideration by the Meeting or proposals to alter this Constitution must be submitted to the Secretary at least 28 days before the Meeting

43. A Member unable to attend a General Meeting may deliver his vote on any item for which notice has been given in the form of a written proxy to the Secretary not later than seven days before the meeting and the Secretary will record it at the meeting.

44. Any alteration to this Constitution shall require the assent of two thirds of the Members voting whether in person or by proxy. All other resolutions brought before a General Meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of the Members voting whether in person or by proxy. The Chairman shall not vote in the first instance, in the event of an equality of votes the Chairman shall have the casting vote.

45. Unless an effective date is otherwise specified any resolution decided by the Meeting shall be implemented from the date of that Meeting.

46. There shall be an **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** of the Society not later than the last day of June each year.

47. The business of the AGM shall be to:

- (a) receive apologies for absence;
- (b) receive and adopt the minutes of the previous AGM and any Extraordinary General Meeting held since the last AGM;
- (c) receive and adopt the Chairman's report for the past year;
- (d) receive and adopt the Treasurer's report and ~~the audited~~ accounts, which have been independently examined, for the past financial year;

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

- (e) elect a President, and vice Presidents; ~~and Patrons;~~

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

- (f) elect the Officers of the Society;

- (g) elect Members to serve on the Committee;

- (h) decide the subscription rate for the year commencing 1 ~~October~~ January following the AGM;

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

- (i) appoint an ~~auditor~~ independent examiner for the next financial year;

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

and

- (j) transact any other business written notice of which has been given to the Secretary at least 28 days before the AGM. Emergency business for which events did not permit the required written notice to be given may be transacted at the discretion of the Chairman.

48. Nominations for the posts of President, Vice-Presidents, ~~Patrons~~, Officers, Committee members and ~~Auditor~~ Independent Examiner shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 28 days before the AGM and shall have the consent of the nominee. A Member who, (a) is under the age of 18 years, (b) has been convicted of any offence involving dishonesty or deception where that conviction is unspent, (c) is an undischarged bankrupt, or (d) has previously been removed from trusteeship of a charity, may not be elected as an Officer or a Member of the Management Committee. . Nominations must be signed by the proposer and

seconded who must both be Members of the Society and be countersigned by the nominee to indicate his acceptance of the nomination. A nominee for a post as an Officer or Committee Member shall further declare that he is not disqualified under the terms of the Charities Act 1993 from acting as a Trustee.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

(Amendment 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

49. The Secretary shall send to the President, vice-Presidents, Patrons and Members not later than 14 days before the AGM copies of documents which will be put to the Meeting. These must include the following:

1. The agenda for the Meeting,
2. Chairman's report,
3. Treasurer's report and audited accounts which have been independently examined,

(Amendment 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007)

4. List of nominations for Officers and vacancies on the Committee,
5. Any resolution for discussion by the Meeting,
6. Any proposal to change this Constitution, and
7. A form on which to submit a proxy vote.

50. The Officers of the Society shall be elected to serve for a period of one year. At the conclusion of a term of office they may offer themselves for re-election.

~~51. The six members of the Committee shall serve for not more than three consecutive years. A Member shall not be eligible for re-election in the year immediately following the conclusion of a term of office either as an elected or a co-opted member of the Committee.~~

The six Members of the Committee shall be elected to serve for a period of up to three consecutive years. A Member may be eligible for re-election in the year immediately following the conclusion of a term of office either as an elected or co-opted Member of the Committee provided that the total period in office shall not exceed six consecutive years.

(Amendment 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002)

52. If the number of nominations for President, Officers, members of the Committee or ~~Auditor~~-Independent Examiner exceeds the number of vacancies there shall be a ballot in a form prescribed by the Committee on which all Members of the Society may vote either in person or by proxy.

53. Notwithstanding that only one nominee has been submitted for a particular Office or post a ballot of Members shall be held.

54. In the event that there are insufficient nominations for a particular Office or post, or a single nominee is not elected the Chairman shall accept nominations proposed and seconded by Members present at the AGM with the consent of the nominee. Such nominations will be put to a ballot of the Members present at the meeting.

55. An **Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)** of the Society may be summoned at any time by the Chairman at the request of either the Committee or of not less than twenty Members of the Society acting together who shall submit to the Secretary a written request stating the business to be discussed.

56. The business of the EGM shall be stated on the notice convening it and no other business will be discussed at the Meeting.

#### **PART VIII - Conduct of Members**

57. A Member is expected to further the best interests and general goodwill of the Society at all times.

58. A Member is entitled to vote at General Meetings of the Society.

59. A Member is eligible for election as an Officer of the Society.

60. A Member is eligible for election to the Committee of the Society.

61. No Member shall make use of the name of the Society without the prior written permission of the Committee.



62. A Member may participate in the Society's productions except that he shall not be permitted to perform on stage unless he has satisfied the Committee and/or its delegated representative of his singing, acting or dancing ability.

62A. The Society shall take appropriate measures under the provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 to ensure the safety of children participating in its productions.

(Amendment 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004)

62B. The Society shall have in place a written Child Protection Policy and a set of procedures so that all members shall be fully aware of their role in the protection of children in the Society's care. A written statement of Child Protection Policy and a description of the Child Protection Procedures are set out, respectively, in Appendices 1 and 2 to the Constitution.

(Amendment 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004)

63. The name of a Member may be suspended from the register of Members for a specified period if he:

- (a) commits any act detrimental to the good name of the Society or the production of any specific show,
- (b) having given a commitment to perform in a production fails to attend an adequate number of rehearsals without suitable explanation being tendered to the Producer, Musical Director or the Committee's representative,
- (c) fails to attain acceptable standards of behaviour in whatever capacity employed,
- (d) fails to comply with any of the terms of this Constitution or rules made under it.

#### **PART IX - Show choosing**

64. To ensure that the Society is able to obtain a performing licence it shall select the shows it will perform in the Spring and Autumn of any one year three years in advance of the year in which it is intended to perform those shows.

65. Members shall be asked to suggest by 31 July each year the names of two suitable shows for presentation by the Society during the year three years ahead. Suggestions should be given in writing to the Secretary and shall include in respect of each show suggested:

- (a) reasons for the recommendations and
- (b) a brief synopsis.

66. The Committee shall, from the suggestions made by Members, determine the two shows which should be performed during the year in question and which are considered to be best within the Society's capabilities and resources to perform, having due regard to audience appeal.

67. The Committee may determine at a later date that the Society should perform a show other than one originally chosen where:

- (a) there is a change of circumstances which would prevent the Society from being able to perform the chosen show or
- (b) the show, within the Society's capabilities and resources to perform but excluded from choice at the time of show choosing, subsequently becomes available.

68. At the AGM following its decision to perform a particular show the Committee shall submit its proposal to Members for ratification.

69. A provisional production budget for a show selected shall be presented to the Committee by the Treasurer at the earliest convenient meeting of the Committee following the selection of the show. Any revision of costings shall be notified to the Committee as they become known.

## **PART X - Show production**

**70.** Before the commencement of each intended production the Committee shall appoint as necessary:

- (a) a producer,
- (b) a musical director,
- (c) an assistant musical director,
- (d) a choreographer,
- (e) a rehearsal pianist,
- (f) a business manager,
- (g) a stage director,
- (h) a stage manager,
- (i) a stage electrician
- (j) a wardrobe mistress,
- (k) a properties manager,
- (l) any other person.

**71.** The Committee shall notify each appointee of his appointment in writing (two copies) setting out the terms of the appointment. The notice shall include details of any relevant budget and/or financial constraints within which he may operate without reference to the Committee. He shall accept his appointment by returning one signed copy of the letter of appointment to the Secretary.

**72.** At the discretion of the Committee a person may act in more than one position.

**73.** The Committee shall have the power to remove any appointee at any time without notice.

**74.** An adjudicating panel comprising the producer, the musical director and at least one other person deemed suitable by the Committee, will hold auditions on behalf of the Society for all principal roles. Members may attend auditions.

**75.** The Secretary will give 21 days' notice of the date of auditions and make available details of test pieces for the various roles. Auditions may be arranged on an alternative date only with the permission of the Chairman.

**76.** A person wishing to audition must advise the Secretary not later than 7 days before the proposed audition date specifying the role for which he wishes to audition. Persons not giving the required notice may only audition with the permission of the Chairman.

**77.** A non-Member of the Society who offers himself for audition must pay an audition fee prescribed by the Committee.

**78.** A non-Member selected for a principal role must pay half the annual membership subscription less the audition fee already paid which entitles him to temporary membership of the Society for the duration of that show only. A successful audition for a principal role does not confer on the person full membership of the Society.

**79.** A non-Member selected for a principal role will in addition be required to pay the appropriate show levy.

**80.** A Member not selected for a principal role may only perform in the production if he has previously satisfied the Committee as to his singing, acting or dancing abilities.

**81.** Only where the audition panel is unable to cast a role from those auditioned shall the Committee use alternative means to find a suitable person.

**81A.** When the Society proposes to undertake a production which requires the inclusion of children in the cast, open auditions will be held to select the appropriate number required having regard to ability, age, size and gender. In all cases selection will be on merit. Children wishing to audition must give notice to the Secretary no later than 7 days before the proposed audition date and must pay an audition fee prescribed by the Committee.

**(Amendment 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004)**

81B. A child declared successful after the audition will be deemed to be a juvenile member for the duration of the relevant show only. An appropriate show levy will also be payable.

(Amendment 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004)

82. The music of each show shall be the responsibility of the musical director.

83. An updated production budget shall be presented by the Treasurer at a meeting of the Committee immediately before the start of rehearsals for that show.

84. A production account shall be presented in draft form by the Treasurer to the Committee within 60 days of the completion of the show. A final audited account covering all shows performed during the financial year shall be presented to the Committee in time for adoption and circulation to the President, vice-Presidents, Patrons and Members for consideration at the Annual General Meeting.

#### **PART XI- Dissolution of the Society**

85. The Society shall only be dissolved by resolution passed by a majority of at least five sixths of the Members present and voting at an Extraordinary General Meeting called for the purpose of considering dissolution. Any balance of cash remaining in hand after realisation of assets and payments of debts shall not be distributed among Society Members but shall be applied for such charitable purposes similar to those of the Society or paid, distributed or transferred to such charitable institutions or institutions having objectives similar to the objectives of the Society as the Committee with consent of the meeting shall determine.

#### **PART XII - Interpretation of the Constitution and modifications to it**

86. The Committee shall have the power to interpret this Constitution should there be any ambiguity or difference of opinion concerning the purpose or intention of any one paragraph. An amendment to the Constitution to clarify the said interpretation shall be presented for approval at the following AGM.

87. The Committee shall have the power to deal with any matter not provided for within this Constitution.

88. No alteration to this Constitution shall be made except at a General Meeting of the Society.

89. No alteration may be made to paragraphs 3, 4, and 85 to 89 of this Constitution without the approval of the Charity Commissioners of England and Wales or any other authority having charitable jurisdiction from time to time.

**26 June 1997**

**as amended**      3/6/1999  
                         8/6/2000  
                         27/6/2002  
                         5/6/2003  
                         10/8/2004  
                         19/5/2005  
                         24/5/2007  
                         5/6/2008  
                         16/5/2013  
                         8/5/14

## STATEMENT OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Reading Operatic Society (the Society) recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The Society recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. The Society is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All members of the Society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The Society believes that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount,
- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse,
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately,
- all members of the Society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Society will ensure that:

- all children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity,
- the welfare of each child will always be put first,
- a balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision-making process,
- enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism,
- bullying will not be accepted or condoned,
- all adult members of the Society provide a positive role model for dealing with other people,
- action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour,
- it will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation,
- it will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children,
- it will undertake relevant development and training,
- it will hold a register of every child involved with the Society and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies.

The Society has set out child protection procedures which accompany this Statement. These should also be read in conjunction with the Society's Equal Opportunities Policy and Health & Safety Policy.

The Society has a dedicated Child Protection Officer who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy and procedures are adhered to. That person's name is ..... and he/she can be contacted on .....

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Society's Management Committee and will be subjected to annual review.

## CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

### Responsibilities of the Society

At the outset of any production involving children, the Society will:

- undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process,
- identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection,
- recruit chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting,
- ensure that children will be supervised at all times,
- know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.
- in the event of a licence for a child to perform being required, application must be made to the Local Education Authority for the area in which the child lives.

### Parents

- the Society believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the Society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society and to share responsibility for the care of children.
- all parents will be given a copy of the Society's Statement of Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures,
- all parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. To this end parents should supply the chaperone with a written note setting out the arrangements for collection, eg the name(s) of persons who will be collecting the child after the performance. It is NOT the responsibility of the Society to take children home.

### Unsupervised contact

- the Society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children,
- if possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children,
- if unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimise risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area or in a designated room with a door open.
- if it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he/she may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure.

### Physical contact

- all adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children,
- adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity,
- adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.
- dressing rooms, toilets and washing facilities should be separate from adults and separate for boys and girls aged 5 or over

### Managing sensitive information

- the Society has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children,
- permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes,
- the Society's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use,
- the Society will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its members, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

### Suspicious of abuse

- any person to whom a child confides that abuse has taken place should remain calm, but should not delay taking action. That person should listen carefully to what has been said, allow the child to tell him/her what has occurred at their own pace, and questions should only be asked for clarification. Questions that suggest a particular response should be avoided. No promise should be made that the situation will be kept secret. The child should be re-assured that s/he "did the right thing" in telling someone and made clear to him/her that it will be necessary to share this information with other, but that it will only be shared with people who need to know and who should be able to help.

- The child should be told what will happen next.
- a person witnessing, suspecting or being told by a child that abuse has allegedly occurred should make a note of the occurrence and a note of what action s/he took for his/her own records, in case there is a follow-up in which s/he is involved. The date; time; name of the child; name of person(s) against whom the allegations have been made; a note of what was said, using the child's own words and details of any other relevant person involved should be recorded. The note should be signed and dated by the person making the record.
- any person witnessing, suspecting or being told by a child that abuse has allegedly occurred while that child was in the care of the Society should, in the first instance, make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection, and convey concerns also to the Chairman of the Society. If it is suspected that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem the Chairman should be informed immediately. It will be the Chairman's responsibility to liaise with the relevant authorities, usually social services or the police.
- if a serious allegation is made against any member of the Society, chaperone, or other person connected with the Society, that person will be excluded from the theatre, rehearsal rooms etc, and will not be allowed to have unsupervised contact with any children in the production.

#### **Records**

- in all situations, including those in which the cause of concern arises from a disclosure made in confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident should be recorded regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.
- an accurate note should be made of the date and time of the alleged incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken, eg suspension of the membership of an individual; if relevant why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- the record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

#### **Rights and confidentiality**

- if a complaint is made against a member of the Society s/he will be made aware of his rights under the Society's disciplinary procedures,
- both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under the Data Protection act 1998. Care should be taken not to compromise any possible criminal investigation through the release of inappropriate information.

#### **Accidents**

- to avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health & safety and will be notified of areas that are out of bounds. Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- if a child is injured while in the care of the Society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the accident will be recorded in the Society's accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection.
- if a child attends a rehearsal/performance with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be counter-signed by the person with responsibility for child protection. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is later made that the injury was sustained while in the care of the Society and will be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

#### **Criminal record disclosures**

- if the Society believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. In most cases, due to the degree of sole supervisory contact between a chaperone and the children, the level that will be required by the Society is "Enhanced", but if contact is always supervised a "Standard" disclosure will be sufficient.
- the Society will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information,
- the Society will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

#### **Chaperones**

- the Society is responsible for ensuring that, during the period beginning with the first performance and ending with the last performance covered by the licence, children performing in a production will be in the charge of a person approved by the Licensing Authority. The Regulations describe this

- person as a matron although it need not necessarily be a woman and may be the child's parent or teacher. The chaperone's duties inter alia are to ensure that the child is properly supervised
- chaperones will be appointed by the Society for the care of children during a production. By law the chaperone is acting *in loco parentis* and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in a chaperone's care shall not exceed 12,
  - potential chaperones will be required to produce photographic proof of identity (eg passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the Society. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
  - chaperones will be made aware of the Society's Child Protection Policy and Procedures,
  - chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a required of the local authority, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.
  - where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the Chairman. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
  - if a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the producer and not allow the child to continue.
  - under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the producer to cease using children in this way, and should contact the Local Authority.
  - during performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building,
  - children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms,
  - chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times,
  - children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents,
  - children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets,
  - ~~children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms~~, during shows children shall not enter an adult dressing-room unless accompanied by a chaperone. Similarly, an adult shall not enter a child's dressing-room unless a chaperone is present.

**(Amendment 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005)**

- chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger,
- chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded in the Society's accident book,
- chaperones should examine accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the producer is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child),
- parents should supply chaperones with written confirmation of the arrangements for collecting their children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements if this is not covered in the written record,
- children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting,
- if a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.