



The **Big Plan**

together we can make it happen



Welcome

Welcome to 'The Big Plan' - It gives me so much pleasure to be producing this document and to know that you are reading it.

'The Big Plan' details Petersfield Youth Theatre's intention to create an arts venue from which to deliver our year-round activities. Whilst providing a home for PYT, we hope the venue will also fulfil the needs of our local community.

For the purpose of this document, the building will be called 'The Space'. I am sure many people will have some fantastic ideas for its name, so we'll give that important process consideration in due course!

Having spent the last 20 years involved with arts activities in Petersfield, I hope I am in a position to represent the needs of many and to develop a relationship with all our local organisations.

I spent my formative years performing with all the many local amateur dramatic groups in Petersfield and was a founding member of Petersfield Youth Theatre. The Youth Theatre was the catalyst behind my ambition to work in theatre and I am now fortunate that my work takes me all over the country working with many different opera and theatre companies.

It is my intention that this document is the first of three publications. 'The Big Plan' conveys our aspirations and intentions along with some initial research and plans. The second will keep you in touch with the project. It will have a list of supporters and sponsors; those people who are making it happen and those who have pledged financial support. The third will welcome you to the opening event of 'The Space'.

I hope you find 'The Big Plan' interesting and informative. Having read through it, I urge you to pay special attention to the last section 'how you can help'. Together we will make it happen.

Nik Ashton
Artistic Director, Petersfield Youth Theatre

Petersfield Youth Theatre

Petersfield Youth Theatre was founded in 1990. We are a registered charity working to advance the education in music and theatrical arts amongst children and young people. The company is run entirely by volunteers who employ theatre and education practitioners to direct productions, workshops and projects.

Background

In 1990 an amateur dramatics company; The Petersfield Hi-Lights, gave about 35 young people the opportunity to take part in a musical production. This event was highly successful and had therefore clearly identified a need for theatre experiences for young people in the Petersfield area.

A small group of dedicated (but inexperienced) parents worked tirelessly to form a group especially for young people. From such humble beginnings the group grew in every way possible. The number of members increased, the number of volunteers increased, slowly but surely the number of activities increased, and finally amateur directors, musical directors and workshop leaders became replaced with professionals.



Our aims

Petersfield Youth Theatre pushes the boundaries of theatre for young people, offering experiences of the highest possible standard in a positive, creative and supportive environment.

Being part of PYT is more than just a theatrical experience. The quality of the experiences off the stage is as important as those on the stage. The young people are encouraged to develop their teamwork and communication skills, which in turn brings confidence.

Our activities are not just about performing. Whilst 'end product' provides a focus and aspiration, process driven work provides somewhere to explore and to create. Working alongside peers with the same interest and passion gives all our members a sense of belonging.

Our yearly calendar is packed with a wide range of activities for both PYT members and for young people from the community.



Our activities for 2007 include



Spring Term Workshops

6 weeks of one hour per week workshops. The sessions are an opportunity to gain new skills and to develop the building blocks necessary to participate in theatrical based projects.



Spring Season

An opportunity for members with highly developed skills to work in small groups and to receive intensive direction and assistance. 'The Exam' is a play especially written for young people and 'Starting Out' is a musical exploration of the themes and feelings experienced by teenagers on the brink of adulthood. Public performances given at the Festival Hall, Petersfield.

Easter Project

A real challenge. Working alongside professional performers, musicians and directors, over 150 young people (both members and non-members) are charged with the task of creating a piece of musical theatre in 4 days

Summer Term Activities

Four weekends where specialist practitioners deliver a whole weekend of activities within a particular discipline. Different sessions are aimed at different age groups.

Summer School

A further opportunity for non-members to join in a programme of events based around a summer theme. Participants engage in a wide range of skills building activities.



Autumn Season

The Autumn Season is PYT's highest profile event. The season is seen by over 5000 people. Older members will perform West Side Story and members from across the age group will perform a newly commissioned adaptation of The Wind in the Willows. Performances will be at the Festival Hall, Petersfield.

Christmas Production

The Christmas production is a culmination of 6 weeks of once a week workshops. Participants then give two performances at the Festival Hall, Petersfield.



Our members...

Petersfield Youth Theatre currently has nearly 300 members aged between 8 and 25. In addition to the main body of the youth theatre we run PYT First Steps, a series of workshops and activities for young children aged between 5 and 8.

Membership is open to anyone regardless of ability. The structure behind PYT ensures that young people have the opportunity to develop their skills before being exposed to a project that requires an audition.

As well as our projects open just to members we also offer two opportunities each year for non-member participation. This provides an opportunity for young people to 'taste' the youth theatre before taking up membership.

...and their schools

We pride ourselves on bringing together young people from different schools. Many of our members form friendships at PYT that they otherwise would not.

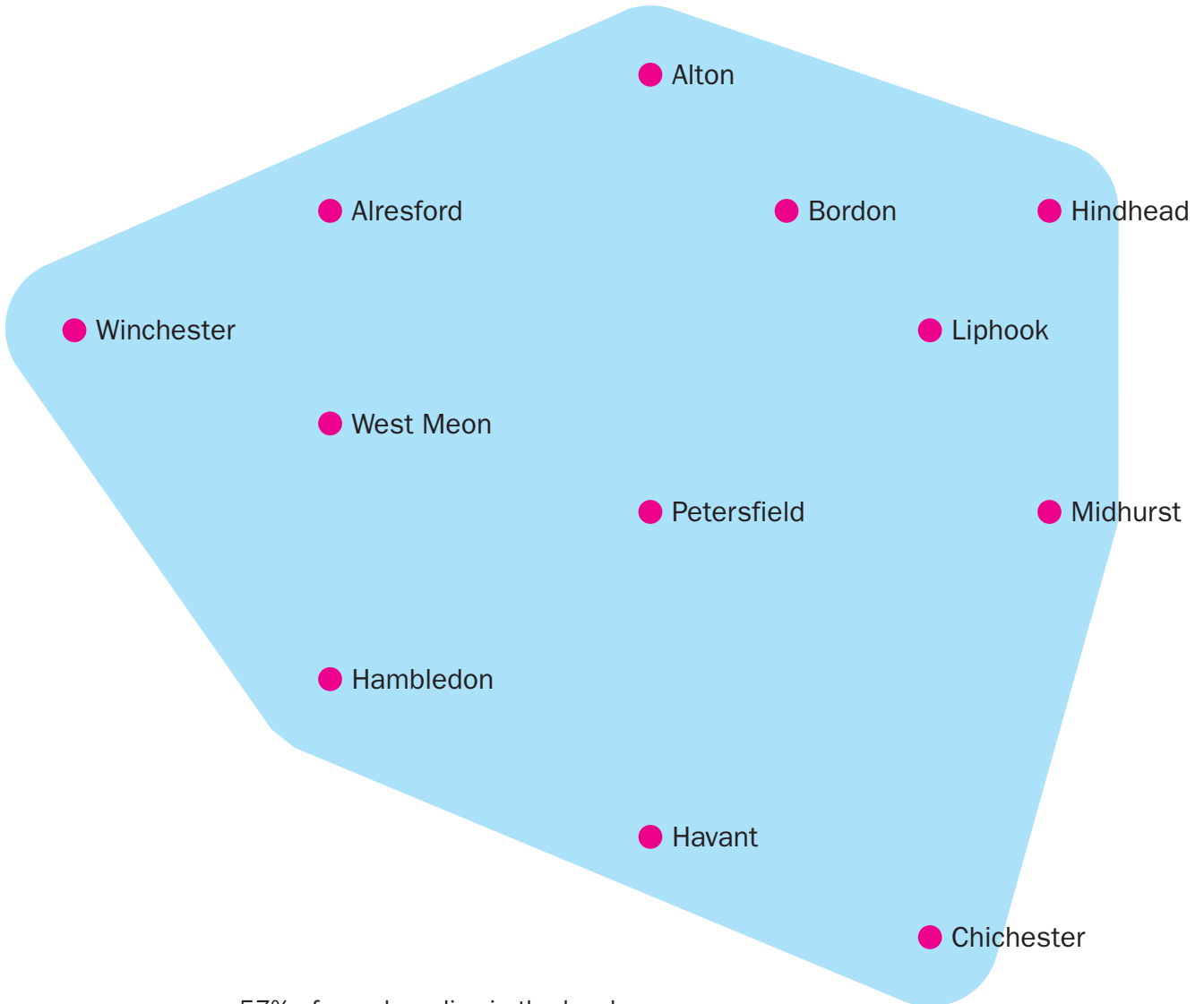
We currently have members from the following schools:

Alton College	Harting	Selborne
Alton Convent	Havant	Sheet
Bedales	Herne Junior	Solent Junior
Bohunt	Highfield	Southdowns College
Buriton Primary	Horndean Junior	Springfield College
Churchers College	Horndean Tech	St Edmonds
Clanfield Junior	Kingscourt Prep	St James
Compton and Upper	Langrish	St Margarets Convent
Marden	Liss Junior	St Swithuns Junior
Ditcham Park	Midhurst	Steep
Droxford	Midhurst Intermediate	TPS
Dunnanie	Midhurst Primary	Twyford
Dunhurst	Oaklands	Chichester University
Eggars	Perrins	West Meon
Frensham Heights	Portsmouth Grammar	
Godalming College	Portsmouth High	

We also have a number of members who are home educated. PYT provides a vital opportunity for young people to interact with their peers.

... and where they live

The map below shows the area in which our members live. However, our holiday activities during Easter and the Summer attract young people from further afield.



57% of members live in the local area
GU31 & GU32

27% live in the surrounding area
GU30, GU33 & PO8

16% live further afield
GU28, GU29, GU34, GU35, PO10, PO11, PO18, PO20, PO6, PO7, PO9 & SO23



The need for 'The Space'

It is possible to identify the need for 'The Space' in two different ways. Petersfield Youth Theatre has needs and the local community has needs.

The needs of Petersfield Youth Theatre

The needs of PYT have been identified by 2 markers:

1

The aim to provide the highest possible quality of experience

PYT currently uses 8 different venues to carry out our activities. Some of these venues are more suitable than others. Some are only available at particular times of the year; some are only available with months (sometimes years) of notice. They all have different strengths and weaknesses, but all involve cost and all come with activity limiting constraints.

The current use of different venues is limiting the quality and quantity of our output.

2

The continuing increase in numbers of young people taking part in our activities

As the number of young people wanting to benefit from our activities increases, the hours we need to hire venues for also rises. We now find ourselves in the situation where there are not enough hours in the day where a venue is available for us to use.



The needs of the community

The needs of the community are currently being researched, although these needs can also be identified by 2 markers:

1

Anecdotal evidence

Through anecdotal evidence and informal consultation with a limited number of people we are sure that a need is there. The next stage of our project's development will involve detailed consultation and analysis of all community based cultural and arts groups. Our project has the potential to fulfil the needs of many groups, so it is vital that their needs are met.

2

Researched evidence

One local organisation that has shown support for our project, because of its own quantifiable needs, is The Anne Blumlein School of Dance. The Dance School has been in Petersfield for 31 years. It runs 60 classes per week in many venues of varying degrees of suitability. It gives opportunities to 400 young people aged from 3 upwards, as well as giving classes for adults.

Other local organisations have pledged support for our project. As more and more people become aware of our plans we hope this list will increase.

The Building

It is our aspiration that 'The Space' will provide a focus point for cultural and arts activities in Petersfield. Although the building will house a multi-purpose performance studio, it is not a theatre. 'The Space' is about making and creating work, developing skills and providing an infrastructure for people of all ages to make a cultural contribution to Petersfield.

The Space will provide

- A physical home for PYT
- A focus point for cultural and arts activities in Petersfield
- An atmosphere in which to make and create

In devising the initial brief for the building we have decided to aim for the top! However, we are aware that many differing constraints may eventually modify the facilities available.

The Facilities

- Multi-purpose performance studio
- Large rehearsal room
- 2 dance studios
- Set construction workshop
- Set storage
- Costume construction workshop
- Costume storage
- Music rooms
- Foyer space
- Gallery

Architectural Aspirations

We plan to create a building that respects the character of the area in which it is built, as well as reflecting the dynamic nature of the activities that it will house.

The internal design will support the multifunctional use of space in order to respond to users' needs.

The details of the design will be developed, once a suitable site has been identified, in consultation with the users and East Hampshire District Council. We will work with a project architect, community development advisors and sustainability advisors to achieve our objectives.



Sustainability Solutions

It is our intention that the building itself will be constructed to achieve best practice in sustainable design and build. The use of materials will achieve the architectural aspirations whilst harmonising with neighbouring properties.

We would like to use the opportunity of the design and construction of the building to contribute to wider community awareness of sustainability. This could be done through a permanent exhibition of construction methods and design in the public areas as well as information about the energy use within the building.

It will seek to be completely carbon neutral once constructed, taking advantage of advancing knowledge in this field. There will be a high standard of acoustic insulation to enable the multi-use of workshop spaces.

There will be an appropriate mix of internal and external space provided. External space will be landscaped to minimise the impact of the built structure, car and bike parking areas etc., and to provide outdoor space for activities, if appropriate.

Transport Solutions

We intend to develop and promote a green transport policy for the centre in order to identify and promote sustainable transport solutions for users. This will include promoting the use of public transport, car sharing, walking and cycling. We hope to find a site that will support these aims with good links to the existing networks. If this network does not exist at present we will work with public transport providers to set up a partnership service.

Funding Solutions

We estimate that the cost of building 'The Space' will be £2.25m

We will appoint a fund-raising team who will explore all the options regarding funding. The team will be responsible for sourcing as many different forms of grant-aid and donations as possible.

The funding options are likely to include

- The National Lottery – Community Buildings Programme
- The Arts Council
- Hampshire County Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- Petersfield Town Council
- Individual donations
- A membership based donation scheme (Buy a brick or something similar)

Managing 'The Space'

Ideally 'The Space' would be owned freehold by PYT. However, it is more likely that PYT will sign up to a long lease at a peppercorn (nominal) rent. This would give us some financial security in terms of improvement costs etc and would be a considerable asset, at least for the first 50 years of the lease. A short lease is unlikely to meet the needs of the project.

The PYT management team will be responsible for all aspects of operation and maintenance of 'The Space'.

The on-going costs

The on-going costs will need to be covered by many different sources. These include

- Renting out the facilities
- PYT subscriptions
- PYT friends' subscriptions
- Costume hire
- Interest
- Tax claims
- Activity surpluses

Each year PYT spends a considerable amount of money on hiring venues. The majority of these funds will be diverted into running costs of 'The Space'.

Those making it happen...

The management team for Petersfield Youth Theatre have endorsed 'The Big Plan'. They have appointed a dedicated working party to take this project forward:

Nik Ashton

Nik is currently Artistic Director of PYT. He is a professional theatre director and has experience in both professional theatre and educational practice.

Martin Maylam

Martin has been managing commercial property and locating & purchasing new investments for the last 7 years. Martin is a director of a small building company and brings extensive property knowledge to the team.

Richard Perry

Richard is a previous treasurer of PYT and is a practising chartered accountant. He specialises in the charitable and not-for-profit sector.

Sarah Pinfold

Until recently Sarah worked for Camelot Group Plc, the National Lottery Operator, where she had some exposure to various Lottery Good Cause bodies. With this knowledge of how funding is allocated she can help to steer the working party through some of the pit falls and opportunities in Lottery grant applications.

Jane Rebeiro

Jane's background is in administration which included running a private hospital. More recently she completed a degree in English and Creative Writing and has been working with infants and special needs children.

Christine Seaward

Christine works as an environment manager specialising in climate change and sustainability. She has skills in community development; project management including external funding and sustainable construction methods.



Overcoming hurdles

We have two significant hurdles to overcome in order to make our project happen.

1

Land and planning consent

Following a preliminary meeting with the planning department at EHDC, the ideal situation would be for 'The Space' to be within the current 'settlement boundary' for Petersfield. Outside of this boundary is referred to as countryside, where we understand new buildings are harder to make happen.

After an extensive search within the current 'settlement boundary' there would appear to be no land left that is of a suitable size for 'The Space'.

At the time of going to print 'The Space' working party has been informally offered two sites in Petersfield, with a third site currently being negotiated. These sites are within areas of countryside planning policy designation and if we were to be successful here we would need a more flexible interpretation of current criteria.

2

Funding

Although we have identified possible avenues of income, making the applications and securing funding is a time consuming task.

We are hopeful that once we have secured land and planning consent, funding will become easier to apply for.

How you can help

Individuals – you can offer your emotional, practical or financial support. Maybe you have some spare time to help administrate the project. Maybe you have skills that we could benefit from or perhaps you are in a position to make a financial donation.

Organisations – you can register your support. You can keep in touch with us to ensure that 'The Space' fulfils any needs that you may have.

Councillors – you can will the project to happen. You can be our ambassadors, and help to make the 'right' decisions regarding planning and financial aid.

Conclusion

We want 'The Space' to be something Petersfield can be proud of. Our project has the potential to make a substantial difference to the operation of both Petersfield Youth Theatre and our town's other cultural organisations.

The success of the project relies on many people working towards one common aim. We need people to talk about 'The Space', to become ambassadors, and to will the project forward.

Giving the best of oneself is a fundamental expectation that our organisation makes of its participants. We would like the town to set its sights equally high and help build a fantastic building with fantastic facilities to nurture generations for years to come.

Together we can make it happen!



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