

76th ISTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2021, 16:00 TO 17:00, VIA ZOOM

The Society's Chief Executive, Ginny Brown, welcomed those attending and announced that voting was open. Ms Brown then introduced the Society's Co-Chairs, Erin Sanchez and Frederick Way.

Mr Way, on behalf of Board of Trustees, welcomed participants to the 2021 AGM and outlined the agenda. He also informed members that Trustees have appointed one Trustee, Nafisah Baba, as allowed in the Society's Articles.

Ms Sanchez then gave the Chair's address (**Appendix 1**)

Mr Way expressed thanks to the ISTD staff and leadership for their hard work, the Board of Trustees for dedicating time, energy, and knowledge into the ISTD's work, and ISTD's members for all that they do for the ISTD and for dance.

Mr Way then announced that 148 votes had been cast in advance, and proxy votes had been received from 5 members.

Ms Sanchez then read the following questions which had been submitted in advance:

Imogen Knight asked:

Please could the ISTD Board & SLT consider changing the time that the AGM is held in future years to be some sympathetic to the bulk of its teaching members, so that we grass roots teachers can participate?

Answer:

Thank you for this feedback. We will schedule next year's AGM for late morning.

Zoe Dawson asked:

Prior to the pandemic, UK headquarters and regional examination sessions were widely used by members. The examinations department has not yet reinstated these sessions due to there being 'currently no or very little demand for them from our teachers'. As no proactive survey to establish demand for these sessions has been undertaken by the ISTD, the only data the examinations department is using for their decision making is the number of teachers who have taken the step of contacting the ISTD themselves to ask specifically about these sessions. When taking the decision to withdraw (either temporarily or permanently) an integral service such as this which has been offered to members for many years, it would be appropriate for members to be fully consulted. Why has the ISTD taken the decision not to reinstate these sessions at this time and why have members not been consulted?

Answer:

We have not conducted Centre sessions since the pandemic began in order to follow the government guidelines. We haven't reinstated them during the winter months to avoid risks associated with teachers and learners from different schools mixing in these settings. There has also been very little demand since July, as remote examinations provide a convenient alternative. However, we will explore re-starting Centre sessions again from spring 2022, to ascertain the current demand for this service.

Robert Aldred asked:

The Society used to have a rule that required faculty members to retire at age 70 years but following the introduction of the Equality Act this rule was amended to allow faculty members to only serve three, three year terms. The burden of this rule however still falls most heavily on those more senior faculty members, as has been demonstrated in some of the recent faculty elections, with a wealth of experience and knowledge being lost to the faculties concerned. The faculties are the custodians of the techniques on which the Society's examinations and qualifications are based and it is therefore essential that this knowledge and experience is not lost, particularly to the smaller faculties, to ensure our syllabi retain credibility in the wider dance communities in which we operate. I would like to ask the Council what the rationale is for maintaining this rule and if, considering the Society's EDI policy, whether it is still appropriate?

Answer:

Council introduced this rule at the same point as putting this stipulation in place for Council members. This is in line with Charity Commission guidance and is designed to ensure that Boards and Committees are regularly refreshed. This is important so that fresh perspectives are included and for succession planning.

We recognise, and greatly value, the wealth of experience and knowledge that current Committee members have and the important role you play in guiding the future development of your syllabi. However, to protect the future of each genre, it is essential that the next generation of teachers are nurtured and empowered to continue the excellent work of each faculty.

Ms Sanchez announced that voting had closed, and then Ms Brown gave the Chief Executive Officer's address (**Appendix 2**)

Ms Brown then addressed a question from **Lynn Richardson:**

Why are there no dance studios that we can call "home" for our courses and exams?

Answer:

The Council has considered the financial viability of a building that size and what reserves would be left to cover any unexpected occurrences. Additionally, as an international organisation, we need to be able to serve all our members, rather than purely focus on one location.

The acceleration of digital learning has also demonstrated the need for a flexible delivery model. We do have a small studio in the refurbished building which we will utilise when we judge it is safe to welcome more people back into the building.

Ms Brown then introduced David Lyon, the Director of Finance and Operations. Mr Lyon addressed additional questions.

Lynn Richardson asked:

Is it accurate that there is not enough workable space for all staff to work effectively and safely in the newly refurbished head office?

Answer:

There is ample space for us to work effectively and safely. There are 60 spaces for staff to work in the office and there are just over 60 members of staff, of whom 53 work in a hybrid manner.

Lynn Richardson asked:

Why have there been no photographs (of the refurbishment) placed on the website?

Answer:

We have a photographer booked next week to take some images of the building.

Lynn Richardson asked:

What was the financial cost to the Society of the implementation of Iplicit and its subsequent failure?

Answer: The external cost of the implementation was about £14,000. I would take issue with the term “failure”. There have been problems with the timesheet portal that we created for Iplicit. This is not the whole of Iplicit; Iplicit is an entire financial system. I have been looking at ways of making payments more quickly, and making the process easier for everybody. I am confident that the investment of £14,000 in Iplicit will be paid back significantly within the next year or two.

Mr Lyon then presented the annual accounts (**Appendix 3**), which are available to view on the Charity Commission website, Companies House, and the Society’s website. Mr Lyon invited members with questions or concerns about the accounts to contact him directly at dlyon@istd.org.

Mr Lyon then addressed a subsequent question.

Lynn Richardson asked:

Are you still using Iplicit?

Answer:

Yes, Iplicit is being used for the entire accounting of the organisation, but we expect that within 2 weeks we will be able to tell examiners that they no longer need to upload their timesheets because we will be able to download that information from Quest.

A further question was then addressed by Ms Brown.

Natasha Georgiou asked:

I understand that there is a new and more inclusive syllabus in progress: based on which genres?

Answer:

Yes, we want to create more inclusive and accessible routes into our syllabi so that as many young people as possible can benefit from them. We haven't yet started that process; the first thing will be to consult with members and other stakeholders about what would need to go into those syllabi. Alongside creating new syllabi we will support members with the "know-how" to reach new audiences so that we can start to get more learners into your schools, and then we can think about what products will best suit them, when they come in.

Mr Way proceeded to the resolutions. The result of voting was as follows:

Resolution 1:	To re-elect Sho Shibata as Trustee
	143 votes For; 5 Against; 12 Abstain. PASSED.
Resolution 2:	To elect Michael Elliott as Trustee
	147 votes For; 5 Against; 8 Abstain. PASSED.
Resolution 3:	To elect Leanne Kirkham as Trustee
	141 votes For; 6 Against; 13 Abstain. PASSED.
Resolution 4:	To elect Kathryn Williams as Trustee
	142 votes For; 8 Against; 10 Abstain. PASSED.

After thanking everybody who had voted, Mr Way announced the following:

- Sho Shibata has been re-elected for a third term to Council
- Michael Elliott has been elected to join Council
- Leanne Kirkham has been elected to join Council
- Kathryn Williams has been elected to join Council.

Any Other Business

Three further questions were asked. The first was addressed by Mr Way.

Lynn Richardson asked:

Have teachers historically ever excluded anyone wanting to learn to dance?

Answer:

Our focus is on encouraging more people to participate rather than looking at people being historically excluded. It's about trying to encourage participation.

Maria Howse asked:

Answer:

There have been difficulties with the time frame for receiving medals, for which I apologise. Before the pandemic, medals were being sent out from head office. This was inefficient and,

with the pandemic it wasn't possible. Therefore we outsourced that service. More recently there have been issues with the supply of medals which are not within our control. I understand that all medal awards up until the end of October have been issued to our supplier to send out, but in some instances the supplier doesn't have the required medals in stock; and both they and we apologise for that. I understand the Director of Examinations has recently sent an update to affected members, and we will send further updates as soon as we have them. In the meantime, I would like to thank you for your patience.

A final question was addressed by Mr Way.

When will a new Chair of the ISTD be announced?

Answer:

Following the outcome of the votes at today's AGM we now have a full Council. The Chair is elected by the Council membership; we will be able to do this at the next Council meeting, after which we will be able to announce the new chair.

Jill Knight expressed thanks to the Trustees, Mr Way and Ms Sanchez for leading the Society throughout the pandemic at what must have been a very challenging time, and to all the ISTD staff for keeping going under incredibly difficult circumstances.

Mr Way thanked Ms Knight for her kind words, and thanked members for attending the AGM and closed the meeting.

Appendix 1: Address by Erin Sanchez, Acting Co-Chair – ISTD AGM 2021

Frederick and I are the Acting Co-Chairs of the ISTD, and have had the pleasure of working alongside 9 other ISTD trustees since June 2021.

Over the past year, the ISTD has experienced both challenge and progress, as our CEO Ginny Brown will address in more detail later. However, we wished to highlight the following points as an indication of the achievements of the ISTD over the past 12 months.

As trustees, we are proud of the society's members as they have worked through the challenges of Covid, including the resilience of members as they adapted to the extreme challenges of the lockdown at the start of 2021 and the need to continue to adapt to this change. We are pleased to see that exams are beginning to return but we recognise how difficult this has been for members – and we are committed to supporting our members to recover following the impacts of the pandemic.

From January 2020 we were able to deliver regulated remotely and we also launched the 'Inspirational Spaces to Dance' Challenge to support teachers with keeping their students engaged online.

Our Think Tanks on Gender and L G B T Q I A +, Racial Diversity, and Disability Inclusion began in the Spring have provided vital opportunities to increase diversity and inclusion, overcome roadblocks, and enhance openness, dialogue and deconstruction. Some of the key outcomes of these Think Tanks so far have been:

- Training for staff and members
- Gathering resource materials, which are housed in the Diversity and Inclusion hub on the website, and
- A 'Talking Dance – Improving Racial Equity' symposium

Our strategic review engaged members across the organisation, from trainee teachers to Grand Council, non-members, and key stakeholders from outside the ISTD. Ginny will be sharing more about this excellent work in her address later today.

Our Talking Dance series has thus far included

- a session in June on Improving Racial Equity, when leading organisations bbodance, International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA), the TIRED Movement and Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) discussed the roadblocks to achieving diversity in dance education and training and how these can be dismantled at every level of dance teaching, creating a vision for a future of inclusive and diverse dance.
- A session in August on The Future of Cultural Education. This industry-wide symposium explored the future of cultural education, with a particular focus on the role dance can play in supporting children and young people's post-pandemic recovery. Our CEO, Ginny Brown hosted guest speakers, including: Laura Nicholson (One Dance UK), Glyn Jones (CDMT), Solange Urdang (Urdang Academy), and a representative from Arts Council England to consider ways in which the sector can work together to ensure that all children have opportunities to learn dance.

We are delighted to report that the refurbishment of the ISTD's headquarters in Paul Street, London is now complete. The refurbishment has enhanced the safety, aesthetic, functionality and value of our premises. The building now boasts a dance studio and dedicated kitchen area and rest space for the studio, a Members' lounge and several new meeting spaces. The building is now also more efficient in its use of floor space, allowing us to let 2 floors and increase our income to enhance our charitable work to support dance and our members.

Our Members' Day in August reached nearly 100 members and was a fantastic and inspiring moment to showcase how ISTD dance teachers have adapted from teaching in car parks to box dance. Sessions also included a presentation by our strategic consultants, updates from the Directors, and an opportunity for discussion with Faculty Committee members.

Dancesport's first competition in October boasted over 300 participants.

As we continue to emerge from the Pandemic, we hope to build on all these successes in 2022.

Appendix 2: Address by Ginny Brown, Chief Executive Officer – ISTD AGM 2021

When I addressed you at last year's AGM, I don't think any of us envisaged that we would still be living with COVID a year later. The events of the last 20 months have challenged and tested us all; so, I want to start by applauding you for your resilience, your creativity and your tenacity to keep going come what may. Your hard work has clearly paid dividends as we are enjoying a healthy upsurge in exams as lockdown restrictions are lifted in each country - which goes to demonstrate just how important progressing in dance is for your students.

Throughout the pandemic my first priority had been to support you, our members, through an ever-changing landscape; and that continues to be the case as we all evolve to meet the challenges, and the opportunities, of the post-pandemic world. Towards that end, this year we undertook a strategic review to ensure that our future plans are guided by the hopes and wishes of our members, our potential future members and your students, whilst also being informed by the rapidly changing world around us. I will say more about that shortly, but first I will start with an overview of the past year.

Report on 2021

Inevitably, the lockdown restrictions we experienced from March 2020 to March 2021 resulted in significant financial losses, which were equivalent to third of a year's usual turnover. We responded by:

- utilizing the Government furlough scheme with up to 40 % of staff on furlough at some points
- and revising development plans to minimize expenditure

We were also fortunate to be awarded a Cultural Recovery Fund grant of £426,000, which clearly demonstrates Arts Council's understanding of the important contribution our dance teachers make to the country's cultural ecology. We used this grant to:

- Undertake a strategic review
- Offer an intensive training programme to upskill teachers to reach new audiences.
- Convene an industry-wide racial diversity symposium
- And to contribute towards the projected shortfall in revenue between April-June 2021.

At all times the impact of the pandemic on our members' livelihoods has been at the front of our minds. We responded by offering:

- 3-month extension to the membership year
- 31 free member activities during 2021

We also granted £89K in bursaries to support teachers with gaining their initial and higher teaching qualifications; and, in January, we launched the Inspirational Spaces to Dance Challenge, designed to motivate students to continue dancing from home. We have been cheered and spurred on by the energy and tenacity of our members and their students.

To date this year:

- Over 5,500 teachers have attended CPD courses
- 30500 students have completed a performance exam
- 513 teachers have completed an initial or higher teaching qualification
- Over 1700 students have participated in an online competition
- 300 dancers participated in our first medalist competition

Whilst responding to the short-term challenges was a clear priority, we also continued to invest in future development to ensure that we emerge from the pandemic posed to make a significant contribution to cultural education.

We are supporting members to apply the Department of Education's Code of Conduct for Out of School Settings, which was launched last November with:

- A series of free webinars
- Advice and guidance in our website Raising Standards Hub
- And the introduction of compulsory DBS checks

We also established a number of Think Tanks to support us with improving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion across the Society, and we completed the refurbishment of our offices.

None of this would have been possible without a huge amount of hard work and support from everyone who works with the Society; so, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to:

- My Leadership Team and their staff
- Our Faculty Committee Members
- Examiners and Lecturers

I am also hugely grateful for the on-going support and dedication of the Board of Trustees, who have steered the Society skillfully through these turbulent times. In particular, I would like to thank Erin Sanchez and Frederick Way who have been acting as Co-Chairs since Chris Hocking unexpectedly resigned last June. I have been incredibly grateful for their wise guidance and keen attention to detail. Erin has completed two terms as a member of Council and has decided not to stand for a third term. On behalf of the Society, I would like to express my deep gratitude for her dedication to the Society. I trust that we will have many more opportunities to work together in the future.

Future Plans

As I mentioned at the beginning, this year we also undertook a full strategic review. This engaged people from across and beyond the Society in a collaborative approach to strategic planning. Which involved:

- A membership survey
- Focus group discussions with Faculty Committee members, Members, Students and external practitioners
- And individual conversations with a cross-section of people who interact with the Society (and some that don't currently connect with us)

The strategic review started by considering the big picture: Our charitable purpose, and that we are working in a sector that is in crisis, both because of COVID and due to sustained cuts to arts education.

As you would expect, the review reinforced that Covid has had a dire financial impact on our members, and that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have been disproportionately impacted

It also clearly demonstrated the need for a strong future strategy because, as the past 2 years have shown, we're operating in an unstable and fast changing environment, with:

- Raising awareness of social injustice
- Era of digital acceleration
- An emphasis on community engagement
- But also, with new opportunities for growth

The research revealed 3 overarching priorities:

- An urgent need to prioritise business recovery, both for our members and the Society
- A strong wish to be more inclusive and to nurture the next generation and
- A clear desire for the Society to continue to be known as a 'gold standard' for dance education

Based on these findings, we are forming a 5-year strategic plan which places our charitable purpose at the heart of everything we do. In order to achieve this purpose, we will support our dance teacher members to reach a wider audience (the charity's beneficiaries) by broadening access to dance. This will drive more learners to our members' schools, with the dual benefits of supporting members' business recovery and increasing participation in our progressive training and examinations.

In the longer term, this will result in a growing, diverse and vibrant membership. To achieve this vision, the strategic plan focuses on three drivers which summarise how we are going to achieve these outcomes over the next 5 years:

- Supporting dance teachers to build resilient and growing businesses, will be our number 1 priority
- We will then work with our members to champion inclusion by opening up dance education for all
- And we will demonstrate our reputation as world leaders in dance education by investing in the development of progressive, inclusive syllabi and exams

Not only will this enable both our members and the Society to thrive and grow; it will also have broader public benefits: Broadening access to dance will support public health, wellbeing and community engagement - because, as we know so

well from personal experience, dancing is good for our physical health, our mental wellbeing and for feeling connected to a community of like-minded people. Participating in dance will contribute to creative and cultural learning and develop transferable skills - because your dance classes are not only rewarding in their own right, they also develop creative thinking, collaboration, personal discipline and tenacity.

Ultimately, we want to create a diverse and sustainable profession, where more teachers can benefit from what the Society has to offer, so they can build sustainable, secure careers in dance.

By enabling more people to access our work, we can all re-build financially resilient and sustainable businesses and we can support you to play an important role in the recovery of your local communities, because we have all seen the transformational power of dance - Its ability to unlock creative, expressive potential; the opportunities for embodied learning and its ability to transcend social and cultural divides - so, it's natural to want as many people as possible to learn dance and to benefit from what the Society has to offer; and as we move forward, we will continue to build on the Society's strong foundations: Our history, integrity and the standards for which we are so well known.

I am pleased to announce that two people who epitomize these qualities have recently accepted invitations to join Grand Council:

- Former Society Chair, Sue Passmore and
- Former Theatre Faculty Board and Classical Greek Faculty Chair, Kay Ball.

Appendix 3: Presentation of the accounts for the 15-month period to 31 March 2021 by David Lyon, Director of Finance and Operations – ISTD AGM 2021

Good afternoon. I want to give some headline figures from our financial statements and say something about the impact that recent events has had on ISTD. I do not intend to go into any great detail with regard to the financial statements. They are available to view for no charge on the Charity Commission, Companies House and of course our own website. Should any of you have questions about the figures presented in our accounts I would invite you to contact me and I will be happy to provide you with any explanations and answer any concerns you may have.

The Society took the decision to extend its accounting period by three months in the same way that we extended memberships. This had the added effect of ensuring that the worst impact of Covid would be retained within one set of exceptional financial statements.

I am pleased to say that our internally produced management accounts for the six months since the end of the financial accounting period (that is to say until 30 September) show that the Society is adding to its reserves rather than having to deploy more of them. I can also say that our annual statutory audit which took place shortly before I took up post, went extremely smoothly, and the Finance and Audit Committee were satisfied to note that there were no major areas of concern – which is to say that the accounts paint a reliable picture of performance and the state of affairs at 31 March. The accounts have been examined and approved by the trustees at Council following a more thorough scrutiny by the Finance and Audit Committee.

This is not to say that we do not have some challenges ahead. In particular the Covid pandemic has highlighted the vital importance of our digital platforms and significant investment of time is needed over the next few years to ensure that our systems talk to each other, and provide relevant and timely financial and other data.

Although this has been a tumultuous year for the Society, the sensible stewardship of our resources over earlier years combined with the generosity of Arts Council England and the support of schemes put in place by the UK Government in response to the covid pandemic have softened the blow to an extent.

The deficit shown here of £1.3m can largely be blamed on covid, and is mainly the result of a huge downturn in income – a reduction of more than 50%. When you consider that £212k of the income we did achieve was in the form of furlough grants, and that the period is 3 months longer than its comparator it is surprising that the total shock to our operational deficit was only £1.3m.

The impact on our cash and other current asset reserves reflects the true cost – but it also reflects the investment of £2.5m we have made in our operational HQ with the opportunities that this gives for new income from tenants.

I would want to make it clear that I have no concerns about the organisation's ability to thrive and prosper and that we have the cash to ensure this happens.

I want to reflect on some things that have been taking place but whose positive financial impact is not obvious from our published accounts, because they took place after the end of the financial year:

- The very positive (albeit labour intensive) summer exam season
- The good performance of our new investments
- Diversifying income by making two fifths of our office space available as a rental asset (and in the process making our operational working space a truly lovely environment)

We are constantly looking for ways to carry out our work in more efficient and effective ways, thus broadening the scope of what can be achieved with your membership fees and the other income we receive. Of course our status as a charity means that any future surpluses will be retained and applied to our charitable purposes.

There are some developments that are creating challenges and opportunities for the Finance and Operations portfolio that I manage, which are:

- The debate around freelancers and gig-economy workers is now impacting ISTD as we are now required to assess each freelance and worker contract
- We are exploring greater diversity of income and this involves exploring subsidiary and charity group models
- And the focus on IT continues, most especially as we seek for the efficiency benefits of our new accounting system