

# blueApple

changing lives through  
performing arts

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 Blue Apple

Photos: James Yeats-Brown and Mike Hall

Blue Apple, Faculty of Arts, St Edburga Building, University of Winchester, Sparkford Road, Winchester, SO22 4NR.

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## Trustees 2020/21

Georgiana Robertson (*Chair*)  
Rebecca Sheppard  
Duncan Rutter  
Ross Harvie  
Ed Rothead  
Kim Gottlieb  
Jon Brown (*Appointed April 2020*)  
Michael Hall (*Appointed April 2020, Resigned March 2021*)  
Marilyn Weston (*Appointed April 2020*)  
Cara Honey (*Appointed February 2021*)  
Lucy McKenna (*Appointed February 2021*)

## Staff 2020/21

Richard Conlon: *Artistic Director*  
Simon Morris: *General Manager (to June 2021)*  
Ken Parry: *Finance Manager*  
Helen Rimmer: *Communications Manager (to Dec 2020)*  
Pip Armitage: *Communications Manager (from January 2021)*  
Elisabeth Yeats-Brown: *Administrator*

## Facilitators 2020/21

**Drama leader:**  
Hannah Wright

**Dance leaders:**  
Alana Jones, Amanda Watkinson, Caroline Hotchkiss

**Music leader:**  
Kate Mellors

# blueApple



## Changing lives through performing arts

### Annual Review 2020/21



# Welcome

**A year like no other, courtesy of the pandemic, but also full of uplifting moments, courage, commitment and creativity.**

## Creative

Each year a theme threads our work together. For 2020 it was Justice - social justice, lawful justice, honesty and being treated fairly - developed further with 2021's theme of exploring 'What it means to be human'. In January 2020 performances of *The Railway Children* saw our highest live audiences ever; our film *See No Evil* with associated school workshops were in full swing and then, in March, as we started preparations for *Animal Farm*, everything was abruptly stopped.

Blue Apple didn't falter but gulped, made a reality of our own sense of justice and launched into virtual sessions, an astonishing and commendable feat by staff, freelancers, trustees and performers. Watch our *Pinocchia* on YouTube (December 2020) to see every actor performing their socks off. Enjoy their achievement and read the programme notes to get an inkling of the complexities overcome and the commitment shown.

As I write (September), the first whole-cast, in-person, inside rehearsals since March 2020 are underway and popping with impressive ideas! What better theme for this new season than 'Ambition'? Make a note in your diaries for the *Wizard of Oz* 7-9 Jan and *Macbeth* in the summer to see and enjoy what Blue Apple performers offer.



## Challenges

We all faced challenges during 2020/21; since virtual sessions did not suit everyone, understandably participant numbers fell so we consolidated the weekly programme.

Staff continued to work remotely throughout, showing amazing versatility and resilience with access to neither office nor rehearsal space. Likewise, trustees demonstrated their calibre. I can honestly guarantee that future new staff, volunteers, freelancers, trustees and of course future performers are assured of a warm welcome.

Finance is a perennial concern in the arts world, never more so than during the pandemic. So it is good to report some grant successes. Next year we aim to increase donations from friends and supporters to continue our exciting work.

## Courage

New ventures included a Youth Summer School, run virtually in 2020. We hope that these younger performers will graduate onto Blue Apple's adult groups. Even during lockdown Blue Apple built on existing contacts and forged new international links, participating in digital sessions with Art Stream and Barrier-Free Theatre (USA); broadcasting our contribution to World Down Syndrome Day with some American actors with Downs; and a contribution from Czech theatre company Divadlo Aldente.

In December 2020 we also spoke at an international conference on Outsider Art which was run (digitally) out of Athens.

## Finale

This is my final entry to the Annual Review as I step down in October, bowing out after seven years as Chair and nine as a Trustee. It truly has been a privilege to have been Chair of this exciting and fun theatre company. Blue Apple performers are destined for many great accolades yet to come, supported by a wonderful team of professional staff, volunteer helpers and keen supporters. Who wouldn't want to be a supporter of those who are following their dreams? Certainly I will long remain loyal.

**Georgiana Robertson**  
Chair

## Thank you

Georgiana has been chair of Winchester's Blue Apple Theatre for almost seven years, and a trustee prior to that. In her time as Chair Georgiana has led Blue Apple Theatre as it has grown across Hampshire, moved into film and dance, and become 'company in residence' at the University of Winchester.

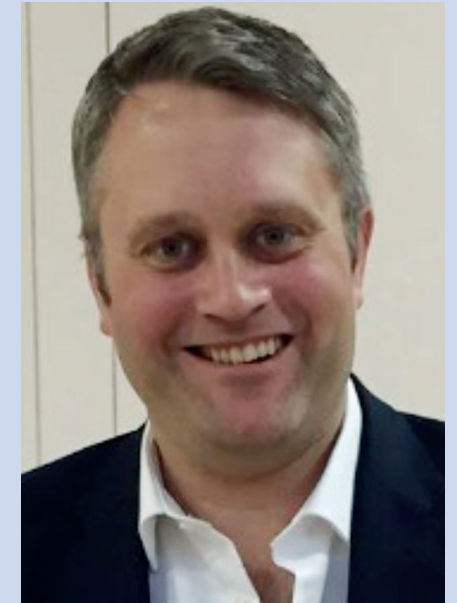
Countless additional adults with learning disabilities have had their quality of life, and their life chances, enhanced by Blue Apple thanks to Georgiana's strategic vision and exemplary leadership and energy (for much of the period giving two days a week).

During COVID-19 Georgiana has overseen the move of Blue Apple to virtual platforms, allowing the benefits to continue and has spearheaded the return to some physical groups once again.

Georgiana has already volunteered to continue supporting Blue Apple in her new capacity as Chair Emeritus.

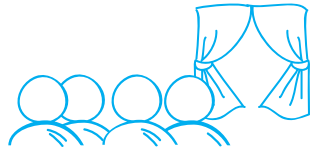
Everyone involved in Blue Apple wishes her well for a superb 'retirement' from this role.

**Ed Rothead**  
Chair Designate





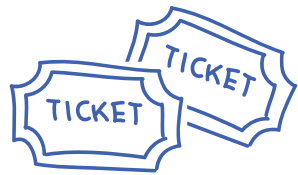
# Our year in numbers



Over **2200** people enjoyed watching a Blue Apple performance.



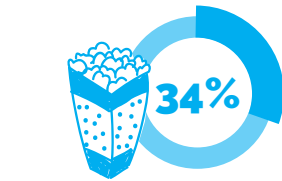
**90** people with learning disabilities took part in Blue Apple drama, dance and singing classes across Hampshire.



We live-streamed **one** production of Pinnochia.



**6** volunteers gave over **386** hours of their time in rehearsals and performances.



**34%** of Pinnochia's audience who gave feedback had never seen a Blue Apple performance before.



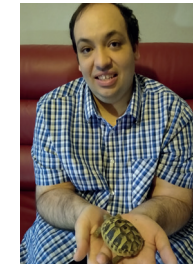
**280** online sessions were held across Hampshire.



**75%** of those who completed feedback said that Pinnochia challenged their thinking about learning disabilities.

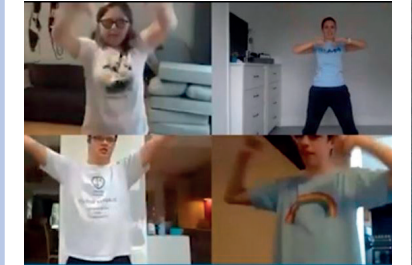
# Everyone learned to use Zoom

Blue Apple Member Grant has a learning disability, a phobia and anxiety issues and the lockdown meant his normal routine stopped.



"The online Blue Apple classes have been a great way to maintain social connection, and they are a fun creative activity, to look forward to each week. It is very important for Grant to maintain some sort of routine and normality during lockdown" said Grant's dad Ron.

"It is difficult to put a value on the difference that you and all at Blue Apple have achieved in keeping these young people ticking over. All I know is that without the continuity of routine their morale could be very low and they would all feel very differently. Thank you so much for the inspiration to make this work so well." Ben's mum Johanna.



Blue Apple's first online summer school had great feedback from the young participants and their families. One mum shared: "My daughter really enjoyed the opportunity, the fact that she got a chance to do it."

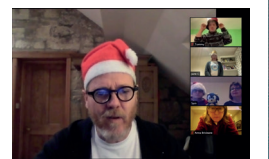


Blue Apple Member Bartholomé enjoyed our activities from his home and staying in touch with his friends. His mum Sylvy shared: "It has been a great support for Bartholomé to be able to carry on joining in Street Dance and Drama during these times. He has also been accessing the recordings on YouTube almost everyday to practise his dancing. "Such an amazing opportunity to keep in touch and be able to interact with all the friends he has made at Blue Apple. Thank you for keeping the show on the road during these difficult times!"

Richard doing an Easter quiz via Zoom just after we went into lockdown



Participants, volunteers, trustees and staff celebrated the end of 2020 on Zoom with lots of trademark fun and laughter. Sally, mum to Blue Apple actor Sam, said: "Blue Apple has been the one consistent thing for Sam this year."



And one family shared: "We want to thank you all for the drama, dancing and singing sessions with Blue Apple which Helen has so enjoyed. They have been a lifeline this year and without them, the situation would have been so much worse."



## Highlights



### A second 'newfound' Polonius speech

was 'discovered' and performed (via Zoom) by Blue Apple actors. The classic Shakespeare speech from Hamlet was reworded by Artistic

Director Richard Conlon to resonate with the pandemic. See: [https://youtu.be/3amtMH\\_RVWA](https://youtu.be/3amtMH_RVWA)



### Inclusive theatres share special milestone

Blue Apple and ArtStream, in Maryland, USA, jointly celebrated 15 years of helping people with learning disabilities to reach their

full potential. The online party included sharing warm-up routines, dance moves and a virtual blowing out of the candles on a birthday cake. The party ended in a disco. See: <https://youtu.be/-JMYwsseV8>



### BBC South Today May 2020

Watch Blue Apple on regional TV news show BBC South where they showed how people with learning disabilities were staying connected during social distancing measures. <https://youtu.be/nObo5gAQe8s>



### Blue Apple launched a new look

and special t-shirts and mugs to mark the 15th anniversary celebrations. The new colours represent the warmth, creativity and vibrancy of Blue Apple.



### International collaborations

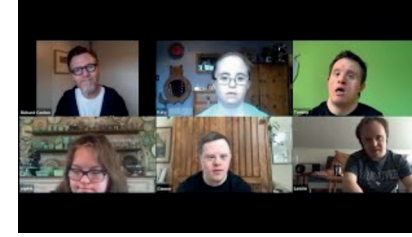
sharing creative ideas in online workshops with Irish theatre company Loaded Dice in July and then in August with Barrier-Free, a theatre based in Maryland, USA.

Richard Conlon, Blue Apple's Artistic Director, said it was a brilliant "hands across the ocean session." See: <https://youtu.be/wEOK7btSgo>



### Blue Apple's 15th anniversary

was celebrated in a special Zoom event with members, parents, past directors, staff and facilitators. Highlights were an interview with founder Jane Jessop and a sharing of favourites performed over the years.



### World Down Syndrome Day

Some Blue Apple performers joined with Sophie from Phoenix, Arizona and Connor from Denver, Colorado to reflect on their performance and what it means to them.

Watched by 795 viewers. See: [https://youtu.be/JAQD\\_lk8kig](https://youtu.be/JAQD_lk8kig)



### August Online Youth Summer School

Using dance, song and acting, young people were encouraged to think about their future with a special theme 'Who am I and what do I want to

be?', raising their aspirations and expectations. "It was really nice, actually...every now and then I would hear her in her room. She'd have got her own YouTube and put her headphones on and she'd be doing it...without us telling her to do it." See: [https://youtu.be/GWRz3\\_RUPo4](https://youtu.be/GWRz3_RUPo4)



### Guerrier family quiz fundraiser

Blue Apple performer Joseph Guerrier was quiz master for this fun family quiz that raised an amazing £321.54 in funds for Blue Apple. A huge thank you to the Guerrier family for this tremendous effort.



### A guide to ultimate fun in the summertime

was devised and performed by Blue Apple's Special Assignments Company during four short sessions in August 2020.

Directed by Simon Morris. See: <https://youtu.be/KsXgr7LcTFs>



### 10 October 2020 World Mental Health Day

Blue Apple performer James, (pictured far left) who has Asperger's Syndrome and lives alone, shared how performing with others,

especially during lockdown, helped him with his mental health. "I feel anxious and low sometimes but when I go to Blue Apple, I find it's a way of releasing and expressing myself. See: <http://ow.ly/GLyP50BN1vX>



### 2020 Winner

Blue Apple Theatre won the Best Social Enterprise award at the 2020 Winchester Business Excellence Awards



## The Year in Review

<b>March 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lockdown started</li> <li>• Blue Apple launched online sessions</li> </ul>
<b>April 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easter Quiz</li> <li>• Digital Easter picnic</li> <li>• Holiday home-based activities via YouTube</li> </ul>
<b>May 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Apple featured on BBC South Today</li> <li>• Launched a Crowdfunder appeal for online summer school</li> </ul>
<b>June 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polonius Newfound speech</li> </ul>
<b>July 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Apple 15 anniversary Zoom event</li> <li>• How To Have Fun In The Summertime by Special Assignments Company</li> <li>• Workshop on Zoom with Irish theatre company Loaded Dice</li> </ul>
<b>August 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop with with Barrier-Free, a theatre based in Maryland, USA</li> <li>• Online Summer School for teenagers with learning disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>September 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Apple and ArtStream 15th Anniversary Party</li> </ul>
<b>October 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James shared his story for World Mental Health Day</li> </ul>
<b>November 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of new look branding</li> </ul>
<b>December 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On ITV Meridian talking about digital play Pinocchia</li> <li>• Pinnochia live streamed Sat 12 Dec</li> <li>• Blue Apple won award at the 2020 Winchester Business Excellence Awards</li> </ul>
<b>March 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Down Syndrome Day 2021 international conversation</li> <li>• Guerrier family quiz fundraiser</li> </ul>

## Reflections from Artistic Director, Richard Conlon

**History will judge the year we have just been through as one of the most challenging for the charitable and arts sectors;**

I am proud to say that we not only survived but we made some worthwhile art, developed new connections and learned new skills over a tricky 12 months.

Our primary drive in the early days of the pandemic was the wellbeing of our participants – staying connected and combatting isolation was a higher priority than dancing, singing or acting.

Slowly but very surely our participants got to grips with a totally new technology and were soon engaging through a screen instead of in a rehearsal room – new skills learned.

Our first fully digital (but still delivered live) show, *Pinocchia*, was watched by many more people than would have seen a theatre-piece, and from further afield too.

The past year taught us a lot which maybe should have been obvious to us on all sorts of levels. At Blue Apple we certainly learned that our community of like-minded people are not necessarily just in our town, county or region but spread across the globe – the digital approach made distance melt away and brought us together with companies like ourselves in the USA and Europe – now we know how easy it



is to reach out and share our work we'll definitely be staying in touch with our new friends.

I have never been prouder of the resilience our performers showed in the year just gone – they were an inspiration. Our trustees also proved their faith in the work of the company by keeping everything moving throughout. As we close the period covered in this review we continue to explore the notion of 'being human' (after the digital-success of *Pinocchia*) with preparations for our own particular take on *Frankenstein* which will be staged and, we hope, toured internationally.



## The impact of maintaining participation online

**At a time of sudden changes for Blue Apple, we adapted and moved our groups into online sessions to ensure our members with learning disabilities could continue to safely access and enjoy all the personal benefits they get from arts activities.**

Blue Apple offered live interactive sessions for each of its groups at their regular times each week. Videos and other activities were also posted on our website and YouTube channel, to help keep everyone active and connected.

For many, the sessions were the highlights of the week whilst they struggled with the isolation of lockdown life. Brothers Harry and Archie Ayling benefited from connecting with their peers during online drama and singing classes during the pandemic.

Harry and Archie Ayling from Winchester both have Fragile X Syndrome, which means they have severe to moderate learning difficulties and mild autistic behaviours. During lockdown and social distancing measures, the brothers worked on college work from home and joined in with Blue Apple's drama and singing classes on Zoom. Mum Lizzie said: "The Blue Apple classes were great.



The boys light up and find a new energy. They love to please and the positive feedback they got during the class was brilliant. If I tell them they are doing a great job they are happy, but when that praise comes from their Blue Apple teachers they visibly puff up. It also gave them something to look forward to and maintains a routine that they are used to."

Harry and Archie have been members of Blue Apple for over two years, enjoying singing classes and drama group the Special Assignments Company. When asked about the Blue Apple classes and what they liked the most, Archie said: "It makes me happy and I feel more confident." And Harry added: "I was nervous at first but then my friends supported me, pushed me to the limit and encouraged me to sing."

Mum Lizzie added: "They both love Blue Apple. It allows them to feel like an important member of a group, gives them a goal to work towards and a huge sense of pride when they have performed.

"The lockdown meant they were unable to go to college, so we were all at home, but this is a happy place for Harry and Archie. They can spend more time with their younger brother and are enjoying helping with cooking. The element they missed was being part of a peer group, the sense of importance when achieving something outside of home and the recognition of that achievement. Routine is important for them and Blue Apple's new online classes helped with this."

How you can help

## I want to help

There are many ways you can get involved with Blue Apple to help make a difference in the lives of people with learning disabilities.

### Make a difference with a donation

To make a donation or become a regular donor,

please visit: [blueappletheatre.com/donate](https://blueappletheatre.com/donate)



### Leave a legacy

The legacy support of generous individuals will help to ensure Blue Apple can continue to make a difference to some of the most disadvantaged people in our society for a long time. Find out more by emailing [finance@blueappletheatre.com](mailto:finance@blueappletheatre.com)

### Become a corporate partner

Blue Apple welcomes sponsorship for our productions and for our education programme – please contact us via [admin@blueappletheatre.com](mailto:admin@blueappletheatre.com) if you would like to pledge your support.

### Volunteer

Volunteers play a crucial role in all that we do at Blue Apple. From helping our members with their lines on and off stage, to providing a friendly face or listening ear at group rehearsals. Please contact us via [admin@blueappletheatre.com](mailto:admin@blueappletheatre.com) if you would like to offer your help.

### Keep in touch

Receive our ebulletin direct to your inbox for all our latest news. Send your details to [admin@blueappletheatre.com](mailto:admin@blueappletheatre.com)

### Follow us on social media

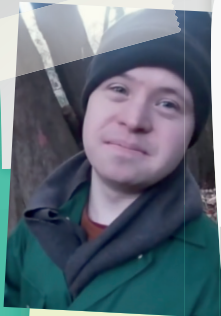
Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Linked In. Plus subscribe to our YouTube channel.





## Feedback from Pinnochia audiences

"I found it far easier to understand than previous Blue Apple productions .. largely because of the subtitles; they were very helpful."



"Loved seeing the allotments for the pre-show, picked up a few good ideas for mine! Then after 2 minutes of the show starting was in tears. Not done that for years. Will remember this forever."

"As a drama practitioner working with adults with learning disabilities the show was amazingly inspiring and sparked lots of ideas for me both in a theatrical way but also digitally."

"It flowed really well. So well designed and put together. I appreciated the subtitles as it made it easier to follow at times."

"Thank you for putting this on and on YouTube, really great to tune to something amazing."

"Thank you so much. It was simply wonderful. Please keep doing what you are doing."

"So many congratulations. Brilliant show, technically amazing, accessible, so well written with wonderful messages and everyone has a delightful cameo. It was so great to see their faces. This should be shown far and wide."

"Huge bravo to you and all at Blue Apple. I thought the show was terrific. So imaginative, moving and brilliant how you involved everyone. I think technology is a really interesting new direction for Blue Apple and one that might take it to many new audiences. Maybe in a strange way Covid has done you a favour."

"I was a little surprised by how poetic the show was."



"I live in the US and it was wonderful to be able to see a performance."

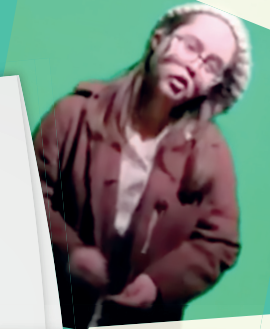
"The show was really well put together considering the COVID restrictions! Such creative use of digital and video features to bring the story to life in a way that you wouldn't otherwise expect in a theatre venue. All cast were fabulous and expressive! I would definitely love to see Blue Apple explore more this medium for future shows! Well done to everyone involved - you are all amazing!"

"Very cleverly done to include a large cast all socially distanced!"

"It was just beautiful. My elderly father passed away earlier this year. Much of the dialogue reminded me of him."

"We were blown away by this production. The creativity employed in the camera work, the settings etc was just amazing. What a mammoth task! We did find the use of subtitles really enhanced our enjoyment. It meant we 'heard' every word. Thank you. it was absolutely brilliant."

"Beautiful storyline, relatable, really loved it. Loved the use of the puppetry and the green screen."



"I just wanted to say, on behalf of the family, how much we enjoyed watching Pinnochia on Saturday evening. It was a fabulous achievement which we could see had taken hours and hours behind the scenes to pull off - and it was FAB! It was great, too, to see the other members of the drama group and we do hope that Z will meet them in person next year. We also want to thank you all for the drama, dancing and singing sessions with Blue Apple which Z has so enjoyed. The joy, enthusiasm and energy you have all given through these challenging months has been exceptional and so very much appreciated. They have been a lifeline this year and without them, the situation would have been so much worse."

"Emily: Great show!!! Enjoyed watching it live from across the pond in Casper, Wyoming!!"



# Thank you!

The past year's achievements would not have been possible without the support of our volunteers and friends. The Trustees extend their sincere thanks to our Patrons Alan Lovell and Sally Phillips, and to all those individuals who have supported the charity either financially or by giving their time and expertise over the past year.

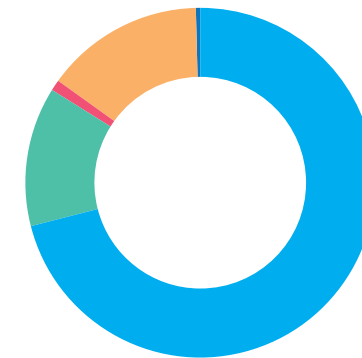
**The charity is also dependent on the generosity and support of numerous organisations, without which the day to day running of Blue Apple Theatre would not be possible. The Trustees wish to acknowledge and thank the following for their support over the year:**



- Albert Hunt Trust
- Arts Council England
- Aviva Community Fund
- Chartwell Shipping
- Cheriton Players
- Delphie Lakeman Memorial Trust
- Edward Gostling Trust
- Friends of Blue Apple
- Hampshire County Council
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Foundation
- Individual donors
- Keats-Shelley Memorial Association
- Play to the Crowd (Theatre Royal Winchester)
- Police & Crime Commissioner, Hampshire & Isle of Wight
- Selwood Trust
- The Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Perivoli Foundation
- University of Winchester
- Winchester City Council
- Winchester GoLD

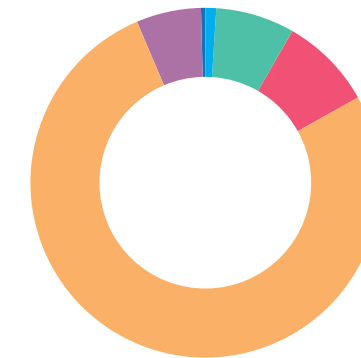


Blue Apple received **£5,100** in donated services and facilities in 2020/21.



**Income 2020-21**

Grants	£91,863
Donations (Individuals & Groups)	£16,632
Donations (Corporate & Charitable)	£1,300
Participation Fees	£19,061
Performance Income	£0
Other Earned Income	£516
<b>Total</b>	<b>£129,372</b>



**Expenditure 2020-21\***

Fundraising Costs	£1,491
Participatory Group Costs	£10,442
Performance & Project Costs	£12,264
Salaries & Staff Costs	£110,074
Administration & Marketing	£8,640
Governance	£503
<b>Total</b>	<b>£143,414</b>

\*Our expenditure was higher than income this year as we weathered the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we were able to use our reserves to meet the shortfall. Restricted funds held increased as projects and productions were delayed. To read a full financial statement visit [blueappletheatre.com](http://blueappletheatre.com)