

Launton Village Players' Artistic Merit Policy
Registered Charity No: 1190149

Definitions:

Artistic Merit - Artistic merit is a term that is used in relation to productions when referring to the judgment of their perceived quality or value as works of art.

Instrumental Value/Outcomes - The value or desirable outcome that satisfies some human needs and wants. For example, the participation in a theatre performance increases the health and social inclusion of the participants, or a theatre performance increases the revenue of the local economy.

Intrinsic/Inherent Value - Intrinsic values are simply how we value the world. It's the building blocks for how we make sense of things. The value of the theatrical arts does not need to be explained for most people, they themselves are a measure of value and are worthy in their own right. The theatrical arts have intrinsic value. They do not need to be justified.

Validity - Is the meaning of a performance piece and how the audience and participants relate to it. If a work of art speaks to somebody and evokes feelings the work is valid, at least to that somebody.

Introduction:

The overriding intention is to generally promote artistic practice in line with our charitable objects. The charity trustees will use their personal knowledge of artistic matters to ensure that the authors, performers and artists are chosen on the basis of the merit of their skills and having regard to the ability of their skills to satisfy the fulfilment of the objectives of the charity, that is to say promoting the public appreciation of and access to the theatrical productions in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and further afield. Launton Village Players (LVP) will aim to provide a range of productions each year with at least one family friendly production.

Criteria:

The trustees may use one, some, or all of the following criteria to decide whether a proposed production has artistic merit. These are listed in no particular order, and may not necessarily have equal weighting in making a decision.

- How it may foster new connections or exemplify creativity and innovation
- Whether it is educational;
- Whether it will be thought provoking, distinctive, bringing fresh insights into musical theatre and drama to the general public;
- The standard (i.e. quality and merit) of an applicant's previous and existing work and reputation;
- Whether it might engender widespread public interest or debate;
- Whether the inherent meaning and storytelling is of value;
- Where appropriate, whether it has relevance to locality and/or heritage;
- Whether it can be seen easily and be sufficiently accessible to the public, and to be for the benefit of the audiences;

- Whether it has the potential to reach underserved populations such as those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited e.g. by geography, ethnicity, economics, disability, or social circumstances;
- How well written it is and how well the characters are drawn;
- Whether there are any aspects of the production which are likely to cause offense to the general public;
- Whether the production is cast-able, and provides a variety of roles both on and off stage that will interest a broad range of participants;
- Whether there are sufficient actors of an appropriate skill level, age, gender and ethnicity available;
- Whether the technical considerations of set, props, sound, lighting, costumes, make up etc. are achievable;
- Whether the production is marketable, i.e. would you / your family / friends pay to see it?

Charity Trustee Skill and Experience:

LVP understands that artistic merit is highly subjective, with the particular tastes and beliefs of each participant, audience member and the wider public impacting on the validity of each piece.

We will endeavour to ensure that the charity trustees will have a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of theatrical productions, and experience of best practice in the administration and delivery of those productions. This will allow them to ensure that the productions that LVP displays, presents, promotes or performs is of artistic merit.

When recruiting new trustees, we will use appropriate measures to ensure they have the necessary experience, skills and understanding to assist in the fulfilment of assessing artistic merit, and thereby contribute to the overall objectives of the charity.

Process:

At the outset, the trustees may see scripts (anonymised where possible and appropriate) so as to engage in decision-making around artistic merit, followed up with an indication of the recipient's understanding of reasonableness of budget and timeline and our requirement for public access and impact.

The trustees will consider whether or not it is of a sufficiently high standard to be acceptable as promoting the public appreciation of the theatrical productions.

Wherever possible, benchmarking against others in the relevant field will be undertaken to guide this decision-making process.

Decision-making will not be delegated, and will be taken within the framework of formal meetings and the due process of risk assessment taken into account.

LVP aims to perform to the best ability of the group. Directors and Trustees must have a good knowledge of participants' skills, experience and aspirations so that they can cast a performance accordingly. Directors (through discussion with the trustees) reserve the right to audition for one or more roles if necessary and appropriate.

The board of trustees will have ultimate responsibility for all decisions. These will be minuted at a trustee meeting.

The trustees are mindful that this must be subject to the trustees satisfying themselves that no existing or potential conflict of interest exists; that the proposed activities will be for public benefit and will be legal; that the proposed activities will be in line with our charitable purposes, and that any equal opportunities and safeguarding requirements are met, all alongside consideration of artistic merit.

Evaluation

We will aim to undertake an evaluation process after each production to evaluate the artistic merit and the outcomes plus the value the audience and participants felt they received. Each production will need to be evaluated to see where our strengths were and where we have room to improve.

Methods for evaluating should be discussed and produced. We recognise that this evaluation process could be difficult and extremely personal. Trustees will endeavour to keep up to date with current research in this area and share any good practice.

Methods to evaluate projects might include;

- Online surveys of audience members a few days after attendance
- Hard copy surveys of audience members when leaving a performance
- Online or hard copy surveys of participants
- Surveys of general public
- Pictures and video evidence of engagement
- Financial reports
- Audience statistics
- Testimonials from audience members and participants
- Reports from external groups who have been working with LVP

Any complaints will be considered by unbiased trustees or other individuals, and notification of the outcomes will be sent to the involved individuals within 14 days of the end of the process.

Update

This document will be updated on an annual basis, or earlier if there is requirement to, or new statutory requirements are made.