

# GEDS Annual General Meeting 2025

Minutes 4 November 2025

Minutes of the GEDS AGM

Tuesday 4 November 2025 at 19:30

Emmanuel Episcopal Church (upstairs hall)

Rue de Monthoux 3, Geneva

## Present:

44 members were in attendance including members of the Committee:

ACKROYD, Siân; ALLARDYCE, Beryl; ALLARDYCE, Brian; ALVAREZ, Susana; BAKKER, Henny; BAKKER, Jo-Ann; BIRD, Gary; BUFFLE, Jenny; BYSKOV, Margaret; McCLENAGHAN, David; CRUISE, Gaby; CUNNINGHAM, Sandy; DAS, Dibyaudh DEREKOVA, Olga; EASTON, Jane; FINN, Julian; GRANT, Malcolm; GRAY, Wendy; HANCOX, Tim; LEWIS, David; LLOYD, Bill; LOM, Helen; MADI-NASSAR, Tamaam; MARINO, Lucia; MORPHY, Neil-Jon; NEWSOME, John; PAPANDROPOULOS, Lily; O'RIORDAN, Robert; ROBOTHAM, Karen; RUTTEN, Caspar; SLOVENSKI, Charles; STEVENS, Yvette; STEVENSON, D; WILLIAMS, Margit; WILLIAMS, Roger; BRONNVIK, Josamine; MENDES, Ann-Marie; NEWHART, Lance; NEZNANSKY, Masha; NORDBERG, Markus; SHERWOOD, Lesley; STUMP, Nathalie; VALO, Veera; and WARD, John

Apologies for absence: AHEARN, Mary; BIASS, Eric; BIASS, Paola; CAMBITSIS, Joan; CROTTY, Brigitte; DÖRIG, Bernice; DOUGLAS, Elizabeth; DOUGLAS, John; Frou-Frou; GOODYEAR, Pauline; GOODYEAR, Tim; HORNIG, Jutta; MUTTI, Susan; and UNGAR, Jerry

Chair John Ward welcomed those present and declared the meeting open and quorate (10 percent of approximately 204 members)

## A. Adoption of and Matters Arising out of the Minutes of the 2024 AGM

1. Three names were printed wrongly: Markus, Debbie, and Caspar's.
2. The price difference between Uptown and the English Church was noted incorrectly during the 2024 AGM.
3. Number of auditors to be corrected.

The Chair proposed to put the number of Auditors forward as a motion; GEDS statutes state to have two auditors but the de facto position is that there is one. The proposal was to change the

statutes to allow only one auditor of the books, reflecting the reality. A vote was taken. No vote was against. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Jane Easton noted that the stage in Nyon is in fact equivalent to Coppet, in reference to point 35 of the 2024 AGM minutes. Members noted that it could be considered for a large audience given approximately 100 more seats than Coppet and an orchestra pit, that the booking can be cancelled much closer to the show and possibly only as 48 hours in advance, that the public transport is well connected, and that publicity should describe how to reach the location.
5. A motion was made to accept the minutes, and it passed by majority.

## B. Report of the Committee:

6. John Ward, as Chair began a summary of the [report of the committee](#). He noted that the season began with *Ghosts*, which the Geneva Nordic club attended and praised. *Shakespeare in Love* was selected by the Committee and drew in new actors as well as large crowds, surpassing expectations and nearly selling out. *Pygmalion* was staged for the first time by GEDS, which has a special relationship with Shaw and his work.
7. Ann-Marie Mendes, as Vice Chair in charge of productions continued, reiterating the Chair's material and adding that her role was extended to include more audition and rehearsal to support seasoned directors and encourage new ones. She shared that the season for this and next year was quite exciting, although all contain similar morbid themes, by happenstance. *Deathtrap* was ongoing and proceeding well. *A Servant to Two Masters* was to follow as a comedy to continue a variety of plays and diversity of themes. Following would be *Late Company*, set to be auditioned on 10 December. September 2026, *Hangmen* was planned in Espérance. Finally, Wole Soyinka's *Lion and the Jewel* was planned to close the productions out. The Vice Chair noted that GEDS is always looking for new plays and new kinds of plays. Proposals are needed up to two years in advance.

7.1 Neil-Jon Morphy commented that the request for proposals had asked for seasons 2025-2026, but he found it unclear that they would be booked out so far in advance, leaving ambiguity for prospective directors. The Chair responded that the theatres are booking far in advance, demanding more planning. Moreover, plays would be requested for 2027 in January 2026. The note was well taken that the advertising needs to be clear on dates.

7.2 Malcolm Grant asked about the gender balance of men's and women's roles in the next five plays, and whether that balance had been considered in selecting the plays. The Chair responded that the plays are based on what members propose and a balance is found from there, although the gender balance was limited and not exact. The point was made that gender and diversity are topics to keep top of mind and maintained deliberately.

8. Masha Neznansky for Playreadings, noted with gratitude that the GEDS showcase this year drew out GEDS writers.

8.1 A request was made to open the full season of sign up for playreadings. Masha responded that early openings had previously led to a high drop-out rate and are not going to be implemented.

8.2 A request was made in that case that the GaaG alert when sign up opens, which will be implemented.

9. Josamine Bronnvik and David McClenaghan for Publicity, noted the handover of publicity duties during the previous season leading to the continuity and enhancement of publicity activities. The GaaG newsletter was continued and revamped visually. Websites and blogs, the radio relationship, and networks with other theatre groups were ongoing. During the previous season, updates were undertaken on the website to modernize, as well as optimize for mobile phones. Standardization of the brand for GEDs across all publicity took place. In addition, GEDs were invited to attend a diplomatic event with the UK Ambassador to the United Nations with ten actors and Liz Comstock-Smith's costumes, which was noted as a great success for 1000 guests and shared across social media. Publicity added that the GEDs photographer Ariadne Kypriadi left and a new photographer was needed.
  - 9.1 Members commended the design and social media modernization.
  - 9.2 Dibyaudh Das asked for an updatable calendar for upcoming events including workshops; similar or the same as sign up to playreadings and something in addition to the newsletter. Publicity planned to look into it to check the feasibility.
  - 9.3 A request was made by Tamaam Madi-Nassar to print a season leaflet in four pages with the productions and playreadings to share in other venues and theatres. Publicity noted the two page leaflet for this season, agreeing a four page with the playreadings can be considered for printing.
  - 9.4 A member asked to share the UK Mission's event work for GEDs membership.
  - 9.5 A member asked whether membership increased following the UK Mission event. Publicity noted that it was not tracked.
  - 9.6 Members noted that targeted reels are useful like the ones used in *Pygmalion*.
  - 9.7 Tamaam Madi-Nassar commented to include consideration of TPG advertising through LiveSystems.
10. Nathalie Stump for Technical shared that the technical team began asking cast members to help at least once on set build. As a result, the previous Sunday saw 13 people at the GEDs barn, significantly more numerous than in previous shows. Technical noted that nevertheless, more help was needed.
  - 10.1 A member asked that the volunteer programmes remind volunteers ahead of time, referencing that there were often volunteers who did not show on the day that they agreed to help.
  - 10.2 Events responds that planning is done between Front of House and Bar but no shows might be inevitable. The time to be there and guidelines are shared but that's the most possible.
11. Veera Valo for Business discussed rights for playreadings as a standard price around 100 EUR, along with a requirement for credit given. For a full production 500–3000 EUR cost can be expected. Business added that recent GEDs productions have relied on Espérance, Coppet, and Le Manège theatres, and this will continue due to availability and good value for money. Any suggestions were welcomed on new theatres. For rehearsal spaces, Business noted that GEDs uses Sismondi and other schools as inexpensive and practical.
  - 11.1 A question was asked on which theatres will be used in 2027. Business confirmed Le Manège and Espérance for the Spring.
12. Lance Newhart for Events shared a busy year on the Opening Event, AGM 2024, and Summer Barbecue. Events helped to organize an acting workshop in partnership with GAOS bringing a professional coach and attracting non-members' interest, with a discount to make it more

available to members. The event was a success in terms of attendees and response. Events was also responsible for recording and editing during the season. Lance noted thanks also to the members who come early to help set up and stay late to break down at GEDS events.

12.1 Members moved to thank the buffet providers for the AGM, which was agreed by a majority.

13. Approval of committee reports: Jane Easton moved to adopt, and Julian Finn seconded. The motion passed with no votes against, and the reports were approved.

## C. Report of the Treasurer:

14. Markus Nordberg, as Treasurer, highlighted the surplus funds that GEDS has amassed, although GEDS is a non-profit, given the success of all three productions of the previous season. The membership and the bar both received thanks for drawing people and funds in.
15. Approval of the Treasurer's report: Malcolm Grant proposed to adopt, and John Newsome seconded. The motion passed with no votes against, and the report was approved.

## D. Stieber Gift and Tax Matters Relating to This

16. The Chair presented that GEDS lost a dear friend in David Stieber, who passed away during the year. He left the Society a generous 50,000 Swiss Francs endowment. A team of solicitors was hired to investigate the situation. GEDS have always assumed it is nonprofit, acted as a nonprofit, provided for the public as a nonprofit, but it had never applied for official recognition. This year, GEDS did apply for nonprofit status. The application was refused because of the points, shared in the report: summarily that there is a high profit made by the society. The bad news was that tax must be paid on the endowment as high as 20,000 CHF. The good news was that the tax per year would be approximately only 500 CHF per year. The solicitors recommended reviewing the statutes and reapplying for rightful nonprofit status. The legal company will be kept on to examine the statutes and correct the nonprofit status. GEDS will need to pay taxes for 2025, but the state was not seeking back taxes.

16.1 Susana Alvarez asked whether there were conditions on the endowment, sharing that the GAOS endowment was conditional on a Gilbert and Sullivan show.

16.2 There was no condition included in Stieber's will, although Committee favoured spending it in a memorial fashion and Treasury noted that the fund is separate from general funds.

16.3 Tamaam Madi-Nassar noted a centenary event should be planned years in advance, given that it should be a large event to gain high publicity, which could be a use of the funds.

16.4 Malcolm Grant asked whether it was too late correcting the statutes to fix the 20,000 CHF tax loss on the endowment itself, given that GEDS operates as a nonprofit.

16.5 Treasury responded with a hopeful no, adding that the work was ongoing to keep the 20,000 CHF as well as nonprofit status.

16.6 Wendy Gray asked why GAOS was nonprofit, but GEDS was not.

16.7 The Chair responded that GAOS applied for nonprofit status ten years ago and renewed this year. At the time, they had a large surplus while GEDS was under the VAT threshold, making the status less pressing. The Chair assured membership that the process to rectify the situation and correct the nonprofit status was underway. Treasury acknowledged the

support and help of GAOS in the GEDS nonprofit application. Jane Easton shared that the Swiss state likely did not understand the finer points of the English language statutes. The Chair agreed and included that GEDS was addressing the translation issue.

16.8 Karen Robotham added that the trouble should not put members off giving more money.

## E. Election of a Polling Officer

17. John Newsome and Julian Finn volunteered and were unanimously elected polling officers.

## F. Declaration of Nominations for the Committee

18. The roles of Secretary and of Chair were open for the next Committee and required filling. The Committee and outgoing Committee members John Ward and Alexandra Shelest were formally thanked.

19. Election of a Chair, Vice-Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer and Election of Committee Members

20. The polling officers made a motion for membership approval of the nominations: Masha Neznansky for Chair, Ann-Marie Mendes for Vice Chair, Dibyaudh Das for Secretary, Markus Nordberg for Treasurer, and continuity of the previous Committee roles.

21. The motion passed and the Committee of point 20 was confirmed.

22. The former Chair John Ward stepped down, with remarks on his six years, the ongoing legacy of the society, and the formal thanks of the Committee.

## G. Election of an Audit Board of One Member

23. Jane Easton moved to elect Ruprecht Simon as auditor. Caspar Rutten seconded the motion. The motion passed by membership vote.

## H. Any Other Business

24. The outgoing Chair John Ward moved to bestow Honorary Membership on Nathalie Stump and John Newsome, with 21 signatures on the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

25. The outgoing Chair John Ward proposed including benefits of some kind for the Committee to repay work done and incentivise volunteership; possibilities included no fees during the period served on Committee.

25.1 Neil-Jon suggested checking the GEDS Statutes for validity

25.2 Jane Easton noted that there is a significant amount of work done by non-committee members that would not be recognized in the motion.

25.3 Karen Robotham shared that it was a nice idea but, she would want time to consider whether membership fees is the best way to repay the Committee for work done.

25.4 Tim Hancox reminded the meeting that a Committee dinner was tradition in the past.

25.5 Jennie Buffle worried that there would be problems of electing people who were not paid-up members if the Committee did not pay fees, but she agreed that a dinner or show tickets could be a reasonable replacement.

- 25.6 David Lewis agreed that an incentive to the Committee was reasonable, up to a limit of a certain value.
- 25.7 Susanna Alvarez shared that GAOS Committee Members are reimbursed for their fees when elected.
- 25.8 Tamaam Madi-Nassar agreed that there should be a benefit to being on Committee, but that it should not be waving the membership fee. A fee discount or free tickets were suggested.
- 25.9 John Newsome proposed two tickets for each Committee Member.
- 25.10 Siân Ackroyd suggested that the question is put in the GaaG to gather proposals from the membership as a whole.
- 25.11 Karen Robotham noted overall that the motion was not controversial in the thought that something should be given to Committee members, only that it was not clear what that should be. Karen moved to include a Committee dinner per year. The motion passed by membership vote.
26. Julian Finn moved for closure of the AGM. The motion was seconded by John and carried by vote. The new Chair closed the meeting.