

Report on New Staging

Harwell Primary School, Gobo Theatre Foundation, Harwell Village Hall

The above organisations joined together to buy some portable staging equipment for community use.

Gobo Theatre Foundation (charity number 1140695) is a youth theatre based in Harwell Village Hall and our emphasis is to make sure that opportunities are available to all, especially those that could not afford it elsewhere. We have a tiered pricing structure based on family income and are very proud to be supporting some great young people with our work, who might not otherwise be able to pay for these chances. We have also started doing some work with adults – partly as a way of bringing more funds towards the youth work, and this aspect of our work is held at Harwell Primary School. In joint conversations we realised we both needed some portable staging – the school has some very old stuff that Gobo used last year but it is not really adequate for our or their needs.

The village school has grown considerably in recent years as a result of the house building increase in the area. There are now around 200 children across 7 classes. The current Head and management team are working hard to make many improvements around the school, and increasing facilities for these numbers, as funded by the Harwell School Association (charity number 1129793), which is the fundraising parent teacher group. The hall has been renovated over the February half term – very old equipment removed, walls repainted and the floor sanded and varnished. To complete this with new staging has been very valuable. Particularly as the staging we purchased is multi-level, which allows for excellent visibility.



Many children crammed onto the small old stage at the school for the nativity in 2018. Most not visible!



Gobo show 2019 with around 30 students – grown to 50 this year. We are hoping the new staging will improve visibility and dynamics for our 2020 production.

For the youth theatre Gobo uses the renovated Harwell Village Halls, both for rehearsals and productions. It has been designed so that the floor is a stage and the seating is raked to allow for visibility – however as our numbers grow and grow, we are finding that this isn't sufficient for getting everyone seen and to have some elevated areas would be immensely beneficial. There are also many other groups using the Village Hall that have expressed interest in being able to have a raised area – particularly bands who might want a drummer seen, and choirs who often have many onstage and only standing so need those at the back seen. Local

Didcot Phoenix Drama Group and other players who bring shows to the hall would also like it as an option. So in conversations here we also realised it would be useful for community use within the village hall.

So all 3 organisations decided to club together to buy some shared staging that would be available for use within both the school hall and the village hall – although since it has already been borrowed and taken elsewhere too so it’s proving popular!

22% of students on role at the Primary School live in Didcot and Gobo has about 24% (of 40 pupils) - which equates to 50-60 pupils each year for both organisations. Having the staging as a shared commodity expands the possibility of use – Harwell School and the village hall have many community groups using their spaces, including groups from Didcot who would be very keen to use staging. These are direct users of the staging – all have audience members that benefit even more by being able to see the performers so much better, and from

audiences come more members. If they have seen a memorable and enjoyable performance, they are much more likely to get involved next time, and so these groups are likely to expand more. Involvement with the arts is such an important part of community and Harwell has many things to offer the wider community of Didcot.



School nativity 2019 on the new staging – many more possibilities for having everyone seen! (And heard with the special surface!)

The staging was purchased in December for a total of £7253.76. This was contributed to by the following organisations:

Harwell Village School	£2218.80
Gobo Theatre Foundation	£1250.00
Harwell Village Hall	£1500.00
Didcot Town Council	£826.00
Co-op Community Fund	£250.00
VAT refund	£1208.96



The above image is taken from the staging website – it is similar to ours though ours is all black; both the stands and tops and covers. It is modular and therefore can be used in many different combinations, which allows for much more dynamics in productions as well as many different uses for various users. It is much safer for all users as the top is a special non-slip surface, and the first comment from the Head of Harwell Primary School was “it’s SO much quieter!”.



Teachers at Aureus Primary enjoying their “new” staging as handed on from Harwell.

Here at Gobo Theatre Foundation we haven’t had the chance to try it out yet, though are hoping to very soon as we begin staging our large 2020 production, but we, and all the groups who have contributed, are very excited about the many possibilities this is going to bring to many community clubs in the area. It’s already been used by others who we did not anticipate before the purchase, and there have been other positive side effects – for example the old staging from Harwell Primary School was taken by Aureus Primary School in Didcot and they are equally thrilled with their new acquisition as they had nothing at all before.

Thank you to all those who made this purchase possible.