**Report by the Chairman of The Repertory Players to the Annual General Meeting**

**Sunday April 14 2013**

Ladies and gentlemen

In a small but significant way, the past year has allowed Reps to start reaping from what we have sown, and it is my belief that the hard work put in by so many people is creating the foundation of the brighter future to which I alluded in my report last year. Although we have been able to post a modestly positive financial result for 2012, the year was not, in fact, an easy one for The Repertory Players – or for Zimbabwe – as we continue to experience the consequences of a sluggish overall economic situation within the country.

The Society has continued to stage its own productions on the Main Stage and in Theatre Upstairs, and has been able to host hire productions of a range of organisations and individuals. A reasonable number of new members have been recruited and activities related to the members’ bar have been plentiful. Wardrobe hire has continued to be promoted and encouraged. A small but useful amount of sponsorship money has come in. As always, many members (and non-members) have given freely of their time and materials and we have put both to good effect.

All of this has combined to keep the Society fully operational, although it must be said that in all these areas we would like to have seen a higher level of income. We want and need greater support for all our activities, with resultant increased income to allow not only for day to day expenditure but also for much-needed investment in repair and maintenance as well as in new equipment and upgrading projects.

I am frequently told by people from all walks of life that they are amazed at how Reps keeps going through good times and bad, and at how it still plays an important role in the community through provision of an active and well-run arts and entertainment venue to be proud of. And indeed it is true that, in a country which really has so many pressing problems to face and so few resources –especially financial – it is impressive to see a small band of enthusiasts keeping the flag flying and maintaining a tradition dating back more than 80 years. We have much to be proud of, fellow members.

Keeping Reps going is not an easy task but it is one we all enjoy, and it is my hope that we can build on the progress of the past year to do even more to not only stay up and running but also to expand, innovate and extend our horizons, all of which are essential for growth and development.

As I was able to do last year, I can confidently state that Reps is both stable and strong, and that we have every reason to believe that the future is bright on all fronts. We must keep ourselves focused on what must be done and we have to encourage new ideas, new initiatives, new people and new methods if we are to remain operational and relevant. Reps’ success depends entirely on the talent, skill, commitment and contribution of its members and other supporters, so it needs all of this in abundance.

After last year’s AGM the Executive Committee held a second Strategic Planning Seminar, reviewing and updating the 2011-2013 Strategic Plan. Report-back sessions in June and November highlighted action taken and what courses of action were being followed into 2013. I would like to see more members coming to these sessions as they provide both a means of finding out what is going on and an opportunity to have one’s voice heard, on any number of issues. In general terms we have achieved much of what we set out to do, but there are some areas in which we need more meaningful action, most especially in the area of recruiting people and then equipping them with the information and skills they need to undertake the activities essential to running shows. The skills base in lighting, sound and general stage management need to be expanded as a matter of urgency.

The sub-committees of Exco are tasked with handling ongoing strategic activities and reporting to Exco on the status of these activities. To remind you, the portfolios are:

* Production (chaired by Sue Bolt)
* Finance (chaired by Sue McMillan)
* Backstage (chaired by Stage PJ Smyth)
* Marketing and Publicity (chaired by Stan Higgins)
* Technical management (chaired by Mike Blackburn)
* Office and property management (no working committee, but the activity is spearheaded by the Theatre Manager)
* Training and development (chaired by Marc Thomas)
* Bar management and social events (chaired between the AGM and August by Jenni Ferguson, and after her resignation from Exco in July by Tim Garrard)
* Membership (chaired initially by Tim Garrard and latterly by Mike Southall)

Members of Exco and of these sub-committees have been involved in all relevant areas of endeavour, although I would like to say that I would like to see more activity flowing from some of the committees/portfolios. New faces can and must come onto these sub-committees and from them will come the Exco members of the future. As stated previously, everyone coming on to Exco should do so with a background of active and successful participation in one or more of these sub-committees, which provide a valuable insight into how Reps works.

During 2012 we continued to have the services of John Bonney as Theatre Manager and his input remains both valuable and valued, and I would like on behalf of every member of the Society to thank him most sincerely for his contribution and his constant prodding and dropping in of new ideas. I would like also to thank all the staff of Reps for their continued dedication, co-operation and input.

During 2012 we also enjoyed the services of a Director of Productions, having contracted Zane Lucas for a period of a year. Unfortunately illness prevented Zane from achieving all he set out to do and for most of the second half of the year he was unable to undertake the tasks allocated to him. We look forward to his ongoing recovery and to seeing him at work again in the field he loves so much and at which he excels. Well done to him on being named Zimbabwe’s Best Director for 2012 in the recent NAMA Awards, for his direction of the play Eclipsed, which was also a nominee for Best Play in the NAMA Awards.

We do not as yet have funding for a contracted Director of Productions for 2013, so this post is not active at present, but the valuable experiences of 2012 will stand us in good stead when funding does become available and we are in a position to re-introduce it, as we know we must if we are to enjoy growth and development of our core business.

I would like to thank each and every person and organisation whose input and efforts have helped Reps in one way or another. These include members, friends, staff, colleagues in related fields, sponsors, donors, suppliers and patrons. Reps is fortunate to have such a network of support and its existence depends on the continuation of such a network. A sincere thank you to you all for what you have done, do and will do.

It is my hope that 2013 will bring about change in the economy and in the community, which will in turn allow us to take advantage of positive developments that will inevitably flow from such change.

Our focus areas for the coming year are clear: maintain and increase the level of activity on the stages at the same time building the skills base; bring about greater ticket sales; attract a significant number of new members and ensure last year’s members all renew their membership; upgrade the technical and theatrical infrastructure of Reps where needed; maintain the momentum achieved in bar activities and sales; encourage greater use of the Wardrobe and enjoy increased income from it; source funds from international and local organisations to increase money available for developmental expenditure.

It is a major set of challenges but I believe we as a Society are equal to the task and I look forward to a continuation of the spirit that has made Reps what it is today and which will equip us with at least the attitude needed to see us into 2014.