John Wesley said “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can”.

Alone, that seems an impossible challenge. But Philippians 4.13 reminds us that “I can do all things through Jesus Christ who gives me strength”.

A young man, struggling with his mental health, had challenged himself at New Year to perform an act of kindness every day. As his health began to improve throughout January, he decided to continue this challenge throughout the year. Twelve months later, having completed an act of kindness every single day, he was interviewed on the radio. As a result, he said, his mental health had improved significantly and he felt a renewed and changed man. His kindness had not only been a blessing to others – to friends, family, and strangers – but also to himself.

Kindness is kindled with one act – one smile, one cup of coffee – to one person.

We are entering spring/summer with fewer restrictions and more opportunities to carefully connect with others. May we, through God’s strength and leading, seek to be actively kind to everyone we encounter.
New Business Model

Last spring brought Saltmine a challenge to grow in ways we had never anticipated. We were faced with a choice to sit still and hope for the best or allow our restrictions to force creativity and new ways of working. As an organisation underpinned by our supporters and inspired by Jesus, finding a new way to grow was always our choice.

It’s been a journey and we are still learning, but a new business model has taken shape over the year and we are so proud of how each member of the company has facilitated rapid growth that under ‘normal circumstances’ would have taken years.

Over the following pages you will see how our work has grown and how we have had to adapt to producing performance and educational content for the small screen. We are still learning lots but think that having filmed both theatre in education projects and a Christmas show successfully is worth celebrating!

We are itching to get back to good old theatre with an audience but we are so thankful for all we’ve been able to achieve whilst the curtains are closed.

Written by Bethany Kessell, Design Lead
Embarking on filming *Hark! A Nativity Story* was an audacious and ambitious adventure from the start. The ingredients were assembled – actors, a band, our wonderful directors, a beautiful set, and the most important story of all to tell – but we had no idea what would come out of the oven! Gathering in our Covid bubble gifted us with the real sense of forming a creative community. Having such a large team working on a singular project is a rare occurrence; the result was a truly collaborative achievement.
CALLING THE SHOTS

Instead of our usual crowds of people, our audience was formed of four cameras and their very talented operators. The decision to film began as a necessary choice made when the limitations of lockdown were closing in, but soon became an opportunity for creative freedom. Our videographer Dave describes the process:

“It was a privilege – having watched the musical Hamilton online I was pumped for the challenge! We got a team of freelance videographers on board along with me and Chez, and hired extra kit. Between us we already had a range of experience, it was just about honing existing skills. With limited time, calling the shots was a high pressure, high stakes experience, and that was before long hours of editing! A highlight was capturing the audience reactions. We sat all the cast down in the auditorium and recorded a whole range of rapturous responses to layer the sounds of a larger audience over the footage. After a couple of intense weeks, there was a real moment of camaraderie and joy at what we had all achieved.”
LISTEN, CAN YOU HEAR IT?

Led by musical director Reisz Amos, with an incredibly talented band of musicians and composers playing a range of instruments, we were able for the first time to create an original score for a Christmas show. Using the underscore soundtrack he had created for previous tours as a base, Jacob describes the process of storytelling through music:

“Our idea was to make the opening song a macro creation story that sets up the start of the show as well as the context. The band jammed around the idea and came up with a structure that followed the energy and excitement of creation and the subsequent solemnity of the fall of man, musically and lyrically. From there we built anticipation; a repeated ascending phrase over the words ‘Listen, Can You Hear It?’ The song ended on a chord which intentionally didn’t resolve, inviting to the audience to ‘hark’ to the unfolding story.”

With 63 church and community bookings, Hark! reached around as many people as all three of our Christmas tours usually do. We were delighted to hear of how many churches, families, and individuals engaged with Hark! – our audience stretched as far as Australia and Thailand!
“Your clever plot, humour, wonderful acting and clear gospel message made the performance sparkle – it was the highlight of my Christmas.”

Christ Church, Coventry
INTERNET SAFETY

In the height of lockdown, children’s screen time climbed to an average of nine hours a day. Although largely for learning, this increased activity heightened concerns over internet safety and the wellbeing of our young people. For Internet Safety Day on February 9th, we decided to create new resources for primary and secondary school students. We wanted to explore dangers online and offer practical advice to help students safely navigate the ever-growing digital world.

Through an interactive presentation, our primary school resource helps children identify what makes apps safe and unsafe, how to protect personal information and what to do if they feel worried or upset online. We wove the session around clips from our primary theatre show, Escape, and created fun characters to unpack our three top rules.

“The thought-provoking questions that were asked throughout the video resource generated a positive response from our children. The students engaged with sharing their thoughts and opinions.”

Primary School, February 2021
Our secondary school resource is a webpage which students can access on their own devices. Presented with the phone interfaces of two characters, Samantha and Nathan, students trace their paths across various online platforms. Faced with tough decisions surrounding cyber bullying, sexting, pornography and online grooming, students are empowered to make wise choices and take control of what happens next. It was a challenging process designing and programming an interactive webpage, and our web/graphic designer worked hard on creating a phone app that was both relevant and engaging.

“A really relevant, dynamic resource. Well done to Saltmine Trust on this production – it’s brilliant.”

Oasis Lister Park, February 2021

To view our repertoire of digitally adapted Theatre in Education productions, visit: saltminetrust.org.uk/digital

Written by Freddy and Ben, Senior Actors
IN THEIR SHOES

What happens when you bring six seasoned Saltmine actors to a show they have performed many times before? Their ideas become bigger and more bonkers, of course.

With funding from the Home Office, after having had to delay touring twice, we were able to film In Their Shoes for the first time. More characters, more costume changes, a reinvented set and brand new music injected the show with plenty of life.

Our rehearsals were full of laughter, silliness, and inventiveness. But In Their Shoes has always featured an irreplaceable main character – the audience.

In the accompanying workshop we really wanted to recreate a sense of interaction, including as many games and character cameos as we could in order to engage the children in their classrooms or at home. Many schools across Sandwell and Dudley have already received the show, and we’re currently exploring how much further it can be distributed.

“A great experience and as good as having you live in the school!”
Sandwell Virtual Tour, March 2021

Written by Emily Feltham, Actor/Writer

To view our repertoire of digitally adapted Theatre in Education productions and workshops, visit: saltminetrust.org.uk/digital
In the autumn of 2019, we were finally able to pay off the mortgage and become the owners of the Saltmine headquarters building. The next step was seeking to raise money for a complete replacement of our extremely worn out kitchen. We raised over £12,500 and with the office closed again, January 2021 provided an unexpected but perfect opportunity to commence the work.

The team stripped the old kitchen out before Christmas and we took full advantage of the January sales, purchasing new kitchen cupboards and flooring along with a new cooker, hob and dishwasher. We replaced the tired beige with a beautiful sage décor, and are now the grateful owners of a brand new kitchen. As you can imagine, lunchtime and tea breaks are very important at Saltmine; the kitchen has been a huge blessing in the midst of all the restrictions and uncertainty. Thank you so much to everyone who has supported us.
This year, Saltmine Trust re-told the powerful Easter story through three individual creative digital sketches. We wanted to take people across churches and households on a journey from Good Friday through to Resurrection Sunday, with two monologues and an all-age sketch.

In The Breaking
A monologue from Mary Magdalene centring on the suffering and loss of the crucifixion.

“With the tremor of an earthquake the damage is undone; with the relief of a torn veil you’re drawn in. It is finished. And somehow, in the breaking - there’s beginning.”

He’s Alive!
A monologue from the disciple John, who is reeling from the impact of Jesus truly being ‘the resurrection and the life’.

“And we spilled from that room, alive and charged, and changed, and vision altered, transformed, never seeing or being the same way again, never again.”

Jerusalem Live
In this ‘news room’ style, all-age sketch, meet the clumsy tomb guards, the frantic disciples, and the first eye-witness to the resurrection.

These short films are still available now, along with other gospel resources, and can be found by visiting: saltminetrust.org.uk/gospelresources

Written by Ben and Freddy, Senior Actors
PRAY FOR 
SALT Mine

“I am the resurrection, he said, I am the Life and he was – he really was. And we spilled from that room, alive and charged, and changed, and vision altered, transformed, never seeing or being the same way again, never again.”

Excerpt from ‘He’s Alive’, one of Saltmine’s latest gospel resources available online. Visit: saltminetrust.org.uk/gospelresources
PRAY FOR SALTMINES

TEAM
We are all continually navigating through ongoing uncertainty. Please pray our team would have discernment and wisdom as we grow into this new business model.

REACH
Through our digital productions and virtual tours we have the potential to reach a far wider audience. Please pray for each person who might be engaging in our work, that their lives would be impacted and transformed.

INNOVATION
We are adapting to our new business model; a theatre company producing films and other digital resources. Please pray for direction on the right projects and avenues to undertake, as well as preparations for when we can tour again.

INSPIRATION
Throughout all our Theatre in Education work our heart is to inspire young people to make positive life choices and to perceive themselves and others with a greater sense of confidence and worth. We pray our digital Theatre in Education Resources would aid young people as they address issues such as mental health, community cohesion, and internet safety.

PROVISION
Give thanks to God for the abundance of provision during this pandemic through our faithful supporters. We are so grateful, not only for financial support, but for our pool of collaborators, and for the fresh ideas provided by God’s dynamic inspiration.

PARTNERSHIPS
From the Home Office to YFC, we are so grateful for all the individuals and organisations who partner with us. This year, although we have been blessed with these existing partnerships - including ongoing work with Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons) - it has been very difficult to explore new connections. Please pray for us to be able to reach more people who are inspired to share our vision of how the creative arts can be an incredible tool.

PERSEVERANCE
After a long year some semblance of normality seems so near but yet so far! Please pray for continued endurance and hope as we rely on God’s faithfulness throughout the next season, and plan our future work.
The Liberator was originally commissioned all the way back in 2019, with the intention to premier the show at Saltmine’s 40th birthday celebration before a summer tour. Needless to say, these plans had to change. However, with funding secured from the Jerusalem Trust, the extra time has given us an unexpected chance to dream and create. We’ve begun to get under the skin of the script, exploring using physical language and musical potential to bring Jesus’ story to life. These dynamic rehearsals – which have at times bordered on bible study – have involved devising modern interpretations of the parable, performing the Beatitudes at a music festival and creating a storm with nothing but ourselves and a few chairs! We are continuing to develop plans as to how and when we will produce this show, so watch this space.

2022 also holds exciting plans to resurrect the Birmingham Passion Play as the National Passion Play! Both Norwich and hopefully Birmingham (tbc) will be experiencing the joy, pain, and drama of “God on the Streets” over Holy Week. We can’t wait to work with local volunteers and performers to create brand new community casts and tailor the journey to the local area so that each retelling of the story is truly “by the city, for the city”.

Written by Emily Feltham, Actor/Writer

To follow our journey with future Passion Plays or to make a donation towards them, visit: saltminetrust.org.uk/passionplay
For more information and to book any of our available productions please email creative@saltmine.org

Gifts for specific projects:
If the project for any donation received has been fully funded, completed or discontinued for any reason, Saltmine Trust reserves the right to use the donation for other purposes.

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