

Blind Faith - the mystery

In blind faith, on 30th May 2014, after hearing of the success of ‘Churchill - The Musical’, the exciting plans for ‘Blind Faith - The Musical’, and the Investment Offer, which stated, ‘*Blind Faith – The Musical*’ needs working capital to get the project off the ground in a sound and professional manner’, my wife and I, under some considerable emotional pressure, made a loan of £10k to H&A Musicals, a company which we were told was valued at £5m. (email 24th November 2014) This was to be repaid on 30th November 2015. The money was transferred electronically to Barclays Business Account - Brighton Branch. Curiously, or not, the only two shareholders (Directors) had 200 shares each, at £1 a share. (Companies House website) Did they have a joint account, or individual accounts with Barclays? Who had access to the funds? Was this the £25k recorded at Companies House, (‘Allotment of Shares, Number allotted 4, Nominal Value of each share £1, Amount paid £25,000.0’) If so, ‘*THE SHARES HAVE ATTACHED TO THEM FULL VOTING, DIVIDEND AND CAPITAL DISTRIBUTION RIGHTS.*’ Why were we not informed of our rights?

We were guests at the ‘*Red Carpet World Premier*’ performance at Lagoa Auditorium on 7th October 2014, which was superb in every way. Lord George Carey, the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, ‘... who having read the script and listened to the songs, said, “I am really impressed by this project and wish you every blessing.” (Portugal News 02-10-2014) In 2015 the production was due to, ‘... embark on a ground-breaking National Cathedral Tour of the UK, starting at Manchester Cathedral on 20th March and finishing at London’s magnificent 2,200 seat Central Hall Westminster on 5th September.’ (ditto)

Churchill - The Musical, was also due to open in September ‘(probably at the Queen’s Theatre in Hornchurch), and then the following month we will be opening ‘*Capone - The musical*’ at the same venue. Both shows will then do short tours in the UK before ‘Churchill’ opens in San Diego and ‘Capone’ opens in Chicago.’ The Directors were also writing ‘Anno Domini - The Musical’, ‘... which tells the story of Jesus from the Gospel accounts’ (email 15 December 2014) On the strength of this glowing forecast, we made a further loan of £10k to H&A Musicals on 15th December 2014, which was to be repaid on 27th April 2016, and were looking forward to July 17th or 18th 2015 when we were hoping to attend a performance of Blind Faith - the Musical, in Gloucester Cathedral. The same email dated 15th December 2014 stated, ‘*Please rest assured - your investment is safer now than it has ever been.*’

However, at the beginning of May 2015, we rang the Hotline to book tickets, only to find that the number was unavailable. So I rang Gloucester Cathedral, who could find no reference to ‘Blind Faith - the Musical’. They rang back later to say that it had been cancelled ‘... due to lack of funds.’ The other 17 cathedrals all confirmed that the tour had been cancelled. My wife found H&A Musicals on-line, and discovered that apparently a new Director had been appointed on 15th December 2014, ‘... who has already made a down payment of £100,000, ... and he will be putting in a further £1.56 million within the next 12 months.’ (email 24th November 2014). We emailed one of the Directors on 26th, 27th, and 29th May 2015. His eventual response, dated 1st September! told us that he had been locked in a car and that he and his wife had been threatened with violence unless

they signed all their rights away. It was on 5th December 2015, that we received information telling us that advice from his legal team prohibited him from talking to us about the situation, '*You are no longer a Director of H & A Musicals since being ejected from the company*', (by the other two named Directors) '*and as such you cannot engage with the Braytons in relation to the loan that they made to H & A Musicals.*' We were contacted by the legal person, on 14th June 2016, who assured us he had our best interests in mind.

However on 22nd February 2017, following two emails requesting an update on the legal situation, we received a response stating that he had been unsuccessful, and was '*... not willing to waste any more time and effort on this fruitless project.*' A further message from the deposed Director (25 January 2017) closed with, '*Please do not bother responding to this email, your ramblings will not be read, they will just be deleted.*' Was this written by one who may be suffering from a feeling of guilt?

Those are the facts. But we are left with more questions than answers. According to the Companies House website, the third Director was appointed on 15 December 2014, the very day we made our second loan to H&A Musicals. Is this a coincidence? A new UK Secretary was appointed on 5th March 2015, and her employment terminated just six days later on 11th March 2015. One Director's appointment was terminated on the same day. What was going on? Why did two Directors depose the third? What had he allegedly been accused of? According to him, he had been taken to court in central London on 17th August 2015 re. '*... the collapse of the company...*', by '*One of the antagonists...*'. The Director says the case '*was thrown out of court*' and the costs were borne by the 'antagonist', who incidentally maintains it is all lies; he is owed money for services rendered, and that he has been threatened with the police for alleged harassment.

In an email of 25th January 2017, it was suggested by the late Director, '*... the fact that you listen to tittle tattle and gossip anywhere, let alone in the Algarve, shows surprising naivety.*' Well what follows is first-hand information. It may not be the whole truth, I wouldn't know, but it is *not* tittle tattle. Research alleges, that the shortly-to-be 'sacked' Director had enlisted the help of an acquaintance who had a lorry, and financial problems, to transport props and costumes. His business subsequently folded, entailing further inputs of cash. Money was allegedly being spent on an inflated monthly salary of £3,000, personal items, a car, a laptop, a new 'phone, and expensive musical equipment. £25k had been paid upfront, to a London venue six months in advance, without even knowing if they would be putting on a show. One of the stagehands alleges he has never been paid for work undertaken. One of the production team was in the UK with the members of the rehearsing cast from 25th February to 5th March 2015, and was due to return on the 18th March for the start of the tour; only to be told on 11th, that '*... the company had ceased trading,*' and her services were no longer required. When an independent accountant looked into the finances of the Company, overseen by Silver Levene Ltd at the same address as H&A Musicals, it was revealed there was no money left, and that it would cost a minimum of £500k to get a successful show on the road, hence the '*... due to lack of funds.*' If the Company was still operating, but now with two Directors, *they* would have been liable for the repayment of our investment. Why couldn't the legal team secure it? Notice for *Compulsory Strike-off* of the Company was dated 16th February 2016, and finally *Dissolved* on 24th May 2016, more than a year after the UK tour

of Blind Faith - The Musical folded. This was after the repayment dates for our investments. So why were we not reimbursed?

During the recent period of Lent, which led up to Easter, I was reading, 'The Book of Joy'; an extended conversation between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In the chapter on 'Forgiveness: Freeing Ourselves from the Past', the Archbishop talks about his time with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, and the courageous way in which mothers, for example, had forgiven the perpetrators of the atrocities against their children. He goes on. '*Not reacting to negative emotions, does not mean that you do not respond to the acts ... Forgiveness does not mean that you do not seek justice or that the perpetrator is not punished ... When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberator.*'

This is *not* about revenge, retaliation or retribution; it is about seeking the *truth* behind the prevarications, the innuendoes, the half-truths and the lies. We recognise that we have lost our loan, the money which had been earmarked for home improvements, to make life easier for my wife who has Motor Neurone Disease and is wheelchair dependent. And we have learned a bitter lesson about friendship, trust and blind faith.

And this is not just about *us*. Spare a thought for the professional actors who were already in rehearsal for the UK tour, who thought they had nine months' work. Did they have contracts? Did they receive compensation? Consider the *show's* director; would he find alternative employment at a moment's notice? Think of the secretary who was appointed and sacked within a week. The members of the production team. All have been sorely affected, financially, emotionally, in terms of future employment prospects, and their soured views on human nature. Think of the toppled Company Director; he has lost everything - or has he? Was he the innocent victim of a carefully orchestrated take-over, or did he bring about his own downfall? Who were the other investors we know nothing of? How many were there? How much have they lost? Were *they* informed of the collapse of the company, or were they, like us, kept in the dark trying to piece together what has happened? We hold them all in our thoughts. It would be interesting to hear accounts of their experiences.

So, on our third anniversary of the loan, will our questions ever be answered? Will we ever know the whole truth? I doubt it. As Oscar Wilde wrote in his famous play 'The Importance of Being Earnest', '*The truth is rarely pure and never simple.*' Everyone will have their own version of events. So ranks have closed. But *someone* is spending, or has spent, our money! A simple 'Sorry' from someone might have helped. Anyway, good luck to them! End of story; - or is it?

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