**Artistic Director’s Report to the AGM July 2023**

I am happy to say that the Theatre has been doing booming business over the last year – not just in terms of our Main House productions but in the Studio as well. Ultimately, the number of seats you sell increases your income from each show – well the first ten, twenty or one hundred seats goes to pay for the production and thereafter it becomes profit. But the number of seats sold also affects the business you can expect at the bar - which has made record profits this year. Hurrah!

I want to acknowledge the sterling work of our various creative teams over the last year: Christine and her crew for the sometimes simple and sometimes lavish sets she has caused to be built, the lighting crew for their unfailing readiness to bring ideas to the table when it comes to creating atmosphere, Emma and her gang (lets call them the Emmerites) for making stage-management such a crucial part of each and every production here at the QMT and the various hands we have had running the costume department so that each character looks just right. Added to this – although not strictly in my job description to mention it – I want to thank Andrew Piggott and his team for keeping the bar and café ever open and the cash tills ringing as well as our FoH team who are the public face of the theatre to our valued customers.

We started the year with a wonderful production of Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman*. It was a colossal undertaking to open the season with such a large-cast show, but it worked so well. A standout cast and some brilliant set pieces made it a production to remember. Katie Milward drilled the youth theatre with her usual aplomb to bring us Jim Cartwright’s *Road* in November. The next senior BPs show was Dick Whittington by those masters of the genre, Dee and Richard Lovelock. It was brilliantly funny and drew in large crowds.

Now tell me another Junior theatre group in the country that is presenting *Iphigenia at Aulus*, and I’ll fall over! But under Claudia our Junior group has no fears at all and this was another stand out Main House production. Then there was my own production of *Equus*. I thought it was brilliant with Charles Plester and George Adams leading the company and it was a happy experience too. Finally, at the end of the season, we go out with a bang with Elliot Bunker’s Company, one of Sondheim’s best musicals. I think the cast think it is still running, they’ve made some firm friendships and see each other regularly.

I think what we do here at the QMT is unique. Not just putting on productions but the way we work together and value each other. We have always wanted to ensure that the QMT is a home away from home, and I think in many ways we have succeeded.

Next season is upon us. Keith has already cast *The Height of the Storm* and *Peter Pan*, our Christmas show, will be auditioning in early September. In the New Year we have the hilarious comedy, Bleak Expectations and to finish the year in the main hall, Nicki Pope is mounting what I think will be a memorable production of Coward’s *Present Laughter*.

Alongside these productions, there will be more Friday workshops over the year. Three will be devoted to Directing a production and four will be for actors looking to improve their technique – something all actors should attend to regularly!

Our intention always is to produce a quality product – something done so well that we can all be justifiably proud. I am happy to say that I think the quality of all the BP shows, senior, Big Spirit and Juniors are something to take pride in. But we mustn’t relax, keeping standards high is a tough job and something we must be aware of.

Rory Reynolds, Artistic Director/ Production Manager, July 2023