



## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Bancroft Players was held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 7.30 pm.**

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Jenny Rushmore, Len Seymore, Matt Gray, Zara Schafer, Edith and Frant Pratt, Emma Saunders

Present 35 members.

2. Minutes of the AGM of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 were agreed and signed as a true and correct record.

3. Matters arising: None

4. Chairman's review of the year:

The Bancroft Players & Queen Mother Theatre (2024–25 Season) Presented by Elliott Bunker, Chairman:

Good evening everyone, It's genuinely heartening to see so many of you here at the AGM tonight – thank you for coming out and showing your commitment to our society and this theatre. Let me begin by celebrating what has been, once again, a fantastic season. Our productions have challenged, delighted and surprised audiences – particularly in the studio, but throughout we've seen bold creative choices and powerful execution. And the best part? We're not done yet. With two shows still to come, this season has plenty more to offer. We've also received a nod from NODA this year with a nomination for Best Pantomime – a tremendous achievement, especially considering we only joined NODA this time last year. With more of our productions being reviewed, I'm hopeful that we'll see even greater recognition come January. There's already early interest in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Blackadder Goes Forth*, which is fantastic news. I won't tread too much on the thanks that I know will be shared by Claudia, Nicki and Matt later this evening, but I do want to say this: the work this year – across every department, every production, and every role – has been phenomenal. It's been a genuine privilege to watch it unfold.

While I am on the production though, I'm also pleased to share that our sponsorship with Raymond James in Hitchin is continuing for a second year. Susie and Faye, who own Raymond James, are also active members of our society – you'll often see them behind the bar on show nights. Thanks again to Nicki for forging that connection and helping ensure it continues.

In other news and after many years of hard work and persistence, we've finally completed the creation of our CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). A



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huge thank you to Mark, who has led this process with determination and care. We can now begin the important work of transferring our societies and assets into the CIO, reducing liability and making the most of the benefits that structure provides.

Looking ahead, I'm equally excited about what's coming next. The new season, curated by Nicki, Matt and Claudia, is rich with variety and promise. It offers real creative opportunities for our actors, technical teams, designers and audiences alike. There's plenty to get stuck into – and real potential to connect with new audiences as well. I look forward to seeing those shows come to life. But alongside the celebrations, I think it's only right that we acknowledge something else: behind the curtain. It's been a tough year. Personally – and I'll be honest with you – this has been my theatrical *annus horribilis*. I've had to deal with issues that go well beyond the stage. Situations that have affected how we work together, how we communicate, and how we treat one another. Before I go on, I would like to thank the members of the committee who were also involved – going above and beyond. Thank you.

We are a community – a creative one, a passionate one – and communities, by their very nature, will not always agree. That's fine. Disagreement is not the problem. It's how we handle disagreement that defines us. Unfortunately, some of the behaviours witnessed, experienced and endured this year have crossed the line. It's no longer acceptable to shrug off difficult conduct as part of 'theatrical temperament'. It's not okay. And I want to be crystal clear – with the full support of the committee – that such behaviour will be called out. Where necessary, we will ask individuals to leave the society. We've already lost valued members – people who've stepped back or walked away – and that cannot continue. It isn't sustainable. It isn't right. It isn't who we want to be. That's why, over the coming weeks and months, you'll see us actively re-emphasising our Code of Conduct. Not just as a policy, but as a set of values – ones that protect, support and respect every person in this building. This brings me to something else that's vitally important. Being a member of The Bancroft Players is not the same as joining a drama club that turns up twice a week to rehearse a show. When you become a member here, you become part of a society that owns and runs a working theatre. That's a privilege – and a responsibility. This message is a well-trodden path, but we can't keep relying on the same small group of people to carry the weight. You will hear a bit more on this later in my membership



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update, but as your Chairman I'm inviting – no, urging – everyone to reflect on how they contribute. If you've never worked a bar shift, never stewarded – now's the time. And if you're not sure where to start, come and speak to me or any member of the committee tonight. We'll help you find a way to get involved that works for you. And for those of you connected to members who are drifting or distant – please, reach out to them. This is your community. Help us rebuild it together. Let's now move on to something inspiring – and forward-thinking. Earlier this year, I wrote to the chairs of several local drama groups – The Hitchin Thespians, The Settlement Players, The Arcadians, SPADS, and The Lytton Players – with a simple idea: what if we stopped seeing ourselves as isolated societies, and started working together? That idea has taken shape as the North Herts Drama Network – and I'm delighted to say that every society responded with enthusiasm. We held our first meeting a couple of weeks ago here at the QMT, and the honesty and energy was inspiring. So what is it? It's a collaborative network focused on: Joint marketing and promotion, Audience development, Volunteer and member support, Resource sharing, and Professional development. It's about raising all our flags together – making the theatre scene across North Herts stronger, more sustainable, and more exciting. Our next meeting, focused on marketing, is scheduled for July. And we'll keep you posted as the network continues to grow. If you'd like to know more or want to get involved – come and chat to me. This is just the beginning.

Following the conversation with the other societies, I reflected on how so very fortunate we are that we own and control everything within the society, we have if not the cheapest, one of the cheapest membership fees, the largest membership, the largest mailing list. And despite all our internal challenges, I think we have a job to do to remind ourselves of the asset that we have here in our people and our theatre. And that we shouldn't take any of it for granted. And now – our 80th year. If I'm honest, at times this year, it felt like we wouldn't have the headspace to properly celebrate it. But several events this year just reinforced something important: milestones like this aren't about buildings or dates. They're about people. That's why our 80th year will be focused on honouring the people who got us here. The celebrations will begin formally in July – marking the anniversary of the formation of the Hitchin Drama Group, which later became The Bancroft Players. We'll then host a relaxed, informal BBQ-style members' party on 13th September – a chance to come together, share stories, and simply enjoy being part of this community. Claudia is leading



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on the plans, and we'll be sending out further details soon. I've also asked Rory and Chris to update Keith Crook's wonderful written history of the society. They're expanding it, modernising it, and making it easier to access. It'll be made available digitally and in print, and we'll also be exploring a more permanent way to honour the key figures who helped build this society and this theatre. Let's make sure we never forget the people who got us here – and those still shaping our future. And with that, I'd like to take a moment to remember two beloved members we lost this year: Keith Crook and Rosemary Bianchi. Their contributions were enormous, and their absence is deeply felt. We will ensure their memory lives on, both in our hearts and in this building. A brief word now on honorary membership. We are not awarding one this year, but we are looking into proposing a new, more inclusive process. Going forward, we'd like you, the membership, to be able to nominate individuals whose contributions deserve recognition. These nominations will be reviewed by the committee, and if there are several candidates, we may put it to a vote. It might not always result in honorary membership – but we'll find ways to meaningfully celebrate exceptional service and impact. And so, to close. To the committee – Firstly to a couple of Emma's. For work and personal reasons Emma O'Connell stepped away from her role on the EC and as Bar Manager (although has remained as the Licensee) and Emma Northcott stepped back even further from her EC role and as Front of House Co-Ordination Manager...all the way to Devon. I'd like to thank both for their hard work and hope to welcome Emma O'Connell back when her time allows.

I'd like to thank Amy Walker who was co-opted to the Committee in place of Emma. And Jackie Ried who manages the front of house rotas from her poolside in Spain (well for part of the year anyway!)

Now to Miss Pope – it may have only been a year, but I'm grateful for Nicki's involvement in leading the creation of a great next season and for facing head-on challenges with the production diary. Thank you.

Finally, onto Matt, who as you know is stepping down at Studio Manager at this AGM. Plus passing on the Publicity Manager responsibilities onto someone else...Matt has done a great job and overseen several creative and successful seasons of plays in the Studio. I'd like to thank him for driving forward the programme of challenging and thought-provoking productions and for his hard work on the committee. Thank you.



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I know Nicki and Matt will talk more about their reasons for leaving, much of which is echoed by my own reflections on this year.

Thank you to all the other committee members too, Vivien, Mark, Chris, Rory, and Claudia for their perseverance and commitment in a very challenging year. Our strength lies in our people – past, present, and future. If we move forward together, with creativity, collaboration, and kindness, there's no limit to what we can achieve. Here's to a better, bolder, brighter 80th year.

Thank you.

5. Charitable Incorporated Organisation CIO: Mark commented that he had begun the process 4½ years ago. He went over the history of the process and achieving the Queen Mother name. Once everything is completed an Extraordinary General Meeting will be held to set up the new structure. Mark was thanked for all his work.

- CIO registration is complete and the administrators now need to be set up, but it exists as the QMT. I will review the current set up and expand to the suggested format of 4 Trustees once appointed at the AGM.
- I would suggest we do not make any changes to running or processes until after the AGM.
- The leasing agreement with the Council is now in review stage and we will need an element of property lawyer support, who was appointed as a recommendation, approx. costs £300.00.

6. Reports – Treasurer



## Finance Report: Summary for AGM 2025

### Yearly Review:

The season of 2024 – 2025 has been a super busy season (and not yet over), with predominantly in house productions maintaining a focus on our programme of events having made the decision to disengage with Mostly Comedy in



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November 2024. The only two (2) outside hires now are Hitchin Film (who also manage our NT Live programme) and Stage Tots.

We had a number of hiring enquiries, but with the additional workload to our volunteer group, we decided to remain focused on our programme and reduce the expectation to support external groups and societies this season using the premises. Both Hitchin Film and Stage Tots are self sufficient.

We have again been doing well in managing costs within our overall spend and agreed production budgets, anything else not planned for at the start of the season has had to have a budget submission for EC approval prior to purchase.

The Finance Policy was updated this season and also the finance editorial of the Directors Handbook (to manage production expense claim and the process) so we need to now make sure that everyone likely to make a claim or an expense is aware that:

1. An expense sheet is required (available from Treasurer or QMT website)
2. A receipt or invoice is required
3. An approval is required prior to purchase (if not a Head of Dept) and anything above £250.00 needs Treasurer approval anyway

Its also important to let our departments know, that if we have an account with the supplier (you intend to purchase from), to make please we use it and also please add the min. details below:

1. Their name can be as an approved reference
2. The activity, play or dept is also to be used as a reference (or both if needed) so the cost can be attributed to the correct budget.

I believe the current expense sheet is suitable for use and with the legends applied the drop-down process is simple and explicit to use for any claim required. The 2025 - 2026 season expense sheet will be available from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025.

2023/2024 accounts have been submitted to Charity Commission with no challenges or negative observations

### **Production Budgets:**



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Current 2024/25 season is updated below tickets sales included, so far, we have had a good contributory programme with 3 shows already providing over £10k nett back to the Theatre. We still need to ensure we are managing show budgets as originally planned at the start of the season understanding some still evolve as the show starts. Our plan is still to make sure we attain an ideal percentage (%) of above 68% and above for really good contribution.

Continue to support team and department engagement is key when managing your performance budgets, the overview of course is managed by the Treasurer, PMs for Main and Studio and SMs for the production.

Below is this seasons details of productions as of Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June

SEASON 2024- 2025									
15.06.25									
Production	Period	Tickets	Books &Licence	Agency/Design	Production Costs	Total Production (Actual)	Production Budget (Estimated)	Surplus against Sales	%age of GP v Sales
Juniors Summer Showcase	Jul-24	£ 405.00	£ -	£ -	£ 42.68	£ 42.68	£ 150.00	£ 362.32	89.46%
Juniors Summer Workshop	Aug-24	£ 500.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 150.00	£ 500.00	100.00%
Silly Cow	Sep-24	£ 6,750.00	£ 747.73	£ 456.00	£ 1,039.17	£ 2,242.90	£ 1,200.00	£ 4,507.10	66.77%
Brimstone & Treacle	Oct-24	£ 3,044.00	£ 501.92	£ 414.00	£ 709.55	£ 1,625.47	£ 250.00	£ 1,418.53	46.60%
Brainstorm (Big Spirit)	Nov-24	£ 1,834.00	£ 430.11		£ 177.12	£ 607.23	£ 250.00	£ 1,226.77	66.89%
Sleeping Beauty - Panto	Dec-24	£ 18,358.10	£ -	£ 486.00	£ 4,937.07	£ 5,423.07	£ 4,500.00	£ 12,935.03	70.46%
Beautiful Thing	Jan-25	£ 3,861.00	£ 450.00	£ 522.00	£ 200.23	£ 1,172.23	£ 250.00	£ 2,688.77	69.64%
Juniors - Our Teachers A Troll	Feb-25	£ 894.00	£ 216.00		£ 38.12	£ 254.12	£ 150.00	£ 639.88	71.57%
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nightime	Mar-25	£ 15,249.00	£ 753.99	£ 789.37	£ 3,440.07	£ 4,983.43	£ 3,000.00	£ 10,265.57	67.32%
Jack Absolute Big Spirit	Mar-25	£ 2,791.00	£ 324.00	£ -	£ 908.12	£ 1,232.12	£ 500.00	£ 1,558.88	55.85%
<b>Blackbird (short by a performance)</b>	Apl 25	£ 1,292.00	£ 420.00	£ 542.76	£ 22.99	£ 985.75	£ 250.00	£ 306.25	23.70%
Black Adder Goes Forth	May-25	£ 14,101.00	£ 450.00	£ 520.80	£ 2,249.31	£ 3,220.11	£ 2,000.00	£ 10,880.89	77.16%
Side BY Side	Jun-25	£ 3,084.00	£ 1,040.00	£ 522.40	£ 136.29	£ 1,698.69	£ 2,500.00	£ 1,385.31	44.92%
Twelfth Night	Jul-25	£ 1,056.00	£ -	£ 456.00	£ -	£ 456.00	£ 1,800.00	£ 600.00	56.82%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>£ 72,814.10</b>	<b>£ 5,333.75</b>		<b>£ 13,858.04</b>	<b>£ 23,901.12</b>	<b>£ 16,800.00</b>	<b>£ 48,912.98</b>	

Also as usual we are looking and planning ahead, we have a season already identified for the Main and Studio productions, all licences are already purchased and it again supports our commitment to ongoing investment in the arts and the programme at the Queen Mother Theatre:





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Another actor's friends arrive. There's no bar. No drinks. No coffee. No interval ice-cream. They enjoy the performance, but other than a cursory "well-done" there's no reason to stay after. They leave straight away. The actor feels a bit flat as their friends go home thinking, "Well... it was okay." And maybe they don't come back.

That's the risk we face when we don't all do our bit. This year, 38 adult members performed in a show – and 28 of them didn't do a single front-of-house shift. That's not a judgement – but it is a reality check.

This theatre works when we show up for each other – not just when we're on the cast list.

Now, looking at the wider picture:

We have a total membership of 216 – adults, juniors, youth members, and patrons. That's up from 204 last year.

Our adult membership is currently 139, down slightly from 145. But what's more striking is this: 66 adult members from last year didn't renew. That's a lot of people stepping away – and we need to think carefully about why that might be happening.

On the volunteer front:

- 69 adult members have done at least one shift, which is great – but still just under half.
- But only 27 have done four or more, which suggests a small core group is shouldering most of the work. That makes things challenging – especially for those who are always stepping up.

We're still urgently looking for a Set-Build and Set-Design Manager, and a Publicity, Comms and Marketing Manager to help us grow our audiences and our presence in the community.

We have had some success bringing new people through the doors. Since October, I've hosted New Members Open Evenings in October, November, January, February, April and June, with one more planned for July. Attendance has been variable – but where people have come, they've stayed. We've had a 70% conversion rate from attendee to member, which shows that once people see who we are and what we do, they want to be part of it. In fact this last Monday we had 100% of the people become members within 24 hours!



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But keeping people engaged – that’s the harder part.

Earlier this year we tried to launch a Membership Engagement Team. The idea was to bring some joy and energy back into the social side of the theatre. It didn’t quite take off as hoped – but we did manage to run a Christmas Quiz, a successful Wine Tasting Evening, and of course, we’ve got our 80th Birthday Party still to come.

But here’s something I’ve been thinking about a lot:

We’re a big community – over 200 members – but in reality, we often function as lots of smaller micro-communities. Each show creates its own little bubble – for a few months, a cast and crew become close. The same happens in tech teams, in departments.

And that’s great – but once a show ends, there isn’t always something pulling people back into the wider Bancroft Players family.

Some members jump from one show to the next, joining new bubbles – and that’s fine. But my concern is that others simply drift off, because there’s no reason to reconnect.

That’s what we need to fix.

We need to create that sense of belonging to something bigger than just the current show. To feel like you’re not just in “The cast of [insert title here],” but that you’re part of The Bancroft Players. That you’re part of something ongoing, evolving, and welcoming – whether you’re performing, volunteering, watching, or just sharing a drink in the bar.

So, to summarise:

- Our overall membership is growing, but adult numbers are slipping, and we’ve lost 66 valued members this year.
- A quarter of adult members have performed – but only a small portion are helping with the vital work behind the scenes.
- A core few are doing a lot. And we need to better share the load.
- We’ve been successful in bringing in new people – now we need to give them a reason to stay.
- And finally, we need to rebuild that shared identity – not just a place where shows happen, but a place where people belong.



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Let's all try, in the coming year, to give a little more, stay a little longer, show up for someone else – and most of all, help build a community we're all proud to be part of.

Thank you.

### Artistic Director: **Artistic Director Report – June 2025**

It has been a busy and eventful year at The QMT, with some great productions and shows we can be really proud of.

I will let the Production Manager's go through this year's shows, but my first priority is to thank Claudia and Matt for taking such good care of both Main House and Studio. Without Production Managers for each space, everyone's roles become much harder, these jobs are vital to the smooth running of the theatre- they are often not appreciated as much as they should be – thank you both!

A huge thank you to The Stage Management Team led by Emma Saunders, the Tech Team led by Len and Chris, and the Set Team – your work is wonderful and we are so grateful to you all.

A shout out to Matt, Amy and Elliott who managed publicity so well – it is not an easy job, especially when we have 3 back-to-back shows to promote, and limited areas to actually advertise – thank you.

Thank you to Laura who has taken on costumes and building her team – huzzah!

Thank you to Faye and Susie at Raymond James – Hitchin, we are so lucky to have their sponsorship and support, please do not take it for granted, other societies would jump at this opportunity.

Taking over as AD was never going to be easy, and it hasn't been. From day one there have been challenges and issues to be resolved, some I have managed, others unfortunately I haven't. I don't want to dwell on these here – but it has not been an easy or fun time for me.

I am delighted that this season we have had 3 new directors this season Amy Walker, Yvonne Patterson and Julia Fraser. I hope you found the experience a



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positive one, and that you will return with fabulous ideas for your next productions.

To all the Directors this season – thank you. Until you have directed a show it is difficult to understand the amount of energy, time, patience, creativity, deep breath taking and ball juggling it takes – Huzzah to you all!

As AD, I have introduced Saturday matinees, for Main House, which are proving popular, the audiences for this will grow as they get to know about them. I have attended meetings at The Little Theatre Guild, NODA and Visit Hitchin on behalf of The QMT – these have mostly proved helpful, and very interesting.

For next year we have trimmed the diary to 4 Main House, 3 Studio, 2 BS and a showcase, and 2 Juniors and a showcase. The diary has been crazy this year – especially with 3 back-to-back productions in June and July, this was poor planning and has stretched our resources to the limit. Next Season we need time to breathe and re-build.

We have an incredibly exciting season ahead; it was so important for me to invite new directors into the fold. I am delighted I have achieved this with some wonderful directors and productions lined up – please look after them, support them and help them thrive!

I am very sad not to be standing as AD this year, I am so proud of the work I have done, and the season I have managed to create for next year. It has been an incredibly difficult decision, but quite frankly the way I have been spoken to by certain members of the Society has been unacceptable – sadly, they always get away with it. I hope to continue to be actively involved and support where I can, and wish the new AD all the very best, I am just sorry it isn't me.

We are so lucky to have this wonderful theatre – we need to look after not only the building and our legacy, but each other. Be kind!

Nicki Pope, June 2025. Thanks were given to Nicki for her work during the year.

Theatre Manager – Chris Lane I don't have a huge amount to report this year, but it's been a continually busy year. We started the year with the front parking area resurfaced, as mentioned in last year's report.

We also had the roof looked at. We had the ridge tiles reset at the front area and any cracked or slipped tiles were replaced.



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We were given a fair supply of scaffold poles last year, to increase our stock dramatically. That dictated the direction we would construct the back wall flip-down steps for Curious Incident, saving a good sum on set build.

We have fitted rails to the side walls of the stage in the studio to fit black curtains direct to the wall, increasing the size of a stage when not requiring wings.

We have replaced both front door closures as they had become ineffective. They are probably the singularly most used item in the theatre!

I managed to attend to all the loose seating chairs this year in a big push. Although odd chairs will need attention to lose squabs and backs I'm sure, this will always happen within a year, the integrity of the frames has now been restored.

Even though we intend to find replacement chairs this year that will take some time still with trialling samples and manufacturing time, we have bought some time for the start of the next season. There are five full rows again now to do A-E fully.

Yet again I want to thank the army of people who have kept the machine running this year. Oksana has been reliably keeping us clean, Amanda has been amazing again looking after maintenance and adding as much time as she can spare to refreshing rooms and corridors everywhere. We thank her for stepping up to the bar duties too this year and keeping that on-track. On top of that prep-ing the spaces for productions and outside hirings. I would also like to thank the people who have done the small jobs that get done and go unnoticed, often carried out by the members of the set team with their experience.

Chris Lane June 2025

### **Studio Theatre Report 2024 – 2025**

This year the Studio has presented a number of very distinctive plays, all of which have attracted different audiences.

Thanks to all the individual production teams/crews for their hard work this season.

We started off with the Dennis Potter classic Brimstone and Treacle which attracted good audiences despite its controversial reputation.

Then we had Beautiful Thing by Jonathan Harvey which proved to be another popular choice with audiences.



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Next up was David Harrower's Blackbird, which despite being very well received perhaps proved too hard a sell with its abuse-based storyline and audiences were mid-range though the week. Unfortunately, this show was also cancelled on the final night due to one of the actors breaking their spine on the Saturday morning!

All these plays have been supported by our Tech and Set Build teams, and despite the limited budgets and resources, they have consistently delivered high quality production values, so special thanks to them for this.

We also have the final show of the season yet to come, with the musical Side By Side By Sondheim starting next week. This looks like it is going to be a fantastic show, and one not to be missed. Nicki has been doing most of the production manager duties on this one due to my commitments to being in Blackbird, and my subsequent incapacity. Many thanks to her for stepping in and helping with this.

Also extra thanks to Elliott for picking up the day to day publicity tasks that I was unable to do whilst incapacitated.

Moving forwards, the number of Studio plays is dropping from four to three, in line with the plan to maximise resources and space, but this does not mean that there will be any drop in the quality of the shows, in fact it has allowed the choice of plays to be an eclectic mix of classic and new theatre which will be an exciting challenge to all involved. I wish all the upcoming directors and their teams the best of luck with their projects.

I am saddened to have to say that criticisms and accusations were made towards me and the way that I was fulfilling my production manager role earlier this year, and, although these were not upheld by those investigating them, I advised the EC that I did not feel that I could remain in any of my roles at the theatre, and that my position had become untenable and had become the subject of gossip.

Finally, again I'd like to thank all those who have supported the Studio this season, whether that has been via involvement in shows or just by coming to see them. Your support as ever is always much appreciated.

Matt Gray – QMT Studio Production Manager



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### **Production Managers Report for AGM Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

We have had a very successful season in the main house. “Silly Cow” directed by Matt Gray, kicked off the season with this great comedy by Ben Elton. Great performances and lots of laughs. “Sleeping Beauty” was our wonderful Christmas Panto by Richard and Dee Lovelock which was nominated for a NODA award. Lots of Christmassy fun.

“Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” Directed by Keith Swainston and Katie Milward was a hugely ambitious play from both a technical and movement perspective but we totally pulled it off. Fantastic reviews from the audience and a standing ovation every night! James Dowell has to have a mention for an outstanding portrayal of Christopher. Superb tech really helped in giving this show the real WOW factor.

“Blackadder Goes Forth” directed by Yvonne Patterson. This was Yvonne’s debut to directing at the QMT and we really hope she will come back and do it again soon. Another sell out show with super reviews. A fantastic representation of the TV show loved by so many. A great set, complete with a very authentic dug-out. All our well known characters portrayed brilliantly.

“Twelfth Night” directed by Charles Plester is still in rehearsal and is set to be a great show – get your tickets if you haven’t already!!

What a fabulous season with three productions bringing in over £10K each and also bringing in lots of people to the theatre who are bound to come back after seeing such professional productions. We have had a few challenges this season with supplying chaperones for shows that involve children so if you feel you could help out in this area please let me know and we can get you DBS checked and trained up as a chaperone.

Huge thanks to the set and tech teams for all their hard work and to all the Stage Managers and Stage crew who make the shows possible. Thanks also to Laura for taking on the Costume Dept and who has supported so many shows already. And of course to all the bar staff and FOH staff – our shows would not be able to go ahead without you.

I hear so often from audience members that our shows are so “professional” and of such a high standard. We can only keep this highest of levels in place with



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everyone working together to make our society the very best that we can be, so let's continue to do that and continue to create such wonderful theatre.

Claudia O'Connell

### **Juniors Report for AGM – Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

The Juniors Season started in February this year with the Saturday group performing "Our Teachers A Troll". Both nights played to good audience sizes and the feedback from parents was great!

In May the Monday group performed "Trojan Women". Also played to good houses both nights and feedback again was super! Both groups are now working towards the summer Showcase in the studio in July.

The Saturday group are performing a cut down version of "A Hundred Words For Snow". The Monday group are performing a short excerpt from "Medea".

We will also be showcasing some of our LAMDA work. We held our first set of LAMDA exams in March and all the students received a Distinction grade, which we are over the moon about. Both groups have good numbers of children and we are still operating a very healthy waiting list.

Super excited for both groups performing in "Nativity"!! Huge thanks to Leanne Campbell-Phillips and Evie O'Connell. Ella Townsend and Doug Robinson for great tech support Matt Gray, Amy Walker, Alison Hancock, Elena Hancock for chaperoning.

Thanks for your continued support of the juniors. Claudia x

### **Big Spirit report**

The Youth Theatre and the Ensemble group continue to thrive. We have had the wonderful Megan Burke running the Youth Theatre with me this year and she directed two great shows: Brainstorm in November and the very funny comedy, Jack Absolute Flies Again in April.

Sadly Megan has now moved to Manchester and so a new Youth Group Leader will be appointed in September. At present both the Ensemble (Saturday group) and Big Spirit are run by Rory and Evie.



## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Bancroft Players was held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 7.30 pm.**

Auditions for Big Spirit are in July and we aim to take around 25 members. The size of the Ensemble fluctuates a bit (currently 15) since it is essentially a feeder group for Big Spirit for those aged 13+.

Rory Reynolds, Big Spirit Youth Theatre

### **200 CLUB REPORT**

This has not been a good year for the 200 Club, with a loss of yet more members. With the age demographic of the Club, sadly it is to be expected. Currently we have 83 members, a bit short of 200! In addition, with the Green Room Newsletter no longer being issued, I am unable to promote the 200 Club's existence to new and existing members. I am not sure what paperwork is handed to new members but it would be helpful to include something about the 200 Club. A few years ago, Elliott kindly introduced a new way of joining the Club and that was through QMT the website. However I believe members have to be reminded each year to renew their membership and Elliott is a very busy man! Without their contact details, I am unable to remind them myself. I will ask Elliott for them.

To this end, it is with great reluctance that I have decided to reduce the amount given to the BP's from the Club. I am keen to continue with the biannual £50 prize but in future years, might have to consider reducing that as well. So this year, £200 is being given to the Society. However the cheque I am presenting tonight is for £235.00. Ann O'Dell, a longtime member with three numbers, sadly died last year but I was not advised of this and a cheque for £25 was sent to her. Her daughter subsequently contacted me and requested that the sum be given to the BP's. Additionally, Leanne Phillips' mother won £10 and she has asked this be donated to the BP's.

I end this rather depressing report by congratulating Bron Martin on winning the June £50. Paula Downes

Following the presentation of the reports, thanks were given and comments and question from those present were responded to. Chris commented on the rows of single chairs for some productions that if all the rows were to be used part of the stage would need to be removed. Claudia reported further that communications between departments should be a goal for next season. The theatre needed to be aware of and acknowledge the very pertinent message in



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Matt Gray's report. Claudia explained the setting up of the LAMDA procedure with the Juniors. Laurie Kerr thanked the leaders for their work with the Juniors.

There was some discussion on the possibility of Big Spirit and any visit to Edinburgh for the Fringe. It was commented that this is very expensive and any such trip might need to look at some form of sponsorship.

There were also discussions on the problem of members volunteering for front of house roles and whether some form of payment would be appropriate and legal with regard to insurance.

### Election of officers

Chairman – Elliott Bunker

Secretary – Vivien Kerr

Treasurer – Mark Weatherbed

Artistic Director – Keith Swainston

Theatre Manager – Chris Lane

Studio Manager – Alison Hancock

The two committee members elected are Amy Walker and Nicki Pope.

Questions from the floor Paula Downes queried keys for Front of House Managers. It was agreed that issues around key safes and digital keys would be discussed at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10 pm.



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