

# Banbridge Musical Society

## Annual Report 2022-2023

The aim of the Society from the outset has been to advance the education of the public in Banbridge and surrounding districts in the understanding and appreciation of Performing Arts. To facilitate this, the Society performs musical, theatrical and light operatic works and encourages the public to attend and participate.

The purposes of the Society are:

- to promote and develop Performing Arts for the benefit of the public in the area of benefit;
- to encourage participation in and appreciation for Performing Arts by both young people and adults in the area of benefit by the provision of performances, facilities, training and support; and
- to present, promote, organise, manage and produce Musical Theatre performances.

After a forced hiatus of over two years due to the Covid pandemic, our new committee began the year with the aim of finally returning to performing for a live audience. They hoped also to build our finances, boost our membership and promote the society within Banbridge and the surrounding area.

Our first activity was the preparation of the show "All Shook Up" at the Market Place Theatre, Armagh. The difficult decision to move our productions to Armagh was taken because the venue we had been using in Banbridge, IMC Cinema, had not been maintained and was no longer a safe venue for our members. Auditions took place on 24 April 2022 and twice weekly rehearsals immediately followed culminating in 4 performances on 5-8 October 2022. This production involved 24 adult members supported by our backstage and production teams.

It was a new challenge for us to try to encourage our loyal Banbridge audience to travel to Armagh to see this production, while also trying to build a new audience in Armagh. Despite these challenges, we managed to sell more than 800 tickets over the 4 shows. In addition, feedback from our audience was that the quality of performance and the overall spectator experience was improved by the move to Armagh.

Although we had made the decision to stage our major productions in Armagh, we still wanted to stay connected to and provide entertainment in the Banbridge area. Hence, we rehearsed and performed a concert "Merry Musicals" on 2 December 2022 at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Banbridge. This concert was well received and feedback from our audience was very positive.

Our second major production of the year was Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Auditions took place on 12 Dec 2022 followed by twice weekly rehearsals with 6 performances taking place on 23-26 March, again in the Market Place Theatre, Armagh. This production involved 30 adults and 36 juniors on stage, supported by our backstage and production teams.

The involvement of children in this production is evidence of our increasing youth membership who gain from participation in Performing Arts. These youth members have

benefited from increased knowledge of music, dance and drama activities through access to professionals who provided coaching and direction in stagecraft and performance. In addition, they have developed valuable inter-personal skills and confidence through the experience of attending rehearsals with members from a diverse range of backgrounds and the experience of appearing on stage in a quality production. The entertainment element of our objectives is evidenced by the wide support we have received from the local public. Ticket sales for this show exceeded our expectations with almost 2,000 tickets booked.

Like most amateur theatre groups, ticket sales alone rarely cover all our operating costs. In order to remain financially viable each year we organise a programme of fund-raising events. We strive to make these of interest and benefit to the public. Examples in the past year include a table quiz, a bingo night, various raffles, carol singing on a number of different dates and locations and performing at the Georgian Festival in Armagh.

We also rely on membership fees and donations from our members and patrons. Local businesses frequently support us by placing advertisements in our show programmes or by providing prizes for our raffles. In addition, we apply for grant assistance where this is possible. In the most recent year, we received assistance from Arts Council NI towards the costs of the production team and band for "All Shook Up". We also received Small Events Grants towards the costs of hiring the venues for both "All Shook Up" and "Joseph".

Throughout the year we took advantage of any training opportunities available to us, e.g. First Aid, Chaperone and Child Protection training for committee members, as a way of ensuring that in all our activities safety is our paramount consideration. In particular, safety on stage, is crucial. Risk assessment is completed before each production and the Stage Manager and their team, along with the Director, are responsible for ensuring the safety of all beneficiaries onstage, offstage and in the auditorium. Trustees are responsible whilst in rehearsal premises.

We believe as a Committee that we have been successful in meeting our objectives of promoting and encouraging participation in Performing Arts. We have continued to build our membership and our finances with sensible decision-making at Committee meetings throughout the course of the year.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year, our trustees have given careful consideration to The Charity Commission of Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that our activities have helped to achieve Banbridge Musical Society's purposes and to provide a benefit to its beneficiaries.



Aileen Colgan

Chairperson

10 April 2024