

# Banbridge Musical Society

## Annual Report 2023-2024

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.

Our first event of the year was a dinner to celebrate 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Banbridge Musical Society (formerly Banbridge Choral Society). This dinner was well attended and enjoyed by members and patrons, past and present.

Although we had made the decision in 2022 to stage our major productions in Armagh, we still intended to stay connected to and provide entertainment in the Banbridge area. Hence our next activity was to rehearse and perform a concert, "Banbridge Does Broadway", on 18 November 2023 in Banbridge Parish Centre. 24 adults and 15 children took part in this concert and we were pleased that this concert attracted an audience of around 250 and received very positive feedback.

The involvement of children in our concert is evidence of the growing interest within the Banbridge area for opportunities to participate 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.

Preparation for our major production of the year, "Oklahoma!" began almost immediately after the concert with auditions on 20 November 2023. Twice weekly rehearsals followed culminating in 4 performances on 17-20 April 2024 in the Market Place Theatre, Armagh. This production involved 34 adult members supported by our backstage and production teams. Ticket sales for this show were in line with our expectations with approximately 1,000 tickets sold.

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

*A. Colgan*  
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include a table quiz, 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 a Small Events Grant from the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon District Council towards the costs of hiring the Market Place Theatre, Armagh.

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

15 March 2025