WELCOME TO THE 2016 BECKENHAM THEATRE SURVEY RESULTS.

Firstly, thanks to everyone who took part in this year’s BTCensus. The 2015 survey was an incredibly useful exercise and helped the trustees to put in place a number of changes over the last twelve months that are just beginning to bear fruit, so we have been looking forward to hearing your views on how the theatre is doing.

It continues to be a challenging time for amateur theatres across the country, with dozens of established societies ‘going dark’ over the last two years and many more struggling to survive. With your advice and everybody’s hard work, we are managing to stay strong and healthy: indeed, having already announced our 2017 season, we look set to have an outstanding run up to our 70th anniversary celebrations the following year.

Fewer people responded to the second survey than the first, but despite the lower sample size, most of the key answers were consistent with the 2015 findings:

- we still prefer modern drama, musicals and comedy;
- three-quarters of us (74%) watch between three and nine shows per year; and
- a whopping 84% of us are happy to recommend Beckenham Theatre to our friends!

Overall, the picture is really positive, while also highlighting a couple of areas we are already working to improve, which this report covers in more detail. The way we communicate with members – and particularly the website – came in for some firm but fair criticism, so I’m delighted to announce that after several months of work, we have just re-launched the website! Please visit www.beckenhamtheatre.co.uk to see our fresh new site, packed with useful information about all of our productions, policies and social events. This is the first major piece of our new communications strategy, which is being put into place over the next couple of months, so watch this space!

On the subject of social events, I hope to see as many of you as possible at our Open Day on Saturday 16 July: linked with WordFest on the Green, we are throwing open the doors to the community, to show everyone what we do in the ‘old house on the corner’.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to find out more information, please contact me – or any of the trustees – at trustees@beckenhamtheatre.co.uk, where we will be happy to help!

Yours,

Emma Berryman
Chair of Trustees, Beckenham Theatre
WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

We canvassed the membership, those who had expressed an interest in joining and those whose membership had recently lapsed to take part in the survey, as well as guests who came to see Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen’s Guild Amateur Dramatic Society: Murder Mystery in 2016 and Revue Twenty Sixteen, in June 2016.

“Are you a member of BTC?” 46 people answered this question: 38 (83%) were members and 6 (17%) were not. These are similar proportion to last year’s survey, demonstrating a 5% increase in non-member show attendees.

The survey this year had a lower level of participation than 2015 and the question about age range, showed up which groups had not taken part.

The three groups over 40 years of age (‘40-49’, ‘50-59’ and ‘60 or older’) last year amounted to 96 respondents, while this year, less than a third (31) in those groups took part.

Conversely, although the overall respondent levels weren’t high, almost exactly the same number of people from the ‘17-24’ and ‘25-39’ brackets completed the online or paper surveys.

WHAT DO WE ENJOY?

When asked how many shows they have watched in the last 12 months, most people (56%) said they watch between three and six productions a year.

Impressively, 18% of people said they see more than seven shows a year, while 20% only watch one or two. Three respondents said they hadn’t seen any shows in the last year.
What was very interesting was that, despite the smaller sample size in the survey, the ways respondents said they were interested in being involved with Beckenham Theatre almost precisely matched last year’s survey, with a great deal of interest in directing and technical support, in addition to the audience, social and acting categories.

Obviously, the theatre depends on the 91% of members who want to watch productions (89% in 2015), but it is also important to continue to encourage members to actively take part in producing shows, when that is of interest.

We asked again about which types of show people most enjoyed watching.

The same preferential patterns emerged as in 2015, with the majority choosing the following five types as their favourite shows at Beckenham Theatre:

- **20th Century Dramas**
- **Comedies**
- **Musicals**
- **New Writing**
- **Thrillers**

When it came to the question of quality, the scores were outstandingly positive, and even better than last year. Over 75% of respondents said Beckenham Theatre productions were usually ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. It should be noted that nobody rated them ‘below average’ and only one person in the whole survey felt shows were just ‘average’.
HOW DO WE FEEL?

The final question in the survey was about how prepared we would be to recommend Beckenham Theatre to a friend or colleague. This is key, because it demonstrates the level of advocacy within the organisation.

People were asked to rate their feeling on a sliding scale, where zero represented ‘not at all likely’ and ten represented ‘extremely likely’. According to SurveyMonkey, the platform where the Census was conducted, scores between zero and six show detractors – people who will not recommend, while scores between seven and ten show promoters. The results were as follows:

0-6: 16.67%
7-10: 84.33%

These scores are amazing and demonstrate that the vast majority of our members and show attendees are willing to recommended Beckenham Theatre to their friends and colleagues.

These figures are consistent with our findings from last year’s survey, which we have spent twelve months responding to. In addition to re-launching Friday nights and running monthly social events, we have just launched the new information-packed and fully mobile-responsive website (http://beckenhamtheatre.co.uk), which is designed to enable you to more easily share news of what we’re doing, across your networks.

So please, next time you think someone “would really like it down there”, bring them to a social night or a production and encourage them to join! Meanwhile, share, post, forward and retweet everything we’ve got coming up!

WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT?

Although the sample size was comparatively small, two clear trends emerged from the comments throughout the survey:

BEING MORE FRIENDLY

“Good to see the social activities happening more often. Starting to see a real improvement in the atmosphere over the last couple of months.”
“Feels like you have to know people to get involved. It would be nice to have more open social things where people like me could come along without knowing anyone.”
“I would like to see the Theatre be more outward-looking and involved with the local community and more welcoming to new people.”
“It needs to be more fun. It needs more members. Members need more & clearer value.”
“Not particularly easy for a visitor who doesn't know anyone.”
“People made to be made to feel welcome - too many still think it is a closed club for members only. Opening up ticket sales to the general public is a first step towards this.”

**TRUSTEES RESPONSE:**

“Similar feedback was received in 2015 and lots of people have been working hard over the last year to make Beckenham Theatre far more open and friendly, but cultural change takes time – so we need your help to spread the word!

The positive first steps have included publishing these survey results, relaunching Friday night socials, widening ticket sales beyond the membership, running a full programme of organised social events and generally being more friendly (the new website even has photographs of all the Trustees to make it easier to strike up a conversation).

At the last AGM, we committed to redefining what benefits are available to members, to add clearer value to the membership – these changes will be discussed at the next AGM.

We have put procedures in place to welcome new actors and directors and have begun working on our community outreach – come along to our Open Day on Saturday 16th July, which is linked to WordFest on the Green – and bring your friends along to find out more!

As always, the social committee would also love to hear from anyone who has an idea for – or would like to organise – a social event.”

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**OPEN DAY**

**Saturday 16th July 2016, 1.00 - 5.00pm**

Did you know that Beckenham Theatre Centre was originally started in 1948 in Beckenham Library?

Did you know that the theatre at 46 Bromley Road was officially opened by comedian Dick Emery in 1960?

Did you know that the Oscar winning film director and actor Richard Attenborough was a member and his membership form can be seen in the bar?

Come and find out more about this unique theatre in the centre of Beckenham. Take a tour round the building, enjoy FREE singing, pantomime, and belly dancing workshops and Children's

Beckenham Theatre Centre, 46 Bromley Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5JD

[www.beckenhamtheatre.co.uk](http://www.beckenhamtheatre.co.uk)
COMMUNICATING MORE CLEARLY

“Please improve the website. And better use of the noticeboard.”
“Shows and events need to be broadcast more widely - use of local press and a better and regularly updated website would help.”
“There is a shortage of new members: the theatre needs to do more advertising / social media.”
“I often feel the play auditions are not advertised early enough - I sometimes miss that they are happening.”
“Paper publicity, not as easy to forget as emails.”
“The website being updated a bit more frequently.”
“Better social media and earlier promotion.”
“Audition notices etc need to go out MUCH earlier - often they seem to only pop up on the day like it’s an afterthought.”
“Emails for auditions / events are sent out too late. Never thought I’d say this, but I miss paper publicity.”
“Have you thought about a recruitment board for each show in the bar?”
“Better marketing; publicity in local shops, libraries etc.”

TRUSTEES RESPONSE:
“In a tough climate for amateur theatres across the country, we recognise that growing our membership and audiences are vital to our survival. In the last year, we have looked carefully at how we communicate to existing members and potential new ones and a lot of work has gone on behind-the-scenes to improve our communications across the board.

Our biggest project has been successfully launching a new website which is clear, easy to navigate and fully responsive, with up-to-date information about all forthcoming opportunities to get involved with the productions and activities at Beckenham. In addition, we have grown our active Facebook Group, more than doubled our Twitter following and even dipped our toes in YouTube.

We have started printing show flyers again and distributing them to local homes, shops and businesses and over the next few months will complete the ongoing work on our full communications strategy, to ensure that members received clearer, more timely information than ever before, and that our fast-growing mailing list is more accurately targeted.

But we need your help. Bring people with you to see shows and attend social events, share our news, pictures and blogs on social media and get in touch if you’re happy to post leaflets through your neighbours’ doors – many hand make light work!”

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY. TOGETHER, WE CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR LITTLE THEATRE.