

**J21-04 A motion to petition the Students' Association to oppose the permanent closure  
of The Barron Theatre**

**In-Effect Date:** 22/01/2021

**Review Date:** 01/05/2021

**Owner:** Cate Hanlon

**This Joint Council Notes**

1. The University is planning to permanently close The Barron Theatre and grant Mermaids Performing Arts Fund a permanent residency in the Byre Studio.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Barron is one of just three student-run theatres in the UK.<sup>2</sup>
3. The Barron is comprised of the foyer; the building workshop; the main performance space; an elevated tech booth; wing space; a dressing room; an office for the Barron Manager; props storage room; and costumes storage room.
4. Mermaids is able to access the Barron at any time within the opening hours of the Students' Association.
5. The Barron is financially self-sufficient, relying on funds brought in from hire of the space and a funding pot within the Antony Tudor Fund that has been set aside for the purpose of upgrading the Barron space.
6. The Barron offers free, unlimited rehearsal space to Mermaids and its affiliates.<sup>3</sup>
7. The Barron is used by a wide range of official societies, other student groups, and academic departments.
  - a. From March 2019 – March 2020, groups that used The Barron included, but are not limited to:<sup>4</sup> The School of English; The School of Classics; The School of International Relations; The Indonesian Society; The African and Caribbean Society; The French Society; The Feminist Society; Saints LGBT+; St Andrews Sexpression; HeForShe St Andrews; Refugee Action St Andrews; The Ballroom and Latin Dance Society; The Tango Society; St Andrews Filmmakers' Society; The Just So Society; The Gilbert and Sullivan Society; The A Cappella Society; Sitara Charity Fashion Show; Catwalk Charity Fashion Show; Ubuntu. Sofar Sounds; Capture Collective; Amazing Beasties Art Project Artists Collective; JOOT Theatre Company Dundee; EikCafferty Creative; Szentek; The Christian Union; ASHA Sound System; and The St Andrews Revue.
  - b. This also includes recurring bookings for the weekly Blind Mirth show and ArtSoc's weekly life drawing event.
8. Under the plans for closure, all Mermaids assets currently stored in The Barron (set, props, costumes, tools, etc.) would be moved to The Byre's storage facility in Ceres.<sup>1</sup>

9. Mermaids has not yet been provided with a satisfactory solution to the loss of the workshop space and sewing equipment currently housed in the Barron.<sup>1</sup>

**This Joint Council Believes**

1. The closure of The Barron and relocation of Mermaids to the Byre studio would be severely detrimental to the performing arts in St Andrews.
2. The Barron facilitates all sides of the performing arts and is a fantastic – and inimitable – learning space. While the Byre studio may fulfill the needs of actors and directors, this move would take away countless opportunities for young technicians, set builders, and costumers. The Barron provides a pressure-free environment for people to learn these skills. Many students who go on to have careers in the technical side of theatre had little to no experience before coming to St Andrews, and leave the University with the skills they need to pursue that career path due to learning they were able to do in The Barron.
3. Due to the restrictions on when the studio is able to be used because of a lack of sound proofing between the studio and the auditorium, it would be exceptionally difficult for Mermaids to facilitate the volume of shows they are able to with The Barron.
  - a. Both Mermaids and The Byre would be negatively impacted by the lack of soundproofing limiting the number of events that each party can produce.
4. Societies and student groups (as in Note 7.a) would lose easy and inexpensive access to a large and flexible blackbox space for events, photoshoots, etc.
5. Week-long festivals (i.e., Freshers' Drama Festival and the On the Rocks Festival) would be very difficult, if not impossible, to programme without The Barron as they would require the main auditorium of the Byre to essentially lay empty for a week at a time.
6. Available rehearsal space, already scarce, would plummet. Mermaids and its affiliates already put as much pressure on the Students' Association and the Arts Building as they can. The amount of time each society can book in the Laidlaw Music Centre is very limited. Even using all of the spaces available, it is unlikely that production teams would be able to have the quantity of rehearsal space that they need.
7. The position of Barron Manager provides unparalleled experience in performing arts administration and is an incredible credential to put on a CV. Past Barron Managers have cited this position as the reason they have been able to have careers in the performing arts. Overseeing the relationship between Mermaids and the Byre studio space cannot be compared to programming and managing an entire theatre venue.
8. This is a make or break year for Mermaids. They haven't staged a performance in nearly a year, and engagement is dropping off – evidenced by lower numbers of proposals and people attending workshops and socials. If they lose The Barron, and the knowledge and skills that it allows members to pass down, Mermaids will never be the same.

9. The Barron has been closed since March 2020, which means that current first years have never experienced what it has to offer, and current second years only had five months with The Barron. As half of the undergraduate population does not have significant experience with The Barron (yet), it is essential to listen to alumni voices on this issue.
10. The Barron is a student-run theatre, which is what makes it so special, but also means that the University doesn't know how much goes on in the space, or what it means to people; the University is not well placed to make this decision. Though they may see this as a beneficial move for the performing arts in St Andrews, they don't realise how much they are taking away. This has been demonstrated by a petition asking the University not to close The Barron garnering nearly 1,500 signatures in under 24 hours.
11. A Mermaids residency at The Byre would handicap the biggest community theatre in Fife. The cost of keeping the building open just to access the studio would be significant.
12. Mermaids production teams would suffer from lack of easy access to props, sets, and costumes. The Byre would have to salary a driver to retrieve Mermaids assets from the storage facility in Ceres on a very regular basis.

#### **This Joint Council Resolves**

1. (Amendment 1) We ask that the Students' Association oppose the permanent closure of The Barron Theatre.
2. This should be done by submitting an official statement to the University of St Andrews stating that the Students' Association opposes this decision and believes that The Barron Theatre should remain open.
3. Additionally, the Students' Association and the Sabbaticals should advocate for continuing existence of The Barron in any ongoing discussions with the University.

#### **Secunder:**

No need for seconder as it is a motion via petition.

## Appendix I: Sources

<sup>1</sup> Announcement on the Mermaids Facebook page; minutes from the initial meeting between Dr Stevenson and student groups.

<sup>2</sup> The only other two student-run theatres are Nottingham New Theatre (<https://newtheatre.org.uk>) and Bedlam Theatre in Edinburgh (<https://www.bedlamtheatre.co.uk>).

<sup>3</sup> [thebarrontheatre.com/get-involved](http://thebarrontheatre.com/get-involved).

<sup>4</sup> From the Barron calendar and the [barron@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:barron@st-andrews.ac.uk) email archives.

## Appendix II: Student and Alumni Testimonials

*“I have no doubt that without the Barron Theatre I would not be a professional theatre director today.”* – Joanna Bowman

*“My performing arts career was kickstarted by the breadth and variety of shows afforded by the Barron’s existence.”* – Hannah Raymond-Cox

*“The freedom of having a completely student run space taught me so many lessons that I have since used as a professional producer for dance companies and now as an Artistic Director for my own arts organisation.”* – Charlotte Baker

*“The Barron makes St Andrews’ incredible output of student theatre possible and was the reason I chose the university.”* – Helena Jacques-Morton

*“It’s an incredible resource for students, not just for theatre but for music, art, and many other activities too.”* – Cameron Kirby

*“The Byre Theatre studio is a great space but it simply isn’t the Barron – not in freedom, flexibility or scope of what can be staged there. The Barron Theatre is a creative hub and home for so many.”*  
– Louis Catliff

*“...The opportunity to manage a working, independent arts venue – a unique and sadly very endangered type of community space – is precious.”* – Ali West

*“Without the Barron Theatre and its role in student arts and culture, I wouldn’t have learned the life-changing skills of producing, management and fundraising that have led me to my academic and professional career in the arts... I have no doubt this will lead brilliant students to reconsider their choice of University or lower their satisfaction once there.”* – Laura Antone

*“It is the Barron alone that allows a university with so small a student population to compete with the likes of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh when it comes to the quality of student art.”* – Oli Savage

*“I went to lock-ins and workshops and exhibitions, and sometimes they were brilliant and sometimes they weren’t, and it didn’t matter because it was a student space for anybody to put on a project they were passionate about.” – Lauren Dunlop*

*“It makes no sense in a town which already lacks performance spaces to close down one of the most active venues.” – Paul Lancaster*

*“...The Barron’s position as a student-run theatre makes it uniquely placed to help students develop as actors, directors, costumers, and lighting technicians, amongst other occupations.” – Rachel Horrocks-Birss*

*“The Barron’s closure would remove so much oxygen to the performing arts... Without the Barron, I would not ever have been on the path that led me to become a Sabbatical Officer and what that has done for my memories and career personally.” – Daniel Palmer*

*“I went to St Andrews because of its performing arts scene and its diverse range of opportunities to be creative and expressive as an artist.” – Lindsey Miller*

*“Those on Mermaids Committee (particularly the Barron’s Manager) also have the privilege of running the theatre; the space is for the students and by the students, and it is this hands-on approach that has led to St Andrews having an impressive number of young and highly skilled practitioners leave the university despite it not having a performing arts course.” – Alice Gold*

### **Appendix III: Signatures**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Matriculation Number</b>	<b>Signature</b>
<b>1</b>	Cate Hanlon	20/01/2021	170006054	Cate Hanlon
<b>2</b>	Sophia Kiely	21/01/2021	190018562	Sophia Kiely
<b>3</b>	Isabella Zeff	21/01/2021	170003685	Isabella Zeff
<b>4</b>	Alice Rickless	21/01/2021	180009640	Alice Rickless
<b>5</b>	Keava Low	21/01/2021	180015250	Keava Low
<b>6</b>	Beatrice Travis	21/01/2021	180008698	Beatrice Travis
<b>7</b>	Catherine Davidson	21/01/2021	170013236	Catherine Davidson
<b>8</b>	Giuseppe Casci	21/01/2021	180011923	Giuseppe Casci
<b>9</b>	Isabela Martin	21/01/2021	170002760	Isabela Martin
<b>10</b>	Sasha Gisborne	21/01/2021	170014450	Sasha Gisborne
<b>11</b>	Avery Kitchens	21/01/2021	170011911	Avery Kitchens
<b>12</b>	Molly Luckhurst	21/01/2021	190005505	Molly Luckhurst
<b>13</b>	Julia Webster	21/01/2021	190005639	Julia Webster
<b>14</b>	Gabrielle Olowe	21/01/2021	170014008	Gabrielle Olowe
<b>15</b>	Caroline Hinson	21/01/2021	170016936	Caroline Hinson
<b>16</b>	Matthew Gray	21/01/2021	180004788	Matthew Gray
<b>17</b>	Molly Williams	21/01/2021	160023267	Molly Williams
<b>18</b>	Tristan Sharman	21/01/2021	190005859	Tristan Sharman
<b>19</b>	Juliana Zaharevich	21/01/2021	170021220	Juliana Zaharevich

20	Danaja Kurnik	21/01/2021	180021568	Danaja Kurnik
21	Eric Dunham	21/01/2021	190009467	Eric Dunham
22	Ruby Carter	21/01/2021	170008675	Ruby Carter
23	Emma Baxter	21/01/2021	190013858	Emma Baxter
24	Tabitha Benton-Evans	21/01/2021	160000467	Tabitha Benton-Evans
25	Hanna Zaimovic	21/01/2021	190002318	Hanna Zaimovic
26	Zuzanna Szaruga	21/01/2021	200026271	Zuzanna Szaruga
27	Stuart Wright	21/01/2021	170014359	Stuart Wright
28	Katharine Kibort	21/01/2021	170006014	Katharine Kibort
29	Jennifer van der Merwe	21/01/2021	170000305	Jennifer van der Merwe
30	Ella Matza	21/01/2021	170009701	Ella Matza
31	Cam Kloeppe	21/01/2021	190009336	Cam Kloeppe
32	Ellie King	21/01/2021	190004224	Ellie King
33	Ranna Mehr	21/01/2021	170015282	Ranna Mehr
34	Juliet Boobyer	21/01/2021	170001591	Juliet Boobyer
35	Alice Robinson	21/01/2021	180002987	Alice Robinson
36	Vanessa Wolosz	21/01/2021	170018092	Vanessa Wolosz
37	Jessica Undy-Jamison	21/01/2021	170015330	Jessica Undy-Jamison
38	Alexandra Flagg	21/01/2021	190001430	Alexandra Flagg
39	Caitlin Morris	21/01/2021	140002530	Caitlin Morris
40	Aimee Rutherford	21/01/2021	160012719	Aimee Rutherford
41	Isabelle Cory	21/01/2021	190003807	Isabelle Cory
42	Joseph Daly	21/01/2021	180002448	Joseph Daly
43	Simone Adamiuk	21/01/2021	180022555	Simone Adamiuk
44	Ainsley Thistlewaite	21/01/2021	180036959	Ainsley Thistlewaite
45	Hannah Taylor	21/01/2021	200019880	Hannah Taylor
46	Cecily Norbury	21/01/2021	180011147	Cecily Norbury
47	Sarah Willich	21/01/2021	170004185	Sarah Willich
48	Georgina Savage	21/01/2021	180004639	Georgina Savage
49	Clara Reeves	21/01/2021	190003209	Clara Reeves
50	Jeanne Adam	21/01/2021	170012789	Jeanne Adam
51	Nicole Entin	21/01/2021	180030948	Nicole Entin
52	Julia Lurfova	21/01/2021	190013442	Julia Lurfova
53	Duncan Kremer	21/01/2021	190003648	Duncan Kremer
54	Tabitha Saunders	21/01/2021	180001280	Tabitha Saunders
55	Joshua Wood	21/01/2021	160004467	Joshua Wood
56	Rhiannon Woolford	21/01/2021	190023226	Rhiannon Woolford
57	Ben McAuley	21/01/2021	170012393	Ben McAuley
58	Cerys Pryce	21/01/2021	200001894	Cerys Pryce
59	Charles Vivian	21/01/2021	180006052	Charles Vivian
60	Jordan Cavell	21/01/2021	170011243	Jordan Cavell
61	Talia Jackman	21/01/2021	180019397	Talia Jackman
62	Tara King	21/01/2021	130023172	Tara King
63	Charmaine Au-Yeung	21/01/2021	170002034	Charmaine Au-Yeung
64	Euan Higgins	21/01/2021	200023137	Euan Higgins
65	Rory Potts	21/01/2021	170007026	Rory Potts

66	Ailidh Mackichan	21/01/2021	170012472	Ailidh Mackichan
67	Natalie Psilou	21/01/2021	170003580	Natalie Psilou
68	Charlotte Luse	21/01/2021	190015737	Charlotte Luse
69	Tilly Leeman	21/01/2021	160004346	Tilly Leeman
70	Maria Kovacova	21/01/2021	190018263	Maria Kovacova
71	Nina Koshy	21/01/2021	190004723	Nina Koshy
72	Dione Hodges	21/01/2021	180002516	Dione Hodges
73	Rachel Aird	21/01/2021	180013278	Rachel Aird
74	Chloe Chuck	21/01/2021	20006259	Chloe Chuck
75	Hanna Palya	21/01/2021	190004804	Hanna Palya
76	Marina Papalampro	21/01/2021	200032048	Marina Papalampro
77	Montserrat Picado Campos	21/01/2021	150021269	Montserrat Picado Campos
78	Tom Conti-Leslie	21/01/2021	170020649	Tom Conti-Leslie
79	Kas Schroeder	21/01/2021	190012827	Kas Schroeder
80	Milo Farragher-Hanks	21/01/2021	150016361	Milo Farragher-Hanks
81	George Watts	21/01/2021	180003069	George Watts
82	Laura Day	21/01/2021	190012827	Laura Day
83	Emily Watson	21/01/2021	160010063	Emily Watson
84	Jack Detwiler	21/01/2021	190013239	Jack Detwiler
85	Sam Hatchell	21/01/2021	170000948	Sam Hatchell
86	Emma Norman	21/01/2021	170004093	Emma Norman
87	Caitlin Fawkes	21/01/2021	180003587	Caitlin Fawkes
88	Anna Owen	21/01/2021	200008970	Anna Owen
89	Lucia Guercio	21/01/2021	180005705	Lucia Guercio
90	Rory Gibb	21/01/2021	150012619	Rory Gibb
91	Edward McMillan	21/01/2021	180002844	Edward McMillan
92	Laetitia Chardon	21/01/2021	160003415	Laetitia Chardon
93	Meghan Shaw	21/01/2021	20000649	Meghan Shaw
94	Joe Waters	21/01/2021	190001085	Joe Waters
95	Charlotte Bryson	21/01/2021	160002415	Charlotte Bryson
96	Ida Mönkkönen	21/01/2021	170019861	Ida Mönkkönen
97	Vicky Chu	21/01/2021	200003707	Vicky Chu
98	Robby Scherer	21/01/2021	180030330	Robby Scherer
99	Rachel Smyth	21/01/2021	180001919	Rachel Smyth
100	Eilidh MacKinnon	21/01/2021	140011288	Eilidh MacKinnon
101	Jennifer Harvey	21/01/2021	190012313	Jennifer Harvey
102	Isobel Sinclair	21/01/2021	170002155	Isobel Sinclair
103	Lucy Coatman	21/01/2021	130002360	Lucy Coatman
104	Harry Ledgerwood	21/01/2021	180012483	Harry Ledgerwood
105	Edward Backman	21/01/2021	190024146	Edward Backman
106	Jacob Toner	21/01/2021	180016943	Jacob Toner
107	Lorna Robertson	21/01/2021	180008689	Lorna Robertson
108	Anenti Winter	21/01/2021	170000600	Anenti Winter
109	Krishna Patel	21/01/2021	170003409	Krishna Patel
110	Elizabeth Torrens-Burton	21/01/2021	190005377	Elizabeth Torrens-Burton
111	Elizabeth Hawken	21/01/2021	180011509	Elizabeth Hawken

<b>112</b>	Marianna Panteli	21/01/2021	170005616	Marianna Panteli
<b>113</b>	Aimee Watts	21/01/2021	160002864	Aimee Watts
<b>114</b>	Gabrielle Green	21/01/2021	190006321	Gabrielle Green
<b>115</b>	Sacha Davies	21/01/2021	200017839	Sacha Davies
<b>116</b>	Jennie Wang	21/01/2021	200021729	Jennie Wang
<b>117</b>	Kian Cross	21/01/2021	190017103	Kian Cross
<b>118</b>	George Cooper	21/01/2021	190003611	George Cooper
<b>119</b>	Caitlin Brown	21/01/2021	190016848	Caitlin Brown
<b>120</b>	Matthew Colquhoun	22/01/2021	200003685	Matthew Colquhoun
<b>121</b>	Noemie Jouas	22/01/2021	170009470	Noemie Jouas
<b>122</b>	Jared Israel	22/01/2021	170022231	Jared Israel
<b>123</b>	Cady Crowley	22/01/2021	170014292	Cady Crowley
<b>124</b>	Adia Folsom	22/01/2021	170017671	Adia Folsom
<b>125</b>	Emily Muller	22/01/2021	170008054	Emily Muller
<b>126</b>	Clara Harrison	22/01/2021	190000924	Clara Harrison
<b>127</b>	Rose Annable	22/01/2021	170006723	Rose Annable
<b>128</b>	Heather Borland	22/01/2021	170011037	Heather Borland
<b>129</b>	Maria Morales Guzman	22/01/2021	190030225	Maria Morales Guzman
<b>130</b>	Pui Lam Bernard Lee	22/01/2021	190002868	Pui Lam Bernard Lee
<b>131</b>	Kristoffer Naas	22/01/2021	190022077	Kristoffer Naas
<b>132</b>	Harvey Fry	22/01/2021	180005559	Harvey Fry
<b>133</b>	Charlotte Kell	22/01/2021	180009885	Charlotte Kell
<b>134</b>	Maria Goikhberg	22/01/2021	180002453	Maria Goikhberg
<b>135</b>	Daniel Connelly	22/01/2021	190016851	Daniel Connelly
<b>136</b>	Ross Walker	22/01/2021	180013717	Ross Walker
<b>137</b>	Alison Thomas	22/01/2021	140006522	Alison Thomas
<b>138</b>	Lauren Pursey	22/01/2021	200011853	Lauren Pursey
<b>139</b>	Charlotte Robertson	22/01/2021	180013957	Charlotte Robertson
<b>140</b>	Aarushi Malhotra	22/01/2021	200005316	Aarushi Malhotra
<b>141</b>	Daisy Humphrey	22/01/2021	190017126	Daisy Humphrey
<b>142</b>	Catriona Ferguson	22/01/2021	170003252	Catriona Ferguson
<b>143</b>	Nadia Cummings	22/01/2021	180009094	Nadia Cummings
<b>144</b>	Hannah Dineen	22/01/2021	190014141	Hannah Dineen
<b>145</b>	Niamh McLaughlin	22/01/2021	180014804	Niamh McLaughlin
<b>146</b>	Marianna Panteli	22/01/2021	170005616	Marianna Panteli
<b>147</b>	Lucy Adam	22/01/2021	200013749	Lucy Adam
<b>148</b>	Sara Weissel	22/01/2021	180000474	Sara Weissel

NB: We also had significant interest from alumni hoping that Honorary Life Members could sign.