

MARTIN FOR SSC PERFORMING ARTS OFFICER

MANIFESTO

I am running to become the SSC Performing Arts Officer so that I can work to provide as many people as possible with the same opportunities I have had through Mermaids since arriving in St Andrews. I want to be an advocate for the interests of **all performing artists** on Student Association Councils. As someone who has faced a range of experiences with performing arts in St Andrews, from serving on Committee, to working on both Mermaids-funded productions and independent productions, I believe I am well-positioned to lead the Committee and make decisions in the interest of the students whose ideas, of any kind of performing art, can develop with Mermaids' help.

1. *Proposals and Transparency*

The main role of Mermaids Performing Arts Fund is to give students money to produce their own shows, **whether they be plays, concerts, dance shows, or beyond**, in a variety of different performance spaces.

As the President of Mermaids, I would work to make that process **more transparent and open to more students** to ensure that everyone has all the tools they need to propose a successful show to us.

This would include,

- a. Asking that each member of the incoming and outgoing committees, together, **draft a series of proposal guides** that provides an overview of their corresponding section in the Mermaids Proposal Form, Budget Form, and Risk Assessment Form;
 - i. For example, the Set and Props officer would include all the information on how to approach the Set and the Props sections of the form, and the Technical Safety Officer would provide an in-depth overview of the Risk Assessment Form
 - ii. Preliminary versions of these guides would be ready by the first round of proposals after a new committee is elected,
- b. **Posting passed proposals on the Mermaids website**, with permission from the teams who have written them, so that those students who have never written a proposal can **directly see the level of detail and information** that Mermaids requires to fund productions,
- c. Increase efforts to speak directly to teams wishing to propose at events such as **Drop-in sessions** with members of Committee and **Proposals How-to** workshop, including in Freshers' Week and leading up to every proposal session,
- d. In the event of a show not being passed, I would work with the Vice-president and Productions co-ordinator, as well as other members of the Committee, to provide teams with **constructive feed-back immediately** on how to improve a proposal, and would continue the practice of offering teams to meet with them personally to discuss their proposal,

Lastly, I would work to **better publicise Mermaids' weekly open meetings**, held on Mondays at 18:00, so that members of the public with an interest in the affairs of the

Fund may better understand the work of the committee and **pose relevant questions to its members and production teams**. This is an important opportunity to make the Fund more transparent which is currently under-frequented due to lack of awareness about its existence.

2. *Engagement*

There are countless ways to make Mermaids a more open and welcoming for everyone. As SSC Member for Performing Arts, I would emphasise the following points:

- a. Team engagement: We already have **schemes to recruit students** in place, but these are underemployed and under-advertised. Thus, I would work with the Engagements Officer to broaden the reach and scope of such schemes, to make sure that anyone who wants to be can get involved:
 - a. There are countless societies which are even tangentially related to the work that Production teams are involved in, which we could develop partnerships with to recruit new members,
 - i. I would work during the summer to create a list of these societies, and then host a forum at the start of the year, inviting their members to **meet and interact with teams** to see if there is a fit,
 - b. Every year, a number of societies fund their own performing arts of various kinds; I would work to ensure that they know **they can find funding with Mermaids, and that we do not just fund theatre**.
- b. Audition workshops: Part of what is difficult about getting involved on stage with theatre is auditions. They are challenging, and it can be scary to even show up,
 - a. Therefore, I would add to the Freshers' Week Give it a go day to include an **Audition Workshop**, in which anyone wishing to get involved can **take part in a discussion about how auditions work**, and can do one or a series of mock auditions in front of a would-be team,
 - b. This would allow them to give it a go, and to get **immediate, in-person feedback**, without the added weight of any potential role or casting.
- c. I want to work with the Engagements Officer to make Mermaids a more social and socially welcoming society. I would work with the committee to host a more varied set of social events throughout the semester, such as
 - a. **Trips to see our shows with a meal or drink beforehand** so that everyone has someone to see a show with,
 - b. Partnering with other performing arts groups in the university to hold **joint social events**,
 - c. Plan a **greater variety of socials**, taking advantage of more of the things that are available in St Andrews social life, from restaurants to pubs, the cinema, and so on.

I am committed to working with the Engagement Officer to develop on these ideas and ensure that Mermaids becomes a welcoming and social group even independently of the productions that we fund.

- d. Affiliates: Mermaids Performing Arts Fund is affiliated with a number of wonderful performing arts societies, and, as SSC Member for performing arts, it would be **my responsibility to defend their interests** in Association Councils,

- a. While there currently already exists a President's Forum for the presidents of the affiliated societies, I would extend a **formal invitation for all affiliated presidents to attend the weekly public meeting**,
 - b. Before all meetings of Association Councils, I would ensure that I have **communicated directly with the presidents** of the affiliated societies about any concerns they may have, and **ensure that I am prepared to defend their interests** within the Students' Association.
- e. Independent productions: Having directed an independent production in St Andrews, **I know the challenges that it entails**,
- a. I want to make sure that people know that **this remains an option**, and that while securing funding is challenging, it is not impossible.
 - b. I would work with the **Costumes and Set and Props Officers** to do all I can to make Mermaids' physical resources available to those independent production, reducing their financial burden and making the realisation of their vision even more possible,
 - c. **I commit to serve as a personal point of contact** throughout the process. While Mermaids funds some fantastic art, it is possible to make a vision come true independently of it, and the President of Mermaids should have the ability to recognise that.

3. *Production Support*

An important role of Committee is to support the productions it funds at every stage of the process. I would work to improve the following:

- a. Production team and cast **wellbeing support**: the role of the President and Vice-president is to support anyone involved with Mermaids' productions with any issues arising throughout the process,
 - a. This would mean **increasing awareness** amongst teams and cast members that Mermaids Committee is there to **support** them and to **address any issues** that come up,
 - b. I would therefore ask all Directors/Producers to supply us with University email information for full teams and casts, and send an email to each show's members, **extending an invitation** on behalf of my Vice-president and myself to **serve as a point of contact on wellbeing**,
 - c. I would also stress that any member of committee is available for such discussions if anyone is uncomfortable discussing issues with either myself or the VP.
- b. Secondly, I want to make sure **anyone who wants to be or tries to be involved with Mermaids has a positive experience**. With dozens of teams and casts every year, from normal productions to the Freshers' Drama Festival to the Fringe, **there should be a place for everyone**,
 - a. I will lead a committee which is dedicated to including everyone in any role available by working to **connect them with teams**, and invite those wishing to be involved to public meetings, or **personally place them in contact** with teams until they find something they want to do,
 - b. I will reiterate, on behalf of myself and the VP, our role as **wellbeing officers** not only for those on production teams, but for **everyone** involved or wishing to be involved in the performing arts scene,
 - c. I will **create an anonymous feedback form on the Mermaids website**, whose responses I will **monitor in committee meetings** twice a month, and I commit

to addressing the issues that are raised up by those who feel uncomfortable speaking to Committee in person,

- a. The form will be **accessible to all on members of committee** and the relevant Sabbatical Officers to ensure any and **all issues get addressed**.
- c. Lastly, I want to make sure anyone who would become a member of my Committee feels supported, and is not suffering academically or otherwise due to Mermaids responsibilities. This can be achieved by:
 - a. Ensuring that all members of Committee find the **correct balance between responsibility to their role and personal wellbeing** considering the volunteer-nature of Mermaids Committee
 - b. Advocate for Committee wellbeing when dealing with potential conflict between teams' expectations and Committee availability, while maintaining the aforementioned support for teams that Mermaids needs to provide. As with anything, it is all about the right balance.

4. Outreach

I would work to build upon the initiatives I have taken as Marketing Officer for 2019-2020 to aid production teams in expanding their marketing reach to other audiences:

- a. Currently, most marketing is done on social media, and this publicity reaches mostly members of the student body and friends of the production team
- b. I would support the next Marketing Officer in their efforts to spread that outreach to more people, especially to members of the town community who enjoy the professional theatre presented at the **Byre Theatre** and would be interested in attending the high-level theatrical performances funded by Mermaids throughout the year,
 - a. This could be done by creating a **new mailing list**, operating on a voluntary basis, targeted at **non-student audiences**, which we could build in partnership with theatre and performing arts companies in the area and members of the staff and their families.

While the goal of any Mermaids production is for a successful run of the shows that it funds, it is so **important for the hard work of the whole production team and cast that their audiences fill up**. There is no better way to do that than by working to place Mermaids amongst the big names of Scottish performing arts.

But, fundamentally, all these promises aren't worth much if I am not held accountable to them. This is why I **commit to using my Campaign Facebook page to update the public on which points of my manifesto I have achieved or are in progress** twice a month, posting this information on the Mermaids Website, so that the people who put their trust in me know on what I am delivering and what I need to continue to work on.

I hope I have earned your vote. Remember that polls open on March 5th and close on March 6th, and remember to vote, no matter for whom!

- Martin