Branch Secretary’s Annual Report

It’s been a good year for the branch. Attendance has increased and Branch Committee is functioning well. Thanks to Blue Merrick for stepping in as Chair, to Bea Comins for stepping in and taking on minutes and Anthony Blakesley for taking on the role of Campaigns Officer.

Thanks also go to Melanie Crawley who has taken on the organisational side of 3 successful workshops with film/TV director Debbie Howard and Catherine Schofield, vocal expert.

I have been pleased to secure for the branch the following speakers. Cheryl Martin, Director of Red Ladder Theatre, Charlie Barnes, Director of Dead Earnest, Andrew Wilcox, Company Manager of Sheffield Theatres, Charlotte Sutton, Head of Casting at Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company, and our own Jimmy McWilliams who spoke entertainingly about his life-long career in Variety. Thanks also to Dan/Tia Ana who arranged a member of Equity’s LGBTQ+ committee, Tigger Blaise to speak passionately about attacks on drag artists by the far right.

We are fortunate to have free meeting space at The Crucible and a good continuing relationship with Ellen Mutch there. Fingers crossed there will be no change to that when Elizabeth Newman takes over from Rob Hastie in December. All next year’s meetings have been confirmed well in advance. I sent our thanks to Rob for welcoming Equity into the building and supporting the branch.

Thanks to Fiona Tobin for her continuing support with Action Network and to Dominic who attends both Branch Committee and Branch meetings whenever possible.

In terms of political participation, a small delegation of us with our regional banner at Doncaster Pride this year and are already thinking about booking a stall well in advance for next year. We have established contacts with other branches in the region but it seems some of them are struggling to be quorate. This should give us a sense of how important it is we function as well as we do.

We had a small social event in the summer at The Brown Bear – first drink on us, which was well-attended. Our Christmas get-together is 9th December at The Sheffield Tap. 7.00 First drink on us.

This year, two members, myself and Dave McClelland, have attended Equity Training Days at Head Office in London. This is important in giving ideas and feedback to our staffers who will be re-negotiating the upcoming Recorded Media contracts with PACT. We achieved a 16.5% increase for West End members recently which is a huge success and following the successful SAG/AFTRA strike in USA, we need to try for parity or better so that UK isn’t a back door to cheaper labour for the Producers and people who invest in the work we do. It’s time we were paid a fairer share of the vast profits of the modern streaming system.

Our FB page is functioning better. But if anyone is good at social media presentation, they might have fun improving ours so please do let us know. We always welcome ideas and participation.

Next year is another opportunity to build the branch. Let’s do so together. Finally, if you are on Branch Committee but find you can’t attend at the moment or wish to step down, do let us know in case there are people who’d like to give it a go. Have a great festive Season. See you at **Sheffield Tap on Dec 9th at 7.00 for Xmas drink. Next meeting Crucible on Monday Jan 20th at 7.30. We will be discussing motions to Conference ’25 so please prepare any you wish to put.**

Kate Rutter

Equity South Yorkshire Branch Secretary