

# Canberra Philo

**2023-24 Plan and Priorities**



Cats, 2023

# Foreword

Musical theatre is a glamorous art form. The lights, the costumes, the dancing, the singing – it all adds up to beautiful and breathtaking moments that delight audiences. It's this glamour that's kept Canberrans coming back time and time again to Philo's productions over the past 75 years.

But Philo isn't sustained by glamorous productions. It's sustained by the dedicated work of community volunteers who work behind the scenes to make moments of magic happen. This work is often decidedly unglamorous; it can be technical, dirty, time-consuming, bureaucratic and sometimes very boring. But all this work is absolutely essential to allow Philo to make the stellar, high quality musical theatre that it's known for.

Following the smash-hit season of Cats in March, the Philo committee made the hard decision to not hold a show in the second half of this year. We understand that this is disappointing for many members of the Canberra theatre community. But the last few years have been incredibly challenging, and Philo can't keep running on fumes from one year to the next. A break between shows is essential for us to make structural changes to set us up to make excellent theatre for years to come.

This Plan outlines what we're going to do over the coming year, and how it sets Philo up for the future. It sets goals and priorities we can work towards and against which the Philo committee and sub-committees can be held accountable. In working towards these goals, I am confident we'll make a better Philo.

However, the Philo committee cannot do this alone. We are, after all, only 9 people who have families and jobs and lives outside of this society. Making these changes is going to require a society-wide effort. Thankfully, I know there is a broad Philo community full of members both past and present who care deeply about Philo and the theatre it creates.

If you are one of those people, I strongly encourage you to nominate for one of the new Philo subcommittees. It's a chance for you to have a real say on how this society operates, such as the way we select shows, build sets, make costumes, run rehearsals or engage with the broader Canberra community. As a community society run entirely by volunteers, we need your passion, skills and ideas to thrive. You can nominate for a subcommittee by filling out this form: [NOMINATIONS AND FEEDBACK](#).

I hope that this Plan gives you confidence about the future of Philo, and our commitment to making top quality musical theatre as a fun, inclusive, safe and respectful community. If you have any questions about the Plan, or want to know more about how to be involved, please reach out – whether its through a message, via email, or in a theatre foyer.

**Jonathan Rush, President (2023-24)**



Jersey Boys, 2021

# Key priorities for 2023-24

**Produce *Bring It On: The Musical***

**Draft and implement a cultural diversity policy**

**Establish and fill five new sub-committees**

**Launch a new process for selecting shows and production teams**

**Conduct an audit of Philo's assets (costumes, props and sets)**

**Launch a new website**

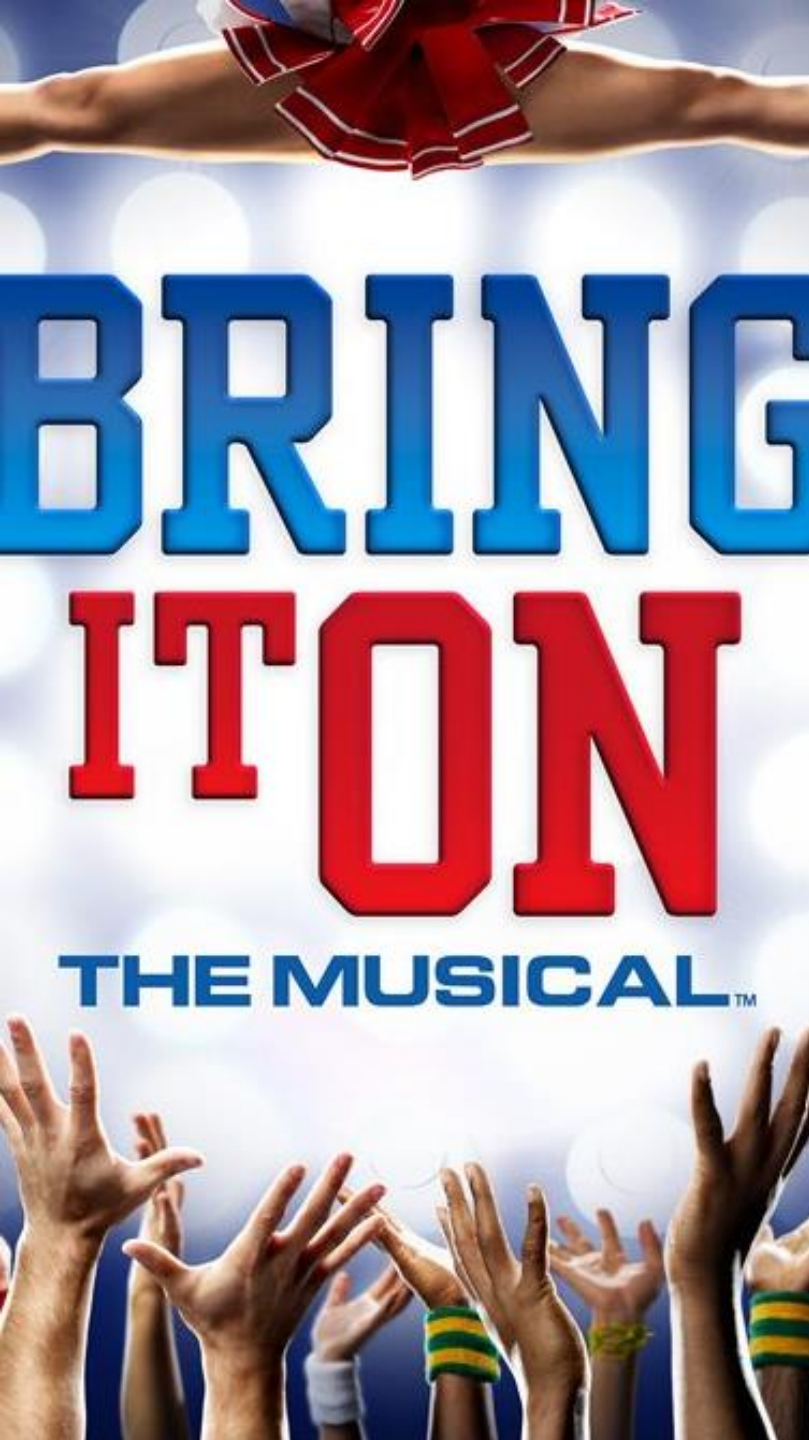
**Explore social activities outside of major productions**

**Develop a full suite of transparent policies and procedures**

**Calculate Philo's operating budget**



Rock Of Ages, 2016



# 2024 Productions

## March 2024 – *Bring It On: The Musical*

Philo's first production in 2024 will be the Canberra premiere of *Bring It On: The Musical* at the Erindale Theatre. Bitingly relevant, sprinkled with sass, and inspired by the hit film, *Bring It On: The Musical* will take audiences on a journey filled with the complexities of friendship, jealousy, betrayal and forgiveness.

The musical was created by some of the freshest and funniest musical theatre writers of the 21st century, including Lin-Manuel Miranda (*In The Heights*, *Hamilton*), Jeff Whitty (*Avenue Q*), Tom Kitt (*Next to Normal*, *Jagged Little Pill*) and Amanda Green (*High Fidelity*), and was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Musical.

*Bring It On: The Musical* is an ambitious and exciting undertaking for Philo. It's an opportunity to showcase the best of Canberra's talent– including the skills of Canberra's significant cheer community. Philo is excited to announce that we will be partnering with Sirens Cheerleading to support the cheer aspects of the production, including the use of their rehearsal venues and help with training and rehearsal of cheer routines.

The production team for *Bring It On: The Musical* are:

**Director:** Isaac Gordon

**Music Director:** Alexander Unikowski

**Choreographer:** Charlotte Gearside

Isaac, Alexander and Charlotte bring a wealth of experience and passion to the production team, and we're incredibly excited to see their vision for the show come to life.

We are looking for people to fill other key roles in the production, including production manager, stage manager, costume coordinator and set coordinator. If you are interested in any of these roles, please reach out to [secretary@philo.org.au](mailto:secretary@philo.org.au) – we'd love to hear from you.

Auditions for *Bring It On: The Musical* will be held in Spring 2023. Make sure to follow Philo's socials to avoid missing any announcements!

**Priority**

Produce *Bring It On: The Musical* in March 2024 at the Erindale Theatre.





Chicago, 2017

## A note on diversity

We're better when we're more diverse. On-stage, it allows us to tell more authentic stories that resonate with the broader Canberra community. Off-stage, it allows us to create rehearsal spaces and social events that are more respectful and affirming.

We all need to be taking proactive steps to encourage diversity in our communities.

*Bring It On: The Musical* represents an opportunity for Philo to embrace greater diversity. Among its many modern themes, the show explores race – racial discrimination, racial inequality and white-saviour syndrome. This means the show needs to be cast appropriately. It also means we need to be sensitive to these themes when designing, rehearsing and performing the show.

We'll have more to say on this in the future, but be assured we at Philo are taking diversity seriously, both for *Bring It On: The Musical* and for all future Philo productions.

Improving our diversity requires a deep examination of the way we currently do things, and potentially making significant changes. To guide us as we move forward, Philo will develop and implement a cultural diversity policy to embed structural changes in the way we work as a society to improve cultural diversity.

### Priority

Develop a cultural diversity policy ready to be implemented alongside our production of *Bring It On: The Musical*

The cultural diversity policy could include actions such as:

- Cultural diversity targets for casts and production teams.
- Reserving roles for people from diverse cultural backgrounds where cultural diversity is a key factor in ensuring we tell stories in a genuine and authentic way.
- Reviewing our audition processes and requirements to remove barriers to participation.
- Undertaking diversity training for production teams and committee members.
- Employing dramaturgs or cultural consultants for productions.
- Voluntarily collecting data on diversity characteristics from the people involved in productions.
- Conducting post-audition and post-production surveys to identify areas of improvement.
- Explicitly considering Canberra's diverse cultural communities in the way we communicate with the broader Canberra community, including marketing auditions and productions.

If you have views on how Philo can improve its cultural diversity, please get in touch! We'd love to hear from you.

Philo values diversity across the board. This includes diversity in cultural backgrounds, but also gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, body type, disability and age. While cultural diversity is the immediate focus, we will endeavour to capture more data on how Philo is faring across all areas of diversity, and implement targeted measures where barriers to diversity are identified.



Evita, 2015





Anything Goes, 2016

## Show 2 2024

We are keen to get back to producing two full shows a year. Philo fully intends to produce a second show in 2024. We are also planning to change the way we select the shows we produce, starting with Show 2 next year. For more details, see the section on *Show Selection*, below.

A rough timeline for the development of our second show in 2024 is:

- **September – October 2023:** Seek proposals for show ideas and production teams
- **November – February 2024:** Philo committee decide on show and production team
- **March 2024:** Show and production team announced
- **April 2024:** Auditions
- **Spring 2024:** On stage!

This timeline is subject to change.

# Sub-committees

Philo's Rules allow for the establishment of sub-committees to support the operation of the society. Sub-committees allow for the sharing of effort across the membership, avoiding relying on a handful of people to keep the society running. They also allow for a wider range of views and ideas into be incorporated into the running of the society. And they allow for targeted involvement by members, allowing them to pitch in on the issues that interest them most. Members of sub-committees will have a real say on how the society functions.

The 2023-24 committee has decided to establish five new sub-committees, each with key goals and responsibilities. A key priority of this committee is filling these sub-committees with keen, dedicated and passionate volunteers from the Philo community.

## Priority

Establish and fill five new sub-committees to improve the operation of the society, and expand the ability of members to have a say in the way the society functions.



Legally Blonde, 2019



Barnum, 2018

# Proposed structure

## Committee

The committee oversees the management of the society, and sets the priorities and remit of the sub-committees.

All decisions of the society are subject to the agreement of the committee.

The committee has a particular focus on **policies and procedures**, **government compliance** and the society's **finances**.

## Sub-committees

### Current production

Manages the current production of the society.

### Show selection

Reviews proposals and recommends options for future shows.

### Asset management

Manages the society's assets (costumes, props, sets).

### Marketing and communications

Plans and designs the society's communications.

### Social and outreach

Recommends and enacts plans to engage and expand the society.

## **Current production sub-committee**

The current production sub-committee will manage the delivery of the current production. It will consider aspects such as scheduling, the implementation of the production's budget, engagement with the theatre, and cast and production team wellbeing. The sub-committee will be chaired by the show's production manager.

Major decisions regarding the production (e.g. show dates, cast announcements, WHS concerns) will still be subject to Committee approval, but informed by the sub-committee's advice.

This sub-committee largely represents a formalisation of existing production team processes.

## **Show selection sub-committee**

The show selection sub-committee will be responsible for recommending to the committee options for future shows and production teams.

The first task of this sub-committee will be developing an open, transparent and fair process for receiving and reviewing proposals for future productions.

A process that encourages submissions from the Philo community will ensure Philo produces shows where production teams have vision and passion, and where members of the society have had their say about whether it's the sort of show they want to be involved in.



Strictly Ballroom, 2017



Beauty and the Beast, 2019

The show selection sub-committee will be tasked with designing and recommending a new process for selecting shows and production teams to the committee, and then implementing that process. We envisage that any process will involve a strong role for the sub-committee in reviewing and recommending future shows to the committee.

### **Priority**

Develop and launch a new process for selecting future shows and production teams, ready to be used for Show 2 2024.

### **Asset management sub-committee**

Philo has a unique position in the Canberra musical theatre community in that we have a dedicated rehearsal venue, costume and prop storage, and set construction facility. These assets allow Philo to produce top quality musical theatre.

The asset management sub-committee will be responsible for advising the committee on the maintenance of our assets, and overseeing any actions that need to be taken.

Because of our significant store of sets, props and costumes, along with our rehearsal venue at the Hut, Philo is also in a position to support the broader Canberra musical theatre community by hiring out our assets.

Developing a robust hire system could also diversify the income of the society. In the long-term, we envision the asset management sub-committee also being responsible for developing and overseeing an asset hire system.

However, as a first step, we need to know what assets we have! A key priority for the asset management sub-committee this year will be to undertake an audit of the society's costumes, props and costumes. This will support future Philo productions make the most of the society's assets. It will also ensure that we have adequate insurance coverage for the assets the society holds.

### **Priority**

Undertake an audit of the society's assets (costumes, props, costumes).

### **Marketing and communication sub-committee**

Good marketing is a key factor in ensuring the wider Canberra community are aware of our shows. The marketing and communication sub-committee will be responsible for the development and delivery of a Philo communication strategy, covering both traditional media (e.g. posters, newspaper articles) and digital media (e.g. our website, our social media presence, our email distribution network).

The marketing and communications sub-committee will work closely with the current production to advise on marketing options for our shows, including graphic design of posters and digital assets.





The initial priority for the sub-committee will be to update our website. Philo needs a modern, accessible and exciting website. This new website will be the first port of call for members, audiences and the wider Canberra community seeking to know more about what we're up to, and how they can get involved.

### **Priority**

Launch a new website for Philo that's modern and accessible.

### **Social and outreach sub-committee**

There's an unexplored opportunity for Philo to have a deeper and more regular engagement with its membership outside of the standard two-show-a-year schedule. This could include organising more social events and gatherings that allow the Philo community to meet and collaborate.

Events outside of Philo's major productions represent an opportunity for a less daunting, and less time-intensive, way for members to engage with the society. This is particularly true for new members who may be dipping their toes into the Philo waters for the first time.

The social and outreach sub-committee will be responsible for developing and implementing new ways in which Philo can continue to engage its members, and the wider community, outside of our major productions.

The social and outreach sub-committee will also lead on the development of the cultural diversity policy.

**Priority**

Explore social activities outside of Philo's major productions.



Christmas party, 2020





Jesus Christ Superstar, 2018

# Committee priorities

## Policies and procedures

The 2023-24 committee will build on the work of previous committees, and continue developing a full suite of clear and transparent policies and procedures under which the society operates. These policies and procedures are critical to ensuring the expectations and responsibilities of everyone involved with Philo are clear and understood. This committee will focus on :

- updating the policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of key production team members
- updating cast and production team agreements to reflect expectations around appropriate behaviour
- finalising an auditions policy
- finalising a bullying, harassment and dispute resolution policy

Once finalised, these policies will be published on the Philo website for transparency.

### Priority

Develop a full suite of transparent policies and procedures.

## Operating budget

Philo has boom and bust years as some shows are more successful than others. But there are clear costs that the society has to pay regardless of the shows we produce – things like insurance, utilities, bank fees and more. It's been a while since the society last re-evaluated how much the society needs to operate. In an environment of rising costs, its important the committee understands these costs to make informed decisions about other financial matters – such as ticket prices and show budgets.

### Priority

Calculate Philo's operating budget, and use it to inform future financial decisions of the society.



Hairspray, 2010



Jersey Boys, 2021

# Contact us

If you're interested to be involved in any of the initiatives outlined in this Plan, or you have any thoughts about Philo's priorities for 2023-24, please get in contact with us!

**Email:** [secretary@philo.org.au](mailto:secretary@philo.org.au) // [president@philo.org.au](mailto:president@philo.org.au)

**You can also register your interest for a sub-committee, or provide feedback, by filling in this form:** [NOMINATIONS AND FEEDBACK.](#)