



Association of Ulster Drama Festivals (AUDF)

Minutes AGM 27th September 2025

Portadown Town Hall

Present

President	-
Vice President	Alan Marshall
Chair	Clare Greer (Bangor)
Secretary	Paul Cuming (Newtownabbey)
Treasurer	-
Minutes Secretary	Trevor Hutton (Portadown)

Ballymoney	Margaret Edgar J Mac Pollock
Bangor	Clare Greer Isobel Eaton
Enniskillen	Dave Rees
Mid Ulster	Patricia Nugent
Newry	No delegates
Newtownabbey	Maureen Dunn Alan Marshall David McCann Paul Cuming
Portadown	Susan Gates Lloyd Montgomery Trevor Hutton
Strabane	No delegates

Opening Remarks

Chair apologised for the late start to the meeting, missed the turn for Portadown on the M1.

1. Apologies

Vice Presidents – Beth Duffin, Billy Burns
Ballymoney – Sharon Flynn
Bangor – Sean Greer
Enniskillen – Stefan Bukowski
Mid Ulster – Plunkett Nugent
Newry – Eileen Mooney, Anne McCart, Kate Carriager
Newtownabbey – John Beresford, Gayna Beresford
Portadown –
Strabane – Aodh McCay, Ciara McCay, Rosella McCay

2. Minutes of previous AGM 19th October 2024

These were taken as read. Proposed: Newtownabbey Seconded: Susan Gates

3. Matters Arising

Paul reported that AUDF has been registered with the N.I. Charity Commission No 109943

4. Chairman's Report

Before I begin my report, I must make mention of Barbara Cooke who we lost shortly after Ballymoney Drama Festival on 8th March 2025. Barbara was a member of Ballymoney Drama Festival Committee from 1984 until her death and also a former chair and minute secretary of AUDF. She had an infectious enthusiasm for amateur drama and was equally at home on stage as behind the scenes. She won many awards in her time performing with and directing for Ballymoney Literary and Debating Society.



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She is sadly missed by us all and I would like to extend my sympathy to her sister Gail and all her drama friends.

More recently I received news that the GODA adjudicator Paul Fowler had died 9th September 2025 after a long battle with cancer. Many of you will have had Paul adjudicate at your festivals. He was always encouraging and positive in his adjudications and a pleasure to work with and I know he will be missed by festivals across the UK

NI One Act Festival

The NI One Act Finals staged at Belvoir Studios in January were extremely well attended. It is a very suitable venue for the event and tickets appear to sell without too much effort, which I wish was the case for the Ulster Drama Final. Walker Ewart adjudicated and Bart Players were victorious and progressed to the British One Act Finals in England in July, more of which later. Thank you to Belvoir Players for hosting the event free of charge and serving suppers for the teams. Also thanks to those of you who helped on the night.

Jan 18th at Belvoir Studio Theatre with Adjudicator Walker Ewart ADA

Belvoir Players – A Little Box of Oblivion
Theatre 3 Newtownabbey – Perchance to Dream
Bart Players – Visitor from Mamaroneck

The results of the 2025 Northern Ireland 1-Act Drama Final Festival.

Best Overall Production:

Bart Players Visitor From Mamaroneck.

Best Director:

Lynn Gordon Bart Players.

Best Actor:

Harry Montgomery T3

Best Actress:

Julie-May Noteman Belvoir Players.

Adjudicator's Award:

John Beresford T3 for lighting.

71st Ulster Drama Festival

The Ulster Drama Finals in May relocated to the Courtyard Theatre from Theatre at the Mill. I think this turned out to be a very suitable venue. A lot of work was put into trying to sell tickets for this event. The Gourmet Boys ran a competition for us on social media, we handed out flyers in Abbey Centre and we had a mention on UTV Life. A number of the nights had fairly decent audiences and there was a great atmosphere. However it was disappointing that two of the groups had very low audience numbers as they had travelled a distance to perform and their productions were excellent. The standard of all six productions this year was very high. I enjoyed all six very much. Our adjudicator Ailbhe Garvey-Hughes had a difficult decision. In the end Balally Players were victorious with Ulster American. Their production went on to Athlone and won the Abbey Theatre Award.



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I'd like to thank Paul, John, Gayna and Sean for all their hard work trying to publicise the Ulster Finals and to all the festival representatives who assisted during the week of the festival.

71st Ulster Drama Festival Monday 5th – Saturday 10th May 2025

The Courtyard Theatre

Adjudicator: Ailbhe Garvey-Hughes ADA

Admission: Nightly Tickets - £15 & £13 (+ booking fee) TBC

Curtain: 7:30 pm

Monday 5th "Ghetto" by Joseph Sobol (Abridged and adapted by Seán Treanor)

Newpoint Players

Tuesday 6th "The Woodsman" by Steven Fetcher

Castleblaney Players

Wednesday 7th "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" by Ian McDonald

Rosemary Drama Group

Thursday 8th "Art" by Yasmina Reza

Dundalk Theatre Workshop

Friday 9th "The Night Alive" by Conor McPherson

Slemish Players

Saturday 10th "Ulster American" by David Ireland

Balally Players

The 2025 Awards

THE PREMIER AWARD: Ulster American – Balally Players The Society presenting the Best Overall Presentation.

THE BELFAST NEWSLETTER CUP Declan Rudden – Ulster American – Balally Players For Best Director.

THE AUSTIN STEWART AWARD Ghetto – Newpoint Players The Society which is runner up to the Premier Award.

THE JAMES YOUNG GOLD AWARD Kevin Stanton – Balally Players For the best performance by an actor. Nominations: Peter Haveron, Lowry Hodgett – Newpoint; Michael Rose – Slemish; Roraidh Irwin – Castleblaney.

THE UTV HUBERT WILMOT AWARD: Aisling Finn – Balally Players For the best performance by an actress. Nominations: Lillian Parkes- Rosemary; Heather Hennessy – Castleblaney:

THE RICHARD COCHRANE AWARD: Mark Irvine – Rosemary Drama Group For the best performance by an Actor in a supporting role. Nominations: Paddy McGennity-Newpoint; Alan Kennedy - Rosemary; Kevin Fahey – Balally:



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THE RICHARD COCHRANE AWARD: Shirley Sweeney – Rosemary Drama Group For the best performance by an Actress in a supporting role. Nominations: Heather Hennessey – Castleblaney; Roisin Carey – Slemish

THE COLIN BLAKELY AWARD: Sarah Smith: Newpoint Players For the most promising Young Player. Nominations: Jamie McKinney – Rosemary; David Ryan – Rosemary:

THE FRIERS AWARD: Rosemary Drama Group For the society or individual responsible for the Best Décor. Nominations: Castleblaney Players: Slemish Players; Balally Players

THE TERENCE KIRKWOOD AWARD: Newpoint Players: Final Scene in Ghetto For best moment of theatre.

British One Act Finals –

Then I was off to **the British One Act Finals** in Litchfield in July. This was my first time attending a British Finals outside NI and it was a very enjoyable weekend. Apart from the fact that I fell and cut my knee very badly just a hour or so after arriving! Lichfield is a beautiful city and the festival was well organized and run by Total Arts Community Theatre (or TACT as they are better known). There was a really friendly atmosphere at the event and all four plays were very enjoyable. Bart Players gave a superb performance of The Visitor from Mamaroneck and got a glowing adjudication from Chris Jaegar. But it was always going to be England's night as their production really stood out as something different and special.

The 90th British Final of One-Act Plays
Hosted by the AEFT Central Area

at Lichfield Garrick

4th & 5th July 2025

Adjudicator: Paul Fowler GODA

Scotland	– Bon Accord Players
Northern Ireland	– Bart Players
Wales	– PMA Theatre
England	– Nantwich Players

“UK Community Drama Festivals Federation”

Next final will be hosted by - Wales

So all in all it's been an enjoyable first year as chair and next year I hope to be able to get to some of the festivals I missed attending last year. There is a lot of work to do to try to increase attendance at the Ulster Finals and we've been kicking around a few ideas which we will share with you. But thank you for all your efforts running your festivals, it is much appreciated.

Chair's report proposed by Alan Marshall, seconded by Mac Pollock



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5. Treasurer's Report

AUDF Treasurer's Report for the 2025 AGM.

The accounts for 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 are as distributed. Income for the year was £8,737.48. This was made up of Affiliation fees of £700 plus the income from festivals as detailed below. Outgoings were £11,994.46, leaving us with an overall loss on the year of £3,256.98.

The 2024 Ulster Drama Festival was helped financially by a grant from Enkalon, adverts and reasonable ticket sales. However, the overall loss for that event was £2,716.57.

The 1-Act Final January 2025 had an income of £2,890 from ticket sales plus £50 from an advert. Outgoings were £1,222.55 leaving a profit of £1,717.45.

The accounts details have been sent to Connor Moore, who is a Charity Commission auditor, to check and approve.

2025 Ulster Drama Festival - Also distributed is the summary for the 2025 Ulster Drama Festival held in April, which indicates a small profit of £791.42, thanks to grants from Enkalon, Drama Circle Theatre Trust, and Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council.

The balance at the end of the year was £6,425.54. Our current balance £5,915.03.

Just a gentle reminder that annual affiliation fees are now due. The rate for the last several years has been £100. It may be a time to discuss an increase.

Questions on Report -

The subscription to AUDF by festivals was raised from £60 to £100 last year, so another increase was not justified.

Mac Pollock asked about "Fees for Adjudicators" minimum fee from GODA is £90 and ADA fee is 160 Euro which relates to £140. It was agreed the secretary should contact GODA and check how is eligible for the £90 and confirm their website details are correct, before contacting ADA.

ACTION - Paul

Mac Pollock thanked John for preparing the accounts and proposed acceptance and seconded by Paul Cuming.

6. Drama Festival Reports 2025:

Ballymoney Drama Festival:

1st- 8th March Nancy Heath

Open Winner – "The Night Alive" Slemish Players

I cannot begin this report without a reminder of the death of Barbara Cooke, former Chair and Minute Secretary of AUDF, who had been a member of Ballymoney Drama Festival Committee since 1984. She first won the award for Best Actress at Ballymoney Festival in 1979 and she made a significant contribution to the success of the Festival, on stage and off, for nearly half a century. She enjoyed success with Ballymoney Literary and Debating Society as an actor and a director, and her work won her the respect and admiration of the Amateur Drama Community in Northern Ireland and beyond. She will be sadly missed by us all and we continue to offer our sympathy and support to her sister, Gail Morrow, who is also a member of the Ballymoney Committee.



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The 84th Ballymoney Drama Festival ran from Monday 3rd to Saturday 7th March 2025. The adjudicator was Nancy Heath, who was making her first visit to Ballymoney – we would be happy to welcome her back in the future. On the Final Night, cups and trophies were presented by Clare Greer, Chair of AUDF.

There were only four entries this year. Slemish Players were awarded first place for their production of *The Night Alive* by Conor McPherson, Rosemary came second with *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* By Ian McDonald and Bart's production of *The Whiteheaded Boy* came third. Our fourth entry was from Theatre 3 and Belvoir Players generously agreed to perform their One Act play. *The Little Box of Oblivion*, on what was our fifth and final night.

With no production by a local company and no obviously 'popular' play to attract a larger than average audience, our Box Office returns have suffered because of this smaller entry. I am sure other Festivals share our concerns about this situation but perhaps it is a particularly acute problem in Ballymoney as we are only affiliated to AUDF. For now, we can only hope we will see more of the 'usual' teams back on the circuit next year.

We plan to run again next year from Friday 27th to Saturday 7th March. Our Adjudicator will be Tristan Marshall.

Bangor Drama Festival:

Not running

Bangor One Act Drama Festival:

The winner of the Festival was Letterkenny with "Cider Park" and the winner of the confined was Coachford with "Sinking" the adjudicator was Paddy Farrelly and the Festival played to packed houses for all three nights. 2026 Festival is from 30th October to 1st November adjudicator Walker Ewart

Enniskillen Drama Festival

7-15th March Ciaran Mccauley ADA

Open Winner – "The Curious Incident of the dog in the night time" by Bridge Drama

Confined Winner – "Translations" by Phoenix Players

Martin Quinn sadly died during the festival and will be sadly missed.

Enniskillen One Act Drama Festival

The Festival ran during October and encouraged local groups to participate. Tom Byrne was the adjudicator and was very easy to work with. A new Bursary to attend the Summer School in Limerick was presented and it is hoped to repeat at this year's One Act festival.

Mid Ulster Drama Festival

21-29th March Imelda McDonagh ADA

Open Winner – "Ghetto" by Newpoint Players

Confined Winner – "Class" by Glenamaddy Players

6 Teams for the open and 3 confined teams competed and Imelda McDonagh was well received by all the teams.

Mid Ulster Festival were chosen to host the All Ireland Confined festival in 2026 and this will take place 9-18 April 2026 with Martin Maguire as adjudicator.

Newry Drama Festival:

24-29th March Geoff O'Keeffe ADA

Open Winner – "Ulster American" by Balally Players



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Anne McCart is only out of hospital, so no report available.

Newtownabbey Drama Festival:

Not running

Maureen reported that she continues to explore funding possibilities for the festival.

Newtownabbey One Act Drama Festival:

6th to 8th November 2025 Adjudicator Tristan Marshall

Portadown Drama Festival:

12-21st March Michael Poynor GODA/ADA

Open Winner – "Ghetto" by Newpoint Players

Confined Winner – "The Woodsman" Castleblaney Players

5 Open teams and 3 confined teams competed. Unfortunately, no teams were available on the 17th March. Michael Poynor was well received by the teams, although his adjudicator could be a little long winded.

Strabane Drama Festival:

14-22nd March Aodh McCay ADA

Open Winner – "Little Gem" by Bradán

Confined Winner – "The Weir" by Upstage

No report available.

7. Election of Officers

It was proposed to accept the existing team. Proposed by David McCann seconded by Maureen Dunn

Chairman:

Clare Greer

Vice-Chairman:

Susan Gates

Hon. Secretary:

Paul Cuming

Hon Treasurer:

John Beresford

It was proposed by Maureen Dunn (Newtownabbey) and seconded by Susan Gates (Portadown) That Mac Pollock be elected as Vice President.

It was proposed by Susan Gates (Portadown) and Dave Rees (Enniskillen) that Maureen Dunn be elected as Vice President

8. Appointment of Festival Delegates

Three delegates may attend for each affiliated Festival.

9. Northern Ireland 1Act Drama Festivals 2025

Festival	Dates	Adjudicator
Bangor	30 Oct – 1 Nov	Walker Ewart OBE (ADA)
Enniskillen	23-25 th October	Declan Drohan (ADA)
Newtownabbey	6-8 November	Tristan Marshall (GODA)

1-Act AUDF Final to be held at Belvoir on Saturday 17th Jan 2026. Adjudicator Paddy Farrelly ADA

10. Ulster Drama Festival 2026

Dates 20-25 April 2026 Adjudicator Nancy Heath (GODA)

Courtyard Theatre, Newtownabbey



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Marketing Ideas;

- Selling Scratch Cards with a winning ticket receiving a "Season Ticket"
- Season Tickets -Selling early to secure a better price.
- Abbey Centre – Promoting sales, advertising
- Gourmet Boys – will handle Social Media outlets
- Abbey Theatre promote a reward at Athlone, possible promotion to Lyric to offer an award.

11. British 1Act Finals 2026

Wales at Mole 3rd and 4th July 2026

Northern Ireland – provisionally booked the Mac in Belfast
Enniskillen is also being explored again.

12. Festivals 2026.

Festival	Dates	Adjudicator	Adjudicating Body	Venue
Ballymoney 85 th	27/2- 7 March	Tristan Marshall	GODA	Town Hall
Bangor *	Not Running			Bangor Studio
Enniskillen *	6-14 March	Ben Humphrey	GODA	Ardhowen Theatre
Mid Ulster *	9-18 April	Martin Maguire	-	The Patrician
Newry *	23-28 March	Tony Finnegan	-	Newry Town Hall
Newtownabbey *	Not Running			Courtyard Theatre
Portadown *	11-20 March	Robert Meadows	GODA	Portadown Town Hall
Strabane *	Not Running			
Ulster Drama Finals	20-25 April	Nancy Heath	GODA	Courtyard Theatre
ADCI Open Finals	30/4 – 9/5	Padraic McIntyre	-	Athlone
ADCI Confined Finals	9-18 April	Martin Maguire	-	The Patrician

TBC To be confirmed

All Festivals now have a Facebook presence

Results of each Festival to be sent to John Beresford: audftreasurer@gmail.com asap after Final nights please.

13. A.O.B.

13.1 All Ireland Confined Festival

Mid Ulster hosting in Carrickmore 9-25 April 2026. Patricia thanked Paul for his assistance over dates. Paul asked festivals to promote the event.

13.2 E Mails – Paul reported difficulty sending emails and suggested a "What's App" group to advise when he was sending out emails.

13.3 Thanks - Alan thanked the executive team for all their hard work over the year. Clare also



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thanked Paul and John for their valued assistance.

13.4 AUDF Team Mileage - Mac asked if the AUDF travel for teams was still 15p per mile.

13.5 Team Entry Fees - Mac also asked about Entry Fees from teams.

13.6 Minister of Communities – Mac also investigating funding for AUDF with the minister.

14. Date of next AGM: Saturday 26th September 2026, venue hopefully Portadown

The Meeting closed at

Signed: _____

Date: _____