News

Andrew named Shadow Culture Secretary

Sophie Layton (she/her)

Stuart Andrew (Conservative, Daventry) has been named as Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport in His Majesty's Official Opposition. Following the appointment of Kemi Badenoch as Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Conservative Party last month, she named the former culture minister in her shadow cabinet, replacing Julia Lopez, who had held the role since the General Election.

Andrew, who served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Sport, Gambling & Civil Society before the General Election, has previous experience within the Department of Culture, Media & Sport, serving in his former role from the beginning of Liz Truss' premiership in September 2022 continuously until July this year. Following the election, he served as Opposition Chief Whip, before moving back to lead the Opposition's Culture representation in Badenoch's shadow cabinet. He also made headlines in 2022 for defying FIFA ruling at the Qatar World Cup, wearing a One Love rainbow armband when the England football team had been banned from doing so.

Andrew joins three other MPs – Saqib Bhatti , Louie French and Dr Luke Evans in shadowing the Department of Culture, Media & Sport. However, Andrew is not the only member of Badenoch's new team to have experience in the Culture, Media & Sport department. Helen Whately, appointed Shadow Work & Pensions Secretary, served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage & Tourism for five months in Boris Johnson's administration.

Similarly, Nigel Huddleston, former Under-Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism, Heritage & Civil Society from February 2020 until September 2022, has been made one of the two Chairmen of the Conservative Party, and Mims Davies, who was Under-Secretary of State for Sport, Civil Society & Loneliness from 2018 until 2019, now holds the shadow briefs for both Women and Wales. Davies has also recently been appointed to the Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee.

The return of Andrew and the opening moves of the new Conservative leader, aim to rebuild the party and bring its many factions together as they begin their time in Opposition, with Andrew ready to challenge Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, seeing their first culture questions last Thursday .

The full Shadow Cabinet can be found on the government website



Credit: Ina Fassbender



News

SUTCo to take *Peace Circle* to Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Sophie Layton (she/her)

The Sheffield University Theatre Company (SUTCo) will be returning to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the world's largest performing arts festival, this summer. Having last visited the cultural celebration in 2023 with their production of *We Are, In Fact, The Problem*, the group will take *Peace Circle* to the Scottish capital in August, following proposals last week.

Holding a separate show proposals process to their upcoming semester two slots, the proposals saw three productions go forward for consideration, before being voted on my attendees. Whilst competition from Darcey Severne and Kirsty Lucas' *Clerical Error* and Alicia Fitzwilliams and Abbie Wright's adaptation of Katherine Mansfield's *Bliss* was tough, it was ultimately Lucy Singer's original script *Peace Circle* that was successfully selected for the coveted slot, which will be produced over the next semester and into the summer months.

To be directed by Lucy Singer, with Milly Derrick as Production Manager and Jasmine Kaur Lee as Producer with Jess Clayton as Assistant Producer, *Peace Circle* will tell the story of six people brought together in a form of restorative justice. Sitting together to discuss a crime, the perpetrator and victim, and their relatives, must seek understanding from one another, with each learning more about themselves as the process evolves.

For most of the production team, this will be their first involvement with a SUTCo show, with Singer, who recently was the Deputy Stage Manager for the record-breaking *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the exception to this rule, in a win for new talent in the society.

The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is an annual arts, theatre and comedy festival taking place in the Scottish capital for four weeks in August, aiming to bring together new and emerging creative talent, as well as providing a platform for them to showcase their talents to wider audiences. This will be the first time SUTCo has taken a show to the arts festival since 2023, organising a production to be staged there every other year, alternating with a 24 hour musical, in collaboration with the Sheffield University Performing Arts Society.

As well as taking productions to Fringe, SUTCo is a theatre performance group staging around seven plays each academic year, with a mix of established writing and original scripts from its members. Their most recent show, a production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by the group's Treasurer Amaara Qureshi was staged in the Library Theatre from November 20th to 22nd and broke SUTCo's record for ticket sales, which had existed since 2017. The play was very widely praised, with societies and reviewers alike praising the professionalism and comedy the production brought, which was reflected by their ticket sales.

The group return to the Drama Studio stage this week with the original *Margaret Beaufort: Kingmaker*, written by SUTCo member Andrew Hurrell, which focuses on the titular Margaret Beaufort's efforts to secure the English throne for her son at the end of the War of the Roses. The production stars returning actress Tilly Harradine, who was widely praised last year for her performance as Nurse in *Medea*, as the titular Margaret Beaufort, Imogen Kerr as Lord Thomas Stanley, Jamie Egan as Richard III and James Platt as the Duke of Buckingham.

Whilst SUTCo prepares to take to the stage for their final production of 2024, their recent announcement of their 2025 Fringe production has already driven excitement at the prospect of University of Sheffield students performing in Edinburgh once again. Whilst it is unclear whether any of the unsuccessful productions will put forward their shows for consideration in semester two, the successful team behind *Peace Circle* will already be making preparations ahead of their now confirmed run in Scotland in August, and the beginning of the production's journey within SUTCo.