



The board of The Hope Theatre in Islington have resigned their roles after being unable to reach an agreement with the pub in which the theatre is located.

Departing Artistic Director Phil Bartlett announced his intention to step down to the board last November, after two-and-a-half years in the position. After a wide search, a new candidate was chosen to take on the role with an expected start date in early March.

However, after lengthy discussions with the pub it became clear there was no chance of an agreement on the future direction of the theatre. This made the position of the board as an independent charity untenable.

The board will therefore step down from their position and dissolve Solar Plexus Productions, the company that currently manages the theatre. Under Solar Plexus Productions, The Hope Theatre produced Off-West End hits including THRILL ME: THE LEOPOLD AND LOEB STORY, HER ACHING HEART, LOVESONG OF THE ELECTRIC BEAR and many more, including most recently the professional UK premiere of Jen Silverman's THE MOORS and intimate gig-theatre piece SNAKEHEAD.

The Hope Theatre was founded in 2013 by Adam Spreadbury-Maher as an extension of the old King's Head theatre down Upper Street. It was the first Off-West End venue to open with a house agreement with Equity, the UK's largest performers union, to ensure a legal wage for all actors, stage managers and box office staff working at the theatre. The Hope was handed over to Matthew Parker in 2014 who ran it for five years. He was succeeded by Kennedy Bloomer and then Phil Bartlett, who will be the Hope Theatre's final Artistic Director of this incarnation.

Productions at the Hope Theatre have previously transferred to the West End (USHERS: THE FOH MUSICAL to the Charing Cross Theatre, and Snoo Wilson's LOVESONG OF THE ELECTRIC BEAR to the Arts Theatre) and it has been home to many world premieres, including the professional world premiere of Joe Orton's FRED AND MADGE and Joel Samuels' adaptation of the Nick Hornby football memoir FEVER PITCH.

The current Deputy Artistic Director, Ella Dale, will oversee a transition period to ensure all the companies who have been programmed at the Hope between now and June have a fantastic time and receive the attention and audiences that their shows deserve.

Paul Clayton, patron of the Hope, said: "This is a sad situation, and the relationship between venues and their companies is a delicate one. The Hope theatre has always put artists and their welfare first. If the theatre is run by someone they haven't appointed, this is not possible. This also means that my position as patron is impossible and I will step down forthwith."

The space in which The Hope Theatre operated will remain in the hands of the pub.