

University of York
Pantomime Society
'Panto Handbook'
2025-2026



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Welcome

Hello, lovely panto person!

Welcome to the University of York Pantomime Society (PantSoc) handbook!

The purpose of this document is to also outline the useful panto-related information in one place for both old and new members.

This document features several parts. Firstly, there is a brief introduction to the society, what we do, and what a pantomime is anyway? Secondly, there is a handy general (o7) timeline of the PantSoc year. Thirdly, there are glossaries of panto terms, 'bits' and phrases to enlighten and inform you as to why shenanigans occur and what roles are within the society. And lastly, there is a page of useful links which take you to further information, past show recordings and the committee members you may wish to contact.

To new members, I wish you all the happiness I found in joining this society! To you 'old lot'... look, we actually have a panto book now! (j/k) 😊

Panto love!

Rosy (Zee)- (Extra)Ordinary Member and Dereck the Blue (Advisor to the(Extra) Ordinary Member)



PantSoc in a Nutshell

The University of York Pantomime Society (PantSoc) perform three main pantomimes a year and two 'social pantomime events' (Panto in a Night and Panto in a Weekend). Please refer to the General (o7) PantSoc timeline for roughly when these occur each year! We hold 2 audition cycles a year (for our main shows) - RAG and Spring together, then Summer - and everyone who auditions for the Spring and Summer shows gets a part!

We also have a wide range of behind-the-scenes roles available, such as set design, makeup design and costume design and many more. Each panto is written, directed and produced by the pantomime society, and each show is a unique and awesome experience! Prod team and audition opportunities will be advertised on the society's Instagram.

PantSoc Shows Overview

The Raising and Giving (RAG) Show

This takes place around December time, rehearsals start in September, and auditions take place at the same time as for our spring show. You can audition for both RAG and Spring within the same period (but you have to do a separate audition for each executive production team panel).

This is our only show where you are not guaranteed a role (but there are others where you are!) If you are a part of the RAG show, you can also be a part of the Spring show in a smaller role once the RAG show is over.

This show features fewer actors than the Spring and Summer Shows, and non-leads tend to play multirole parts. RAG show rehearsals take place twice a week (Wednesday Evenings 7-9pm and Sundays 11am-4pm).

The RAG show raises money for a cast-chosen charity (so far the most we have raised was our 2024 RAG show 'PantSoc Presents: Peter Pan: the Pantomime!', where we raised over £1000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital). This tends to be through ticket sales and other events, such as charity raffles and busking sessions in York City Centre, etc!

The Spring Show

This takes place early/mid-February, rehearsals start in October, and auditions take place at the same time as for our RAG show. You can audition for both RAG and Spring within the same period (but you have to do a separate audition for each executive production team panel). Everyone who auditions for the spring show gets a role!

Spring show rehearsals take place once a week on Sundays 11am- 1pm and then 2pm-4pm. Every cast member is required for the morning (as this is typically a song and dance rehearsal), and actors are called as required for the after-lunch rehearsal if they are in the scene that is being run.

The Summer Show

This takes place late May, Rehearsals start in April, and auditions take place after the spring show production week. Everyone who auditions for the summer show gets a role!

Summer show rehearsals take place twice a week Wednesday Evenings 7pm-9pm and on Sundays 11am- 1pm and then 2pm-4pm. Cast members are required for Wednesdays if they are called. Every cast member is required for the morning of Sunday rehearsals (as this is typically a song and dance rehearsal), and actors are called as required for the after-lunch rehearsal if they are in the scene that is being run.

Panto in a Weekend

A whole panto? In a weekend? Panto in a Weekend is a one-act panto which is written, rehearsed and performed all in one go; Friday to Sunday of a weekend. This is more of a social event and takes place between the end of the spring show and the start of rehearsals for the summer show. There are no auditions; the 'Wheel of Fate' chooses who plays which character. You are not expected to learn the lines, as you can have the script with you during the performance. Is it intense? Yes! Is it epic fun? Also yes!

Panto in a Night

You thought Panto in a Weekend sounded like intense epic fun? Well, Panto in a Night is also a thing! This is more of a social event where we split off in groups to write short panto scripts with one or two parody songs integrated in. We then take it in turns to perform these short pantos to the rest of the society members. It's a late one! Caffeine and the day off work the next day is advised 😊

What to Expect at an Audition

Audition packs are available in advance of the auditions taking place. Auditions usually take place over several days of one week and on both campuses. There is a warm-up room available, in this room, there will be some lovely PantSoc members on hand for chats, advice and pin badges! Within the audition room, there will be some members of the Executive Production Team for the show. These are the writer/s, producers and directors of the show. You will be asked to perform three segments for the audition, which you can do in any order. These are a reading of your chosen part/s with redirection from the directors, signing about a minute of a song of your choice and then an improvisation section based on a prompt given to you by one of the directors. The directors may also ask you to read for another part, although this does not always happen. The executive team may ask you if it is okay for your audition to be video recorded; this is, of course, up to you. These are welcoming experiences, try to have fun and relax and remember if you're auditioning for the Spring and Summer shows, you got a part just for auditioning!

What to Expect During a Production Week

Production Week (prod week) is a whole week of afternoons and evenings dedicated to the performance of the RAG, Spring or Summer shows. The earlier parts of the week are dedicated to various runs of the show, such as a dress run and a tech run, as well as 'get in' where we get into the booked performance space, including the set, costumes and props. Show days are typically Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Prep rooms are allocated for makeup and costume. There will be soft call and hard call times published for cast and crew, and the shows take place in the evening. Following the last show is 'get out', which, as you

can imagine, is the opposite of a 'get in'. There will also be an after-party (usually on the Sunday of prod week).

General (o7) PantSoc Timeline

These are rough timings based on the previous academic years and may be subject to change. Therefore, specific timings will be communicated to you by the executive production teams of the show or the PantSoc committee throughout the year.

Month	RAG Show	Spring Show	Summer Show	Other Key Events
September	Auditions	Auditions		Welcome Week
October	RAG and Spring Show Meet and Greet	RAG and Spring Show Meet and Greet		
	Rehearsals (2 times a week)	Rehearsal (Sunday 11am-4pm)		
November	Rehearsals (2 times a week)	Rehearsal (Sunday 11am-4pm)		RAG Show Busking Fundraising
December	Production week (early December)	Rehearsal (Sunday 11am-4pm)		
January		Rehearsal (Sunday 11am-4pm)		Parody Social
February		Production Week (Early - Mid Feb)	Writers' pitches for the Summer Show	PantSoc Committee Elections!
March			Auditions (mid-late march)	Panto in a Weekend Writers Pitches Open
				Annual General Meeting
			Summer Show Meet and Greet	Panto in a Night!
April			Rehearsals (2 times a week)	Panto in a Weekend!
May			Rehearsals (2 times a week)	
			Production Week (late May)	PantSoc Graduation!
June	Writers' pitches for the next RAG show are due	Writers' pitches for the next Spring show are due		
July	SUMMER BREAK!			
August				

General (o7) PantSoc Rules

(Section written by Ben Severn, 2025/6 Chair)

While our major goal each year is to put on a fun show for the members and audience to enjoy, we do need some rules to keep things fun and fair! While you won't be 'punished' for not following these rules (we aren't evil), we do ask that you stick to them to preserve our fun, safe environment!

- ★ **Multi-Lead Casting:** You cannot be cast as a lead twice in **subsequent audition cycles**. This means that if you were cast as a lead in RAG or Spring, you cannot be a lead in Summer and vice versa. This is to allow as many people as possible to have the chance at being a lead!
- ★ **Multi-Exec Prod Roles:** We also tend to avoid having people as members of the executive production team twice in a row, though this rule is a little less cut and dry. Directors/Producers cannot be director/producer again in a subsequent pitching cycle, but could be a writer. Writers cannot write again in a subsequent pitching cycle, but could pitch for a director/producer.
- ★ **The Weekend Exception:** As with every good rule, there is an exception to both of the above rules. Due to the weekend's nature, if you write for or direct a weekend, or are randomly wheeled to be a lead in a weekend, you are not exempt from being cast or on the exec prod for a show!
- ★ **PANTO IS FOR CHILDREN:** Pantomime is known to toe the line of appropriateness, and while traditionally a children's medium is beloved due to its ability to keep adults entertained with innuendo and other such risqué jokes. Due to this, there are certain things that are not to be said on stage. These are:
 - **No swearing.**
 - **No explicitly sexual content.**
 - **Nothing that would require an additional trigger warning for the show (this can range from things such as racism, animal cruelty and other unsavoury topics).**
- ★ **Antisocial Behaviour:** This should go without saying, but please do not intentionally antagonise people. Do not make fun of someone based on protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation), do not harass or bully people, do not show up to events inebriated, etc. We reserve the right to ask you to leave the society or event if you are breaking these rules.

We understand that mistakes happen, but generally, please do try to stick to these guidelines wherever possible. If you have any concerns, please follow the guidance within the Welfare section of this document (pg 14).

PantSoc Glossaries

Words, phrases, acronyms and 'bits' which are all panto related

Committee Roles

All committee roles are voted for during our PantSoc elections, which take place in February.

Committee Role	Explanation	Current Role Holder/s
	Executive Committee Roles	
Chair	The chair leads the pantomime society. They make sure we adhere to the policies and constitution, they chair committee meetings, oversee show casting, monitor feedback and are (usually) the Exec Committee contact for the Spring and Summer Show.	Ben Severn
Vice Chair	The vice chair steps in to fulfil the chair's duties in the event/s of their absence. They are (usually) the Exec Committee contact for RAG. They schedule committee meetings, facilitate production team handovers, assist production teams and update the production team handover documents. They also step in as production team members if required.	Alex Minihan
Secretary	The secretary writes the weekly PantSoc emails, books the meeting, performance and rehearsal venues, takes the notes at meetings, makes meeting agendas and fulfils any society administration tasks.	Alyn Edmonstone
Treasurer	The treasurer holds the society's budget, sets ticket pricing, applies for society grant funding, keeps track of society expenditure and countersigns any reimbursements the prod team members make for costumes, set or makeup, etc.	Elijah Roth
	Committee Roles	
Social Secretaries	There are usually two social secretaries who are appointed. They are in charge of planning and running social events through the PantSoc calendar. They also plan and run meet and greets and after-show parties and act as the responsible person/s at these socials.	Elis Owen and Joseph Winstanley
Wellbeing and Community Champion	The WaCC is a safe contact for society members. They are a point of contact during the shows, run the welfare drop-in sessions and support society and committee members.	Erica Overend
Acting Cat	The acting cat maintains the panto archives, both physical (the panto bible) and digital, by adding new material and preserving the previous show archives.	Faith Wardle
Stablehand	The stablehand looks after the society's storage, updates the inventory, keeps watch over Doctor Horse and provides access to the storage as required.	Bee Richardson

Press and Publicity Officers	There are usually three PnP officers who are elected. They are in charge of running the PantSoc social media pages, designing posts and badges and monitoring social media correspondence.	Charlie Butler, Ophelia Preece and Chloe Mills
Extraordinary Member	The extraordinary member writes and updates the Panto Handbook (insert forth wall break here, 'hello reader!'). They also offer support to other committee members, are the society's members' voices on committee meetings is a helping hand wherever they are required!	Rosy (Zee) Jane Lyon

Production Roles

The executive production team oversees the running of the show, including rehearsals and auditions. These roles require both written and verbal pitches. The non-executive production team roles require written pitches. You can have a role in the cast of a pantomime and as a production team member at the same time, but not as an executive production team member. The link to the handover documents is [here](#) if you would like more information on a specific role:

[Prod Handovers!](#)

Production Role	Explanation
	Executive Production Team Roles
Directors	The directors are the face of the exec production group, engaging the cast. They facilitate the scene blocking and acting feedback. Usually, there are two directors for each pantomime. Directors also provide prop lists and input on the tech script.
Producers	Producers schedule rehearsals, send out information as to who is required for the upcoming rehearsal and what is being covered. They also facilitate the warm-up games in rehearsals, scrolling of both scene and song documents, playing backing tracks for the MD and choreographers and reading in for cast members who may not be present and organising set painting sessions. They can also act as backstage assistants and stewards on show nights as required, and may make an appearance on stage as Doctor Horse.
Writer/s	The writer or writers are in charge of creating the script, writing the lyrics to the parody songs and making the audition packs. They liaise with the directors, musical director and choreographer as to how their writing is translated to the actual show.
Exec Committee Contact	A member of the exec committee (unless in strange circumstances, the chair or vice chair) who you can get into contact with if you have any problems you don't want to bring to members of Exec Prod or want to take them straight to the committee.
	Production Team Role
Set Designer	The set designer will create a design to go onto the flats. They also liaise with the producers as to when the set painting takes place and are on hand to draw out the design and facilitate the input from the set painting volunteers.
Musical Director	The musical director is in charge of teaching the cast the parody songs within the show, as well as vocal warm-ups and 1-2-1 sessions with cast members who have solos or want support.
Choreographer	The choreographer puts the moves to the music, creating choreo documents for the cast, and they work closely with the musical director to allow the singing and dancing to work in sync with each other. They also often produce mirrored recordings of the dances for the cast to practice and dance catch-up sessions.
Costume Designer	The costume designer brings together the costume ideas for the show, and prepares a spreadsheet to track the costume items

	lent, provided or purchased. They also produce a costume comfortability form once everyone is aware of their role in the cast. This way, everyone is comfortable in the costume during the performances.
Tech Designer	The tech designer works with the directors to produce a tech script. This is a version which includes lighting cues, sound effects and song cues.
Props Master	The props master receives a props list from the directors and sources these. They also provide a props tracing spreadsheet to know who is lending what prop, whether cast members have prop suggestions or what props require purchasing.
Makeup Designer	The makeup designer produces the makeup and hair looks for the show. They are usually supported by a troop of volunteers from cast and prod teams who will follow the makeup designer's vision and take the looks from paper to person.
Merch Designer	The merch designer produces designs for the show merchandise, which can be purchased by the cast and production teams. They are in charge of creating the design, sourcing the company to print the design (usually on garments), and gleaming interest and payment from the show members.
Backstage Manager/Assistant	This role is usually undertaken by the producers, but in the event that the producers are within the cast (which can occasionally happen), a backstage manager or assistant can be appointed. It is their job to make sure that the cast are ready to go on stage for their cues, which is particularly useful in venues such as Central Hall, where the backstage area is upstairs! There still has to be an executive production member on hand to assist them.

PantSoc 'Bits' and Phrases

These are some words and phrases you will likely hear at rehearsals and social events. So that you're in the know, a handy list has been provided.

Term	Meaning
Action and Words - Salute to 'General...'	This originated from 'General Meme Cat' within Panto in a Weekend 'Cats the Musical a Pantomime'. From 2024, it has evolved to whenever someone says general followed by a word, those words are repeated and saluted. An example would be 'General Gist'; it has now expanded to include the word 'Major' as well.
Action - Arms Up	This is our version of catching people's attention. It means you need to be quiet, as someone is going to say something important. If you see someone with their arms up, not talking, it means you need to do the same.
Back-ting	Back-ting means acting silently in the background in a way that fleshes out the scene without drawing attention away from whoever is delivering lines. You 'backt' in a scene where you do not have lines at that moment, but you should still be integrating with other cast members and reacting to what is being said. Scenes that generally require back-ting may be a town square, inn or any other area where a large group of people would be gathered.
Circle Time	This occurs at the beginning of rehearsals where we all and in a circle, say our names, pronouns (if comfortable to do so), roles (cast, production and committee if applicable), and an answer to a question posed by the exec prod team such as 'what is the strangest thing you would eat in a sandwich?' or 'what is the best way to enjoy a potato?' for example.
Dance Move - Zeus Zeus, Hades Hades	This is a dance move that originated from the Pantomime Hercules in 2019. It has since featured in practically every show in some form and is often abbreviated on documents to ZZHH. There are different types of ZZHH moves now, including 'open palm ZZHH' and 'Big ZZHH'. But it is likely to feature in some form in one or more of the songs in a show you're in.
Doctor Horse (They/Them)	Doctor Horse the 3 rd is our magical, somewhat, legally immoral and quite imposing pantomime horse. They usually turn up in every pantomime to help save the day in some ludicrous way!
Living Memory	Pantomimes in living memory refer to shows that the current society members were a part of or were in the society when these took place. Technically, the oldest living memory is now Robin Hood from 2019 as we have one society member with us who was in that show, however, living memory officially refers to shows within the last 3 years.

Read- in	You might be asked to read in for a character during rehearsal. This means the cast member is not present but to keep the rehearsal on track other cast members step in for the time being.
Scroll	Scrolling is when someone (usually a producer) will scroll through a document for the MD, Choreographer, or directors so that the cast can follow the document effectively and efficiently.
Story Time	During the Meet and Greet held before rehearsals for shows begin, the exec prod for a show will perform a short summary of the show written by the writer. This is usually comical and helps the cast to get an idea of the script, or to get an idea of the sister show's script for RAG/Spring.
The Panto Bible	The panto bible is the physical panto archive and it is looked after by the acting cat.
'Exec'	Exec is a contextual shorthand term used to refer to either the Executive Committee (Exec Committee) of the society or the Executive Production Team (Exec Prod) of a show. They tend to be used interchangeably, but throughout this document we have tried to add the Prod or Committee to prevent confusion.

Welfare Links and Guidance

(Section written by Ben Severn, 2025/6 Chair)

We aim to keep this society as safe, inclusive and fun as possible. We have several avenues to voice your concerns, and would implore you to do so should there be an issue that you feel needs to be addressed. We, as a committee, are committed to improving this society and making it as accessible and amazing a space as possible, and welcome any and all feedback you may have. Underneath are links to specific forms / avenues of welfare that are relevant to current committee and active shows:

[The Anonymous Comments Box](#) - This is a comments box where you can leave any issues completely anonymously that only the current Chair has any access to. There is more guidance to this within the form itself.

Wellbeing and Community Champion - Our current WaCC is Erica Overend (email: kdp513@york.ac.uk). If you need any support or have any issues you would like to raise, please do not hesitate to contact them.

Society Chair / Current RAG/Summer Exec Contact - The current chair of PantSoc is Ben Severn (email: hkn513@york.ac.uk). If you have any issues you feel you cannot go to our WaCC for support with, or have any RAG related concerns you don't wish to raise to the exec prod, please contact him.

Current Spring Exec Contact/Sustainability Lead - The current Spring Exec Contact (and Vice Chair) is Alex Minihan (email hfk513@york.ac.uk). If you have any Spring related concerns you don't wish to raise to the exec prod, or any sustainability related concerns or questions, please contact her.

Accessibility Lead - Our current accessibility lead is Elijah Roth (email: elijah.roth@york.ac.uk) If you have any accessibility related concerns or questions, please contact him.

Useful Links



PantSoc Quick Links!

Hello! This is your quick access document for useful PantSoc information. If you have any questions that aren't answered here, please drop us a message at pantsoc@yorksu.org.

If you have any issues you'd like to discuss with our Chair, Ben Severn, you can contact them via email at hkn513@york.ac.uk

[Committee Role Information](#)

[Up to Date Constitution](#)

[Comments box](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Prod Role information](#)

[Membership](#)

[Safe Space Policy](#)

[Prod Role Handovers](#)

[Past show videos](#) ~ [Past Panto Songs](#)