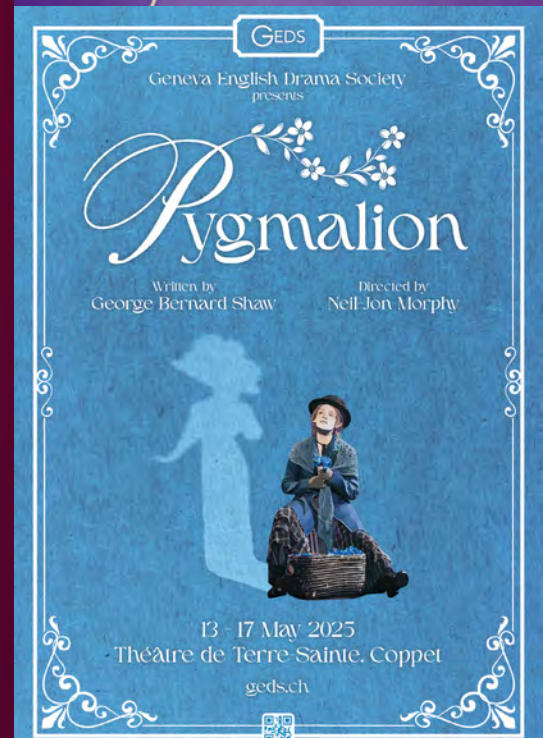
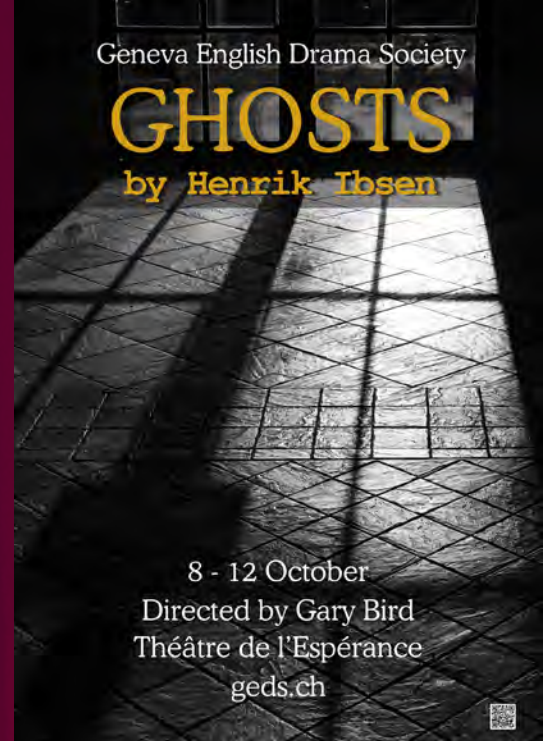


2024-2025 Season Committee Report



GEDS Committee Report

2024-2025 Season

GEDS has once again had a busy year with a full schedule of productions, playreadings, workshops, and a charity performance for Gaza School of Music in conjunction with the Geneva Literary Aid society.

Productions

The first show of the evening was a welcome return to directing by Gary Bird with his production of Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts*. This was a complex and emotional play performed by a five-person ensemble cast of experienced actors. This was a well-received production with some members of the Geneva Nordic club in particular expressing how much they enjoyed seeing an Ibsen play performed in Geneva.

The second production of the year was the season's big one with a sumptuous production of *Shakespeare in Love* adapted by Lee Hall and directed by Ann-Marie Mendes in her directorial debut for GEDS. This was a terrific achievement to bring this twenty-eight-person cast to the stage, possibly the largest cast in any production by GEDS. The production was hugely popular and sold out some of the nights. There was, as usual a large backstage crew that made it all possible, but a special mention should go to Nathalie Stump for the complex set build including a balcony and Liz Comstock for costuming the entire production in period Elizabethan costumes which very nearly stole the whole show! I was particularly pleased to see that GEDS can produce these large-scale, large cast ambitious productions with such high quality.

Lastly the season finished with veteran GEDS director Neil-Jon Morphy's production of *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw. Shaw has been a regular playwright in GEDS productions with one of GEDS earliest productions of his play, *Androcles and the Lion* featuring in the 1935/36 season but we have never produced what is probably his best-known play, *Pygmalion*, so it was great to see GEDS finally bring it to the stage in what was a very popular production.

In addition to these productions, there was an unexpected revival of GEDS' 2024 FEATS best original script winner *Friends Help You Move* with another one act play *The Humours of Bandon* in a sold-out charity evening organised by Denis McClean of the Geneva Literary Aid Society.

Of course, as well as the main productions, a varied and interesting season of play readings was organised by play reading coordinator Masha Neznansky including the ever-popular *GEDS writes* evening. Our workshop activities included again an acting workshop given by professional Acting and Directing Tutor Eva Sampson.

I'd like to once again thank our Membership for their continued support, especially all those who have devoted their time to helping with our productions and activities. GEDS cannot do what we do without the vital help from members and volunteers. Lastly, I would also like to thank my fellow committee members who have worked extremely hard to make this season happen.

John Ward

Chairperson, Geneva English Drama Society

2025 and beyond

Since last year's AGM we have provided a wide range of plays, genres and experiences for our audiences and members.

My role as Vice-Chair this year has been to ensure the audition and rehearsal process runs smoothly and consistently and to support the Directors as they move from audition to performance.

The first production of 2025 was *Shakespeare in Love* at Théâtre de l'Espérance. This was a 5 night near sell-out show with one of the largest casts in GEDS' history. It was not only a commercial success, but it also brought several new members to the society.

Following on from this, we had George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, directed by Neil-Jon Morphy at Théâtre de Terre-Sainte in Coppet. Again, this was a commercial success and was well received each night.

This Autumn, we will be staging Ira Levin's *Deathtrap* at Théâtre de Terre-Sainte in Coppet, directed by Veera Valo, assisted by Gary Bird. Rehearsals are well underway.

In Spring 2026, we have two plays being performed at La Manège in Onex. The first being performed in March is *A Servant to Two Masters*, a Lee Hall adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's original play, directed by me. Then, in May, the second will be Jordan Tannaway's *Late Company*, directed by Charles Slovenski.

In September 2026, John Ward will be directing *Hangmen* by Martin McDonagh at Théâtre de l'Espérance, and in November at Théâtre de Terre-Sainte in Coppet, Yvette Stevens will be directing *The Lion and The Jewel* by Wole Soyinka.

So, as you can see, we are staging a diverse selection of plays, and we are always seeking members to propose ideas for future productions.

Ann-Marie Mendes
Vice-Chair

Playreadings

Yet again we have had a wonderfully diverse and interesting playreadings season full of talent, by all involved, both on and off the stage.

Here is the list of our readings, which we should all be very proud of:

- *Opening Event: Heavy Petting* (17/09/24)
written and arranged by Lesley Sherwood
- *22 :2 A Ghost Story* (01/10/24)
written by Danny Robbins, arranged by Owen Boyle
- *Moon of the Misbegotten* (22/10/24)
written by Eugene O'Neill, arranged by NJ Morphy
- *Life x3* (05/11/24)
written by Jasmina Reza, arranged by Olga Derenkova
- *Man and Gentleman* (26/11/24)
written by Eduardo Phillippo, arranged by Lesley Sherwood
- *Agamemnon* (21/01/25)
written by Aeschylus, arranged by Nicholas Wimberger
- *The Seafarer* (11/02/25)
written by Conor McPherson, arranged by John Ward
- *Late Company* (25/02/25)
written by Jordan Tamahill, arranged by Chuck Slovenski

- *Time of my Life* (18/03/25)
written by Alan Aychburn, arranged by Kate Richardson
- *The Man from Earth* (01/04/25)
written by Jérôme Bixby, arranged by Sasha Shelest
- *Mosquitos* (15/04/25)
written by Lucy Kirkwood, arranged by Jill Gordon
- GEDS Showcase:
 - *That Wall Paper Goes or I Go* by John Ward
 - *Canceled* by Iryna Dzyubynska
 - *Kiss the Day Goodbye* by Ann-Marie Mendes
 - *Another Human Comedy* by Jennifer Wingate
 - *Not Belinda's* by Lesley Sherwood
- *Buried Child* (27/05/25)
written by Sam Shepherd, arranged by Tamaam Madi-Nassar
- *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* (17/06/25)
written by Nassim Soleimanpour, arranged by Will Fihn Ramsay
- *The Trial of Brother Jero* (28/06/25)
written by Wole Soyinka, arranged by Yvette Stevens

Masha Neznansky
Playreadings Coordinator

Publicity and communications

GEDS Publicity carries out all tasks related to advertising and outreach to ensure positive visibility of the Society and its activities.

Whereas in recent years GEDS Publicity has been overseen by one person, for the 2024-25 Financial Year the Committee divided the role into two areas of responsibility:

- **Publicity and Outreach**, led by Josamine Bronnvik
Covering: Weekly newsletters and member notices; outreach and communications through the publicity account; external website posting; advertising coordination; media relations.

- **Digital and Design**, led by David McClenaghan

Covering: GEDS website content management; social media management; brand identity; graphic design of posters, flyers, and programmes; printing and distribution.

The two roles continued to collaborate closely, and the new approach has been a great success—allowing each role to dedicate greater focus and time to their areas while still ensuring consistency of messaging and style.

It is the intention of the committee to continue this two-role approach to publicity into the 2025-26 Financial Year.

To ensure the widest possible advertising reach, this year the GEDS Publicity team focused on streamlining the marketing strategy to target the most impactful formats, updating content, and design to align with industry trends, ensuring continuity of the GEDS visibility plan.

Major productions

Ghosts (8-11 October 2024) was the final show with publicity managed by our previous Coordinator, Tamaam Madi-Nassar, to whom immense credit is due, not least for setting the stage for future publicity.

Shakespeare in Love (11-15 March 2025) received wide notice on blogs, on WRS, through social media, and through consistent poster and flyer display throughout Geneva. This is a team effort as members of the production and Committee took time to cover the city. As ever, reviews and advertisement were arranged on events sites in French and English and partnerships were arranged to share the show with other theatres or interested parties.

Pygmalion (13-17 May 2025) benefitted from the same consistent blog and radio publicity. However, since the show was in Coppet, and by regulation posters can only be shown in Geneva for shows taking place within the Canton, *Pygmalion* could not receive free advertising in the city. Instead, Publicity travelled to Lausanne, where posting is allowed, to distribute physical materials. Meanwhile, focus was given to social media and paid advertising. For example, *Pygmalion* took advantage of paid poster space in Swiss post offices. Costs for advertising remained within the low range of recent shows.

Diplomatic event

During the season, GEDS was invited by the UK Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva to perform at a diplomatic party to mark the birthday of His Majesty The King.

The GEDS publicity team arranged an evening of interactive theatre in honour of the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth—with readings, improvisation, and performances of classic scenes from her novels. A talented cast of actors came together to perform for over 1000 guests: Gillian Barmes, Anna Bradley, Josamine Bronnvik, Chris Clyde Green, Jennie Klein, David McClenaghan, Daire O'Doherty, Andrea Ogbonna-James, Gemma Parkes, and Hannah Sellers.

A special thank you to Liz Comstock-Smith for creating spectacular costumes, which were the talk of the party.

GEDS' new season flyers were disseminated to the crowd and GEDS received callouts by the Ambassador in person, on social media, and in an official letter of appreciation.

Branding and Design

This year saw the creation of an updated GEDS brand identity, similar to those used by the marketing teams of professional theatre production companies.

Using the existing logo as a starting point, the identity established a consistent new visual style, including:

- New standardised logo variants:

- Basic:

GEDS

- Basic with tagline:

GEDS | GREAT THEATRE
IN ENGLISH
IN GENEVA

- Full:

GEDS | GENEVA ENGLISH DRAMA SOCIETY
Great theatre. In English. In Geneva. Since 1933.

All logo variants can be used either in colour or as white on darker backgrounds.

- A GEDS tagline: "Great Theatre. In English. In Geneva. Since 1933."

- A brand colour: Hex #740645
- A brand font: Avenir

This consistent style will allow for greater brand recognition, making GEDS content more recognisable and memorable to new audiences as we continue efforts to expand our reach in 2025-26.

Social media

Digital marketing continued to be a primary mode of GEDS publicity, reflecting the ever evolving marketing landscape.

Highlights of our 2024-25 social media include:

- New social media profile badges in line with updated brand style and modern social media trends
- Paid advertising to promote productions and target new audiences previously unfamiliar with GEDS.
- 31% increase in Instagram followers
- 19% increase in interactions on Facebook
- Increased use of reel content
- Reduced overall spend

Website

In recognition of the new brand identity, the look and feel of the GEDS website was modernised and updated to reflect the consistent new visual style, making use of the same updated logos, colour scheme, font, and tagline. This was a substantial project, involving redesigning the style and layout of the entire website.

Updates included:

- A more modern, consistent, minimalist design with standardised colours, fonts and presentation.
- Optimising content layouts for smartphones and tablets in addition to desktops.

- Search Engine Optimisation to increase Google and other search engine rankings.
- An updated menu to simplify site navigation.
- Increased use of images.
- A new fully scrollable timeline of past GEDS shows.
- Custom banners with links to buy tickets during promotional periods for each production.

In addition to the website refresh and general updates managed by publicity, huge thanks are due to webmasters John Newsome and Jane Easton for continuing to devote substantial time and effort to coordinating the technical side of the GEDS website, including hosting, domain registration, ticket sales, data, and managing the backend.

Additional thank you and credit to Neil-Jon Morphy for his work on GEDS Showcase content including production summaries, and to Lance Newhart for his work recording and editing videos of public domain productions such as *Ghosts*.

Photography

GEDS' photographer Ariadne Kypriadi, a friend of the society and talented artist, once again kindly donated her time to provide consistent, high-quality images for the all three shows of the season. Her work was used extensively across all our publicity throughout the season, with substantial impact. Ariadne has since left the country, and her contribution will be greatly missed. We will now work to find replacement photographers to ensure ongoing visuals for publicity, but many thanks go to Ariadne for her support over the years.

Additional rehearsal photography was also provided by members including John Ward, Alexandra Shelest, Matt Beveridge, David McClenaghan, and Josamine Bronnvik.

Ongoing Activities

Ongoing activities carried out by GEDS Publicity Team include the following:

- Producing original promotional materials such as flyers, posters, and digital graphics to advertise GEDS shows, activities, playreadings and other events.

- Drafting and placing ads for upcoming performances in local events outlets and relevant websites. This helps to expand the reach of GEDS productions beyond the organization's existing networks.
- Developing engaging posts and updates for GEDS's social media platforms to inform and attract followers.
- Designing programmes for each production. Publicity is also responsible for arranging professional printing and ensuring materials are available when needed.
- Producing and updating content on the GEDS website to keep information current. This includes adding new show announcements, event details, and multimedia content.
- Compiling and distributing a weekly GEDS at a Glance email newsletter to inform members about upcoming events, news, and important updates. These are among other notices such as the playreading reminders.
- Coordinating and arranging interviews with World Radio Switzerland (WRS) to promote GEDS events to a broad English-speaking audience.
- Planning and overseeing photography sessions to capture images of the cast, rehearsals, and productions. These photos are then used in publicity materials and official production albums.
- Monitoring and answering questions or comments received on social media and via email bulletins. Timely responses help maintain positive relationships with audience members and the public.
- Connecting and collaborating with other English-speaking theatre groups to exchange promotional materials and cross-promote events. Partnerships with our friends at GAOS, the Village Players, Hoops of Iron and others, are essential to supporting the full English theatre ecosystem in the Geneva area.

The GEDS Publicity Team wish to thank everyone involved in bringing the productions to life and making the 2024-2025 GEDS season such a public success. Marketing and outreach simply make the public aware of what is available to them, and the amazing quality of the shows does the rest.

Josamine Bronnvik and David McClenaghan
Publicity Team

Technical

The whole of the technical team—from set designers, builders, painters, lighting, sound, truckdrivers, costumes, and make up—have had a very heavy workload with our limited resources. We have managed to put together the technical challenge of three period shows with large casts, period costumes, makeup, wigs and furnishing, and three large sets.

For *Shakespeare In Love* we were fortunate to have been helped by an experienced GAOS stage manager, who was used to working with a very large cast of over 20. This was also a learning experience for the GEDS team. Special mention has to be made to Liz Comstock-Smith for the costumes for all 3 shows, and Christina Conti for the makeup.

I would like to thank the core members of our technical team for all their hard work. The same team has worked on all the shows. Without this incredible team the staging of our shows would not be possible.

We are now asking all cast members to give the technical team at least one day of help to get their show ready for the performance, so far we have had 3 of the five cast members helping which has been a real help.

The building dates are now advertised in the *GEDS At A Glance* newsletter in advance, this has been a success with several new members who have volunteered to help, which is very encouraging.

Nathalie Stump
Technical Manager

Business

Intellectual property rights for productions and playreadings

Applying for rights remains rather a time consuming task. The fees vary from production to another and there's usually not much room for negotiation, if any, but we always try when it seems reasonable.

The committee has taken the habit of getting a price estimate for rights before deciding on going forward with a production, to avoid surprises. Last year the

performance fee for *Shakespeare in love* was rather high, 2400 EUR, but the committee trusted it would attract an audience, which it did. For older plays we often don't need to pay for rights, which was the case for *Pygmalion*.

The performance fees for playreadings were at the same level as previous years. However, some rights holders have started to demand a script order for all cast and crew. This is not the case for each play, but whenever a script order is required, the total costs are usually about double the license fee. This past season we had a few original plays and out-of-copyright older plays, which kept the costs reasonable.

Theatres

The first production of GEDS 2024 to 2025 season, *Ghosts* (by Henrik Ibsen) directed by Gary Bird, was performed at the Théâtre de l'Espérance (Geneva).

The second play of the season, *Shakespeare in Love* (by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard, adapted by Lee Hall) directed by Ann-Marie Mendes was also performed at Théâtre de l'Espérance.

The season ended with *Pygmalion* (by George Bernard Shaw) directed by Neil-Jon Morphy at Théâtre Terre Sainte in Coppet.

These two theatres remain the best options for GEDS in terms of availability and value for money, as well as Théâtre Le Manège (Onex). Théâtre Pitoëff hasn't been available for bookings recently and currently it's only available for theatre companies who are tax exempt. GEDS will be looking into the matter in the coming year to be able to book this theatre in the future, and to potentially benefit from state subsidies.

Other theatres that could be considered for our productions in the future include Scene Caecilia (Geneva) and Théâtre de Ranches (Vernier). The biggest challenge with booking theatres is the availability. We have started booking the venues two years in advance to secure the most popular venues for our productions.

Rehearsal/Events Space

Most of the rehearsals took place in Collège Sismondi. Occasionally we also used the Collège Sécheron, André-Chavanne Business School, English Church hall, Cigüe space Les Bavillons as well as ICVolunteers space called "Arcade". The society's Opening event, AGM and Christmas event were held at the Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

Playreading Venue

Playreadings continued to take place in the Salle Rive at Uptown, under the same terms as for the previous season. All public events need to be declared to the Geneva authorities and we pay a small fee for the permission. For productions at Théâtre de l'Espérance we also book parking space in front of the theatre to allow smooth theatre move-in and bar management, as the glasses need to be taken home by the bar manager to be washed after each show.

Veera Valo

Business Manager

Events

It has been another busy season with many events, including the GEDS season opening evening, the AGM, the Christmas Event, and the GEDS barbecue at the barn led by Jane Easton and John Newsome.

GEDS Events held a weekend acting workshop with Eva Sampson, a professional acting coach from the UK, who Alexandra (Sasha) Shelest helped to arrange and to make the logistical arrangements. This workshop was co-organized by GAOS, who kindly hosted the workshop at their HQ. GEDS and GAOS members benefited from a special price, while the general public had a higher price. This encouraged some persons to consider becoming GEDS members. GEDS Events was also responsible for recording, editing, and producing Zoom playreadings and some of our scheduled playreadings, such as GEDS Showcase.

We continue looking for new ways to engage GEDS members, both younger and older, to keep our theatre community active. Member feedback is encouraged and always welcome.

And we would like to thank all members who volunteered to help with the logistics, preparation, and the serving of food and drinks during our various events and summer barbecue.

Lance Newhart

Events and Workshops Coordinator