

Rosemary Squire and Howard Panter buy HQ Theatres as Trafalgar empire expands

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The Churchill Theatre in Bromley, which will become part of Trafalgar Entertainment.

Rosemary Squire and Howard Panter's Trafalgar Entertainment has acquired HQ Theatres, in a deal that will see it add 12 venues to its growing portfolio.

HQ Theatres, part of Nick Thomas' Qdos Entertainment Group, currently operates 11 theatres, including G Live in Guildford, the Churchill Theatre in Bromley and the Orchard Theatre in Dartford, all of which will join

Trafalgar Entertainment's current venues, Trafalgar Theatre and Theatre Royal Sydney.

In addition, HQ Theatres is currently the preferred operator of the New Theatre in Cardiff.

The transaction was completed on March 27 but terms of the agreement have not been disclosed.

Qdos Pantomimes – the panto production arm of Qdos Entertainment – will continue to be run by Thomas and Michael Harrison, with the company not being impacted by the changes.

Squire, joint chief executive and executive chair of Trafalgar Entertainment, described HQ Theatres as a “fantastic business”.

“It’s a credit to the whole team that they have navigated the recent closure period so successfully and are poised to emerge intact and well placed for future growth as the sector rebuilds. Our aim is to add value and investment, through Trafalgar Entertainment, to their portfolio of venues to accelerate growth and to build the business. But of course HQ will continue to do what it does best – offering a premium live theatre and entertainment experience – complemented with an industry leading food and drink offer - to theatregoers up and down the country,” she said.

Thomas, chairman and founder of Qdos Entertainment Group, said he had built HQ from “small beginnings to be a major player in the UK theatre and live entertainment sector”.

“I am delighted that the journey will continue for the team through this collaboration with Trafalgar Entertainment to further develop HQ, the business I founded. This is not so much the end of an era as the beginning

of an exciting new chapter for HQ, together with the company's producer and local authority partners," he added.

HQ's group leadership team including chief executive Julian Russell, chief operating officer Alvin Hargreaves and group marketing director Chris McGuigan will continue as part of the acquisition, and will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the company.

Russell said the partnership would help to "fast-track" the company's recovery plans and "offers a range of exciting opportunities for the development of HQ Theatres in the future".

Trafalgar Entertainment, co-founded by Panter and Squire in 2017, also operates a producing arm, with Trafalgar Theatre Productions and Jonathan Church Theatre Productions.

The company also includes Trafalgar Releasing and Stagecoach Performing Arts, ticket agency London Theatre Direct, Luke Shires Marketing, Chiswick Cinema and More2Screen.

Squire and Panter stepped down as joint chief executives of Ambassador Theatre Group in 2016, when they were replaced by Mark Cornell.

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