

Howard Panter: ‘We want to create more producing houses as part of HQ Theatres deal’

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Howard Panter at The Stage Debut Awards in 2018. Photo: Alex Brenner

Trafalgar Entertainment boss Howard Panter has outlined his plans for the [recently acquired HQ Theatres brand](#), revealing he intends to turn the Churchill Theatre in Bromley back into a producing house.

Trafalgar Entertainment today announced it had acquired HQ Theatres, from Qdos Entertainment Group.

Panter said Trafalgar Entertainment and HQ Theatres would together create a “new combined force in British theatre” and that Trafalgar Entertainment would be looking to create synergy between its existing brands – including Stagecoach, Trafalgar Releasing and London Theatre Direct – and HQ Theatres.

As part of this, Panter – who is creative director at Trafalgar Entertainment – said he would be using the London Theatre Direct ticketing site to grow audiences for the network of HQ Theatres, which includes the Lyceum Theatre in Crewe, the Churchill Theatre in Bromley and the Orchard Theatre in Dartford.

He added that, using the Stagecoach brand, he was keen to “build upon the educational and community work already going on in the venues”.

Speaking about his plans for the theatres, he said: “In terms of content and programming, the Churchill Theatre in Bromley was, years ago when we had it as part of Ambassador Theatre Group, a producing house and we would like to revisit that idea of Bromley being a producing house, and indeed producing work in other places too.”

He said there may be a piece of work, for instance, to be produced in Crewe and added: “We would hope to be upping the amount of content that goes through HQ Theatres at the moment, working with the directors to bring more national and local content to fruition. That is something we very much want to do.”

Panter said he wanted to link HQ Theatres with the central programming and production capacity that Trafalgar Entertainment has through its Jonathan Church Productions and Trafalgar Theatre Productions.

He also said the company was looking to continue its expansion, and was exploring “different opportunities as they come up, internationally and regionally”.

The company already operates the Theatre Royal Sydney and Panter said the company was looking at other opportunities in countries such as Korea, as well as in the UK.

“When we created ATG, one of the things we were proud of was the regional network we established which was, and still is, the largest regional network in the UK. Much as London is wonderful, the regions are the biggest single part of the British theatre ecology,” he said.

He added: “This is a real vote of confidence in the UK regional market and in our commitment to building regional theatre in the UK.”

He also said he intended to keep the existing staff base from HQ Theatres as part of the deal.

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