

Royal Exchange Theatre show was cancelled after pro-Palestine and trans rights row

From the [Manchester Evening News](#)



A five-week run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was cancelled following a row over pro-Palestine and pro-transgender rights at the Royal Exchange Theatre, the Manchester Evening News can reveal.

The theatre was due to stage a modern take on the William Shakespeare classic, set in contemporary Manchester with a drum 'n' bass soundtrack, from September 6 to October 12. But

the first few performances were cancelled, with theatregoers told of a cast injury and 'technical issues'.

The Royal Exchange Theatre said the decision followed a 'a number of issues with the production' and insisted that 'every effort was made to get the show on'.

Now, the M.E.N. can reveal some of the details from the turbulent week which contributed to the show being axed.

It is understood a row broke out following an internal preview of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on September 6, after it emerged the production included a song which referred to trans rights and the phrase 'free Palestine'.

The song, which was to involve the audience, had been included as part of the show's modernisation led by director Stef O'Driscoll. It's understood theatre bosses called for the section to be removed, but the director insisted it should remain in the show, with the support of her cast.

A source close to the production told the M.E.N.: "They did the first preview, at which point the theatre said they are going to have to cut the reference to trans rights and free Palestine. The director said – no..."

From that point, performances began to be cancelled and postponed.

Acting union Equity confirmed that the cast and workforce have been paid for the run in full. It's understood that this will have cost the theatre tens of thousands of pounds. Acting union Equity and directors' union Stage Directors UK also stepped in. The meeting took place hours before a press preview had been scheduled.

A source told the M.E.N . . . "At the weekend they couldn't agree, the director had walked, so they cancelled it."

I never though I would regret the Lord Chamberlain losing his

duty to consider theatre performances for inappropriate subject matter. Although in the current climate he/she would probably approve this.