



Show Report

Showstoppers Theatre Group

Great Expectations

18 October 2025

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Great Expectations
SOCIETY	Showstoppers Theatre Group
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	14
DIRECTOR	Rachel Bunting
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Victoria Husband
COSTUMES	Victoria Husband
MARKETING	Megan Husband
STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Bunting
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Victoria Husband
STAGE CREW	Victoria Husband
SET DESIGN	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
PROPERTIES	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
LIGHTING DESIGN / OPERATOR	Steven Oliver-Grant, Daniel Oliver-Grant & Kelly Holder
SOUND DESIGN / OPERATOR	Steven Oliver-Grant, Daniel Oliver-Grant & Kelly Holder
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers
PHOTOGRAPHS	Arthur Patchett
PROGRAMME	Rachel Bunting

CAST LIST

Pip	Calum Dunsdon
Young Pip	Leo Husband
Joe	Katie Dearnaley
Mrs Joe	Sheila Gooding
Mr Pumblechook	Emily Hill
Biddy	Katie Wilkins
Miss Havisham	Becci Alberti-King
Estella	Megan Husband
Herbert	Aidan Jagatsingh
Jaggers	Chloé Joyce Walker
Wemmick	Lucy Jade
Aged P	Robert Mott
Molly / Miss Skiffin	Jade Harley
Magwitch	Lee Hurst

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 18th October 2025
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 20th October 2025
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1001
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT	1628
STRONGEST ELEMENTS	Powerful Performances

- **Calum Dunsdon's** portrayal of Pip is one that would not have been easy for even a seasoned professional so to see such an unwavering skill throughout the play is impressive especially in amateur theatre.
- **Lee Hurst's** characterisation of Magwitch is well done, creating a frightening figure. This helped to bring another dimension to the play and created uncomfortable moments for some of the other characters in the piece which was entertaining to watch.

Bold, Intelligent Direction and Structure

- The choice of staging by **Rachel Bunting** and **Victoria Husband** was one of which helped to keep the pace of the piece. Usually classic dramas are seen as being quite lengthy but this direction meant it kept the momentum of the piece and kept the audience interested from start to finish.

Walking into Hyde Festival Theatre was a very different experience going to watch Great Expectations by Showstoppers Synergy as this is a theatre I know so well from stage side rather than being the one in the audience. I was very warmly welcomed by **Vicky Husband** who is one of the Co-Principals of the society and she passionately spoke about the production and the cast involved. She made sure my guest and I knew where our seats were and made sure we had a beverage, while we had a look through the programme. Instantly I noticed just how much Vicky Husband and the other Co-Principal of the society **Rachel Bunting**, actually did for this production. Together they were not only the Director and Assistant Director, but they were also Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager and Stage Crew, in charge of Wardrobe, Set Design, Props and Programme, their passion for this society is ineffable.

Taking on such a classic as *Great Expectations* is no easy task, as it tackles difficult issues such as social mobility and self-discovery. Also, with it being set in the nineteenth century, the tongue in which the characters speak is not of one that comes natural to most. Showstoppers Synergy took on this task with great skill and with a different take on staging that gave it a fresh feel.

The stage was set out into different 'zones', making use of the ashtrays also, and this meant that the story was able to flow seamlessly between different sections of the play without need for complete set changes. As there are multiple timelines that happen in the play simultaneously, this was able to be symbolised by making use of these different 'zones' of the staging and lighting whichever zone needed to be in the audience's focus. The lighting and sound were delivered to us by **Ste Oliver-Grant**, **Daniel Oliver-Grant** and **Kelly Holder**. The way the lighting was used really helped to direct the audience's attention, helped to signify when the protagonist was reliving moments of his younger life and to create atmosphere especially in Miss Havisham's House.

The costumes were all fitting for the period and helped to take you back in time. Most of the characters stayed in the same outfit which helped to keep the flow of the piece going as like the staging, there didn't need to be time set aside to give a character time to change offstage. The make up that was used also helped with the characterisation especially with some of the female cast playing male roles, they made sure that this was obvious through use of shading to create an unshaven look.

Our protagonist Pip is played by **Calum Dunsdon** who grasped the audience's attention instantly with his strong projection. You can tell that he knew the part very well which is impressive considering how dialogue heavy this role really is. Throughout this play we see Pip not only taking part in scenes but also narrating them and we are able to distinguish between whether Calum was taking part in a scene or watching over it and retelling the story by his great use of rise and fall in his voice. Ever present in whatever he was doing, the constant reaction within any scene just shows how truly engaged with this piece he was.

Alongside our protagonist, we also see Young Pip, played by **Leo Husband**, acting out scenes from Pip's younger life as Pip is retelling them. During the early scenes in the play, Leo plays a forlorn Young Pip well and that couldn't have been easy, seen as though Leo is the youngest member of the cast at just 17 years old. Due to the mature nature of the piece, it is great to see how Leo engaged with it although I would have liked to see him push the characterisation even further. Knowing that this is the first time performing with Showstoppers Synergy, after coming up from the youth group, you can see that this is just the beginning of a new venture for Leo, and his acting skills will only continue to grow.

Our first impression of Magwitch, who has a confusing relationship with Pip throughout the piece, was one of discomfort which is exactly how the character is supposed to come across. **Lee Hurst** plays the role with conviction and his entrance in the initial graveyard scene left us wanting more and awaiting his presence in other scenes. Though his scenes were few and far

between, he left an impression, though at times his speech seemed hurried and slightly unclear, this seemed fitting for the character.

Aidan Jagatsingh's characterisation of Herbert brought comedic relief. When he first entered the stage, his speech seemed rushed, but he seemed to settle into the role quite quickly. We were then able to hear his full use of vocal range to bring the character to life, he even turned throwaway comments into laugh out loud moments for the whole audience. Though he also didn't need to say anything for the audience to know exactly what he was thinking as he used his facial expressions and full body to create physical humour, especially the moments he shared with Magwitch where he was obviously uncomfortable and even disgusted by the Magwitch's character.

Becci Alberti-King's portrayal of Miss Havisham is intelligently done to create a real rollercoaster of a character. She was able to draw in the audience's attention with her vacant stare and monotone expression to begin with, this being further accentuated by make up that hollowed out her eyes and made her look devoid of emotion. She was also able to use her vocal range to show when Miss Havisham began spiralling and her passion took over. Unfortunately, the haste in which Miss Havisham's death was portrayed left the audience a little bit confused and made it seem a little more comical than was intended so I wish more time would have been taken over that.

Although in the play we have a different actor playing Pip and the younger version of himself, **Megan Husband** played both Estella and her younger counterpart. There were two different costumes used to signify the difference between Estella and when she was playing Young Estella and she uses subtle nuances to differentiate. When playing Young Estella, Megan was able to play a petulant child well, using her facial expressions and you also see a nod to her more playful side when she was twirling her skirt from side to side. When playing Estella in her adult life, Megan uses great diction and projection and is able to demonstrate a strong-minded woman. Although these differences between the two characters were able to be captured, I wanted even more of a juxtaposition between the two.

Katie Dearnaley took on the role of Joe, and although her accent wavered at times, it was really effective when at its strongest. There is quite the character arc for Joe as we see him go through loss from people moving away and also from bereavement, Katie demonstrates these emotions well but with a stiff upper lip that we would expect from the character. You saw Katie reacting throughout the scenes, keeping in character and engaging well with whatever was going on.

Mrs Joe is played by **Sheila Gooding**, and she is able to create the familiarity of an elderly relative that most people have or know of in some capacity. She plays the frustrated character well, but I wish she would have projected more consistently as there are times that her dialogue was lost. Mr Pumblechook, played by **Emily Hill**, who knew the sections of the script she was involved with well and you could see that she was aiding others with their cues to keep the flow of the dialogue. Emily began in the first Act quite understated, but her character grew in the second Act and her projection improved.

Chloé Walker played the role of Jaggers, who used her posture to signify the importance of his career as a Lawyer. Often accompanied by **Lucy Jade** who played Wemmick, she also used her full body to really get into her character. She developed quite a comical character in her portrayal, with her choice of accent adding to this, though at times she needed to slow down for the audience to have time to enjoy the character. She also created some sweet moments between herself and Aged Parent, played by **Robert Mott**.

Miss Biddy was played by **Katie Wilkins**, and her projection and diction was great. She was able to portray a soft but stern figure in Pip's life when she entered his life as a carer for Mrs Joe. There is a sweet moment when we see that Miss Biddy and Joe are married but I do wish there would have been more development of their relationship shown as it seemed to come from nowhere in this rendition.

There was also the addition of **Jade Harley** who played Molly/Miss Skiffin. She was added to multiple different scenes to help the audience to understand what was happening.

To say that a lot of the cast did not know the story of Great Expectations in any depth before embarking on this challenge and that Showstoppers Synergy admitted that they wondered if they had taken on too much by taking on such a classic drama having never done so before. In my opinion, they haven't taken on too much, and I look forward to seeing what other ways they can stretch themselves as a society. The piece was paced well especially for something that has so many scene changes so this innovative way of setting this piece really helped to keep the audience's interest and it definitely piqued my curiosity.

PHOTOGRAPHS



PROGRAMME

