

## Producers Forum

The Gaiety, Carrick Street, Ayr  
Thursday 10 November 2016 2-5pm  
The Gaiety, Ayr

### Attendees:

Karen Allan (National Theatre of Scotland), Ailie Crerar (CCA - Centre for Contemporary Arts), Rhea Lewis (A Moments Peace Theatre Company SCIO), Jaine Lumsden (Creative Scotland), Hector Macpherson Brown, Rishaad Moudeen (Ayr Gaiety), Kate Nelson (Nutshell Theatre), Mahri Reilly (National Theatre of Scotland), Barry Robertson (Capall Dorcha), Callum Smith, Cat Tyre (Cumbernauld Theatre), Pamela Walker (Imagine)

Amanda Liddle (FST), Ruth Johnston (FST), Agnieszka Swida (FST)

### 1. Introductions

Amanda Liddle welcomed everyone to the Producers Forum and thanked them for attending. This Forum is a platform for more detailed discussion of wide-sector issues around aspects of producing theatre and dance. FST specialist forums are led by those that wish to be part of it. It is there to allow for networking and skills sharing, including best practice, knowledge and peer support.

### 2. FST Update

- **FST Members' Meeting and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception:** The next FST Members' meeting will take place on 7 December 2016 at Assembly Roxy. The meeting will include a presentation / discussion with Janet Archer, CEO of Creative Scotland, and two panels on different aspects of how we make our sector (artists, creatives, managers, technicians etc.) more diverse and inclusive. In the evening (5.30pm-7.30pm approx.) we will invite wider stakeholders to join FST members in a celebration event for FST's 40th anniversary. The event will include a small number of speeches including Anne Bonnar, FST Chair in the early 90s, and Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs. To RSVP for both members meeting and the reception please email [hello@scottishtheatre.org](mailto:hello@scottishtheatre.org)
- **Emporium 2017:** FST's annual Emporium takes place over two days in March (15 & 16 March 2017, Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock), this event allows for focus on both long-term planning and discussing ideas at the very early stages of development (Early Dialogue Day) and on short and medium term planning at our established Market Day. Bookings are now open. Early Bird discounts for Market Day are available until Friday 2 December 2016. For more information and to book your place click [here](#).

#### FST Training and Development:

- **[International Touring - The Fundamentals, Edinburgh, 29,30 November & 1 December:](#)** We're running this course again as there's been a lot of positive feedback from Kate's

previous International Touring courses. It is a 3-day course and the attendees can choose all three courses or just the ones which cover the subjects of interest to them.

- **[FST Winter School, 7-9 February 2017, Pitlochry Festival Theatre](#) – Bookings are now open!**  
Bookings for the FST Technical Winter School are now open and the early bird rates are available until 20 December. There is a wide range of courses for technical theatre and production professionals: from QLab and Vectorworks, to H&S, Working at Height, PAT and Prop Making and Paint Techniques. All the courses are listed on the FST website and we would appreciate it if you could spread the word to anyone interested in attending.
- **FST call out for Forum chairs:** if you are interested in becoming a chair of one of FST's forums please get in touch with [Amanda](#).
- AL enquired whether a training event focussing on EDI and training in assertiveness where of interest to forum members – a number of members responded yes to both.

### 3. Creative Scotland Update – Jaine Lumsden

- **Regular Funding:** The 2018-21 RFO guidelines have now been published. They will open for receipt of applications from 16 January 2017 and the closing date will be 3 April 2017. CS anticipate announcing the decisions on the next round of Regularly Funded Organisations in Autumn 2017, this will depend on the timing of the budget announcement from the Scottish Government.
- **Touring Research:** FST has been helping CS draw up a tender document for touring research which is currently out to tender. It is anticipated that the work will be completed in January 2017.
- **Producers Project:** A Producers Project has been scheduled for January 2017 with a view to disseminating findings via Producers Forums.
- **CS Open Fund:** This fund supports the arts, screen and creative industries, with projects that help them explore, realise and develop their creative potential, widen access to their work, and enrich Scotland's reputation as a distinctive creative nation connected to the world. CS have noticed that not many applications for over £15,000 are referencing their applications as 'theatre' and that theatre applications currently represent the lowest number of applications submitted. Those applying for under £15,000 are generally research and development.

**4. Attendees split into two groups to discuss: Access routes to the sector – what are the different routes to becoming a producer and what further support do emerging producers need to enter the profession?**

**Feedback: What are the access routes to the sector?**

- Opportunities via venues, orgs, FST bursaries, initiatives e.g. Arches Live
- Access across different departments within an organisation e.g. moving from administration to producing
- Opportune accidents
- Drama school/performing arts backgrounds

**What do emerging producers need to enter the profession?**

- There needs to be strategic level conversations about this e.g. CS projects such as The Producers Hub. There needs to be a conversation about continuing the Producers Hub - how do we grow this model?
- The provision of producers – how many do we need?
- What kind of training do producers need?
- Use existing infrastructures e.g. Admin Monkeys. Make info accessible and easier to find
- FST Producers Skills Audit: This is currently updated annually. Raise its awareness
- Informal sharing of info through meetings
- Networking opportunities
- Informal mentoring e.g. ‘coaches’ or ‘friends’ to support emerging producers to create their own opportunities
- Define the fundamentals and basic skills of the Producers role
- Create a list of producers with contact details
- Shift focus of the forum to peer learning/strategies
- A fund for early stage producers to support them to attend meetings
- Regional Hubs for those out with the central belt

**Actions: to support emerging producers:**

- A strategic conversation between CS and FST
- Clear info sharing
- Sign up to FST newsletter
- FST/ITC discount on training
- Review skills matrix
- Shift focus of forum
- Funding opportunities for emerging producers
- Advocacy
- Explore what NTS offer – a practitioners’ day for Producers?

**5. Attendees split into two groups to discuss: Sustaining a career as a producer – what are the barriers to sustaining a career as a producer and what recommendations can we make to help producers sustain their careers?**

**Feedback: What are the barriers to sustaining a career as a producer?**

- Financial: lack of regular funding can make sustaining a career very difficult. Financial instability can lead to burnout
- Lack of succession planning
- Venues in Scotland being receiving houses rather than producing
- Lack of commercial venues using producers in Scotland
- Pilot schemes that are not sustained
- Local authorities not investing
- General lack of arts engagement
- Government strategic aims need to be clearer and more stringent
- Unstable networks that go through changes and reorganisation
- There are more producers than there are jobs, creating a lack of progression or succession

**Recommendations for sustainability**

- Continuation of the Producers Hub
- A succession planning day
- Local authorities: explore how to tap into a network of underused space due to cuts in local funding
- Think about how to use local authority venues to reignite interest in the arts and investment in arts and culture
- Learn from commercial ventures; where to get money and how to get these insights
- Think about how to get the skill set to stay in Scotland
- Could the big companies have more joined up thinking about sharing resources?
- Look at other models for sustainability e.g. Catalyst for dance. Could this work for theatre?

**Actions: Themes to consider for future forums**

- Career progression
- Sustainability
- Funding

**6. Best Practice Guidelines for approval – Co-creating work**

The Best Practices Guidelines for co-creating work were circulated to attendees ahead of the Forum. These guidelines were approved by attendees at the Forum.

**7. AOB**

Amanda Liddle (FST) took the opportunity to thank Kate Nelson (Nutshell Theatre) for chairing the Producers Forums this past year. There is now a call out for new chairs. If you are interested in becoming a chair, please contact Amanda. FST also thanked The Gaiety, Ayr for hosting the Forum which was followed by a tour of the newly refurbished theatre.

**Next Producers Forum -29 June 2017 – Venue TBC**