

Producers Forum

The National Theatre of Scotland, Rockvilla, Glasgow

Thursday 29 June 2017 2-5pm

Attendees:

Karen Allan (National Theatre of Scotland), Philip Anderson-Dyer (Bunbury Banter Theatre Company CIC), Susannah Armitage (Vox Motus), Katja Armknecht (Red Note Ensemble), Helen Bang, Steph Connell (Citizens Theatre), Rebecca Davis (Stellar Quines Theatre Company), Anna Derricourt (Catherine Wheels Theatre Company), Jude Doherty (Grid Iron), Sarah Gray (Cumbernauld Theatre), Lauren Hendry, Brenna Hobson (National Theatre of Scotland), Becky Hope-Palmer, Viviane Hullin (Fire Exit Ltd), Stephanie Katie, Rhea Lewis, Jaine Lumsden (Creative Scotland), Hector Macpherson Brown, Janis Marshall Reilly, Marianne Maxwell (National Theatre of Scotland), Kate Nelson (Nutshell Theatre), Laila Noble (Nutshell Theatre), Margaret-Anne O'Donnell (National Theatre of Scotland), Eileen O'Reilly (National Theatre of Scotland), Ashley Pilling, Melanie Purdie, Hannah Putsey (Catherine Wheels Theatre Company), Mahri Reilly (National Theatre of Scotland), Barry Robertson (Capall Dorcha), Callum Smith, Cat Tyre (Cumbernauld Theatre), Pamela Walker (Imaginate), Jo Walsh

FST:

Jude Henderson (Director), Amanda Liddle (General Manager), Fiona McCurdy (Training and Professional Development Manager)

1. Introductions

Kate Nelson welcomed members of the forum leading round circle introductions and thanking NTS for hosting the meeting

2. Welcome / FST Update

- AL introduces FST's new staff members; Jude Henderson (Director) and Fiona McCurdy (Training and Professional Development Manager)
- It was confirmed that two working groups have now been set up to respond to the Review of Touring Theatre and Dance. Both groups, Audience Development and Code of Practice will meet twice before early September in order to feed into Creative Scotland's review of funding.
- The next FST members meeting will take place on Wednesday 27 September and will also include the AGM.
- Momentum programme (survey deadline is on 5 July, more info in Research and Resources section)
- Critical Response Process session on the Fringe Central: the CRP Facilitators will run a session during the Fringe, which is called: 'An Introduction to Critical Response Process' and will be hosted by Simon Hart from Puppet Animation Scotland and two of the CRP Facilitators. During the session, there will be an introduction to what CRP is, followed by a fragment of work in progress and a CRP session and will finish with a talk from an artist who uses CRP to

talk about how this methodology affects their practice. The session will take place on Saturday, 12 August at 11am at the Fringe Central and the free tickets can be booked via the edfringe.com website

- FMC noted that she will be conducting a review of FST's training provision and will soon be sending out a survey to gather input from members.
- Applications to become a Step Up mentee will open 31 August and if anyone would like further information on the programme please contact Fiona
- FST's newly funded Future Proofing (Creative Production and Technical Skills Programme) has now been launched and includes a Recent Graduate bursary; Training Fund and Technical Skills Forums alongside other projects in partnership with Scottish Drama Training Network. Full details can be found [here](#)
- The next deadline for Assistant Director and Producer Bursaries is 18 September

3. Creative Scotland Update - Jaine Lumsden

JL provided an update on current CS activity noting the following:

- Assessment of RFO applications is ongoing
- Applications for Open Project Funding are still open
- An evaluation of the Producers Hub project will shortly be published and further work on this may include a working group in association with FST to look at next steps

4. National Theatre of Scotland –Resources available at Rockvilla

Margaret Anne O'Donnell (Head of Producing, NTS) provided an introduction to current NTS activity noting that the new building housed great rehearsal space with 2 productions currently in rehearsal. MO also noted that with a new building and new Artistic Director/ Chief Executive NTS are keen to work more closely with the sector and offer resources to support producers at all stages of their career and would like feedback on the following options:

- Hot-desk space for freelance producers
- Buddy a producer
- Cross sector skills exchange:
 - Budgeting
 - International Touring
 - Contracts
- NTS also acts as an umbrella body for disclosure Scotland applications
- 'A day in the life' – shadowing opportunities
- Producers on placement
- Ticket offer for producers

The forum also noted the existing skills sharing networks below:

Face book group - [UK Theatre Producers Network](#)

Face book group established by Mhairi Robinson - [Admin Monkeys](#) (physical meeting to be held 5-7pm on 24th August in Hemma, Holyrood Road EH8 8AU, all group members welcome)

Caroline Newall (Artistic Development Director, NTS) introduced NTS's new artistic development programme - 'Engine Room', which is designed to respond to sector needs including specific resources for producers, highlighting the following:

- Aim to provide as many open opportunities for artists (including producers) as possible
- Provision of access to space/materials
- Masterclasses
- Admin Friday's (being trialled in July) 10 artists to have a desk and meet others in the same way for a day – will also be trying to find similar venues across Scotland who can also support this
- Guest Room - 1 week rehearsal space to be offered free in every 3 month period
- Go and See – NTS to offer invites and fund tickets
- Ideas and careers surgeries
- Pop-in sessions on process
- Assembly - get together and determine what's needed
- Script reading and scouting

If you wish to be added to the mailing list for 'Engine Room' please [contact NTS](#).

Further discussion was also held around establishing a ticket offer across other venues for 'registered' producers. Possibility of FST issuing a membership card and negotiating with venues.

Action FST

Additionally the Friends of the Fringe £30 ticket offer (two for one tickets) is currently still available.

Listings of producers in Scotland were discussed and although a more easily updated resource is required (i.e. an online platform) in the interim FST will re-issue the Producers Skills Audit Survey to the forum members. **Action FST**

5. Discussion Topic: Resource Sharing

The forum split into groups to discuss the above topic and provided the following feedback:

- Wish list -- templates for contracts - things are available from ITC but only if you're a member
- Finding good technical people - central resource
- Rehearsal space outwith the central belt
- Good digs list
- CPD outside the central belt - people felt current provision is hard to access
- Useful to have hot-desk networking opportunities in local areas
- Is there a way to have stronger connections with the rest of the UK
- Way of sharing props/set/technical things
- Discussion on expense of van hire!
- General online accessibility of information
- Stage manager and technicians are a great sources of information - they don't necessarily want to meet formally but is there a way of making it easier for them to share their own information.

- Facebook is Scottish Event Tech & Crew.
- A Day In The Life – could it be a week or a whole shadowing project.
- Case studies of different scales and types of projects - seminars, webinars, written articles, and podcasts. Need for 'basics'- there are resources for intermediates but not so much for the really basic things.
- Access to Festivals/information and funding
- Emerging producers, understanding different job roles and different aspects
- All documents in a drop box. Sarah Gray offered to host initially, but this should rotate
- Shared storage as well as equipment.
- Shared funding application knowledge. Sharing list of producers and specialism.
- Speed-dating event between producers and artists to establish long term relationships
- Steering group work on What A Producer is should be progressed
- Royal Exchange Manchester - document of all venues in one place. Not as complicated as Tourbook.
- Recommended rates – the issue of minimum rates for producers needs to be discussed
- Cultural Enterprise Office holds a lot of information are there ways to sign post more. There's lots of amazing projects and networks out there but it would be useful to map that.
- Skills: where are the skills? How do you access them? Easy to call if you know who people are... Is there a sense of territorialism and competitiveness? Some of our very senior colleagues who have the knowledge are not in the room with us - what are emerging people getting out of things like this forum and what are the senior producers getting out of it?
- Some of what you're buying from a production manager is knowledge so we have to be respectful of that. There is a level that you can share that isn't giving away all your contacts.
- Asking people for advice - it depends on how much you're asking and reciprocity is key. Idea that skills and knowledge are not the same thing - where do we all develop our skills and help others up the ladder?
- How useful it is to learn other skills, both in theatre and in other areas outside producing.
- No need for any further networks but scope for mapping what's there

6. Discussion Topic: CPD and career sustainability

The forum split into groups to discuss the above topic and provided the following feedback:

- Funding for training and difficulty of accessing it and expense of most training opportunities is an issue
- Marketing: what type of training would be effective?
- Is there a desire to learn about other fields?
- CPD - is there a need for formalised training? RCS piloted a scheme on internships
- Entry level - intermediate - advanced - how do you keep interested throughout your career?
- Separate discussion to be held on training involving e.g. Scottish Drama Training Network
- Self-care for producers. Peer to peer and buddying up. Work life balance.
- How companies need to lead by example in terms of work ethic and sustainable working patterns
- Digital age - being able to switch off completely. Working flexibly doesn't equal always on.
- How to confidently self-manage. Looking at examples outside the arts industry. Mentors and peer to peer.

- Central list of funding needed?
- Being employed vs freelance and cost of training.
- Producers retreat - to enable people to be reflective.
- Type of training around marketing: audience development; day surgeries for specific types of touring or shows. And how to make shows and marketing accessible
- Training on accessibility.
- Training opportunities - do we require more formalised producer training similar to Stage 1 which could encompass rights, licensing etc.
- Being in the commercial sector and thinking about diversifying funding sources. Don't be reliant on state funding .
- How do you manage your own stress and timekeeping and, particularly for those working freelance, how do you take the headspace to think about nourishing yourself as well as multiple projects?
- Support group - Should there be a monthly meet-up? How personal development underpins dealing with your professional life.
- Funding question: need for return of the CS fast track funding stream.
- FST training can be too expensive. More information peer training could be offered, expand the producers' forum to a whole day?
- Learning across sector – Winter School - session on technical basics for producers.
- Cultural Enterprise Office offer free sessions also advice but people don't know about them
- Leadership skills and managing teams
- Hot desk can be useful but - who's in the office, will it be busy, will it be quiet - think about the practicalities. Useful to talk to people who've used past similar schemes to see what worked well and what didn't. JL at CS was the lead officer on a similar project so will provided some feedback **Action JL**.

AOB

- Please note we have now created a search in our website resources section dedicated to producers – you can find the current documents [here](#) and we will continue to update and add to this resource
- Friday 22 September – Symposium on Diversity and Representation in the Arts at the Tramway.