

Producers Forum

Wednesday 25 November 2015 12.30-3.30pm
Dance Base, Studio 1, Edinburgh

Attendees:

Helen Milne (Aberdeen Performing Arts), Becca Inglis and Marta Mari (Asylon Theatre), Jeremy Wyatt (Ayr Gaiety), Robert Softley Gale (Birds of Paradise), Rishaad Moudden (Borderline Theatre/Ayr Gaiety), Barry Robertson (Capall Dorcha), Lisa Kapur (City of Edinburgh Council), Nadja Dias (Claire Cunningham Dance), Catrin Kemp (Cove Park), Katie Stuart (Creative Carbon Scotland), Helen Trew (Creative Scotland), Sarah Gray (Cumbernauld Theatre/Producers Hub), Jana Robert (Cryptic), Leigh Robieson Cleaver and Vicky Rutherford-O'Leary (Curious Seed), Hannah Putsey (Fire Exit), Viviane Hullin (Glas(s) Performance), Anna Beedham (Horsecross Arts Ltd), Guillermo Carnero Rosell (K314 Theatric Company), Emily Danby (Ludens Ensemble CIC), Verity Leigh (Magnetic North), Karen Shaw (Producers Hub Coordinator), Ailie Crerar and Jen White (Puppet Animation Scotland), Elspeth Murray (Puppet State Theatre Company), Kirsty Taylor (Scottish Borders Council), Liam Sinclair (Scottish Dance Theatre), Kieran Hurley and Stephen Greenhorn (Scottish Society of Playwrights), David Hutchinson and Iona Forbes (Sell A Door Theatre Company), Rebecca Davis (Stellar Quines Theatre Company), Ruth McEwan (Traverse Theatre), Laura Penny (Visible Fictions) Annabel Cooper, Callum Smith, Dani Rae, Ellie Griffiths, Gemma Connell, Hannah Titley, Hector Macpherson Brown, Jennifer Phillips, Jesse Phillippi, John Cairns, Kate Taylor, Michelle Rolfe, Sarah Longfield, Sáras Feijóo, Stephanie Katie Hunter

Agnieszka Swida (FST), Amanda Liddle (FST), Jon Morgan (FST), Mira Knoche (FST).

1. Introductions

Jon Morgan welcomed everyone to the fifth 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. There is seldom time for focusing on details at the more general FST Members Meetings. 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.

Based on feedback from previous forums, this forum format involved more dialogue and discussion, rather than presentations, with a focus on best practice in both collaborations with playwrights around co-created work and in contracting and working with producers. The aim of both discussions is to come up with a set of best practice guidelines for each area.

2. FST Update

Emporium 2016:

[FST Emporium 2016](#) bookings are now open. This touring event for producers, promoters, venues, professional theatre and dance artists/companies, is now in its tenth year and offers the

opportunity to network with colleagues, promote work and book shows. In 2016, it will again take place over two days, this time at The Brunton Theatre in Musselburgh, East Lothian.

[Market Day \(Thu 3 March\)](#) *Bookings for this day are open for all, venues/promoters, artists/companies and umbrella organisations.*

This day will repeat the already successful Emporium format, allowing artists and venues to promote and programme existing work which is available for touring within the following 6-12 months. It includes a range of networking and promotional opportunities with Open Exchange and scheduled face-to-face sessions with the companies, promoters and venues of your choice.

[Early Dialogue Day \(Wed 2 March\)](#) *EDD bookings are now only open for venues, promoters, programmers, and producers with the capacity to producing other artists' work.*

During EDD, [16 producing companies and artists](#) will present work, which is at the very early stages of creation, giving you the opportunity to discuss artistic plans 12 – 24 months in advance of production stage and for promoters/venues/producers to feed back and express interest. The artists presenting on this day have already been selected. Spaces are limited to 1 place per organisation for promoters, venues and those producers who have the capacity to commit to producing work.

You can book a place through EventBrite page via the [FST website](#) by 15 January 2016 at the latest. Early bookings to reserve your place are recommended.

Please contact [Amanda](#) if you have any questions about Emporium.

FST Members' Meeting – 9 December at Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh

Our next [Members' Meeting](#) is coming up on 9 December (10.30am to 5.30pm) and the full agenda will be confirmed shortly. It will include presentations from Janet Archer from Creative Scotland on the new Open Project Funding (OPF) guidelines and upcoming public spending review of the Scottish Government.

Action: Please submit feedback on the new [OPF guidelines](#) and public spending review to [Jon](#).

Ben Twist from Creative Carbon Scotland will also discuss how the dance and theatre sector can monitor their carbon emissions more effectively. He has worked with CS Regularly Funded Organisation on what they can do to reduce their carbon impact and will share some insights.

As every year at our Christmas meeting, members are also invited to stay for mince pies and networking drinks after the meeting. Please contact [Mira](#) by Wednesday, 2 December, to confirm your attendance and access/special dietary requirements.

FST Technical Winter School – 2-4 February 2016, Pitlochry Festival Theatre

The FST Winter School will again take place at Pitlochry Festival Theatre between 2nd and 4th February. FST is launching the Winter School programme in the week beginning 30 November with early bird and bulk booking discounts available to those who will book within the following few weeks. For more information contact [Emma Beatt](#).

Members can apply for the **CPTS Training Fund** to cover the costs of attending training at the Winter School. The training fund helps anyone working in a technical theatre or production role in Scotland, at any stage of their professional career to access training (in a production or technical skill area) by helping to cover the cost of courses and (reasonable) travel expenses. People working on freelance basis can apply for up to £200 per year and those employed on a full- or part-time basis can apply for up to £100 per year towards their training costs. More info can be found [here](#).

Proposed Dealing with Terrorist Threats – Free Training Event in mid December

In light of recent tragic events in Paris, FST will provide free training around procedures for dealing with terrorist threats to places of entertainment. Please see information on [Project Argus](#) for a summary of what could be delivered.

Please email amanda.liddle@scottishtheatre.org to note interest as soon as possible and you will be invited to submit dates you are available in mid December via a Doodle poll. Training would be FREE and the venue will be in Edinburgh.

FST and Society of Scottish Playwrights review of FST/SSP agreement

JM is meeting Mike Cullen to discuss the agreement which is due a review. The outcome will be discussed in the spring of 2016, possibly at the next Members' meeting on 23 March.

Forum members also said they would like to see information and training emerging from the hub project for the wider sector. FST and the four Producers Hubs are in the process of planning the training sessions below, with dates and details to be confirmed.

Training Sessions for Artists - with Creative Scotland Producers Hubs/FST in spring 2016

The training session is aimed at artists around the question 'What can a Producer do to help you?'. The sessions are likely to focus on:

- 1) artists producing for themselves – an introduction - 1 session
- 2) what do you want from a producer/what do you expect? – 1 session
- 3) getting started – pointers for emergent artists/graduates? - 2 of the same session

Sessions 1 and 2 will be delivered in Glasgow/Edinburgh.

Sessions 3 will be delivered in North East/Aberdeen/shire area.

The training will be free and travel bursaries will be available for participants to attend. The latest Producers [Skills Audit](#) will be flagged up as a useful resource for Artists who are FST members, to utilise it for finding Producers with the skills that they require. FST will promote this via the FST website, newsletters and more.

Please contact emma.beatt@scottishtheatre.org if you wish to express interest.

3. Discussion with Kieran Hurley and Stephen Greenhorn (Scottish Society of Playwrights) around best practice in co-created work (including feedback from the recent Different Stages Conference)

JM explained that the idea for this discussion arose at the recent '[Different Stages](#)' conference, organised by Playwrights Studio, Scotland, the Society of Scottish Playwrights and FST with the aim to improve knowledge and practice between producers, directors and playwrights. While every production presents its own unique scenario, coming up with a set of guidelines for common questions and challenges around co-created works were felt to be a useful tool.

While this discussion was the first step towards guidelines, JM suggested the formation of a small working group following the forum to continue working on this.

Action: Please contact [Jon](#) if you are interested in joining the working group.

Kieran Hurley explained the Scottish Society of Playwrights (SSP) has created a contract model with FST to protect producing partners and playwrights in their work collaborations. SSP provides guidance on rates of pay and best practice and runs events like Different Stages.

KH noted that while a contract is useful it doesn't always match the way works are actually made. The idea is therefore to create a set of guidelines by considering works in progress and multi-authored projects to feed into these. The guidelines are not meant to be a rigid set of rules but are to include insight from playwrights and producers on what works best for them, especially with regard to multi-arts projects, to then formulate a set of principles.

Q & A:

Attendees asked whether the guidelines would involve input from people who don't consider themselves playwrights but who write for/create plays.

KH agreed and said this would be very useful and Stephen Greenhorn pointed out that the SSP would like to include real processes involved in creating theatre, with a diverse group of people.

JM pointed out that the guidelines will focus in on specific areas (e.g. negotiations around set design) rather than trying to resolve too many areas, such as negotiations around set design, as was maybe the case at the last Producers Forum.

A member suggested getting a composer involved in the working group and including guidelines on music theatre, for example royalties' split between composers and playwrights, ie music and words.

JM suggested the working group would initially involve producers from this forum and that it would be important to stay focused. He invited attendees to voice key issues to be addressed by the working group.

Key issues and comments on co-creating works:

- the challenges linked to contracting in a changing funding climate which currently poses issues in co-producing with new funders often making assumptions about copyright that don't match the reality of the situation. While audiences and CS funding are understood, other funding parties are often not as informed.
- co-productions are more likely to stir differences
- best practice around credits
- the question of how agents will respond to guidelines and how widely guidelines will be circulated. SG said the aim is indeed to distribute the guidelines widely, to SSP members and non-members.
- consideration of the different phases of a co-production, for example when halfway through the process new partners come in. KH responded that this aspect also came out at the Different Stages event was that focus and priorities shift throughout the working process.
- issues around commissioned pieces for specific venues and audiences. SG commented that multiple authorship is the main issue.
- KH suggested creating a flowchart/continuum between 'singularly authored plays' vs 'conceived by multiple authors' if, for example, the artistic director takes input in conceiving the play.
- creating guidelines for youth theatre as there are currently none in place
- include role definitions of dramaturge, author, artistic director, and a person who devises a piece.
- negotiations with translators, writers and companies, for example, when Scottish plays are translated into an international cultural context or vice versa.
- questions around registering copyright for ideas for plays to prevent plagiarism. KH noted that while copyrighting ideas is possible in some countries, this is not possible in the UK, at least not until the piece is finished. A forum member noted this was possible with films in the UK. KH noted that the guidelines will focus more on how people work together rather than specific legal issues.
- it was suggested to include case studies with examples of recurring scenarios.
- questions around the work relationship between producers and playwrights, and how producers can take an influence when commissioning playwrights to adapt an existing work.

The draft guidelines will be circulated to forum members for further input. The notes from the Different Stages conference will also be circulated.

Action: Please submit examples of scenarios to do with multi-author projects to [Jon](#) so that these can be included as case studies in the guidelines.

4. Discussion around best practice in contracting producers

JM explained the aim of this forum discussion is to again draft a set of guidelines which can be further developed by a small working group.

At the last Producers Forum in June, where the producers based at the four CS Producers Hubs and the Hub project coordinator Karen Shaw spoke, rates of pay and timespans of projects were discussed. It was also felt that the nature and scale of the role of the producer's role on projects was not always fully appreciated by some artists and funders when looking at planning and budgets and that guidelines around working with producers would be helpful.

Attendees split into four groups to discuss what the guidelines might look like and then presented their outcomes.

Best practice in contracting producers and what the guidelines should include:

Group 1:

The group broke down the various roles and tasks of a producer, with clear roles and responsibilities to be agreed with the artist at an early stage.

In funding applications, the following tasks and responsibilities need to be well evidenced to CS:

- Who is leading the project, the artist or producer?
- risk taking and management: financial, artistic, time, resources, marketing etc
- Producers often struggle with illustrating the risk management of a project to CS. Another question is how to give honest feedback to the artist regarding how high or low risk a project proposal is.
- financial management
- contracts
- tour management
- fundraising
- What a producer brings to the project:
 - network
 - skillset
 - assets
 - track record

Group 2:

This group suggested the guidelines should include:

- a map of the collaborative territory early on in the process
- guidance on how to manage expectations with a mutual understanding of shared values
- signposting of the updated Producers [Skills Audit](#) as a resource to check producers' skills levels and expertise in different areas
- using the guidelines in an open and honest way

- **How do producers work?**
 - Definitions:
 - Creative Producer: brings the concept into the team and delivers
 - Producer: project management
 - Key responsibilities identified by the artists and companies
 - How has the producer been engaged?

- **Producers' roles and tasks:**
 - contracting/negotiations
 - budgeting, fundraising and business plans
 - tour booking, venue liaising and site visits
 - logistics: admin, technical, implementing health & safety, insurance, licensing, visas
 - payroll, book keeping and dealing with tax
 - marketing, audience development and event planning
 - education: curriculum for excellence
 - scheduling and programming
 - recruitment and people management
 - relationship counseling
 - networking and partnerships, negotiating co-productions
 - facilitating the development of work
 - research and developing new ideas and concepts
 - organisational development
 - policy development
 - lobbying
 - evaluation and future planning

Group 3:

This group discussed and suggested including in the guidelines:

- the idea that support is always dependent on the relationship with an artist
- a flowchart (or a tick list) of the producing process and the spectrum, to establish clarity around the process and map out where the artist is positioned in this.
- the producer's wide range of responsibilities
- the issue posed by the fact that producers can, and often do, cut their (salary/fee) budget to reduce costs which frequently leads to self-exploitation as a common practice across the sector

1. Determining shared values:

- conversation to be had at the beginning of and later (when?) in the process:
 - what questions should be asked (include a prompt sheet of questions)
 - determining roles and considering the difference in roles between creative and more old-fashioned producers
- need to hold the tensions between the artist and the producer:
 - a variety of voices involved where the producer is on a spectrum of tasks and responsibilities
- managing the relationship

2. Managing expectations:

- What can we ask people (artist/producer) to do?
- Producers Skills Audit should reflect the guidelines
- fee for producer should reflect:
 - true cost accounting in funding applications and also relate to overall management fees
 - the time required to make pieces of a different scale
 - different levels of expertise

- visual map on routes in
- include guidance on collaborations and early discussions

Group 4:

This group identified 3 key areas of work which a producer can fulfill to a minimum or maximum capacity, depending on time and financial resources:

3 Key Areas:	1. R&D / Early Stage (fundraising):	2. Production / Creation	3. Touring + Strategic
Producers Input:			
minimum (bare minimum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 session with artist for project planning: who/ what/ when/ how + budget (1-2h) ○ giving guidance on funding application (2h) ○ signposting ○ provide templates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ prepare contract: creative team (crew, cast, etc), venues, partners ○ setting, allocating, delegating and managing budget ○ invoicing ○ tour booking (depending on length of tour) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ networking ○ 'selling' ○ tour admin ○ evaluation and monitoring
timespan	1 day min.	2 days min. per week (for duration of project)	(during and post-project)
maximum (money and time are no object)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ all of the above ○ write application ○ meet partners ○ gather all info ○ put groundwork in ○ co-producing partners ○ meet other artists involved ○ go see work ○ checking tour availability ○ strategic planning ○ promo pack ○ planning auditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ all of the above ○ marketing: social media ○ project management ○ being on tour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ all of the above ○ fundraising for further projects ○ future planning and development ○ partnership and maintaining relationships
timespan	10 days min. full time	8 weeks min. full time	

Regarding the work relationship between lead artist and producer, this group also suggested:

- Producer wouldn't work with artist if they didn't know/hadn't seen the work and must get on with the artist.
- The question of 'When does a relationship start?' Doing work for free can be an issue.
- There is a sliding scale between all the things a producer *could* do and the bare minimum.
- Key tasks of the producer (can) include:
 - administration and financial management (project specific): accounts, expenses etc
 - fundraising
 - general/project management
 - overseeing the logistics
 - risk management
 - tour administration and potentially touring with the work
 - marketing: social media
 - work with new creatives
 - line management
 - organising cast and crew
 - creative? involvement with choreographer / director
 - being in role of 'diplomat'

JM asked the group for feedback on the discussion, which included the following reflections:

- the idea that the group's discussion on the role of producers had ranged from the philosophical to the pragmatic
- the limited level of understanding with funders of the time-span involved in producing work, which seemed to some a new phenomenon, possibly linked to Open Project Funding. Helen Trew (Creative Scotland) suggested that there needs to be more clarity in the budgets of CS funding applications.
- the question of who is leading a project, the artist or the producer
- the aspect that a lot of producers couldn't pinpoint what they would *not* do to support an artist that they work with, if money and resources were available
- issues around self-exploitation
- JM suggested that, similar to co-creation, certain aspects/tasks should be clarified as 'by agreement only'.
- question around whether there should be a distinction in the guidelines between how freelance producers and producers embedded in an organisation work. It was suggested that people at the top of organisations can also have a limited understanding of how producers work.

Fees and rates of pay:

- the recurring issue of reducing producers' wages in budgets
- the 'pure, cold logic' behind planning budgets for productions
- the absence of an agreed minimum rate of pay for producers, which exists for playwrights
- suggestion to consider the differences between an emerging and an established producer and how the level of skills and expertise can be enumerated accordingly in a budget
- question around comparing writers'/artists' fees to those of producers

- suggestion to agree on a minimum rate of pay across the board of emerging and established producers; also distinguishing freelance and salaried producers' pay and having a discussion around pay rates in the arts industry in general
- need to consider the follow-up work involved in producing work, for example when there is further interest in a show, and how a producer can respond to this
- Helen Trew (Creative Scotland) suggested that funding applicants need to be realistic when providing in-kind figures as part of their budgets. She also said that partnerships would need to be demonstrated more fully, and involve more than, for example, borrowing a rehearsal room.

JM thanked the forum for the good progress that was achieved through the discussions and said this would need to be followed up by a small working group.

Action: Please contact jon.morgan@scottishtheatre.org to become involved in the FST Producers Best Practice working group.

5. Any Other Business

JM apologised for running out of time and therefore being unable to give an overview of the recently updated Producers Skills Audit. The document can be downloaded from FST's website [here](#).

Action: JM encouraged forum members to contact him about joining the FST/Scottish Society of Playwrights working group, the FST Producers working group, and/or to submit ideas and case studies for each respective set of best practice guidelines to jon.morgan@scottishtheatre.org as soon as possible.

The next Producers Forum is planned for the spring of 2016 and further details will be sent out in due course.

Please feel free to submit ideas and suggestions for topics to amanda.liddle@scottishtheatre.org.