

Federation of Scottish Theatre Producers' Forum

Thursday 14 June 2018

Tron Theatre, Glasgow

2pm-5pm

Chair: Anita Clark

Attendees:

Carla Almeida (Dundee Rep); Susannah Armitage (Vox Motus); Helen Bang; Julie Brown (Random Accomplice); Jean Cameron; Steph Connell (Tron Theatre); Sam Eccles; Alex Fthenakis (Rootstock Arts); Chantal Guevara (Independent Dance Managers Network (IDMN)); Susan Hay (Marc Brew Company); Paul Michael Henry; Luke Holbrook (Assembly Roxy); Stephanie Katie Hunter; Rhea Lewis; Catherine Makin (Youth Theatre Arts Scotland); Seona McClintock; Fiona McCurdy (Federation of Scottish Theatre); Torran McEwan; Emma McIntyre (Tramway); Michelle McKay; Charlotte Mountford (Lyth Arts Centre); Michael O'Neill (Tron Theatre); Kei Seito (Traverse Theatre); Callum Smith; Joanne Walmsley (Tramway); Severine Wyper (Vanishing Point).

In attendance:

FST: Anna Broomfield, Fiona McCurdy

1. Welcome and introductions

Anita Clark (AC) led introductions by asking attendees to place themselves in physical locations in the room to respond to multiple choice questions such as where do you work, with who/for what audiences, and what did you spend most of your time on this week.

The group then stated their names, where they work, and one sentence on their motivation for attending.

2. FST Update

Producer Placements:

We are delighted to announce the first batch of awards for FST's 2018-19 bursaries. The Producer Bursaries were awarded to: Andrew Jeffrey (Mhari Robinson / Independent Arts Projects), Conner Milliken (Feral Arts) and Leila Noble (Ed Littlewood Productions Ltd / Scene Change Productions).

The next round of bursaries will open for applications in September 2018. For further information, visit our [Bursaries and Funding webpage](#).

Staff Changes at FST

We have welcomed back FST's permanent Marketing and Communications Manager Agnieszka Swida, and thank her maternity cover Laura Bain for all her hard work with FST and wish her all the best for the future. Please now direct marketing enquiries to Agnieszka.Swida@scottishtheatre.org (as of Monday 9 July 2018).

Support for Individual Members childcare costs

As part of our commitment to equality and diversity and reflecting our strategic support for Parents in Performing Arts, we are pleased to be able to offer new financial support up to £50 for Individual Members to assist with childcare costs to help them to attend FST meetings and events. Funds will be allocated on a first come first served basis, please request an application form when booking. We will be trialling other ways to support parents/carers to attend meetings during the year so if you have any thoughts on this please do [email us](#).

3. Admin Monkeys Meet Ups / Tron BUILD Programme / Produce & Chill

Members of the [Admin Monkeys](#) Facebook group meet on a monthly basis at the EIF Hub in Edinburgh, and in Glasgow on a more ad-hoc basis. There will be an Admin Monkeys brunch at the Tron Theatre on Monday 10 September. These are open to all, join the Facebook group if interested.

Steph Connell from Tron Theatre highlighted the following from the Tron's [BUILD Programme](#) (July – September 2018):

- **Deskpace/Headspace:** 31 July, 28 August, 25 September, 10.30am – 5.30pm. Communal working space in the Victorian Bar. Includes free tea and coffee all day and bowl of soup. £3 (free for MAKER members)
- **Case Study: Producing Site-Specific & Touring Shows:** 10 September, 12:30pm-2.30pm. Following the Admin Monkeys Brunch, Judith Doherty (Grid Iron) will lead this Producing workshop which will include examples of when it went right, wrong and what was learnt along the way. £30 (£15 for MAKER members)

Independent Dance Managers' Network is running Produce & Chill as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Central programme, on 6 Aug, 13 Aug and 23 Aug. This is an opportunity to take some time out and join fellow producers and self-producing artists to share your Fringe experience, ask each other for feedback, share tips and plan for life beyond the Fringe. More details [here](#).

4. Presentation & Discussion: Producing and holding complex partnerships

At the core of a producing, is the holding of multiple - sometimes conflicting - relationships. The forum aimed to reflect on how Producers approach this, and to share ideas on building inner reserves to manage these demands.

Jean Cameron shared her experience of bringing a producing practice into different work contexts. Jean coordinated Processions 2018 in Scotland, and prior to this she led Paisley's bid to be UK City of Culture 2021.

- In 'The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible', Kate Tyndall describes producers as flexible, bold, creative, entrepreneurial workers who facilitate others, devise teams, and take risks. https://issuu.com/jerwoodcf/docs/a11986_pl_the_producers_book
- Emmeline Pankhurst: She was pragmatic, persistent, and disruptive. She produced Votes for Women demonstrations – many complex partnerships and practical elements to produce, such as communication, marketing, bringing people together, attention to creativity. These are the same skills producers have today.
- [Processions 2018](#), produced by Artichoke, to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the first women winning the right to vote. Women and girls marched as part of a celebratory mass participation artwork. One hundred artists were commissioned to create centenary banners for Processions as part of an extensive public programme of creative workshops.
- How does one person manage to persuade a city to shut down for an art event? And what can Artichoke's experience teach us about persuading others to agree to disruptive change? Understanding our relationship to rules and regulations, and how we can change them, is key.
- Instead of asking for permission to make an event happen, can we ask for help? E.g. instead of asking "Can this event happen on X date?", we can say "This event is happening on X date, can you help?". This can change the conversation and shift the responsibility.
- Paisley 2021 Bid: Cross-sectoral approach to creative place-making. Jean allowed herself to be surprised by where the creativity in the town came from - some of the most imaginative and ambitious ideas came from the most unexpected places.
- We need partnerships to work with people we don't usually work with, and it can help to use their language. E.g. allowing culture to propel growth. Creatives can drive policy in significant ways – our work can make a difference as part of a dynamic relationship.
- Producers as weavers – bringing together the different threads of conversation. The producer's role is to weave a dynamic structure and provide a framework for the artwork which allows the project to emerge. Healthy tension between diversity and coherence. Working as a node, not a hub – your team is your greatest resource. Importance of trust for impact.
- Sharing of values is very important – establishing values at the outset of a project and communicating these across the team is a brilliant thing a producer can do.
- Persuasion: Who do you need to persuade? Are you waiting for permission? How can you give people confidence, and have confidence in others?

5. Walking & Talking: Managing relationships & holding it together

The group split up into groups of three to have a walking discussion on permission, persuasion and managing relationships.

6. Walking & Talking Feedback

- Where do we spend our energy? Important to take a step back and reflect
- Permitting yourself to say no – knowing what your job is and isn't
- Asking for permission vs asking for support – going back to core values and shared priorities to get people on the same page.
- Partners need you as much as you need them
- Often we ask for what we think we can get, not what we need – even if your partner can't provide it, maybe they know someone who can?
- What is your vision, and what do you need to get it done?
- PANDA's Little Book of Creative Wisdom: [free ebook](#)

7. Touring Fund Update

Following a series of workshops which fed into a first draft, FST has collated further feedback on the Touring Fund guidelines with a revised draft now pending Creative Scotland board approval at their meeting on 27 July with the expectation that the fund will launch 31 July.

8. Conclusion and next meeting

Anita asked attendees what they would like to see at future forums. Suggestions included:

- Inspiring contexts and presenters
- A structured space to talk with peers and ask questions in confidence, e.g.:
 - Things you wish you'd known when starting out
 - Am I doing this right?
 - Speed networking
- Chat and reflection as opposed to training
- More senior staff attending
- General discussion of issues in the sector
- Brexit – what do we know?

FST thanked Anita for coordinating the forum, and Jean for her inspiring presentation.

The next Producers Forum will be scheduled for November 2018 – dates/location TBC.