

# AAPTLA Meeting 07.07.20

## Present:

Emma Hayward - Scenic Constructors  
Dominic Bilkey - ASD - Meeting Chair  
Catherine Kodicek - CITA  
Owen Thomas - SMA  
Ian Saunders - ALD  
Stuart Porter - ALD  
Nikki Edmonds - CITA  
Mark Jonathan - ALD  
Johanna Town - ALD  
David Evans - ABTT/SIPA/PMF  
Andy Rowley - SMA  
Jonathan - Props  
Chris - Props  
Katrina Lyndsey - Scene Change  
Mandy Ivory-Castile - PMF  
Max Jones - Scene Change  
Cassie Raine - PIPA  
Fiona Watt - SBT  
Sean Crowley - SBT  
Dan Shelley - PMF  
Cat Silver - SBT  
Neil Austin - FMTW  
Anna Fleischle - Scene Change  
Robin Town - ABTT  
Cynthia DeLarosa -  
Vicki Mortimer - FMTW/Scene Change  
Zoe Milton - ASD (Minutes)  
Sadeysa Bailey - Freelance Task Force

## Meeting:

The meeting began with a discussion surrounding the Government funding. There was a conversation surrounding the ideology of the Government arts funding and the response of the Arts venue in general. There was a sense that the SOLT and UK Theatre negotiations would need further scrutiny to ensure that workers rights and remuneration were protected. Conversation turned to the planned protests on Saturday 11th.

**Owen:** In relation to the grant, there is a large section of the general public who are wondering why we got the money and we've got to keep that in mind, we don't want to appear ungrateful because of alienating them. Further protests could push a proportion of the public away and damage the arts. Social media has definitely shown this and we need the public on side.

**Mark, ALD:** I certainly share those concerns, I have seen very negative response to the bailout. What I don't understand is how the bailout will be divided, after buildings, castles etc have taken their funds, how much will be left for theatre? We could see freelancers unsupported.

**Mandy:** of the 59million available to Wales, the Mark Drakeford said that would be equally proportioned, but now is saying they might give with one hand and take away with the other as devolved members are not in total control. The suggestion may be that other areas will lose finds.

**Andy SMA:** A coupe of small points: Quite a few people have responded to this large amount of money by saying that it must get to the freelancers. I think that we need to be a conduit to find out how this could happen.

We seem to have received a massive Christmas present and simultaneously cancelled Christmas, we would be well advised to keep our eyes on Christmas and make sure that we don't lose performances.

**Cynthia:** I am acting as Community head for wigs and make up working with BECTU in the SOLT agreements. I am sitting in many redundancy meetings, tomorrow is Cameron Mackintosh. He has 5 major productions that he is still continuing with redundancies for. Production companies are still trying to cut corners. They are looking to change terms and agreements for these jobs. I think we need to keep an eye on what's happening, to make sure people continue to get the same money for contractual payments after COVID-19. This should be done through BECTU. The language is that companies want to be back at the same fiscal levels as pre COVID, so those savings need to be made somewhere and we need to make sure that the savings are not made in wages.

**Catherine:** I was going to say similar points, certain companies are using this opportunity to clean house, passing the financial pressure to the individuals.

**Anna:** When people say they are going to cut budgets, we might end up with professions being removed. Dying costumes, prop builders, we have a responsibility to protect all careers, not just the most well seen jobs.

**Sadeysa:** I'm currently the task force and we're worried about people who need greater access, we're worried that all the great work that has been done in accessibility will be lost.

**Johanna:** I think it's great that we're having these conversations and if we weren't we wouldn't have the information we need to say no and that we're not accepting that.

**Cassie:** What's interesting for me as part of PIPA there is an opportunity here to come back in a different way and introduce best practice, how can we mobilise to ensure a solution for all and lead from the front? What's exciting about this group is that we have huge leverage. We should be using that. COVID has really disrupted our working practices and we're up against producers to make sure that we can come back better in terms of inclusivity. We should take a proactive approach.

**Fiona:** I've had a pre-discussion with Max, we need to talk about money, of course, but we should be calling this out as unethical practices and unethical practices. What we're talking about is a return to unethical practices. All companies are signing up to ethical practices and as a body of people, we can easily call this out. It doesn't have to be aggressive, but we should be presenting the case for ethical best practice going forward, rather than just saying we need more money, which doesn't sit well with the general public.

**Cynthia:** I was asked to design make up for a new filmed production, the company wanted me to do three days design work for £300. I am the perfect example how we need to look after our freelancers, the producers kept saying it was for a small theatre, but we can't let this be the new normal. They're going to be filming performances and without royalties will be available forever. Obviously this new way of working is going to introduce new audiences, but we need to protect ourselves.

**Andy SMA:** Absolutely agree with Cynthia, unfortunately we're all used to these derisory fees, which ignore copyright and ownership of creative ideas. I think this issue is a really good thing for this group to agree on. We all have a slightly different point of view to the producers, but that practical sense of how we get through this and make it work is going to be an important part of the conversation.

**Vicki:** I think it's right to take a moment and not to leap at offering solutions, but to look at mechanisms to hold buildings and companies to account. In a way what has happened since the government announcement is that the buildings have decided that they have to start making work it's now that we have to work out what that mechanism is and look at a change of practice and a better practice. My question is, how do we establish this mechanism soon enough to be useful?

**Cynthia:** To answer Vicki, I think we need to look at rate cards and take a step back to see what the film industry have achieved. Some of the women that have been negotiating with Fox and Paramount now have better conditions, more people to support and cleaners to ensure H&S is paramount. H&S shouldn't be thrown to the background. COVID is still serious and we shouldn't forget that we are in the middle of a pandemic. The 20 working practices in order to have a safe working environment. Things like fogging, cleaning and PPE are all provided outside of the individual departments budgets. As a collective, they all got together and negotiated with BECTU what their bottom line was.

**Sadeysa:** I think there is a lot of demystifying to do, we in the UK, don't like to talk about payment. We need the idea that our time is free needs to die. We can't keep supplementing the situation. The idea that we can increase our workload needs to stop. This shouldn't come out of our personal, mental or financial health. It seems that this solution will be the option presented to us. Naturally we want to solve issues, but we need to be front footed in suggesting other ways to solve the problem. It's finding time and personnel to fix this, we can't do everything, so we need to present solutions.

**Catherine:** The opening pubs, while not saying that pubs are safe is almost like national gaslighting. We're being presented as part of the problem, if no one else is using PPE, in pubs or Tesco for instance, why is Theatre needing it? It's making us look like we're the issue. I really believe we need one voice that is going to work for all of us and have that coherence.

**Anna:** It's a slightly wider look at things. In times of crisis, we have a clearer view. I think, with that clarity there is an opportunity, what we're prepared to do and how we want to go forward. There is usually a feeling that we don't want to be too loud in case we're not relevant, I, for example, don't eat meat, but I understand the need for a butcher. The great thing we've learnt from this situation is that we're powerful, we're so used to needing to feel thankful and accept being at the receiving end, but now we should be making a plan and be proactive in creating a plan for how we should work in the future. There is no rule that SOLT and UK Theatre should be telling us what to do, we should understand our own power and know how we can help each other, I would love that to be the outcome of our meetings in the next few weeks.

**Fiona:** There are a few practical things following on from Anna and Cassie, from a design community perspective I think I need to make sure you're entirely aware of the things. We really need to learn from this situation is that we don't become myopic and only look at theatre for solutions. There are some fantastic solutions in film etc that could be applicable to us. Cynthia being able to share some of her resources would be great. In terms of where we'd got to in negotiations before COVID is that we have a negotiation prepared to be ratified. Going forward UK Theatre have agreed to pay all assistants and model box costs, I don't think they realise what that means, but we should enforce it. If time is compromised, we need to enforce the need for more assistants and associates. We can't do the work in a shorter time with graduates, they need to be experienced associates at a cost of £200 per day. So you're aware, it has been agreed that assistants should be paid £120, knowing that they usually cost £150 per day. Associates are £180-200 per day. Of course we don't want to settle for a shorter time frame, but regardless we're in a position to test this, fully backed by the union. That's just a matter of information. What we deal with here, a lot of the time, is injustices, and quite rightly, but what we need to do is pick it apart in terms of pay etc and call out as unethical unsustainable terms.

I would like us to make an announcement and make this PDF document available. On practical terms I just wanted to make that known.

**Cassie:** I wanted to pick up on Vicki's point about rushing to achieve solutions. I wonder where we find the templates for that, so we're not making it up on the spot, also looking at other disciplines for best practice. PIPA have been looking at this for some time, around job sharing, flexibility, we have a wealth of examples of how this could work.

If you have a lighting designer who is doing back to back rehearsals, how are they going to interact with their families, if the kids don't go back to school full time, how will that impact women and primary carers in theatre? These are the core of people we are in risk of losing and all the work we've done in the last few years making theatre accessible will be lost.

It can feel like a bun fight, and it can be hard to hear the collective voice and how can we amplify that voice?

**Andy:** I'm very sympathetic to Fiona's point, but 50% of contracts are not union contracts. It will be these management contracts that will be the ones that are not compliant. I was in the US listening to Stage management there drawing up job descriptions, just writing down what they do. We have to explain what we do so that we're not given extra workloads. We have to put up the rate cards and find out what we all have in common and speak with one voice. SOLT/UK T are only one section of the people we need to talk to.

**Cynthia:** I've been organising people's rate cards in houses, the ENO/NT/etc are organised so that we can refer back. So depending on the size of the job we can show, based on the workload, what the job should pay. We're looking regionally too, Manchester and Chichester to make sure that we're all over the different areas. Perhaps we could look at making that information available, so that people are not working for less or with less people than they had before the Covid shut down. It's not just about money, but staff levels and wellbeing of the staff.

**Nikki:** We've been doing a group where we have been looking at health and safety back to work, because I am involved in a project that never shut down, because it was in preproduction. I kept having to explain the shut down is change everything. I am being told to use graduates and work experience. I am being told this more and more. Work experience cannot replace experienced staff. W.E should not be about sitting and doing what we don't have time to do, it should be a learning experience. We've had contact back with the ABTT, drive-in project and people are getting nervous that they're having to come back. If we aren't having conversations about this we're going to be in a weaker position. With regards to Cassie's point, I think the job shares is a great idea. We have regional representation in our sub-groups, we need to be looking at them and our touring groups, to make sure they're protected, and not to only concentrate on London. I think we need to keep that in mind.

**Johanna:** I think we should talk to Robin from ABTT, so that we know how to share and make information freely available.

**Catherine:** Rate Cards are complicated for theatre. The BECTU website is based around film and TV, that's due to the completeness of theatre and the fact that Theatre buildings constitute a branch. 70% are actually freelance, but because there aren't enough members, that information didn't quite get to them, all the committee members worked in buildings, the members were employed, so the model was not understood. The trouble with creating a rate card outside of a framework is that it's illegal. There are ways and means to do this work. I am asking BECTU to allow us to create a rate card for invoicing staff, but we are in a grey working area and we need to be very careful.

**Robin ABTT:** Hello everyone, fantastic to join everyone and thank you for the invite to participate. In terms of guidance for return to Covid secure working: The infrastructure that exists is as follows. There is a Government task-force with the commissioner Neil Mendoza within that there is a working group for events, feeding into that DCMS group there is a number of groups, under the umbrella of SOLT/ UKT, to provide a single point of communication across the sector. I've heard the comments and concerns and these are all dangers that we need to guard against. The WG has been established that affect the practicalities is the Opening Venues Safely WG. they have been discussing the kind of guidance that they are about to issue. I'm sure we're all aware that we know that there have been many false starts with this guidance when it hasn't quite made it to public status. The hope is that this guidance will be out this week. It will be in principle alone, so very high level and will not contain step by step guidance that professionals need to get back to work and opening of facilities within work places, with the ultimate aim of giving live performance to a present audience. We've been asked to be a point of collation for a more detailed level of guidance that professionals will need to ensure they are doing tasking in a compliant and safe manner.

We have been asked not to publish anything until we've seen this guidance with the guidance that DCMS has been published. We've also been told that we can't see that guidance before it's published. So it's all going to be a very quick task to make sure that the guidance that has been prepared will be aligned with what the DCMS has prepared.

The information will be available to all, free to access via the ABTT website. The reason that we hope this is a appropriate solution is because we help produce the code of practice for the theatre industry UK with the help of the 10 other members of the Theatre Safety Committee many of whom are represented today.

By producing that guidance it effectively becomes part of the reference resource that both professionals working in the industry use and for the regulators to use if they wish to confirm that anybody has applied the appropriate industry recognised approach to reducing risk and achieving compliance to duties in law.

We have a number of guidance notes ready, they are designed to be for the people that are doing that job, written appropriately for people who are doing that job. We're very happy to publish guidance from any source that will help any practitioners in any department under take the process of getting back to work. That's where we stand right now.

**Dominic:** Is that something that we could feed into specifically?

**Robin:** Yes and no, definitely, any area of expertise within associations or representative groups if you think you're the right people to produce information, it would be appropriate to share with us and make available through your own channels at this point. The reason we do it is to provide a universal comprehensive resource for regulators to help them understand how any department would be undertaking a comprehensive return to work. Any material that is being produced, we would be very pleased to put it up.

It is a very nimble way to inject this into the code of practice, so we sometimes offer guidance on language and alignment with guidance that, but we try not to involve ourselves in the departmental disciplines because the individuals can do that so brilliantly.

We do try to include guidance if we haven't had contributions, but would we like further contributions? Absolutely. Do we think we've got it entirely covered? No. We'd like as much help as we can possibly get.

**Dominic:** Great, that's really good for us all to hear.

**Robin:** Please email to me and we will collate.

**Dominic:** Great, that's a really good thing to be able to collate all departments in a coherent document.

**Robin:** I would also say, please don't worry about the state of the information that you want to share, if it's just bullet points, that's fine, it doesn't have to be a finished document. Anything and everything will be considered.

**Max:** On a timescale point, what is the timescale for further contributions? Obviously we can look at the draft and get a sense of the document, but is it a living document? or is there a sign off deadline for publication?

**Robin:** No, there is no deadline, all of the guidance we prepare as part of the code of practice is evolutionary it's always under review as it is a living document. If you've got stuff already and you'd like to share, please do

If in 4 weeks time you identify stuff that should have been covered and wasn't, send that in. If you produce something because of a developing practice, send that in.

The reason that we have lobbied on behalf of the industry so hard to achieve this structure of a code of practice is that we want to be as nimble as possible in adopting the use of new techniques and practices. The normal practice of legislation, the technique of lobbying and regulating is time consuming, by using this method we can be much more reactive. It's evolutionary and there is no deadline Obviously there is an urgent need to get a pack of COVID guidance available. Particularly for smaller scale operators and any SOLT/UKT Corporate members looking to move forward with Covid secure activity in the route towards a present audience watching live performance.

**Mandy:** I just want to second Max's points really, I just wanted to ensure that we would have something up soon, that we could adhere to and that it would be an evolving document, I feel there is a nervousness to get something out and from last week's meeting, that there should be a document held with ABTT, even though we acknowledge that Freelancers make theatre happen is an amazing resource.

**Fiona:** I think it's been a great conversation and really productive. The second warning light is the digital, it could be very useful, as a group to agree a stance on that. In that interim agreement that is awaiting to be ratified, the furthest we could get and still be useful but there is a clause that says, any further digital use of designers work is subject to a separate future negotiation. If we all employ that, I feel that if someone should be dealing with a situation like that, they would be supported by us and the unions, just because of that sentence. It's something else that we need to have constantly there, so that it's not abused.

**Sadeysa:** I wanted to ask Robin, in regards to H&S, wondered if this document covers people who are working off site for a production. Carpenters, prop makers, in a workshop for instance, whether they will be covered and able to use the document as guidance?

**Robin:** Yes, we obviously try to make sure we're covering live performance and theatre related activities, there are huge amounts of information about workshop best practice in construction guidance, and others, for instance, we would always want to offer guidance, or signpost to other areas, if they are more applicable.

In answer to Fiona, we acknowledge that we need to have additional information for outdoor events, maybe some are aware for non-conventional guidance for working in a building that wasn't designed specifically for live events.

**David:** I would request that we talk about sustainability for next week, if that's of interest to the group.

**Dominic:** yes, we'll add that to the agenda for next week.  
It has been a very good conversation today

**Owen:** Do we want to discuss whether we want to get the open letter out sooner than next week?

**Dominic:** I propose that we look at that through Slack, if that's appropriate for everyone?  
We also have an email address now, so we need to talk about how we deal with that traffic, plus perhaps creating a single page website that acts as a from page for our alliance, plus some information on how to get hold of us. Next meeting, same time next week?  
SBTD are hosting next week.

It's been great to see everyone, thanks to all.