

AAPTLE Meeting No.9

Tuesday 18th August 2020 12:00 on Zoom, chaired by Scenechange

Present:

Andy Rowley - SMA, Mandy Ivory-Castile - PMF, Nafeesah Butt - FMTW, Owen Thomas - SMA, Sam Fellows - ASAM, Susie McKenna - FTF, Dan Shelley - PMF, Emma Hansford - SMA, David Evans - PMF, ABTT, SiPA, Max Jones - SC, Stuart Porter - ALD, Ian Saunders - ALD, Nick Wooley - ALD, Jane Lalljee - PMF, Peter McKintosh - FMTW, Johanna Town - ALD, Katrina Lindsay - SC, David Farley - SBTD, Mark Price - PMA, Sunita Hinduja - FMTW, Anna Fleischle - SC, Fiona Watt - SBTD, Sadeysa - FTF,ASAM, Zoe Milton - ASD, Rob Bettle - ASD, Paule Constable - FMTW, ALD, Nikki Edmonds - CITA

Apologies:

SDUK

Welcome

Scenechange welcomed all to the meeting and drew attention to last meeting's minutes for review in the AAPTLE Slack group. New attendees from ALD, DSMA, PMF (Wales) and FMTW were welcomed.

AGENDA ITEMS

Reminder of **Action points from previous meetings:**

- All AAPTLE organisations to put their basic membership numbers on Slack so they can be collated onto a google document.
- Can all organisations list their representatives for future AAPTLE meetings on Slack for continuity. The names should be put in the general section of Slack for the moment.
- Slack is an open channel so any new members can be invited to Slack through their respective organisations so they have access to it.
- With correspondence on Slack please can your name and that of the organisation you represent be added to your profile for clarity.

MANIFESTO:

It was noted that the Manifesto aims have been updated and all new points have been incorporated. It was raised that the most effective way of outlining the aims and ambitions of all organisations was to focus on the common ground we are all broadly interested in. All in the meeting were happy with the Manifesto as it stands and next step is for it to go on the website.

(Action - Later in the meeting it was suggested that we should expand on our use of the term 'diversity' in the aims/manifesto. More specificity is required)

EQUITY/ BECTU

- Paul Fleming, the new General Secretary of Equity has been invited to meet with AAPTLE. His availability is either the 2nd or the 4th of Sept. It was agreed that the AAPTLE meeting would accommodate Pauls availability and therefore not to be on a Tuesday that week.
- A doodle poll has been put on Slack to confirm which of these works best for all. Fiona (SBTD) will follow up confirmation of date with Paul.
- A Slack "Union" channel is to be set up to put specific questions to Equity in. We need to put questions in for Equity this week, for us to discuss in next weeks meeting.
- It was agreed that it would be good to formulate our joint most important questions for Paul ahead of him coming in. He would then be given them in preparation for the meeting.
- The hope is that AAPTLE can help shape things for the better as he is starting his new position and plant the seeds of engagement now with Equity.
- It was agreed that we should do separate Equity and Bectu meetings.
- Bectu – Catherine (CITA) has made contact with Helen Ryan but yet to hear back with confirmation. Helen is away at the moment but definitely interested in coming in. It was decided that we should change our initial date of meeting with her (1st Sept) to after our Equity meeting with Paul Fleming. Mandy (PMF) will follow up with Helen.
- It was noted that Helen Ryan is the person from Bectu that we want in the room.

CULTURE TASK FORCE

- After our meeting with Stuart from ATG it was discussed but not actioned that it would be good to send out an invite to the person responsible for the Touring, Rehearsals and Backstage aspect of the taskforce, as it represented our side more clearly. Mandy (PMF) is happy to contact Stuart again and find the right person to invite in to meet us.
- Names for other people to approach will be put in slack for us to respond to and then Susie (FTF) will follow up with an approach.

SOLT/UKTHEATRE

- It was agreed that it would be good to invite SOLT/UKTheatre into a meeting to hear from them what the situation was looking like now that Panto has definitely been cancelled. To hear from them what the thinking is for end of 2020/Theatres getting back in 2021/ Jan/April? It would be good to know their plans.
- Timing of this invite was brought up. It is important that any pending temporary Covid agreements were across the line and ratified before we invite them in. Timelines around this were to be confirmed, Max (SC) offered to find out through Equity.
- Julian Bird for SOLT and Sebastian Slater UK/Theatre are who we would like in the meeting

GENERAL ON INVITED GUESTS

- General thinking is that we should always have a week between inviting people in to any meeting. Then it gives us the chance in AAPTLE the following week to discuss and action things from those invited guest meetings.
- It was raised that we should have a Calendar for meetings on Slack to make sure we talk about the topics the week before any invited guest meeting.

REPRESENTATION

- Whilst acknowledging the difficulty of continuity of members represented within AAPTLE it is very clear that this is a predominately white space. One that very much echo's the lack of ethnic diversity within our Theatre sector particularly within the backstage community.
- It is now essential, in this moment of pause, that we not only recognise this fact but take responsibility to look at our membership and dig deep to find ways of sorting this out. It is simply not good enough not too anymore. The interrogation will be hard and the results will be poor because there are difficult questions around this to be answered.
- It was raised that if we don't change our practice and take responsibility as individuals, as well as organisations, we will never be able to shift these meeting rooms into places of equity, ethnicity and diversity for our future sector members.
- The issue that any of our members can say they have felt uncomfortable in meetings like these within our Industry for the past 20 years, due to the fact that they are the only person from a mixed heritage/ ethnic background in the room - and only now can they actually tell us all - is truly depressing to understand and the harsh reality of what needs to be faced.
- It was raised that we need to make an effort to retain and support and look at how we help keep people of colour within our industry.
- That terminology is important and that for many people of colour the word 'emerging' is applied to them throughout their career no matter how experienced, so is actually a difficult word to hear.
- It was raised and recognised that Diversity covers a broad and wide range of protected characteristics which are specific so we need to breakdown which aspect of diversity we are talking about when we use this word. (and update Manifesto/Aims)
- It was raised that our industry is often seen as an elitist male dominant place and under representative of members from diverse socio - economic backgrounds.
- It was acknowledged that the lack of representation on all fronts stems right back past the drama colleges, higher education institutes, to access at school level and it is important to have structures going into schools to shift this. www.inspiringthefuture was mentioned as an organisation tackling this issue well.
- It was also discussed that it is not always all about the formal structures that we should be looking toward. There are already established less formal or informal communities that we should be connecting up with like the youth theatre movements, associations where young people are already engaging and involved in projects and having a voice.
- We need to be open to look into the alternative pathways someone might be able to come into our industry. Look at their passion, skill set, creativity and encourage that. To allow all stories to be told and represented.

- To be able to learn as part of being involved and to be allowed to fail is proof that we have created a fair society. People at the top are allowed to fail all the time but those under represented are never allowed to fail. Therefore, we need to be able to mentor them through their path and allow them to grow right up through the industry into leadership positions and we need to be active in doing this.

Actions raised that we all need to take to help shift this environment on:

- Each organisation should gather statistics of the ethnic makeup of their membership
- Then each organisation make a clear action plan on how they will fix that within their organisation. Many organisations are doing this and have started this process. We all have a responsibility to do this and research is good but the best thing is to make it your working Practice.
- We need to take personal responsibility and stick our necks out to challenge producers/companies on this. As senior people within the industry we need to all call this out and sing from the same call sheet. It is all our responsibility to hold the mirror up.
- Stagesight and IncArts are both organisations who have a lot of knowledge in this area. They are places to look to in terms of steps and practice and all in AAPTLE should be encouraged to sign up to.
- It is also important to ask the organisations/ companies we work with if they have signed up to these sites, but also for us to ask them what actions they are doing to shift things. To make them accountable
- It is not the responsibility of the people of colour to be the ones to always have to call out these issues. It is painful but we acknowledge that racism exists and we need to actively, as a team, cohort, community, work together for that change.
- Pathways and mentoring are both seen as crucial ways to help change the playing field, especially if helped and funded by organisations which we as individuals can encourage. There is proof that both these areas work well.
- A constructive action that can come out of this time to change the landscape is to all take mentoring back to the Theatre organisations, companies, producers and say the way of working has to change and from now on we expect this from all of you. Yes, it will cost money but not a lot and the incremental change will be massive.
- The critical mass by us all coming together out of this time can really make a systemic change for the good, so we must be front foot at going forward.
- The first step is to admit how poor diversity is within our sector and from a position of honesty agreed to move forward and make it better.

Thanks, was given for bringing this important subject into the room and although a challenging conversation it is an essential one to keep having and actioning on. Therefore, it was suggested that it becomes a foundation agenda point every week.

- It was also raised that SOLT/UKTheatre have produced a Theatre Workforce Review which outlines all these problems and makes a commitment to address them. It would be useful for us to get a hold of this account and read it to see what might not be there and hold them to account on it.

- It was also suggested that all these points should be raised in our conversation with SOLT/UKTheatre. Through dialogue we can keep pushing the accountability.

WE MAKE EVENTS UPDATE

- The event on the 11th of August was very successful and there are plans to proceed onto a further event.
- The next aim is purely to raise money for freelancers and companies that are in real need and danger of collapsing. The target is to raise around 25 million pounds, outside the Industry pool. The industry is used to doing massive fundraising events for charity (Live Aid etc) and now going to do this for themselves.
- Around 25thOct/31st Oct is the target date just when the government stop every funding.
- It is ambitious but there is every confidence they can pull something off.
- It will be nationwide
- The How and what is still in the planning stage. Any association that wants to get involved will be very welcomed.
- Stuart (ALD) has been involved from the start and is going to carry on reporting back on We make Events in Slack document.
- Latest is that smaller groups are coming together to focus on clear message and try to get together the public campaign message.
- It was raised that although brilliant and a huge achievement to have put together so successfully in a very short space of time it is important that the public profile of it for the next event represents more diversity in the sector.
- As there is more time around the next event there is the chance to change the representation and put our suggestions out there. We have the opportunity now to all put our thinking caps on and be involved.
- The motivation behind it all is right and we should come together to support the possibility of money coming in.

FUTURE ACTIONS/ AOB

- It was agreed that we be proactive and lead with our combined strengths for the changes in Representation within our Industry. It was noted that this is a very nuanced area and we need to always break it down into specifics and to recognise that we have to also hold ourselves accountable.
- It was raised that Digital Rights and Distribution is a complicated messy area of new ground that we should take the lead on in unpacking and move forward. It would be good for AAPTLE to start looking to this as an area to discuss with agents and unions. We lead with our suggestions on it.
- Brexit and its impact on our community members shouldn't be forgotten in the mess of this moment. We don't know what the changes will be and how they will affect all of us and

especially those of us who, although having been in Britain most of their adult lives, are technically seen as being from the EU and having to justify their lives here. We need to keep an eye on Brexit.

ITEMS DISCUSSED TO FOLLOW ONTO AGENDA FOR NEXT WEEK

- Equity questions formalised for meeting with Paul Fleming
- The Spending Review in September needs to be kept in mind so we are tapping into conversations around this and how we as an alliance can make some noise for our sector so it doesn't get squeezed further.
- Cost involved in setting Website up. How do we ensure costs not falling on individuals?
- Sustainability of Admin within AAPTLE going forward. Do we need to formalise and interrogate the current set up?
- Representation actions update
- We make Events updates.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS ARISING

- Membership numbers put in Slack by all organisations.
- All organisations list their names of representatives for future AAPTLE meetings onto Slack.
- Fill in on Slack preferred day to meet with Paul Fleming from Equity – 2nd or 4th Sept.
- A Unions doc to be set up in Slack to put all Equity questions in to before next week so they can be discussed.
- An invite to be extended to IncArts to join AAPTLE Meetings (Sadeysa and Sunita)
- Someone to set up Union document on Slack.
- Fiona (SBTD) to confirm with Paul Fleming.
- Mandy (PMF) to follow up invite to Helen Ryan from Bectu and move the meeting date to two weeks after Equity meeting.
- Mandy (PMF) to follow up on a representative from Culture Task Force on the touring, rehearsal, Backstage side of things to join us for a meeting.
- Susie (FTF) will put names on Slack of other people that could be approached to come in from the Culture Task Force so that everyone can comment on who it should be.
- Someone to set up Calendar for all guest event meetings
- Work on actions outlined in Representation minutes.
- Fiona (SBTD) to follow up with SDUK if still interested in being involved and if they are hosting next week.
- Need to confirm who is hosting next week.

Next week's host is CHAIRING ORG: CITA (SDUK away)