

The Yard Theatre, Freelancer Roundtable

2nd June 2020. 10:00-11:30. Zoom

Minutes

In Attendance

Ashleigh Wheeler	AW
Anthony Simpson Pike	ASP
Cassie Leon	CLe
Celine Lowenthal	CLo
Cheryl Galacher	CG
Dipo Baruwa-Etti	DBE
Emma Clark	EC
Georgia Green	GG
Greg Wohead	GW
Jay Miller	JM
Jess Bernberg	JB
Kellie Grogan	KG (Minutes)
Laura Sweeney	LS
Meg Hodgson	MH
Ned Bennett	NB
Tobi Kyeremateng	TK

Apologies

Ashleigh Bowmott	AB
Brian Lobel	BL
Eleanor Dear	ED
Seke Chimutengwende	SC

1: Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed by all parties present.

2: Brief update on The Yard

As discussed last week, The Yard has submitted an Arts Council application to cover the costs of *An unfinished man* and other projects we paid people for. We are due to hear back either next week or the week after. JM is still figuring out how the furlough scheme will now work for The Yard as the scheme is being extended to October. One change is that organisations will have to contribute to make up the 80% now. Plus, from July, people who have been furloughed can come back to work part time.

- The vast majority of the team have now been furloughed, mostly operational and technical
- If The Yard wants to take advantage of the new part time offer i.e technical or operations staff being able to come back for a day to help with the building, then we need to furlough anyone who hasn't been already, before Wednesday 10th June, so what The Yard is considering is asking the vast majority of our organisation to take leave in June for a minimum of three weeks so that we can ask them to come back on a part time basis down the line. This is useful as we don't know when we will be able to reopen again.
- The local programme is still ongoing atm, other than that, we are thinking about doing another Yard Online or theatre outdoors.

- JM isn't too worried about September to October as he is thinking about doing work outside. He is worried about the colder months as it will be difficult to social distance in our building due to a lack of heat.

3: Update on the NT meeting

Vicki Mortimer, a designer who works at the National Theatre wanted to convene a group of freelancers who work for LTC theatres (a group of 14 theatres in London who regularly meet up and act as a lobbying group). TK attended on behalf of The Yard, she summarises below;

- A group of freelancers including herself met via zoom, there were 10-12 of them from different organisations, except for the Young Vic and the Arcola. It was comprised of lighting designers, stage managers, production designers and directors
- She notes that there was a bit of confusion about what the meeting was for and how it coincided with the Freelancers Taskforce, time was spent trying to unpack that
- They had two actions which came out of the discussion;
 1. Drafting a letter that freelancers could send to their local MPs to help push for more of a understanding about the makeup of the sector and why freelancers need support, with statistics to back this up
 2. A website is to be set up by Holly Bennett - it would amplify the voices of freelancers in the sector, potentially coinciding with the letter. It would act as a rallying cry from the people who make the sector work. TK will check in about the specific aims of the website
- They also talked about what organisations can do to better include freelancers. They all shared information about what other organisations have been talking to them about. TK will send around the minutes shared to this group
- One of the main things that came up was about clarity, and the need for it. People spoke of confusion about moving forward, about not knowing how the Freelance Task Force has been put together in organisations. They also found the differences between how organisations are administering the Taskforce confusing
 - AW asks if the SOLT lobby is feeding into this freelance group
 - JM says that the document about what the sector needs has gone through SOLT, and has had a lot of input from SOLT, but isn't sure about a freelance group
 - CLe asks how freelancers get to know about when letters are being drafted?
 - JM says this group is for that. As a group of people who regularly work with us, he hopes that everyone here can then disseminate their learnings to their wider networks
 - TK clarifies that it isn't one letter but would be a template to send to MPs including all of the information about the sector, including how many freelancers are in it, and what they need. It aims to act as a collective voice, from freelancers that operate in the sector. She isn't sure how this feeds into other conversations
- MH asks about the difference between this meeting at the National Theatre, and the National Taskforce. AW says that the National Taskforce includes theatres throughout the country, whereas the meeting at the National Theatre is London specific.
- MH asks if the draft to DCMS has been submitted with input from SOLT. JM will find out at 1pm today. MH asks if we are feeding into it. JM says he doesn't know. He says that he hopes that the National Taskforce or one TK attended will feed in, but he isn't sure how it will be actioned

4: Update on Freelancers Task Force role

JM notes that this is something that has been set up very quickly, they have asked us to nominate or recruit someone to attend these meetings. The deadline was due to be this Thursday, but just last night it was extended by a week.

- AW says that the broad aim of the National Taskforce is to strengthen the voice and influence of the self employed within the sector, creating point of contacts between individuals, theatres and government
- There will be approximately 100 people sent to these meetings on behalf of theatres. They are paid positions. These will potentially split into smaller groups. They will potentially then lobby DCMS
- AW thinks it's important the individual represents themselves but also feedback to this group of people

a. AW asks how we can recruit fairly and timely

AW notes that there is a representation checklist which organisations will fill in to say where their chosen freelancer is from, what their job role is and what their ethnicity is, amongst other things. This is meant to ensure that there is a diverse range of people in the Task Force. JM says that he would like to get the job description out and decide on an approach as soon as possible, so as to not have the person on the backfoot

- NB suggests self nomination. JM says he did have in mind to have an open callout for freelancers. JM spoke to Lynette Lynton, she opened the callout to freelancers who have been at the Bush during her tenure
- CLe says it may be good for the job to go out to a wider pool in order to give freelancers a chance who may not have checked their emails for weeks.
- AW notes that Daniel Evans from Chichester Theatre suggested that a certain level of familiarity with the organisation would be good so that the person is able to challenge the organisation. JM thinks it is possible to build a rapport quickly with someone unfamiliar though, if we create the right environment .
- LS suggests that maybe the freelancer should have worked at The Yard before. She notes that the pay is low, especially if they are then advocating outside of the meetings etc. She suggested that sticking to those who have worked at The Yard before would enable a balance between openness and practicality, especially as there is such a short window for someone to be appointed
- GG adds that it would be good to open it out to freelancers who have recently worked at The Yard without it being a mass call, as they will have the best insight into the ecology
- EC agrees. Though she adds that she finds it difficult that it is mediated through buildings. She would also feel uncomfortable being on the selection panel
- JB agrees with EC about it feeling weird for freelancers to choose who that person is. She adds that this group is small enough to communicate well, unlike larger groups.
- CLo asks that if The Yard is to go out to people who have worked there within the last two years, would people self identify, or would The Yard email a list of people.
- NB says it should be both, The Yard to put together whatever list they have, and also allow for anyone to self identify, so that no one is missed out
- DBE suggests that opening it up to everyone (including those who haven't worked at The Yard) doesn't feel possible, as it takes a while to build relationships. He adds that he likes this group as a small group, allowing voices to be heard.
- ASP asks why it should be limited to those who have worked at The Yard in the last two years, why not do open calls for those who have worked at The Yard, then email people too. He asks if limiting it to the past two years is needlessly exclusive.
- GW adds that he thinks it makes sense to narrow it to recent years in terms of liveness of the relationships.
- CLe asks about the work involved in processing the application process, could there be input from these freelancers at the final stage.

- DBE agrees with CLe, if The Yard are furloughing a lot of people, DBE asks that we consider what is manageable

JM summaries the discussion so far with the following next steps;

1. Open up job role to include freelancers outside of this immediate group who have worked at The Yard before
2. Send the job out to the list that AW has compiled
3. Advertise publicly for people to identify if they have worked at The Yard

JM asks if we should put a line in the JD saying that it would be preferable if you have worked at The Yard in the last few years because The Yard is different to what it was, so their understanding of The Yard would be different to what it is now. He suggests that maybe it is also not just worked, but participated, in order to include, for example, people from The Committee

- CG says that “preferable” is potentially a leading question. She suggests that we ask that they have a strong relationship to The Yard instead, and are able to challenge us.
- TK notes that it would be strange if some organisations were being very specific, while others are opening it up to everyone. She noticed that there was talk about people who aren't attached to organisations being missed in this. She says there would need to be a reason for opening the role up, otherwise it wouldn't be clear why
- LS asks about for example people who have attended everything at The Yard too, not just those who have worked at The Yard
- Cle feels there is a conflict as every freelancer has to represent a building, so she's worried that those most needing to be represented aren't able to join.
- JB says The Yard is really good about looking after people, and is a good organisation to bring someone in who hasn't worked with The Yard before
- NB says part of this is about trying to untangle relationships between freelancers and buildings so feels compelled that it should be broader
- CLe thinks there should be a level of experience in order to be able to pass information between venues, to know the right people to have side conversations. She isn't sure a new person is right for the role, she thinks the job may be too big for her even. JM says CLe would be great.
- ASP asks if now anyone should be able to apply
- EC thinks in practice it might be difficult, she would worry about false openness
- AW says it should be done authentically, not less ambitious, just only done if you can do it properly
- MH asks how do we make sure all elements of freelance life are represented, what if there are 50 directors and 20 stage managers? JM says the sheet AW shared is trying to ensure that. JM says difficult because a lot have chosen already
- JM suggests we come back together in a couple of days. JM thinks he should be involved. He suggests that those that anyone here who doesn't want to apply, lets us know if they would like to be on the panel
- JM will try and find out who has been chosen so far, and will share
- MH suggests freelancers can help, in order to pull out decision making from The Yard

Final Decisions

1. The job description will be advertised publicly, and won't be limited to people who have worked at The Yard before
2. Those here who don't want to apply can email The Yard in order to be on the interview panel
3. We will all meet again on Tuesday where The Yard will update on applicant numbers and work out the process going forward

JM says he values this conversation and thanks everyone for their time. He says we will send the JD and the minutes.

CLe says although it has been a confusing time at moments, she's excited about the future of this group, she says it feels integrated and like a good thing

GW agrees with CLe asks what the questions will be in the job description. It is agreed by all that the question will be brief and open ended.

5: Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 9th June 2020 at 1:30pm. An invite will be sent out to all parties.