

# AAPTLE Meeting No. 7

*4th August 2020, 12:00 on Zoom, chaired by The ALD*

## *Present:*

Johanna Town (ALD); Mark Jonathan (ALD); Ian Saunders (ALD); Stuart Porter (ALD); Dom Bilkey (ASD); Andy Rowley (SMA); Owen Thomas (SMA); Cat Silver (SBTD); Fiona Watt (SBTD); David Farley (SBTD); Katie Scott (SBTD); Peter Mckintosh (FMTW); Anna Fleischle (SC); Sadeysa Bailey (FTF); Susie McKenna (FTF); Catherine Kodichek (CITA); Nikki Edmonds (CITA); Mandy Ivory-Castile (PMF); Bruno Poet (Stage Sight); Mark Price (PMA); Tracey Elliston (PMA); Sam Fellows (Scenic Artists); Claire Sanderson (Props);

## *Apologies:*

*Apologies will only be included if an entire organisation is unable to attend*

## **Welcome**

The ALD welcomed all to the meeting and drew attention to last meeting's minutes for review in the AAPTLE Slack group. New attendees present representing Stage Sight, Prop makers and Agents. Also a reminder for attendees to update their screen names to list who they are and which organisation they are representing.

## **Issues Arising:**

### **Membership numbers**

Further discussion about assessing how many people AAPTLE potentially represents through its members organisations. Is there a need to know how many are freelance or working in the industry or are raw numbers enough to increase the weight of argument in the fact that "AAPTLE represents xxxx people". Also there will inevitably be some crossover where someone is a member of more than one organisation.

- **ACTION POINT: All organisations to add their basic membership numbers** of various categories and a rough definition of what that covers to a new slack channel #membership-numbers **before the next meeting on 11/8/20**. This can then be further investigated / broken down at a later date if/as necessary. **Supplied info will be collated for later use.**

### **Slack Tips**

New channel to be created for compiling info of Unethical practices. there is only a small window to influence and publicise these before it becomes standard practice or contract variation agreements are based upon them. The distribution of the £1.57Bn and no firm date for re-opening until November is likely to accelerate the issues we are already seeing.

If setting up a new channel ensure that you take up the offer to invite ALL USERS to join the channel so they can see messages. It can be done later, but is more of a hassle and people may miss info.

Some members reported concern about receiving messages for having to pay for Slack. This is purely because most people will be on a FREE Trial of the paid account. It will revert to a basic account at the end. You do not need to pay to continue using it.

If you set your Slack Preferences to receive notifications for ALL MESSAGES rather than just those with your name, you will see more of the discussions happening and be able to contribute

A request was made to create a Slack FAQ which would be useful for everyone to be able to get up to speed with the software, its settings and processes.

## **Aims and Manifesto**

*Are they now finalised and can be added to the website?*

A document has been on Slack for a week now and so, if there are no further comments, can they be laid out better for inclusion on AAPTLE website and distribution as required?

## **Minutes**

*Should AAPTLE minutes sit on members organisations' own website each week?*

Need to be some tighter guidelines and references concerning Chatham House Rule and how minutes are recorded to reflect these.

**ACTION POINT: Create guideline and a template for future use and add to #minutes Slack Channel**

## **Attendees**

*Setting of general guidelines for attending meetings*

- Concern about the number of new members attending on a weekly basis - are they aware of the rule of the meeting? are they up to speed with the issues? Should each organisation have a restricted pool of attendees that are kept up to date with developments to select from each week. Some groups are inviting other members to sit in on proceedings to ensure info is being spread wider - especially into the regions or to new groupings being set due to the current situation. We do not wish to exclude people but there needs to be an awareness of the rules and clarity about introductions of new voices and who they represent.
- There is [now a schedule for chairing and hosting meetings](#) that goes through the Christmas on the #agendas\_zoomlinks channel. If there is a particular week that is an issue, organisations should find a group to swap with and ensure the schedule is updated

accordingly. If the organisation does not have access to a pro Zoom account, various of the organisations do and can assist with hosting the meeting.

**ACTION POINT: Check the dates your organisation is due to host & chair meetings**

## **PLASA - Red Alert Event 11th August - 20:00**

*Large publicity event to raise awareness for the plight of the entertainment and events industries*

<https://www.plasa.org/we-make-events/>

Event is based around a riverboat of journalists and politicians travelling along the Thames with as many buildings as possible lit red and industry workers lining the route - socially distanced and organised - dressed in red to make a statement about the situation we all find ourselves in. Hoping that it will make a good photo opportunity. Participants are encouraged to register so that crowd management can be organised on bridges and in key locations. All groups are asked to spread the word to their members and contacts. The whole event has come together in the last two weeks or so and details are still changing as it develops. The organisers are also looking for celebrity voices to support and promote it and the issues. Also any content that could be used on various large screens that will be part of the event. Please contact PLASA for full details.

## **Guest Attendees Section**

*At this point in the meeting we were joined by Kevin Carson of BECTU and Stephen Spence of Equity to discuss the role of the unions at the current time and how we can build a relationship with them.*

- BECTU being part of the bigger Union Prospect has been able to use their contacts to lobby directly to Whitehall. The crisis highlights the precarious nature of the industry for freelancers, and historically there has not been a strong collective workforce in the theatre industry who have wanted to stand up to bad practice.
- There is now a Theatre Freelancers branch in London. Probably needs more advertising so Members know it exists as it is a newly created branch. It was pointed out that often when theatre freelancers joined BECTU they were automatically placed into the TV/Film branches and so receive little of any theatre specific information. There was also frustration that the website had little recognition of theatre members & crafts.
- As not all freelancers live or work in London so may not be interested in a London specific branch, a query was raised as to whether regional theatre organisations can act as hubs for their own area of freelancers as there were often in-house union reps that are plugged into the mechanism to distribute information or act as a direct contact point for raising issues rather than through a more traditional committee or branch system. The industry is 70% freelance and unions need to be aware that this is the case and reflect that in their structures.

- Unions tend to be slow moving with set structures and processes, but the current crisis is fast moving and constantly changing. How can they speed up their response to be the voice of workers in need?
- It was stated that only unions can negotiate agreements and in these circumstances variations to them. But would request that workers do not accept contracts with such variations until they are agreed and approved. It was considered important to agree variation agreements to enable productions to happen if they are able to in the future. There is rarely full acceptance of any deal, even in 'normal times'. There was also agreement that non-union agreements and contracts were an issue.
- Concern was expressed that there was a lack of understanding of specific jobs - especially in the craft and smaller specific disciplines and that not having the size of possible membership of other disciplines and this quieter voice would always create a disadvantage. Equally some disciplines are represented by different unions depending whether their work was in theatre or TV /Film which increasingly freelancers can be working in both areas.
- Q raised about commercial sector productions failure to uphold agreements, recognised breaks and working conditions compared to building based organisations. It was explained that any Trade Union member who has an issue at work can approach the union for help. However for some disciplines the agent relationship is also important and replaces the requirement of Trade Union membership?
- Issue of still requesting fees for joining a union in the current crisis was raised - answered by pointing out that unions still have staff to pay and legal services to carry out. There has been support given to existing members that have been unable to pay their subscriptions due to lack of work.
- The Unions have the recognition to bargain & reach agreements with employers. The Associations concentrate on specific sector issues and training. A closer relationship between the two - especially using members who are part of both sides will result in more involvement and better outcomes.
- Q - Many (if not all ) freelancers do not have a voice to speak to Govt at this time. How can the unions represent those voices better? A - Both BECTU & Equity are members of the Federation of Entertainment Trade Unions. This is where the issues of commonality have been discussed. It was pointed out that this combined voice needs to be better promoted as it is not always clear what is being done. Union recognition gives them the opportunity to talk to Govt depts and other bodies. Equity has a seat at the table with Govt and opposition through their affiliation to the TUC.

## **ACTIONS ARISING**

- **All organisations to add their basic membership numbers** of various categories and a rough definition of what that covers to a new slack channel #membership-numbers **before the next meeting on 11/8/20**. This can then be further investigated / broken down at a later date if/as necessary. **Supplied info will be collated for later use.**
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- **Create guideline and a template for future use and add to #minutes Slack Channel**

**Next week's host is Production Managers' Forum: 11th August 12 noon.**