



## PYA England Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 29 June 2021 @ Zoom

### Graduates and Early Careers in PYA

<b>Present (17)</b>
Wendy Harris, tutti frutti
Mosa Mpetha, tutti frutti
Thomas Wilson
Tina Williams
Ben Miles, Full House Theatre
Esther Rennae, Half Moon
Isaac Boothman, Curiosity
Katerina, Cloud Cuckoo Land
Katy Costigan, Filskit Theatre
Louise Bardgett, Create Gloucestershire
Pilar Santelices
Rebecca Lyon
Shay, Curiosity
Taneesha Lewis
Vicky Ireland
Victoria Dyson, Filskit Theatre
Warda Abbasi
<b>Apologies</b>
Filiz Ozcan
Sarah Shephard, Filskit Theatre

### 1. Welcome

Katy: So today we're talking about graduates and how we can support new artists. What we can do better as more established groups and what opportunities are there for everyone.

Before we start there's another bit of information we'd like to share with you:

### 2. Update from Katerina from Cloud Cuckoo Land regarding Anti-Racism work

Cloud Cuckoo land have made the offer of an anti-racism webinar. Using resources from TYA USA looking at anti-racism in theatre for young audiences which included an 11 part webinar series: <https://www.tyausa.org/antiracism/>

They're using these resources in Birmingham and have made an offer to local companies who do performances or engagement work with young people to join with them to do the webinar. Hope larger companies and people who are interested will come back to them and help provide some of the structure so they can then find support for those important resources. Not much take up so far. Will look to open up wider, outside of Birmingham if they don't get more uptake.



TYA USA also have a research report on the sector which may be of interest. Based on situation in America but also useful for reflecting on situation here too:  
<https://www.tyausa.org/publications/research/>

Katerina also working on updating list of resources in relation to Black Lives Matter. List for artists, parents and children: <https://cloudcuckoolandtheatre.com/2020/07/21/black-lives-matter-helpful-resources/>

### **3. Introduction to the session - Graduates**

Katy: Important session for our sector. Lots of performance opportunities but lots of artists/companies want to look at how we extend into working more collaboratively with younger artists and ways that we could expand that into other areas.

This can feel hard, particularly for small companies who feel they aren't able to support everyone as well as they'd hoped. We want to share experiences and do it in the best way possible because new art, new work and new ideas coming through into the PYA sector is exactly what we want and what we need.

Today we're going to hear from some slightly different viewpoints. Starting with Rose Bruford (where Filskit all studied).

First a video from Jeremy Harrison, who leads the MA and it's really an invitation to us all.

### **4. Rose Bruford section**

- Video from **Jeremy Harrison**, MA Programme Director  
- Actor Musicianship, Collaborative Theatre Making and Theatre for Young Audiences  
*[sends apologies for not being present as running schools project]*  
<https://www.bruford.ac.uk/staff/profile/jeremy-harrison-ma-programme-director/>

Jeremy talked around the potential for connectivity between the courses at Rose Bruford and professional development work in the PYA sector.

Rose Bruford remain well connected to industry partners and the students are really interested in making connections. The College have partnerships with schools, colleges, youth groups and more established companies.

Jeremy would be really interested in hearing from any PYA UK members who would be interested in exploring the potential for student engagement.

Rose Bruford have the resource of rehearsal rooms and a cohort of students who are keen and interested. Some profitable examples of collaboration have included companies coming in and working, running 2 or 3-day workshops or even a full student production to test material.

Other collaborations have included NIE using Bruford students to deliver extra capacity along with their outreach work.



Do get in touch with Jeremy if anybody's interested in having further conversations or a Zoom meeting to discuss opportunities with a few interested partners.

**Jeremy Harrison:** [Jeremy.harrison@bruford.ac.uk](mailto:Jeremy.harrison@bruford.ac.uk)

- **Thomas Wilson** on working with graduates  
European Theatre Arts, Programme Director  
<https://www.bruford.ac.uk/staff/profile/thomas-wilson-programme-director/>

Co-program director of European Theatre Arts, the programme that Katy, Victoria, and Sarah (Filskit) came out of. Interesting to note many Rose Bruford graduates have found their way into the PYA sector.

European Theatre Arts - The importance of ensemble. The idea of crossing borders artistically, culturally, geographically. Every student undertakes a placement at a company or a school in Europe during their time on ETA. Using those elements to find innovation and finding new ways of doing things.

We have a broad range of students coming in who by the end of the degree are all doing very different things. Graduates are not a singular thing. The diversity and the differences of graduates are really important - what works best is giving life to that and supporting them through that.

Looking at immediate grads - those who may be out for a couple of years. Thomas always tells students it will take 5 - 6 years to establish where their place is in the industry and make it work and not to be afraid of that.

Graduates often leave with the pressure to feel as if they must succeed by Christmas or they've failed. A reality check is important to say it's going to take a while. It's a growing period.

Important to acknowledge that graduates are very varied when they come out and have their own personal contexts. Lots of graduates who succeed, early, often have financial or emotional strong rooting that they can fall back on and use. Some grads don't have that and can mean they feel they're behind, or struggle to get going. It's who presents themselves in front of you after 3 years of training. Some may be super confident and others a bit rabbit in the headlights.

Talking about what the students need, rather than what they want and how do you deal with those needs of grads.

They'll have had a variety of preparation, depending on different courses. You can't do everything in three years. And so it's also knowing that there are going to be gaps in their knowledge and their skill sets. They may have been taught stuff but they may not yet be able to embody that yet. Give them the benefit of the doubt.

Advise individuals to ask questions about them and where they're from and their expectations.



So what do they need in that transition from leaving the institution and going out into the, into the wide world? The first thing is a welcoming spirit. Favourite book Thomas gives them is Art and Fear by Bayles & Orland which is about fine art but mostly about how you deal with the fear you face as an artist. Saying it's okay to be scared and let's chat is a good way.

You need to be upfront about what you can and can't offer. Just be really honest – eg. Yes I can spare an hour of my time once a month to chat to you. Yes, we have X number of pounds, and this space or you could come and work with us but what's the deal. Just be really clear as you are when you're negotiating with venues or with other professionals. Clarity is really important.

They need to be multi skilled, It can't just be about the art it's also got to be about their organizational skills. Whether they're going to be performers, producers, directors or in education. It's understanding that you will also need organisation and management skills. Valuable for them is to see how your organisation or you as an individual enterprise operate and make it work.

Administrative training of how companies run is just as important. They may ask to sit in the rehearsal room but also sit with you while you do some accounting or draft contracts. Seeing how stuff works in the real world is equally as useful for grads.

When Filskit graduated they're a very good example because they very clearly identified their skill sets as a group and followed those skill sets in the administration. But for individual students who may not come out as companies, that's often harder. A number of students are neurodiverse and struggle with some elements of those administrative functions.

Offering advice, giving them the confidence not to be working for free too much unless it's a really clear understanding of what the what the implications are.

It's also about what makes sense for your enterprise or organisation. The best interactions are where it makes sense for the company or the professional and it makes sense for the graduate. And it's a mutual exchange, a mutually beneficial relationship. That it's identified and agreed. If there are issues, they are discussed.

It's about the spirit in which it's conducted rather than giving them £1000 pounds of a couple of weeks in the studio. It's actually about welcoming them, welcoming them into the sector and allowing them to find their feet and find their voice, and find what works for them.

### **Video from Robyn, former Rose Bruford pupil**

**Katy:** Robyn Olivia is a Rose Bruford graduate. She's been doing work throughout the PYA sector in both Oxford, and in London, as well as doing a lot of work on diversity and inclusion, particularly around disability. We've got a short video from her that's actually



more directed at graduates but it's easy for a company to extrapolate how we can improve our communication and offer as well.

**Robyn Olivia** - Theatre maker, puppeteer and facilitator, specialising in PYA and sensory theatre.

Sharing a few thoughts about what it's like being an emerging artist going to children's theatre. Main issue felt was about building CV, being full of creative ideas for shows but not having the resources or the connections to make those thoughts a creative reality. So essentially the process of getting your work seen.

Robyn's recommendations for graduates:

- Find theatre companies, artists and creatives that inspire you and email them, see if they've got any upcoming projects anything that you could go and observe. Give clear examples of why you love their work, give clear examples of where you want to go. Suggest meeting for coffee or be in rehearsal space. Worst they can say is no but the best thing is it really builds experience and CV.
- Look into Youth Arts/Theatre facilitation. It strengthens your knowledge about the audiences that you're wanting to work with. Also the creativity offered by young people and children is fantastic. A great way to get regular work and be inspired as well as strengthening your CV by writing and directing.
- Keep learning. Review your progress every year and look for gaps in your knowledge. She was deviser but did not know much about writing scripts so took part in Little Angel's writing for stage course. Wanted to learn more about sensory theatre so took part in Oily Cart's sensory lab which helped her understand what she wanted to achieve in her own work. Keep learning and stay open to new things. Collaboration is key. See what others can teach you.
- Residency opportunities - Look for residencies focused on children's theatre or supporting emerging artists. If you apply, apply with a clear idea, the clearer you are about what you want to do, the more compelling you are to a theatre.
- The day job - do a day job that is useful. Example: development assistant of theatre because she wanted to learn how theatres worked, learn about fundraising applications, and build connections. Working with schools – able to run workshops and R&D there. Use the world around you to your advantage and use those jobs to your advantage as well. You don't have to hate them!
- Keep learning. Always look for opportunities that gain you more knowledge and skills, because if you're learning, hopefully you're having fun, and that's why we're all in the industry is because we love it.

##### 5. **Louise Bardgett on Kickstart**

Create Glos - [louise@creategloucestershire.co.uk](mailto:louise@creategloucestershire.co.uk)  
[www.creategloucestershire.co.uk](http://www.creategloucestershire.co.uk)

Create Gloucestershire is a network organisation which supports the arts and creative industries in Gloucestershire. Their mission is to make sure that culture and creativity are part of the everyday for everyone.



Raising awareness about the type of occupations and type of work that's available as well as transferable skills across the creative industries. Fill those skills gaps and making sure particularly in Gloucestershire that that sector can thrive for years to come.

They noticed particularly in the arts in Gloucestershire, most paid employers were 40-50+. Really important that we get young talent and diverse intake of talent into the sector that really reflects the range of people that live and study in Gloucestershire.

### **What is Kickstart?**

The Kickstart scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding.

So what does it mean?

- You must take on a young person for 6 months (minimum) for 25 hours per week
- Funding from DWP covers 100% of the National Minimum Wage/ Living Wage through PAYE including:
  - Associated employer NI contributions
  - Minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions
  - Initial setup costs
  - Needs to be recruited through the Job Centre Plus and fulfil criteria eg. Aged 16-24, on Universal Credit and unemployed.

Kickstart currently runs through up until December 2021, so still time to get involved and this may be extended.

With roles you would need to evidence that it's a new job. Needs to be seen as meaningful work, that it's a real, good opportunity for that young person to get them as ready as possible to go into longer term employment.

You're supporting them within that 6 month placement and providing them with things like helping them with their CV or interview preparation or any transferable skills or mentoring, attendance, timekeeping or communication skills.

Create Gloucestershire are a Gateway Organisation

As part of their offer they have 49 placements and 16 different organisations, all in the arts and cultural sector under the consortium of Create Gloucestershire. Some employers include: Cheltenham Festivals and Bright Marketing.

Example: The Roses Theatre are looking for 3 young people to join their team: FOH, Box Office Assistant. Theatre Assistant and Technical Assistant

There to support them. Each employer receives just over 1000 pounds from the DWP which is their first instalment. That helps with any individual training or software.

Louise is there as a Project Manager, to make sure it all goes to plan as things are continually changing.



There is a peer network/zoom networking session for support. come together, find out about each other. What they each other's doing find out geographically where people are in the county.

A gateway can be any type of organisation but it might be anything from a local authority or charity or more network based organization, and then CG act as an intermediary to apply for funding on your behalf. Some gateways also offer employability support and training as well.

If you're interested in applying and taking on a young person, you can go through a gateway, and they can put that application in on your behalf. But the assessment criteria is the same. Or you can go independently, and you can now go in as an individual organization. find out more. There's loads of information on the government website which tells you how you might get started as an employer.

You can apply online by yourself or you can apply through a kickstart gateway.

Search for which sector you're in. You can search, either by postcode or area or sector (most will be Culture/Media)

Some are just on a very local county level, but some of them are on a much more national level.

#### **Want to find out more?**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

At the moment out of their 49 placements they've recruited 20 young people and some are still in the system.

Visit their Kickstart page to see some of the types of roles that are on offer and feel free to get in touch. <https://www.creategloucestershire.co.uk>

**Louise Bargett at Create Gloucestershire:** [louise@creategloucestershire.co.uk](mailto:louise@creategloucestershire.co.uk)

#### **6. Katerina Pushkin - Cloud Cuckoo Land Collective**

Talking about Cloud Cuckoo Land's model of paid ensemble training that is designed to develop and diversify the pool of creative voices making music theatre for young audiences.

Eg. Paid panel of black artists in the wake of Black Lives Matter who identified that the strongest barrier to them for accessing work in the field of theatre for young audiences was a lack of financially achievable funding and training opportunities.

Part of the purpose of the Cuckoo Collective is to reach people who for whatever reason can't access University, and although it is also open to graduates, it's important to acknowledge that university education itself, and training is a privilege.

Addressing the need for paid training, so not just for it to be free, but for it to be funded, an employment opportunity.



Participating with music theatre and working primarily in grassroots spaces and with grassroots communities. Hard to find local artists who've got the specialist, cross disciplinary skills. So it's widening pool of practitioners to the group of people with a shared language.

Addressing the disparity between the makeup of our audiences and the makeup of both our company and the sector locally specifically in terms of Creative Leadership and creative roles. So there might be some representation in terms of onstage but in terms of people actually making up stories and telling them also important.

The programme is a collaborative training and devising process, which is going to be founded on a quality of creative voice. Free training with seven emergent local artists from systemically marginalized communities. There will be two kickstart trainees and five headstart trainees and they will be performance musicians and creatives who haven't previously accessed in depth theatre training or significant employment in PYA. 10 people are going to train together over 50 half days. Includes visiting specialists and teaching and crucially, new collaborators will also be teaching them, and everybody else.

And the goal is to have a group of people who have a shared language, and a shared expertise, have a group of people who can work together, but will also support them to a work independently together and with local communities, and support them to work with other local companies.

Read more here: <https://cloudcuckoolandtheatre.com/workshops/cuckoo-collective/>

## **7. Breakout room notes**

*[Tried to group younger artists together to talk about what their experiences have been. Challenges/good examples of practice or ways in that you would have found helpful that haven't happened. Then grouped some of the more experienced artists together with a slightly different focus of what they have been doing in the past and hope to do in the future]*

- Talking around the barriers of recruitment of Kickstart and the outdated model of the JCP and work coach.
- The disparity of finding jobs virtually, or through a physical venue such as a JCP
- Discussion of backgrounds + reasons for applying
- Discussion of changes to application process (questions sent beforehand to help transparency)
- Discussion of mentoring and support/ Zoom chats
- Ben Miles of Full House Theatre shared success story of working with intern. She was a graduate from Bath Spa who went on to be creative producer with them for two years. Is now a very established local artist working in film.



- Full House recruiting for a 6-month Trainee Producer placement through the government's Kickstart scheme. They also have new design job opportunity (see attached brief for Graduate Set Designer)
- <https://fullhouse.org.uk/who-we-are-2/work-with-us/>
- Working with graduates can be a stepping stone for building new relationships. If it goes well, it means that the companies can work with them because they have ingrained relationship
- Tutti frutti have had a good experience of working with actors who are graduates. A big part is giving them the support and working hard on the culture.
- Helping graduates with tax or housekeeping policy documents
- The element of paying it forward, even though many of us still feel like graduates, imparting some of those life skills, mentoring, help with tour packs/marketing skills
- Looking at the difference between BA and MA graduates. MA may be more specialist. Whereas BA's can be more flexible and pick up skills
- More connections with higher education organisations. Exciting new Rose Bruford courses including design management and VR. Potential opportunities for collaboration there.
- Be aware it might be quite tough for a lot of young people coming through now. How can we help support them, and also those entering the profession later on.
- International opportunities. Potential future relationships abroad connecting with international graduates.

### ASSITEJ UK Membership

This may seem like a weird time to be parting with cash, but please do read on....

Without support from our members, the PYA/TYA sector could have been cut adrift from one another and from our international colleagues. We may also have lost sight of our commitment and passion for high quality live performance for young audiences as being our sole and single-minded concern. On the Edge, Quality of Difference, Assitej regional showcases and countless opportunities for members to participate in Assitej International events would not have been made possible.

At a time when arts organisations are making tough choices and freelancers are facing an uncertain future. We understand how a membership fee is not going to be a number one spending priority. And yet, since lockdown began at the end of March, here are some of the things the **Assitej UK** network has achieved:

- Welcomed 15 new paying members.
- PYA England has reconstituted, recruited a new, diverse steering group, set out a marketing campaign, and hosted 3 coffee mornings, to which more than 30 people have attended each time.
- Members across the UK have contributed to articles in national newspapers, such as the recent article by Lyn Gardner in The Stage
- Members have lobbied their respective Arts Councils regarding the special case for young audiences.
- We have secured £555 funding from Action for Children's Arts Emergency fund.
- Submitted two bespoke PYA letters to Oliver Dowden, Culture Secretary.

Meanwhile, **Assitej International**, of which all Assitej UK members are by default a member, has hosted a raft of global coffee mornings, at which there has been representation from all continents. This is something you could not safely say about international festivals that are largely populated by delegates from wealthier countries and organisations.

It is quite possible that Corona Virus and Zoom have changed our idea of what is possible as a networking organisation, and our capacity to both celebrate our unique characteristics as individuals whilst staying well connected is looking rosier than it ever did! Could you consider joining the network at this time: for solidarity, a future facing approach, seizing the moment and making the next decade that of the child?

Covid-19 has hit our industry hard, therefore in 2021 if you are unable to pay your annual standard subscription of £70 for an Organisation or £25 for individual members, we are offering you the option to pay £25 as an Organisation and £5 as an individual member for the year.

- [Organisation Subscription Covid-19 Discounted Rate: £25](#)
- [Organisation Subscription Standard Rate: £70](#)
- [Individual Member Covid-19 Discounted Rate: £5](#)
- [Individual Member Standard Rate: £25](#)

Alternatively, please contact us by emailing [info@tya-uk.org](mailto:info@tya-uk.org) if:

- the cost of membership is too much for you at this time but you wish to make a one-off donation in lieu of your membership fee
- you would like to take a payment holiday for one year
- If you require an invoice

We very much hope that you will recognise the benefits of membership, and thank you in advance.