



## PYA England Coffee Morning Meeting Minutes

Tues 13 June 2023 @ Zoom

'How are we all doing? What do the new round of NPO decisions mean for us all?'

Chaired by Harriet Hardie (Full House Theatre) with provocation from Nikki Sved (Theatre Alibi)

### Present (12)



Mosa Mpetha (tutti frutti) (Host, me)



wendy tutti frutti



Anthony Haddon



Half Moon Chris Elwell



Harriet Hardie (Full House)



Jude Merrill



Michael Judge



NikkiSved



Sal Christopher Tangled Feet



Sarah Argent ((she/her))



Vicky Ireland, Action for Children's Arts



Zoe - Z-arts

### Apologies

Zest Arts



## **1. Welcome and Updates (Harriet & Wendy) 10.30am – 10.45am**

Welcome to PYA England Coffee Meeting!

PYA England (Performance for Young Audiences) is the England sub group of [ASSITEJ UK](#), a membership organisation which is part of a global network, [ASSITEJ International](#). The PYA England sub group welcomes its Irish, Welsh and Scottish colleagues to the zoom café's. ASSITEJ UK is a membership organisation and we would be delighted if any people new to this network want to become members. Wendy Harris is chair of PYA England, Kate Cross is ASSITEJ UK Chair. There is information at the end of these minutes about how to become a member.

Today's meeting is chaired by Harriet Hardie, one half of the creative directorship of Full House Theatre, we are a new NPO based up in Hertfordshire. Full House is also part of the PYA Steering Group.

Wendy's update on PYA activity:

We have created a scoping report, the [executive summary](#) is on the ASSITEJ UK – PYA England website. This is about exploring the viability for a PYA festival in the North. ACE North were supportive of this project and funded the report so therefore the festival will take place in the North. The next stage was a follow up meeting with the relationship manager, who is not mandated to make decisions. So we requested feedback from senior managers at ACE and a steer as to how we action the next steps. This has resulted in us putting a further request for more investment funds from the North to resource us to develop and action next steps which will enable plans and processes to be made for realising a significant festival alongside sector support. We await a decision on this and will keep everyone informed

Anyone with questions or thoughts please email Wendy directly – [wendy@tutti-frutti.org.uk](mailto:wendy@tutti-frutti.org.uk)

## **2. Nikki Sved Provocation 10.45am – 10.55am**

Summary Points:

- Theatre Alibi and Travelling Light were removed from the National Portfolio in the last round.
- Within the South West, the other existing children's theatre specialist, Prime Theatre, which is in an ACE Priority Area, received an uplift, but overall there was a cut to children's theatre specialists in the region.



- Between Swindon and the tip of Cornwall, there are no NPOs that are specialists in creating theatre for children and young people.
- Both NPO applications were marked highly, rejection was not to do with quality of work. Geography was a predominant decision factor.
- There are questions to be asked about
  - o the validity of decisions based on postcode, particularly regarding touring theatre and where you are cutting out specialisms that are of regional (if not national) significance.
  - o The lack of funding support for performances in schools (Theatre Alibi tour to around 12,000 children in 80 schools each year)
  - o With regards to children's theatre, ACE's favouring of participation over performance
- Theatre Alibi and Travelling Light were both founded in the 80s. Is there an assumption that companies of a certain age are 'tired'. How does the funding system value experience, knowledge and the relationships with schools, venues, partners, artists etc that have been nurtured over the years?
- Decisions have been heavily strategic, with little focus on the work itself. In Theatre Alibi's case no one from ACE had seen any of their work in over 4 years.
- Some wonderful new companies entered the portfolio and there should be no blanket judgements made. We must take care to be welcoming, as well as acknowledging that there are examples of high-risk decisions having been in priority places to organisations with little or no track record.
- It should be noted that we can't find examples of other companies specialising in children's work being removed from the portfolio elsewhere and the in the South West, the only two theatre companies that were cut, specialised in work for children. The South West was singularly hard hit in this regard.
- Theatre Alibi's management team are going to be meeting with Anne Applebaum (Director of CYP in ACE), is there anything the sector would like to add to this conversation?

### **3. Breakout Space 10.55am – 11.15am**

1. How do you think NPO decisions will affect the long-term stability of the PYA sector
2. How do we as sector continue to champion quality performance work for young audiences as well as participation?
3. What are the current challenges of presenting live performance work in schools?



#### Room 1

- Anthony Haddon
- Jude Merrill
- Vicky Ireland, Action for Children's Arts
- wendy tutti frutti

#### Room 2

- Harriet Hardie (Full House)
- Michael Judge
- Sal Christopher Tangled Feet
- Zoe - Z-arts

#### Room 3

- Half Moon Chris Elwell
- NikkiSved
- Sarah Argent

#### **4. Discussion and Feedback 11.15am – 11.30am**

##### Room 1

- How do we ask ACE about strategy? Read the 'Let's create' strategy and see if there are any clear guidelines there that would explain the decisions in the South West. We feel Nikki could ask Anne Applebaum about the ACE's specific strategy for children and young people in the North West in relation to the North where there is a clear strategy for early years, young people etc.
- Vicky - mentioned that there was no spotlight in the press on Alibi or Travelling Light being cut from the South West and have we missed the boat or could something be done retrospectively? There is also an issue round the sensitivity to the companies involved and their future plans
- Is there any point banging on the door of this Tory govt which is in a mess. Begin to make connections with Labour and LibDems who would probably be more receptive to children and the arts.
- The North have three priorities, one is early years and one is CYP. This is why we have been able to push at an open door for the scoping exercise. Perhaps bring this to Anne too, what is SW doing? Could also ask for freedom of information – who have they funded across England.

Nikki happy to share response she received from Darren Henley about how they interpret data.



Wendy – PYA has done some work on this, we started to speak to a data analysis person in ACE to interpret how PYA is identified in the NPO and Project Funded data.

Mosa – This data work was started but not completed, in summary...

- This is an initial request to the lobby group and steering group I pulled together on reflection of NPO and Project data in order for us to better see ourselves reflected: [ACE 2019 DATA NOTES LOBBYING.docx](#)
- This is a summary of NPO data 2020/21 reflecting on PYA representation: [NPO Data 202021 Summary Jan 2022.docx](#)
- This is an email from Lauren after we had a meeting to try and breakdown the NPO data: [Lauren data email notes.docx](#)
- This is the data sent from Lauren broken down to reflect PYA: [Copy of 2021-12-24 LT PYA NPO Data EXT from Lauren.xlsx](#)
- I think if we wanted to Lauren to look at new NPO data, or do a comparison between last NPOs and current NPOs we could, we just need to know what exactly is the question we are asking. If Lauren is still in post of course! If anyone wants more information on this please email [mosa@tutti-frutti.org.uk](mailto:mosa@tutti-frutti.org.uk)

[In Chat]

*Michael Judge 11:27*

*Both Bridge organisations cut completely in Midlands - did RIO get funded in SW?*

*NikkiSved 11:27*

*They did*

Anthony - Bridge organisations also dictate how much activity is going into schools.

## Room 2

- Need to look at National data.  
Clear that some organisations have had uplift for work with children and young people.  
Full House, Little Bulb, Prime, Tangled Feet, Big Imaginations, Mortal Fools.  
Not just PYA sector that has been affected by balancing of Let's Create.
- What is the distinction between place-based events/festivals working with families/children and theatre-makers creating work with/for children?  
Balance of participation & performance already exists.



- Opportunity to work in new areas eg. libraries and community centres and HAFs.
- Challenge of ££s and curriculum to bring live performance work to schools. DTEA advocating party conferences to ensure entitlement to live performance for all children.
- Important to develop schools market in order to support PYA companies business model. Eg. At April Fest, govt subsidises shows that are booked by schools.

### Room 3

- More established companies had been hit harder. A different balance between old and new companies. Enabled more new artists into the portfolio. If we are going to make judgements about older companies being tired, then they need to at least come and see the work and judge it on reality.
- Work is being judged on paper – strategic decisions rather than actually based on the work.
- Balance between performance & participation. A false dichotomy. An argument needs to be made – although its not easy to make – that there is also positive effect of performance work, not just participation. Perhaps those heavily involved in participatory need to be better connected with Performance to help uplift the importance.
- Arts Council also under pressure – not entirely making own free decisions.

Sarah – Being an interloper from Wales – the devastating effect of stopping Wales companies going into schools (6-7 years ago). A lot of money was found for artists doing development work in schools. But there is virtually nil opportunities for children to see work in schools, which effect the demographics of children who get to see work.

### **Next meeting: Tuesday 12 September 2023 10.30am – 11.30am**

Chris Elwell is chairing a discussion on: The dynamic between touring companies & venues from a venue context.



### ASSITEJ UK Membership

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE MORE CONNECTED TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN YOUR FIELD?

ASSITEJ UK (Performance for Young Audiences UK) is the National Centre of ASSITEJ INTERNATIONAL and is made up of professionals from Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales who make theatre and dance for young audiences.

We celebrate excellence in the performing arts for young audiences, whilst promoting and protecting Performance for Young Audiences (PYA) across the UK, advancing the growth of the industry so that it can enrich and nourish both the artists making the work and young people's experience of the world through live performance.

We promote ASSITEJ opportunities and aim to connect artists in the UK with artists abroad. The pillars of ASSITEJ UK are internationalism, professional development and advocacy.

WHAT DO YOU GET?

- Membership of ASSITEJ UK includes:
- Monthly newsletters packed full of national and international opportunities
- Weekly TYA/PYA job opportunity newsletters (newsletter sent on submission of opportunities by members)
- An invitation and voice at the Assitej UK AGM
- Details of Assitej International Global Gatherings and all other festivals and opportunities world-wide
- Access to sector-wide research and data which can be used in funding applications etc.
- Opportunity to apply for Assitej places at international events
- Discounted passes for events and training where available

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

- Regularly funded organisations – £100 per annum upon completion of an annual survey – [membership form](#)
- Project funded organisations – £35 per annum upon completion of an annual survey – [membership form](#)
- Independent artists – £10 per annum upon completion of an annual survey – [membership form](#)

Independent Artist FAST PAY – Set up your direct debit today in seconds and we will email you our members survey to complete in your own time

If none of these fees apply to you or if you require an invoice, please contact us on [info@tya-uk.org](mailto:info@tya-uk.org) Payment is taken via GoCardless.

DO YOU KNOW?

If you are an organisation, you can also sponsor an independent artist's membership for only £10!

If you are an independent artist, you can approach an organisation to request they sponsor your membership

<https://tya-uk.org/join-1/>