

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 2pm –2.50pm



Topic:	Freelancers' Forum (Zoë)	Scribe:	Helen
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How can organisations keep supporting freelancers in the current climate to keep creative work and keep our heads above water? Any best practice?2. How do we champion the voice and representation for freelancers?3. Protecting yourself. How do we maintain a freelance career and still have work-life balance?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Freelancers need to be empowered to seek work outside the 'subsidised sector' (i.e funded organisations), where there are opportunities.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Best practice = do less which impacts more. Work smarter, not harder.- There are more opportunities for freelancers available beyond the 'subsidised sector', e.g. going directly to the young people and ask for the organisation's back-up in creative projects. Freelancers tie themselves to subsidised organisations and their structures. This can be flipped.- It was clear during the pandemic that it's freelancers who make the work, and they weren't included in emergency funding.- Smaller freelancer support groups/networks could challenge the market. This requires unpaid time which freelancers may not be willing or able to commit to.- Treat me fairly, pay me fairly.2. There needs to be more transparency of what freelancers are paid and charge.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is a lack of confidence that Scottish Artist's Union's daily rates of pay are upheld by organisations. There is a lack of transparency about rates of pay.- Can a conversation around fees be continued with YTAS?- Freelancers can and should request and/or create their own 'terms of service' agreement.- Intermediary organisations can stand up for freelancers in terms of pay and wellbeing.3. We need to reshape, not rebuild, the sector.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Freelancer burnout leading professionals to leave the industry is a major issue.- Lobby for universal credit.- Protect your own wellbeing by setting your own boundaries. Changing this requires a cultural shift.- Freelancers can consider using a mentoring-ally/buddy/sounding board. There are good examples of intergenerational mentoring (paid on both sides).			

Top 3 takeaways:

- 1. Freelancers desire and require fair work conditions from the organisations who employ them.**
- 2. Fear can turn into confidence.**
- 3. Transparency on rates of pay is needed.**

Who was in the room?

Jenny Anderson - Freelance
Alice Donnelly - Freelance
Simon Sharkey - The Necessary Space
James Preston - Lyra
Jonathan White - Freelance
Jordan Blackwood - Aberdeen Performing Arts/Freelance

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 2pm –2.50pm



Topic:	Managers' Mingle (Lynsay)	Scribe:	Kenny
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are our priorities in supporting staff and freelancers' wellbeing?2. What has been learned and perpetuated from lockdown that we're still dealing with?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Many freelancers work a combination of day and evenings so managers must be mindful of their capacity and wellbeing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Important for managers to reflect on their own personal experience as freelancers to help considerations such as capacity and working conditions.- Important to incorporate 'pay' and 'time required' into applications but also to be aware of these issues at the project planning stage.- Looking at why we are compelled to work long hours- necessity, expectation, culture?- Recruitment challenges perpetuate this issue. Can this be traced to local authority level?- Shift in sector from post-pandemic experience- pressure from funders promotes project inflation and larger ambitions. Is this pressure authentic or perceived?- When working with young people it can be hard to cancel a session.- Pressure to 'step in' can perpetuate some of the capacity issues.2. Differences between ambitions and timescales set by facilitators and head office. Funders can create issues or opportunities arise that are difficult to say no to.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How have expectations shifted from freelancers (and organisations) e.g in the case of illness? Some solutions could be rearranging, finding cover or time off. Whose responsibility is it to find cover?- Taking responsibility for sickness and cancellation clauses in contracts. PIPA provides useful recommendations.- Communications have become less clear.- Risk of falling back into old patterns, habits and challenges.- Important to be aware of own and others' capacity- being less apologetic for not achieving as much and aware of asking too much of others.- Awareness of impacts from home-working such as environmental factors, strategic decisions when requiring a venue etc.- How these issues affect policy: introduction of flexible working policies, options for home set-up or hot desking opportunities, environmental policies, using wellbeing check-in questions as a way to monitor, review, discuss and develop approach.			
Conclusion: keeping connected to share challenges and insights.			

Top 3 takeaways:

1. Freelance staff management

2. Company capacity/overreach

3. Home working

Who was in the room?

**Rikki Payne – Scottish Youth Theatre
Hazel Beattie – Falkirk Youth Theatre
Anna Plasberg-Hill – Lyra
Anna Meldrum – East Renfrewshire
James Beagon – Strange Town
Jasmine Munns – Perth Theatre
Allan McIntyre – Macrobert Art Centre
Hannah Westwater – Drama Llama
Rachel-Jane Morrison – Young Quines
Katie Gillespie – Toonspeak Young People’s Theatre
Martin O’Connor – Toonspeak/Freelance/Tron
Emma Forsyth – Theatre Royal Dumfries**

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 2pm –2.50pm



Topic:	Creative Conversation (Claire)	Scribe:	Hollie
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Where do you find inspiration?2. What are the projects or artists that are exciting you right now?3. How are you embedding self-care into your practice?4. How are you making sure you continue to develop as an artist?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bringing hope and promise to what the young people are working on.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Importance of encouraging young people within their cohort and how the young people's work ends up being more impactful than initially thought.- Creating spaces where people feel welcomed, and that theatre is for them.- Using the constraints of online theatre to inspire creativity.- Potential lack of other role models mean that young people are looking up to their own cohort and being inspired by each other.- The importance of togetherness and play during the pandemic.2. Creating community post-lockdown.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bringing joy in our own practice: watching others create, validation from others, unexpected connections, facilitating a safe space.- Opportunity for creativity without fear of failure, self-belief and confidence, offering opportunities to support progression.- Promoting a 'come as you are' attitude, open door policy, space to celebrate individuality.- Establishing a community, sense of achievement watching young people grow, finding and giving more respect in our working environment.- Provide a safe space, validation and considering the young person as an equal artist.3. Sharing information and support across the sector.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Measuring capabilities and capacity to avoid burnout. Is it worth the gamble?- Have a space like DramaCon where people can come together to support each other but making sure that space is accessible.4. Checking in with yourself and asking the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do I feel like myself doing this? Or is the organisation getting too big and taking too much on?- What do you stand for and does what you're doing, speak to that?			

Top 3 takeaways:

1. Sense of community.

2. Holding the space to allow young people to grow.

3. Seeing improvements in society and how this affects your practice.

Who was in the room?

**Andrew Simpkins – Eden Court
Vicky MacRae – Eden Court
Jennifer Galt – Traverse Theatre
Jen McDonald – Creative Spark
Rhona Ashwood – Creative Spark
Annie Lowry Thomas – Scottish Youth Theatre
Jamie Steedman – Scottish Youth Theatre
Josie Young – Scottish Youth Theatre
Jo Timmins – Lyra
Attila Budahazi – Freelance
Marion Geoffray – Freelance
Katrine Turner – Firefly Arts
Daniel Orejon – Strange Town
Mikaela Aktag – Dundee Rep Theatre
Hayley Blakeman – Perth Theatre/Dundee Rep
Genna Allan – Perth Theatre
Emily Turner – Perth Theatre
Alice Muir – Solar Bear
Craig McCulloch – Solar Bear
Andre Anderson – Dumfries Theatre Royal
Izzie Kerr – Wester Hailes High School**

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 3pm –3.50pm



Topic:	Access & Inclusion Assembly (Claire)	Scribe:	Kenny
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How can the youth theatre sector create a more inclusive industry in the future?2. How can we respond to a wide range of access needs with limited resource?3. Where and how to start?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Practical solutions and one change to contribute to a more inclusive sector:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- BSL performer to be involved in every piece of theatre.- Access to travel and opportunities to address poverty issues.- Funding and budget support. Pushing inclusive approach at the top/start of the chain rather than catching up at the bottom.- More support for freelancers and organisations to make adjustments for disabled participants, including training staff.- More support with early years from arts practitioners and organisations.- An 'Access first' approach, with training available for all staff making it the 'norm', not simply a one off.- Holding more open calls rather than existing network.- Researching venues access resources and capabilities.- Celebration of positive work being done to encourage further improvement.2. Reacting is too late. Build into the planning stage. Pre-empt instead of response.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Keeping the conversation open and flowing- sharing learning with peers.- 'Fully accessible' is a fallacy. There is always a need for further diversification and room for improvement with support from specialists.- Creative Scotland can provide bespoke support for these issues but it is important that this is utilised appropriately.- Best to go straight to the participant or staff member in question for their lived experience or to gain insight from a specialist in the area.- Investing in accessibility is time and money well spent.- Training is required for more awareness of breadth of conditions e.g neurodivergence.- Young people need role models who can relate to their experience.- Don't be afraid of not getting it right first time, keep learning and do your best.3. Important to ask people if they have any access requirements from the outset. This creates space for discussion from the start and allows the person to use their own words.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engaging in research projects such as the BUZZ Lab opportunity.- Piloting a new access approach to shows in June.- Review and develop current access policies.			

Top 3 takeaways:

- 1. Shared one change we wanted to see to contribute to a more inclusive sector.**
- 2. Topics included: funding, training, representation, access to opportunities, physical access and more awareness of successes and potential.**
- 3. Discussed approaches to practical changes in light of limited resources and shared a few immediate steps.**

Who was in the room?

Jenny Anderson – Freelance
Vicky MacRae – Eden Court
Rikki Payne – Scottish Youth Theatre
Annie Lowry Thomas – Scottish Youth Theatre
James Beagon – Strange Town
Jasmine Munns – Perth Theatre
Anna Meldrum – East Renfrewshire
Alice Muir – Solar Bear
Craig McCulloch – Solar Bear
Allan McIntyre – Macrobert Arts Centre
Emma Forsyth – Theatre Royal Dumfries Guild of Players Youth Theatre

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 3pm – 3.50pm



Topic:	Education Exchange (Marion)	Scribe:	Rachel
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Educating ourselves as artists: Why do children's rights and the implementation of the UNCRC matters to our practice (both in a youth theatre and education context)?2. How do we strengthen the relationships between schools and youth theatre?3. What can youth theatre learn from educators?4. What is the role of the artist in an educational context?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Is there sufficient knowledge and confidence of children's rights within the sector?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What would make people feel more confident?- Terminology may seem foreign/intimidating but it is important to demystify and recognise what you are already doing naturally.- Need to create a space where the child rights are upheld.- Where does art come into play with a children's rights focus?- Should establish an environment that educates the child about their own rights through practice and conversation.- This can be a holistic approach.2. What is the role of local authorities in instilling the culture and opening the communication travels?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Would be useful to build connections and dialogue at the training level at university by getting practitioners in for regular sessions during teacher training rather than one solitary module.- Demonstrating the benefits and citing evidence such as YTAS' Research Project.- Starting at the training stage should then stimulate a ripple effect.- Considerations of funding: where, when, who and how?- Recognising the need for a cultural shift for longer term impact e.g. success of recent push for sports in schools, this could/should be possible for the arts.- Directory - it would be useful for teachers to be able to seek out facilitators experienced in certain themes e.g anti-bullying work.3. Sharing of skills- managing challenging behaviour, planning classes.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A dialogue- helping facilitators to understand curriculum and its gaps; what do teachers feel uncomfortable teaching?- Connecting over shared experience e.g. young people facing confidence issues from isolation period during covid.- Drama and the arts creates space for people who are less comfortable in academic settings. Important for young people to be told and recognise that they are 'good' at something.			

4. Supporting teachers with how to lead when the freelancer is not there.
 - Impart knowledge and passion for theatre.
 - To help create well rounded individuals and giving every child access whilst responding to their individual needs.
 - It is important to manage expectations and negotiate fairly pay; to advocate for self and work.
 - Benefit in creating learning opportunities that feel like 'breaks'.
 - The ultimate dream would be an artist in residence in every school. Who would fund this?

Useful resources:

[GIRFEC \(Getting it right for every child\)](#)

[Children's Parliament](#)

Top 3 takeaways:

- 1. Bridging the gap between school and the arts by talking teachers directly.**
- 2. Artists becoming more confident in becoming duty-bearers in children's rights.**
- 3. The need for more opportunities for artists in residence at schools.**

Who was in the room?

Andrew Simpkins – Eden Court
Jen McDonald – Creative Spark
Rhona Ashwood – Creative Spark
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Jonathan White – Freelance
Attila Budahazi – Freelance
Hayley Blakeman – Perth Theatre/Dundee Rep
Daniel Orejon – Strange Town
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Genna Allan - Perth Theatre
Mikaela Ahtag – Dundee Rep Theatre
Katrine Turner – Firefly Arts
Jordan Blackwood – Aberdeen Performing Arts/Freelance
Izzie Kerr – Wester Hailes High School
Andre Anderson – Dumfries Theatre Royal

Discussion Group Notes

Friday 24 March 2023: 3pm –3.50pm



Topic:	Wellbeing Wag (Lynsay)	Scribe:	Helen
Key Question(s)			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What does it mean for youth theatres to be safe spaces? What does it take?2. Protecting yourself - how do we support young people while maintaining our own self-care?3. Art and wellbeing: how can we use this relationship as an advocacy tool?			
Interesting notes / thoughts / observations			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Young people are allowed to be themselves.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offer information and opportunity to enable cultural agency; treating the young people as artists in the space and creating a level playing field.- It takes tailoring and being attentive to differing and specific needs.- Allowing for enough time to work out what's needed.- Giving yourself permission to adapt.- Being open-minded about what a 'safe space' might be or require.- Being flexible and willing to adapt to suit the moment.2. Knowing and upholding your own boundaries.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Understanding and respecting that these things may be different for your colleagues.- Striving to be a 'healthy practitioner'.- Being clear about preferred methods and times of communication e.g email, WhatsApp, evenings and weekends- This is an important focus for both organisations <i>and</i> freelancers.- 'Fit your own oxygen mask first before assisting others' approach.3. By gathering evidence: evaluating wellbeing during projects.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Making projects visible, shouting more, and using feedback directly from the young people to advocate.- Offering research opportunities to academics and using the results, e.g. taking to the government.			

Top 3 takeaways:

- 1. It takes time to work out what's needed to make a safe space. It takes open-mindedness and a willingness to adapt the space.**
- 2. Knowing and upholding your own boundaries. Giving as much respect to ourselves as professionals as we do to the young people.**
- 3. Get different evaluation and advocacy skillsets in to help make a strong case.**

Who was in the room?

Jennifer Galt – Traverse Theatre
Hazel Beattie – Falkirk Youth Theatre
Jamie Steedman – Scottish Youth Theatre
Jo Timmins – Lyra
Josie Young – Scottish Youth Theatre
Rachael Keiller – Young Quines
Rachel-Jane Morrison – Young Quines
Katie Gillespie – Toonspeak Young People's Theatre