



Minutes of South London Theatre Executive Committee meeting

29 January 2025

Attendees:

Simon Gleisner (SG), Theatre Director, Chair
Gareth Milton (GM) Commercial Director
Chris Bennett (ChB), House Team
Jo Boniface (JB), Theatre Committee
Lorna Felix (LF), Youth Team
Guy Jones (GJ), Membership and Brand Teams
Jess Osorio, (JO), Wardrobe Team
Alistair Simpson (AS), Backstage & Technical Team
John Winter (JW), Building Team
Sarah Farage (SF), Minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

SG welcomed everyone to the first SLT Executive Committee meeting, Apologies were received from Cal Beckett (CaB), Publicity Team. All present introduced themselves, and clarified the teams they were representing at the meeting. It was noted that some attendees were members of more than one team.

- GJ clarified that the Brand work focussed on non-show specific publicity (which is the remit of CaB), and marketing the theatre as a whole.
- JW or Noah Wright would be attending Executive meetings to represent the Building team. JW was also a member of the Backstage & Technical team.
- ChB was representing the three elements of the House team (Front of House, Raffle and Box Office), and was also a member of the Building team, with a remit for heritage and archive.
- JO was representing the Wardrobe team but was also a member of the Theatre Committee.
- JB was representing Theatre Committee, but would be stepping down at the end of January, whilst retaining responsibility for rehearsal bookings.
- GM, as Commercial Director, has a remit for all things relative to building, hires and ensuring SLT meets its charitable objectives.
- AS had recently taken over from Barry Heselden as lead of the Backstage & Technical team, which includes stage management, technical and construction.
- LF line manages Teresa Donoghue, the Youth Theatre Manager, and is part of the safeguarding team.
- SG, as Theatre Director, oversees Theatre Committee, Backstage & Technical, Youth, Publicity, Brand and Membership.

2. Introduction to Executive Committee

SG explained that as Directors, he and GM were the bridge between the Trustee Board and the Executive. The Board's role was strategic, ensuring the long term stability of SLT, including financially. Gerri McAndrew, Chair of the Board, has a wealth of experience in leading charitable organisations. The Board will be meeting at least quarterly, and all Trustees must be, or become, SLT members.

The role of the Executive will be the day to day operations and liaison across teams. Meetings will be held monthly, towards the end of each month, so that issues identified in team meetings can be fed in.

3. Written Report Format

Each team would be asked to produce a written report ahead of each Executive meeting. Reports should be succinct, quick to write and to read, and be submitted no later than one week before the meeting. The reports should reflect the issues discussed within the team meetings. Areas of risk, budget updates and areas of interest to/potential conflict with other teams should also be included. Separate papers may be required where significant decisions or recommendations are needed.

It was suggested that Risk is added as an agenda item to a future meeting..

Actions

- Teams to submit written report on agreed template one week ahead of meetings.
- GM to circulate details of the risk register.
- GM/SF to add Risk to agenda of future meeting.

4. Ticket Prices

GM circulated a proposal for changes to ticket prices in 2025.

It was noted that early bird tickets had been introduced as a way to increase ticket sales, especially to SLT members. The early bird discount has been popular, however a number of recent shows have sold out ahead of the run, with a high proportion (over 80%) of tickets for these shows being at the early bird rate. This has reduced the income received for these shows. It was also noted that the proportional increase from early bird to standard price for members is substantial (£4 increase as opposed to £2 increase for non members).

The paper proposed the introduction of a limit to the number of early bird tickets available, with separate quotas for member (10) and non member (30) tickets. It also proposed a reduction in the standard member ticket to £12.

In discussion it was noted that it remained important to incentivise members to purchase tickets ahead of performance week, but that non members were likely to be family and friends of cast and crew, and would therefore attend anyway. It may be possible to use reports from Ticketsource to gain more understanding of whether non members tended to be repeat visitors. It was felt important to retain the £5 minimum on Wednesdays.

It was noted that currently the earliest that any change could be implemented would be April 2025, and that it would be important to ensure changes were publicised clearly. This could

also be an opportunity to emphasise that member priced tickets should be purchased for members only, and that members buying tickets for non member family/friends should pay the non member price.

Action

- GM to revise ticket price proposal.

5. Theatre Reports (verbal updates)

Theatre Committee

JB reported

- Submissions were currently open for the second half of 2025, closing in mid-February, with the season announcement in April.
- New budgets have been agreed for directors.
- Potential workshops have been identified including dialect, and one run by Janine Wunsche.
- After JB steps down Theatre Committee will comprise JO, Stephen Hayward and Lisa Thomas. There are also additional readers for the submission process and it is hoped to recruit two additional Theatre Committee members.
- Audition attendance is a risk area, with significant non attendance from people booking slots. Often the large numbers booking mean that directors will close slots earlier than advertised, and members can miss out on slots. It was noted that SLT is one of the few companies holding open auditions, and this may need to be reviewed, or fees charged (refundable towards membership) for audition slots.
- There will be a new noticeboard outside the Bar where audition notices can be placed.
- Reps have been allocated up to shows up to the end of June.

Action

- Theatre Committee/SF to add Auditions to agenda for next meeting.

Backstage & Technical

AS and JW reported

- Not all directors/set designers are producing accurate scale diagrams which is causing issues with set construction.
- Discussions are ongoing for replacing the theatre floor. Whatever is decided will require a dark week (probably August, in liaison with Theatre Committee), and it is likely that external contractors will need to be sourced and booked within the next few weeks. It was noted that Chaz Doyle should be able to confirm what the plans drawn up at refurbishment had envisaged.
- Improvements to sound and light infrastructure also need to be planned and budgeted for. Some progress had already been made with sound infrastructure, incorporating equipment kindly donated by Leon Chambers.

Action

- AS to speak to Chaz Doyle and put together costed proposal for floor replacement.

Youth Theatre

LF reported

- Over 140 children are currently enrolled, and there are waiting lists for some groups.
- Income for the current term is £19.5k. Income has doubled in the last few years.
- The Youth show has its get in soon. This is the first show for which the tutors have been paid for rehearsal time. Attempts to gain sponsorship weren't successful but a Just Giving page has enabled parents and members to contribute towards the additional costs, and has raised £1280 plus gift aid. It is anticipated that this will be repeated each year.

- There is no existing policy or safeguarding structure for casting children who are not members of the Youth Theatre. This is currently being looked at but the preference remains to cast from the Youth Theatre if at all possible. This allows children from a diverse group to be selected on merit.

Publicity

CaB had provided a written report in her absence which was summarised by SG.

- New printers were now being used
- Analysis of programme sales has led to a reduction in the number ordered. The number of posters ordered has also been reviewed. A1 posters are now also displayed in the illuminated frame.
- Programme sales in 2024 amounted to over £3k. This helps offset the total print costs, which were around £5k in 2024.
- CaB is working to build the publicity team. A larger team will allow more proactive support of shows.

Brand

GJ reported

- Focus on ensuring social media gets more traction.
- Website has received good feedback.
- Open evenings continue to attract a large number of people.
- The domain name is due for renewal in February. GM is in contact with Bryon Fear about this, and also the need for verification (so that emails are not identified as spam).
- SLT's continued presence on X is being considered.

Membership

GJ reported

- There are currently 405 paying members, and 68 in the supporters circle. In addition there are 15 honorary members.
- The open evening had attracted some parents interested in the Youth Theatre and there may be a need to address this separately, and be clear that the regular open evening focuses on the adult theatre.
- Arrangements for directors to ensure that any non member cast takes out membership are working well.

Action

- [LF to inform Teresa Donoghue of interest in Youth Theatre at Open Evenings.](#)

6. Commercial Reports

House Team

ChB reported

- Raffle made a £2.8k profit in 2024
- Front of House Team is at near capacity, though there are fewer volunteers for the lead front of house slot. ChB is actively managing the allocation of slots so that everyone who volunteers is guaranteed at least one slot in the current quarter.
- Interest from new members is currently high, due in part to the open evenings. Training is not offered to volunteers until they have seen at least one show.

Building Team

JW and GM reported

- GM has been working with the Building Team to develop the building budget, and a prioritised task list for the Building Manager.

- The task list includes the basement tanking (though there is no agreed budget for this yet). Ash may be asked to quote for this work as well as the yard wall.
- Secondary glazing and exterior clearing of the ground floor are due to start in early February.
- Resourcing and cover for the part time Building Manager (who is often contacted outside of working hours) are being looked at.

Wardrobe Team

JO reported

- The team now has five regular members, with JO and Jenny Bennett leading. As the standard wardrobe day is Monday, this may limit attendance at Executive meetings which are also scheduled for Mondays.
- The team is working to improve communications with other teams. This should result in working more proactively with directors, ensuring wardrobe is not forgotten in the closing up process, and attendance at the season directors meeting (though this is also usually a Monday).
- Wheels are being replaced on the costume rail that has tipped over on a number of occasions.
- Current priorities include sorting recent donations, sourcing a new rail, and potentially disposing of some costumes.
- Confirmation of income for 2024 is awaited. Going forward Wardrobe will report finances quarterly.

Actions

- GM/SF to add Jenny Bennett to Executive Team contact group..
- JO to report 2024 financial outcome when available.

7. AOB

Fob training - it was noted that directors are required to undertake fob training, and to have a fob (which will not be issued until after training has been undertaken) so that they are able to close up the building.

Action

- JB to add fob training information to standard Theatre Committee email to directors.

8. Next meeting

It was agreed to change the date of the next meeting to Monday 24 February. Venue to be confirmed.