



Minutes of South London Theatre Executive Committee meeting

24 February 2025 (via Zoom)

Attendees:

Simon Gleisner (SG), Theatre Director, Chair
Chris Bennett (ChB), House Team
Caroline Beckett (CaB), Publicity
Lorna Felix (LF), Youth Team
Alistair Simpson (AS), Backstage & Technical Team
John Winter (JW), Building Team
Sarah Farage (SF), Minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received from Gareth Milton (GM) Commercial Director, Jenny Bennett (JB) Wardrobe Team, and Jess Osorio (JO) Wardrobe Team.

It was noted that CaB was also representing Theatre Committee for this meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes - 29th January 2025

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

Discussion of risk has been deferred until GM returns from holiday.

The proposal for changes to ticket prices has now been agreed and will be implemented as of April 2025. Changes have been highlighted in the newsletter, leading with the reduction in prices for members. This will be repeated in the run up to the changes.

AS has been unable to contact Chaz Doyle to date, but hopes to meet with him at an upcoming set build.

Action

- SG to share Chaz's email with AS

JB has now been added to the Executive Team group.

It was not confirmed whether fob training had yet been added to the standard email to new directors. It is likely to be more important once the Autumn/Winter season has been decided as many of the submissions are from people new to SLT. It might be possible to incorporate training as part of the directors meeting. CaB noted that increasingly people applying for

auditions, and to direct, have never been to SLT before. ChB noted that full job training takes about an hour.

4. Policy for Casting Children and Young People

LF presented the paper, noting that it was documenting the existing process, rather than proposing anything new. The current process works well and is popular with parents. The paper also addresses, for the first time, what the process should be if it is not possible to cast from the existing Youth Theatre membership.

It was noted that Theatre Committee should consider the need to cast children when selecting the season, for example additional costs of chaperones and appropriateness of the play.

It was clarified that directors and stage managers cannot double up as chaperones, and the reference to teachers in the paper referred to Youth Theatre teachers. Chaperoning is a paid role, and is funded through ticket sales rather than the show budget.

Policies on safeguarding and chaperoning on the website will be reviewed and updated once the new process is approved.

It is usually possible to plan around scheduled absence of the Youth Theatre manager, and backup for unplanned absence is sourced from the wider Youth Theatre team.

There was discussion on what was needed in cases where children still at school wished to undertake backstage roles as work experience for drama examinations. It was felt that these children would be above school leaving age, and therefore not require chaperones. However some safeguarding would still need to be in place, and the stage manager would need DBS. A policy on this needs to be developed and documented.

Actions

- LF to clarify reference to teachers in the paper
- CaB to share paper with Theatre Committee for approval within the next week
- Policies on website to be reviewed by Youth Theatre manager
- Youth Theatre team to develop policy for children undertaking backstage roles.

Post meeting note: Theatre Committee approved the paper.

5. Auditions

As discussed at the last meeting, there was an issue of people applying for auditions and not turning up. There are increasing numbers of people new to SLT applying for audition slots, leading to some directors closing applications early, and some shows recently have had high numbers of non-attendance.

CaB discussed ideas to try and reduce the levels of non attendance

- Asking people to reconfirm attendance 48 hours ahead of the audition. Anyone not confirming will not be included on the audition list. This also allows those on the waiting list for an audition to be offered a space. This approach has recently been used by CaB and Stephen Hayward. CaB had just three non attendees, Stephen's auditions are ongoing. This approach does take additional time and administration.

- Charging for auditions, either as a nominal fee, or as a higher fee refundable if not cast, or towards membership if cast. This could be offered through Ticketsource, but any refund would not include the booking fee. This would also entail a considerable increase in work for box office. Charging for auditions does not promote inclusiveness.
- It may also be possible to maintain a list of non-attenders, and to refuse audition slots to those who regularly do not turn up. This would need to be GDPR compliant and safeguards would be needed to ensure there was no confusion with common names.

It was noted that all solutions involve an increased administrative burden. Dates and time of auditions was not thought to be an issue in non-attendance.

Some members had complained about not getting an audition slot, but it was noted that even auditions that close early are open for at least a week. The possibility of priority audition slots for SLT members was suggested.

It was agreed that SLT should not start charging for auditions at this point, however the situation should be kept under review. If it was felt necessary, charges would only apply to non-members and should be trialled on a show where it was likely that the audition process would be difficult to manage.

Actions

- CaB to check audition attendance with Stephen Hayward and Bob Callender
- CaB to share her process for re-confirmation of attendance 48 hours before audition.
- Theatre Committee to encourage directors to adopt CaB's process.

Post meeting note: An additional option on charging would be to request card details, and action a charge on non-attendance, but this would need to be discussed further. With reminders the no show, without notice, rate was ~19% for Bob Callender and ~10% for Stephen Hayward.

6. Commercial Reports

House Team

The report was noted.

ChB reported that the need for new cans (or at least new headsets/earpieces) was becoming more urgent. It was noted that the current set is now two years old and out of guarantee. AS commented that this was discussed at the last Technical team meeting, and there was some thought that the issue was partly the equipment being treated roughly. JW had identified that there is a secondary channel that needs to be matched across handsets, and this does not seem to be widely known. It would also be useful to number the individual units for identification purposes (eg which ones do/don't work).

Cans are needed for logistical and safety reasons and ideally more than three sets are needed to allow assistant stage managers (if needed) and box office staff to have a set.

Front of House teams continue to encourage audience members to meet cast in the bar, rather than remain in the foyer after the show.

Actions

- ChB to survey cans during Bacchae to try and identify if it is a unit or headset/earphone issue (or both)
- CaB to provide AS with details of last purchase.

Building Team

The report was noted. JW reported that the double glazing and cleaning work on the front of the building had been started. The deadline to give feedback to Lambeth Council on this work is quite tight.

There was discussion on the need for a new poster area to advertise upcoming shows. It is unclear what is permissible, and what is needed. Using the door is not ideal, likewise the yard area, and there also needs to be space allocated to other building users. Making more use of the extension area might be possible. The option of having a screen with rolling content is expensive.

Action

- CaB and JW to discuss poster area further.

Wardrobe Team

The report was noted.

7. Theatre Reports

Theatre Committee

The report was noted.

CaB reported that there was a new show budget tracker that had been developed by Stephen Hayward. The spreadsheet is set up for each show, and shared between the director and Theatre Committee. It allows directors to record expenditure as they go along, so that it is clear how much budget remains. Expenses can be categorised, and any that will benefit other shows identified so that costs can be shared.

It was noted that occasionally directors and others involved in a show may buy something but not seek reimbursement. Whilst it may be useful to include these expenses in the spreadsheet, to give a true cost of the show, this would be difficult to put into practice. It was also noted that this impacts the policy of having the same set budget for each show.

In time it is hoped the spreadsheet will feed through automatically to a master spreadsheet for all shows in the season.

Backstage & Technical

The report was noted. There had been more new members involved on the build teams recently, and it would be good to do something to recognise these often unsung heroes, such as welcoming them on the Facebook page..

Currently build team members are listed in programmes, and invited to attend the dress rehearsal. It was noted that it is now usual practice to invite all those who have volunteered on that show to a dress rehearsal. This includes box office, raffle, and wardrobe volunteers who are often not able to take advantage of the complimentary ticket arrangements due to high ticket sales, as well as the build team.

Actions

- SG to send AS details of how to apply for reimbursement of recent expenditure.
- Directors to be reminded to invite build team to dress rehearsal at get in day

Youth Theatre

The report was noted. LF confirmed that the behavioural issues noted in the report were not serious.

The recent Youth Theatre production of Much Ado About Nothing had been of a very high standard, and well received.

Publicity

The report was noted. CaB noted that changes to print supplier and quantities ordered meant that it was not valid to compare current expenditure with that of a couple of years back.

Feedback on the programme design and content would be welcomed by CaB.

Brand & Membership

In the absence of a representative from the Brand and Membership teams, SG reported that some progress has been made with the domain name issue, although it has not yet been resolved.

8. AOB

CaB reported that there is only a limited number of poster designers at SLT. Designing posters on a one off basis might be of interest to young/ trainee graphic designers who would appreciate a chance to expand their portfolio.

Action

- Inform CaB of any graphic designers who might be interested in poster design.

9. Next meeting

Monday 31st March, 20.00, Kit Room, SLT