

EQUITY

Autumn/Winter 2026
incorporating the Variety Artists' Federation

A WIN FOR THE WEST END



INCREASED PAY, MORE HOLIDAY, MOVEMENT ON THE FIVE-DAY REHEARSAL WEEK...
FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE NEW AGREEMENT AND HOW IT WAS WON.

ALSO INSIDE:

OUR LONGEST SERVING WOMAN PRESIDENT – WORKING WITH SAG-AFTRA
LITURGICAL SINGERS' CODE OF PRACTICE – NEW! EQUITY CROSSWORD



To all artists: good work

To all workers: good art

To all people: Equity



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VIEWS

“The industry is feeling the impact of Equity’s reinvigorated structures”

Equity General Secretary **Paul W Fleming** reflects on an energised union and how wins for some members advances the cause for all.

In my first term as your General Secretary, we undertook a deep and radical review of the way the union works. Between 2020 and 2025, we embarked on everything from a new rulebook, reforming branches and committees, increasing staff nationwide, a radically enhanced insurance package, and even new, refurbished headquarters and offices.

A new insurance package radically enhanced protections for every member, our distribution service paid out record royalties, and membership grew to an all-time high. One cannot deny, leafing through this magazine, that our comms are more beautiful and accessible than ever, and with almost 1 in 10 members having been through union training, our conferences are now loud, proud, comradely spaces – looking out to the industry we need to change.

But during the general secretary election last year, and through this first year of my second term, I have thought deeply about a very basic question: What is this for?

To use the ill-fated slogan of former Prime Minister John Major (and son of VAF/Equity members), I’ve found myself going “back to basics”.

In short, we need the terms, conditions, and, most importantly, pay of Equity members in every profession and sector to improve. The outward sign of the inward strength of the union is how Equity improves the working lives of members working in every corner of our industries. This year, that is beginning to advance – and the industry is feeling the impact of Equity’s reinvigorated structures.

In negotiations with Pact over our TV and film agreements, slowly but surely we’re winning: from pay and royalties, to access riders, hair and makeup provision, and world-leading artificial intelligence protections. We’ve won agreements

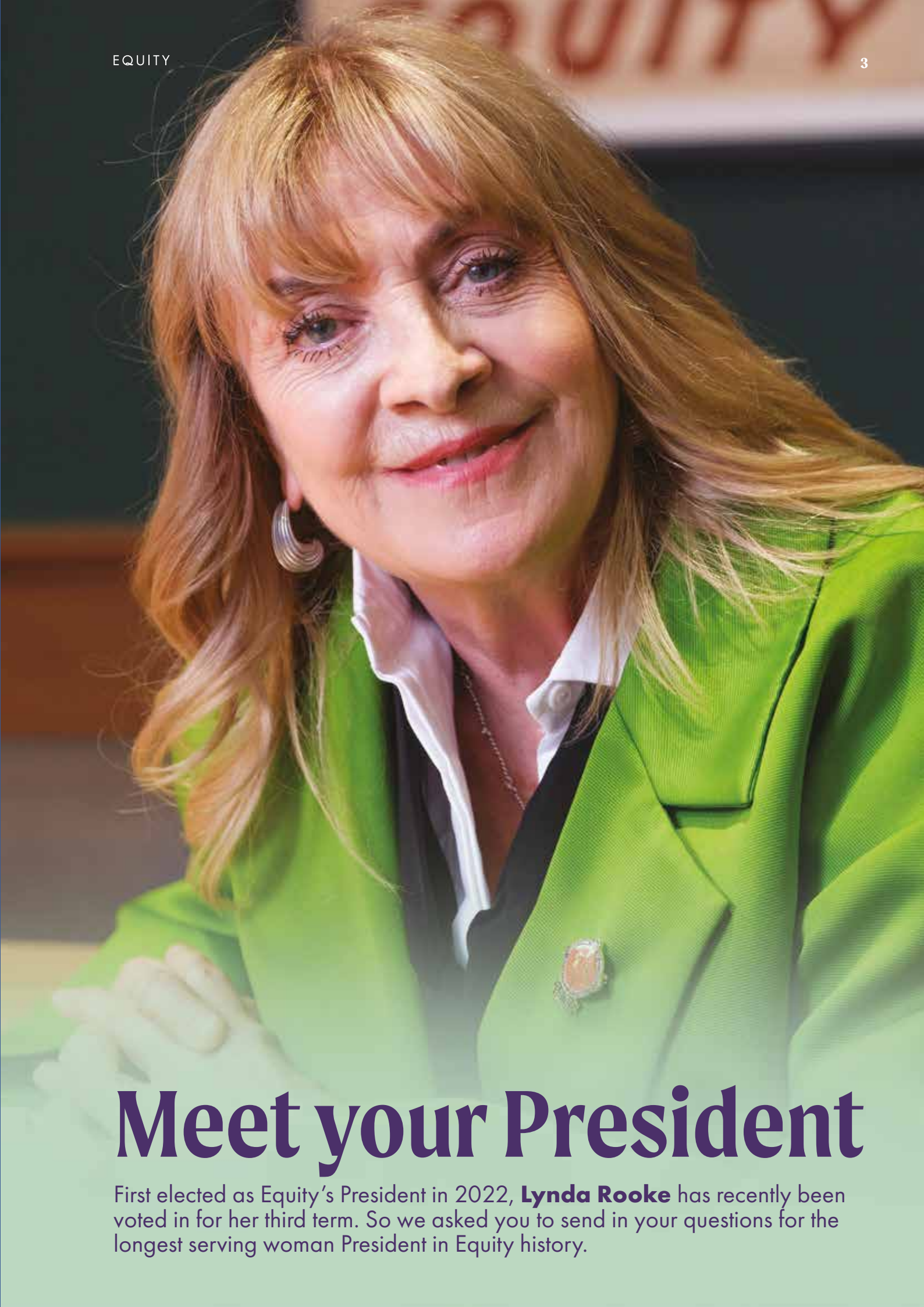
for Pride festivals in Manchester and Durham. In Scotland, the SNP committed to a basic income for artists before they won the Scottish Parliamentary elections.

Perhaps the most pleasing has been our victory in the West End. Minimum weekly pay is now 6.5% better than in 2021, even taking inflation into account. It’s at least 85% better than in 1986 under our closed shop. I’ve never been prouder of a deal we’ve won – it was backed by 98% of voting members, but we got there thanks to a similar 98% vote for strike action. It was only after that credible threat did we win an extra two days’ holiday, stage management differentials, improved leave for injury, and a breakthrough on the five-day rehearsal week.

The tactics we’ve used for performers and stage management in TV, film, and the West End are the tactics we’ll use for designers in the months to come. They’re the tactics we’ll use to beat back the erosion of pay and conditions in subsidised and commercial touring theatre, and win new modern frameworks. As our membership rises on TV series, it makes a massive difference to what we can win in TV commercials. Showing collective strength for self-employed artists at Pride builds a union that can do the same for lone workers in audio. The West End is the ceiling on the terms we can win everywhere in the UK: the higher we pull it, the further all agreements can rise.

In this edition, we explain to you, the activist, the Equity member, how the fullness of the union’s life is having a material impact on you. When I lie awake and sometimes ask: “What’s this all for?”, the answer is, I hope, as clear to you as to me.

It’s for all artists good work, for all workers good art, and for all people: Equity.

A close-up portrait of Lynda Rooke, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and bangs. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a bright green blazer over a white collared shirt and a dark top. She has a large, curved silver earring and a small pin on her lapel. The background is blurred, showing a sign with the word "EQUITY" in red letters.

Meet your President

First elected as Equity's President in 2022, **Lynda Rooke** has recently been voted in for her third term. So we asked you to send in your questions for the longest serving woman President in Equity history.

"Over the years, we've built all of this and Equity is so much stronger," says Lynda Rooke when I ask her why she wanted to run for Equity President for a third time. "But I think there's still battles to be done," she says, listing casting directory fees, strengthening the nations and regions, and arts funding as examples.

Originally from Lancaster, Lynda joined the union fresh out of the East 15 School of Acting in the '70s, before becoming active within her local London Equity branch. After moving to the West of England, she then went on to become a founding member of the Bristol & West of England Branch, get elected to the Screen & New Media Committee, and then Chair of the Women's Committee.

It was in 2014 that she was elected to Equity's governing Council, becoming Vice-President in 2020. And now, she is making history as the union's longest serving woman President – while also serving as Equity's Women's Councillor.

It's an honour Lynda says she hadn't thought about before it happened, but recognises as "a gain for women and their visibility in the union". Running alongside this has been Lynda's career as an actress, which spans stage, screen and audio.

We sat down to put your questions to Lynda, on artificial intelligence, the importance of soaps, and her killer outfits.

Equity gets to sit down with the new Prime Minister. What would the top three priorities for the sector be?

– Luke John Emmett, technical stage manager, Bath.

Arts funding in the regions and nations for sure, including the devolvement of that. I'm totally aware of the underfunding and how that impacts the work available to our members.

The other one is AI. We've just got to get personality rights to protect our likeness and voice – for performers, and for everyone. If AI is going to be used, it's got to be on our terms. This is capitalism, it's about making money from our work, which is greed. So as trade unionists, we call it out.

And the third one is the BBC Charter Renewal and public service broadcasting. It's important that we actually get the BBC working again, protected, and encourage it to produce regionally and nationally. It's really important for training.

How much time roughly each month does it take to be president? How do you fit it around your work?

– Jasmin Davies, deputy stage manager, London.

The hot months – what I call the busy months – are April into May and I'm doing stuff on a daily basis: writing speeches, going over them, prepping for Equity conference.



“Our drag artist members have been hounded and persecuted”

Then it's probably about 40 to 50 hours a month in June and July because I have to chair meetings, plus there's Tolpuddle. The other busy one is September to October as it's TUC and political conference season. And regional and national meetings also take up time. The quiet months are August, apart from the Edinburgh Festival, and January. But otherwise, it's busy!

I manage it all by being quite organised – so I get up, do some form of exercise to clear my brain. I come back and do my emails, write a speech or prep for a meeting. And then if I have a self-tape like I did this week – that just took up the whole weekend basically.

I do look at the dates of jobs to see if I can fit it in around my President role, but if it's worth going for I wouldn't turn it down. We've got other senior Officers – two Vice-Presidents and an Honorary Treasurer – so it's quite right for them to step in.

As you reflect on a climate of ever shrinking budgets for basics in the arts, what can you say has been the progress of the equalities agenda for Equity and has the upsurge of far right politics had any impact?

– *Lisa Lewis, actor, Salford.*

We know it has – our drag artist members have been hounded and persecuted and physically threatened. And let's not forget that Reform have announced they would get rid of the Equalities Act.

In terms of the union, we have our equalities committees (Deaf and Disabled, LGBT+, Race Equality, Women's and Young Members' Committees). And now we've got a dedicated staff member for each. Today, the equalities agenda in the union is a bit like the lettering in Blackpool rock – it runs through the centre and is part of the industrial agenda.

For instance, we've just managed to increase paid parental leave in the West End agreement, and add a new term ensuring appropriate wigs, hair and makeup provision with regard to ethnicities and cultures. And we're having negotiations about getting the latter into the Pact TV & Film agreements.

It's through strengthened pay, terms and conditions that we can redress the imbalance of power so people feel they have a voice to

speak up. So we want to get agreements in 'greenfield' areas where we don't currently hold them, like audio, commercials and video games.

And we've lobbied really hard on reforming social security for freelancers, as well as played a part in stopping the Government from enacting reforms that would have been devastating for disabled members.

But I am worried at the moment – we are going to have to go to battle and not let the right undermine the progress we've made.

Who or what inspires you as an artist and why?

– *Sabrina Laurison, actor, London.*

Okay, that's a big one. I went to a method drama school for a start, so that was very much my focus of training. And I was asked the other day, who influenced you in your early years? And I said, Thora Hird. She's from my hometown and she was an actress who became a dame much later in life, but before that was almost ignored because she spoke with a regional accent.

I worked with Mike Leigh on the film *Naked* and really enjoy his work – that kind of improvised performance working from characterisation. And I do like a lot of devised work – I enjoyed doing it for the National Theatre tour of *Jane Eyre* because it was really fun and the audiences loved it.

I also had to learn to wrestle for a show called *Trafford Tanzi* and we were trained by professional wrestlers, so I have a soft spot for our wrestlers in the union. I found the physicality of the work inspiring and doing things from that focus.

And I worked in a number of political theatre companies, including 7:84, when I was much younger. My God, that was an influence on me – it probably started my activism. 7:84 stood for the 1966 statistic of 7% of the population owning 84% of the UK's wealth. It's worse now.

What is the union doing to champion and support members who don't work in London?

– *Beth Tuckey, actress, Suffolk.*

We're doing a lot more than we've ever done before – in terms of demands around local arts funding, public service broadcasting in the nations and regions, and more.

“AI is capitalism, it's about making money”

Recently in Northern Ireland, members marched to the government in Stormont over the lack of arts funding. In Bristol we stopped the council from slashing the entire arts budget. And in Manchester we won back some of the money owed to performers who worked on last year's Manchester Pride after the company behind it collapsed – and signed an Equity agreement with the new organisers.

In terms of the structure of the union, there's now a dedicated Nations & Regions department with more staff and offices. And we're doing member education so if something happens in a community, members feel they can take action, instigate campaigns, and get union support.

I couldn't help but notice your fashion choices at the Equity conference in Durham this year – the suit was pure lethal! And I have wanted to ask ever since: What role does fashion and style have for you in fulfilling the part of Lynda Rooke, Equity President?

– *Katie Marie Moore, actor and playwright, County Armagh.*

I think that's quite important – when you're going to these events, you're carrying Equity with you. It's in the same way that all our badges, merchandise and magazine really make a statement now. I try and convey something artistic – nothing too straight like a neat black suit, there's always a theatrical edge to it. The idea is that we work in a quirky industry that thinks outside the box a bit. And because I often have to do quite ceremonial things, like awarding Honorary Life Memberships or giving speeches, the outfits do add a little va va voom!

We've had massive cuts to the amount of work available in BBC productions, with the loss of continuing dramas *Doctors* and *River City*, and also a huge reduction in BBC radio drama. The BBC Charter, which sets out the organisation's objectives and purposes, is currently being reviewed by the Government and Equity has proposed an excellent plan. Is this being heard by the Government, and how do we ensure it is implemented?

– *Tracey Briggs, actor, Birmingham.*

It is being heard by the Government and I know that our policy team have absolutely been working to make sure they know that we have this plan, and comms as well.

A big part of Equity's vision for the BBC is regionalisation. That is, investing in the regions and nations across the UK – not just London and the South East – and producing a continuing or returning drama series in each Ofcom-defined area.

But I don't think the Government quite accept the impact of the creative industries. I still think they treat it, as our General Secretary says, as a bit of fun or a hobby for some people. But it's an economic powerhouse.

All the soaps in Manchester, Yorkshire, and so on have provided work and training over the years - including for myself - and they're part of the talent pipeline that allows people to learn their craft. And that's one of the reasons the public service broadcasters are important – they build a workforce.

“I have a soft spot for our wrestlers in the union”



Equity Conference 2026 (Credit - Troy Walker photography)

“I don’t think the Government quite accept the impact of the creative industries”

Making a living as an actor has always been a precarious business, but artificial intelligence now represents a catastrophic threat to artists to earn anything at all. What can Equity and other creative unions do to prevent this ongoing theft of human identity and creativity?

– Christopher Byram Jury, actor, writer, and director, Warwickshire.

I’ll say three things: Firstly, we are pushing within our collective agreements. So for the Pact TV & Film agreements, it’s really important we follow on from [our US sister union] SAG-AFTRA’s deal and make sure that our image and voice are protected so we are in control and nobody can abuse that.

On personality rights, the Government has to acknowledge that if somebody’s image or voice is stolen without their consent and they’re not paid for it, then that is theft.

And the Government has to stop the data mining that has been going on – there has to be transparency from tech companies as to where they’ve sourced their data.

AI is a threat, but it’s not beyond the possibility of trade unions to do something about it, because it is capitalism. This is not some mystical thing that’s landed on us – this is living people who’ve made a decision to make as much money as possible while paying out as little as possible.

What is the single hardest truth about leading a union made entirely of fierce, passionate creatives that no one warned you about?

– Bill Blackwood, actor and voiceover artist, London/Leeds.

I think they did – I’m one of them! I am passionate and I can be fierce, so it reflects on me. The industry is a hard place for people to work in and they will become frustrated when they’re not treated with respect or dignity. So I don’t take it personally when people get angry about something and say, why is the union not doing this? I go, OK, let’s think about what we can do.

And I think we must continue to remind people that we’re part of a bigger picture and trade union movement. We’re not on our own.

And then on the flip side, we have a union of people who will speak out – and the more the merrier. If it’s something they care about, they will back you all the way. So Spotlight’s a good example, as was the Pact ballot on AI, and the West End negotiations.

It is exciting, and it feels great to be able to say, yes, we can do something.

Interview conducted by Stephanie Soh

Photos by Jess Hurd



ACROSS *THE* POND



A global industry needs a global trade union movement. So Equity met with our sister union SAG-AFTRA in LA earlier this year, to join forces on AI, film and TV agreements, and more.

“We showed a united front on key issues across our two unions”

A delegation of Equity members and staff observed critical discussions with Hollywood bosses in April this year. The American talks led to SAG-AFTRA's new collective agreement for US film and TV, and established artificial intelligence protections which Equity is demanding form a minimum for UK performers.

The negotiations in LA between our sister union SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists), and bosses' group AMPTP (Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers) showed the shared challenges facing actors on both sides of the pond. Key issues of self-tapes, vertical dramas, AI, pay, and conditions, demonstrated how important the collective agreements are for workers in both countries.

“It was fascinating to sit in on live negotiations and draw comparisons with our own talks with Pact (the UK's Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television)” said Equity Films Official Amy Dawson. “Most reassuringly, we saw our own negotiating positions taken forwards with often the same producers, showing a united front on key issues across our two unions.”

Equity President Lynda Rooke, General Secretary Paul W Fleming, and officials were joined by members from Equity's Screen and New Media Committee, Will Attenborough and Laurence Bouvard, on the week-long trip which included informal meetings with producers outside of the negotiations, time with our SAG colleagues in their LA offices, and even a studio tour.

“The face-to-face conversations were hugely helpful in sharing details, especially around our disquiet in the area of clones, dubbing and synthetics,” said Laurence. She was also heartened to see SAG using self-tapes guidelines drawn up by the Equity working party. Feeling reflective, she added that the whole experience “emphasised to me the power of in-person communication in this digital age should not be underestimated.”

The Equity delegation was able to sit in some of the key discussions, including the topic of AI. Shortly after the trip, SAG-AFTRA members ratified a new deal for TV and film work which included strengthened AI protections, such as explicit protections for ‘no scan’ digital replicas, consent for dubbing, digital replica security and transfer protection, a commitment to “strongly favouring human performances” over synthetics, and more. This provides a global industry benchmark that we will ensure Equity members benefit from.

Words by Sian Jones

The Equity delegation in LA with SAG-AFTRA's Executive Director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland (second from right) and Executive Vice President Linda Powell (third from right).





Photos by Mark Thomas

A WIN FOR THE WEST END

Increased pay, more holiday, movement on the five-day rehearsal week... the new West End agreement has brought in a raft of long-fought improvements.

Stephanie Soh finds out what – and how – it was won.



Roshani Abbey (Credit - Yellowbelly)

"What have I learned through this negotiations process?" muses Roshani Abbey. "I have learned that if your gut is telling you something's not right, then talk to Equity, try to fix it. Because even if it's not something that'll get fixed immediately, it can be dealt with in the future."

Roshani is a West End performer who has served as an Equity Deputy (or 'Dep' – a union workplace representative) on various shows. She then joined the the West End Negotiations Working Party – the group of around 30 members responsible for negotiating the agreement that sets minimum standards for pay, terms and conditions for performers and stage management in the West End.

"There's so much stuff that we need to shift and it only happens when people take it on themselves or start the momentum to get it done," continues Roshani, who has also recently been elected to Equity's governing Council. "And that's great and heartening. And now I have a long list of things that I want to do."

Alongside a pay rise of at least 13.5% over three years, the new agreement has pushed forward long-held ambitions by Equity's West End membership. Namely, on work-life balance: members will now receive an additional two weeks incapacity salary if they are injured at work; from April 2028, performers and stage management will see their holiday increased by two days to 30 days annually; and also from April 2028, 25% of rehearsal weeks will be capped at five days.

"Now I have a long list of things that I want to do and shift"

The latter is a major breakthrough on a longstanding wish of West End members to move to a five-day rehearsal week. Additionally, there are now two extra weeks of paid maternity and adoption leave, and a doubling of paid paternity leave; differences in pay between stage management grades are to be fixed as percentages (rather than an amount in pounds); fight captains and social media reps will be paid extra, and more.

The agreement came into force in July this year and runs for three years from April 2026 to April 2029, with members' pay being backdated to the start date.

"For the first time in nearly 20 years we're seeing real structural changes in the agreement," says Kirsten Muat, Equity's West End Official (maternity cover). "Things like stage management differentials and new responsibility payments are more than just improvements to things that have been in the agreement before. They are structural changes to how people's pay is calculated."

Preparing to win

Negotiations with the Society of London Theatre (SOLT), the trade body representing West End producers, began in November last year. But preparations co-ordinated by Equity's West End Official Hannah Plant started some time before that.

In July last year, West End members were surveyed on their experiences and the improvements they wanted to see in the new agreement, with the results informing Equity's claim to SOLT. Also informing the claim were the West End Deputies Committee, made up of all West End Deps; the West End Negotiations Working Party; and motions that had been passed at Equity conference. "The priorities that we go into negotiations with are very much led by members," says Kirsten.

"Pay and work-life balance are the biggest things that come out over and over again," says Lizzie Cooper, a deputy stage manager in the West End. Lizzie is also Equity's Stage Management Councillor and is something of a veteran when it comes to West End negotiations, having served on the Negotiations Working Party over the last three agreements.

Negotiations took place at Equity or SOLT headquarters, both located in Covent

Garden, where around 10 representatives from each side would meet to discuss the new agreement. The Equity side would always be comprised of West End performers and stage management, plus staff members such as General Secretary Paul W Fleming, Assistant General Secretary for Live Performance Adam Adnyana, and West End Officials Hannah Plant and Kirsten Muat.

"You don't tend to have a lot of agency in this business, but it feels like you have more of it sitting around that table," says Roshani. "You actually get to tell the people in charge what you think, and it's empowering because you're meeting them on an almost equal footing in that scenario. And a lot of the producers are in disbelief as to what people actually go through on jobs."

New for this set of negotiations was the introduction of breakout sessions – smaller groups of Equity and SOLT representatives discussing specific issues on the claim, such as stage management differentials; wigs, hair and makeup; or rehearsal weeks. "We got to have quite lively debate," says Lizzie. "It was more satisfying because we could have more of a dialogue, offer case studies, and give examples of why we were asking for certain things."



Lizzie Cooper (Credit – Miles Zilesnick)

A stalemate

But five months into negotiations, both sides hit a block. "SOLT made a full and final offer in March this year," says Kirsten. "The

pay offer worked out as at least 12% over the course of four years with improvements on maternity, paternity and adoption leave, as well as on provision of wigs, hair and makeup."

"However, on the rest of work-life balance – so annual leave, rehearsal weeks, and incapacity – there was no movement at all. And we knew how important these were for members going in."

The Negotiations Working Party concluded they could not put this offer to the wider membership with a recommendation to accept, as they knew it didn't meet members' aspirations. And that's when the Working Party met with the West End Deputies Committee, who voted unanimously to move to an indicative ballot for strike action.

Distinct from a statutory ballot – where legal grounds for a strike would be granted and action could be taken – indicative ballots gauge what trade union members would be willing to do. In this case, it was used to drive negotiations forward by showing SOLT that members would be willing to strike unless they were offered a better deal.

That's when it was time to switch from negotiations mode into GOTV – or, 'Get out the vote'. "The Deps did a huge amount of work in speaking to people about why it was important to vote and answering any questions that they may have had – they were a real powerhouse," says Kirsten. On top of that, Deps and Equity activists took part in phone banking and mass texting of members to get them to vote in the ballot.

Roshani was one of three West End Deps who addressed the annual Equity conference in May, gathering support from members in other areas of the union and ending with a photo opportunity that was published by the press and shared as part of the GOTV campaign. "That felt really good, all of us standing there with the banner and chanting 'Pay up in the West End!' It was the camaraderie and the feeling of us all working together."

A resounding result

All of that activity paid off when the result of the ballot came in: 98% of current West End workers voted 'Yes' to supporting strike action on an 89% turnout, while 99% of West End workers from the past three years voted 'Yes' to back Equity's claim on a 78%

"You actually get to tell the people in charge what you think"

“The Deps were a real powerhouse”

turnout. There was now no doubting what Equity members wanted and what they were prepared to do to achieve that.

“As much as staff and Deps did a lot of work in speaking to people,” reflects Kirsten, “the thing that really stood out was that the workforce themselves in the West End were really angry and sick of working long hours for low wages that meant they could just about afford to get by, and having low annual leave without time to recover from injury. And they were willing to take a stand to fight for more.”

Here, finally, was the outcome needed to move SOLT to put forward a sufficiently improved offer. “They moved on things they said they’d never move on – never ever,” says Roshani. “And so the indicative ballot completely changed the game in these negotiations.”

With improvements on pay, holiday days, rehearsal weeks, and parental leave, the Deps and Negotiations Working Group felt the offer could finally be put to the wider West End membership for a vote on whether to accept or reject it.

“We visited all companies in the West End and people could see the difference that it was going to have on their working lives,” says Kirsten. “That was really good to see, especially considering that all those changes have only come about because members fought for them.”

This positive reaction was reflected in the final ballot result, where 98% of West End members voted to accept the offer, on a turnout of 75%.

“This really was a pay offer that members working closely with the Deps, the Working Group and staff won,” says Kirsten. “This is members’ victory.”

What’s next?

But the work doesn’t stop there. For the first time, meetings will be held between Equity and SOLT every few months to discuss the implementation of the agreement, on terms such as annual leave, five-day rehearsal weeks, and more, to ensure these are being rolled out appropriately.

“It’s been really good to see members getting to enjoy the things that they have won,” says Kirsten. “The next step is to keep up the strength and organisation shown throughout these negotiations and to keep building on it to improve working conditions across the West End over the next three years – and ultimately prepare for the next round of negotiations.”

Lizzie and Roshani are also already looking ahead to what can be improved next time around. “Working in the centre of London, being expected to go to classes, singing lessons, keep yourself fit while on a job – all of that costs so much money,” says Roshani. “We also need to save for taxes and the couple of months where we won’t be in a job. So my hope is that the lowest minimum on the West End will be a liveable wage.”

Lizzie says: “The biggest goal, in what is described as the pinnacle of UK theatre, is for us to say that the wages of the workers are acceptable within the economy we live. It’s something else to come back to in three years’ time. And in the meantime, we keep fighting and reporting back to producers whenever we feel there are any inadequacies.”

“We have a strong community in the West End and I really felt that during these negotiations,” Lizzie continues. “I would really recommend getting involved. I enjoy feeling like I’m making a change and seeing thousands of members benefit from that too.”



13.5%

— OR MORE —

PAY RISE

Rebecca Louis

"I've been a member of the West End Negotiations Party and Chair of the Deps Committee for over 20 years. We've made substantial leaps and bounds in the way we've negotiated during that time, with the last two agreements being approached quite differently. The previous negotiations' 'Stand Up for 17%' campaign was revolutionary, however we were aware that potentially we weren't going to secure such a significant pay increase this time around.

"What we've won is a 6% pay increase in the first year, 5% in the second, and the third year is linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figure plus 0.5%, capped at 5%. When you look at those percentages over three years and compare them to what other unions have achieved, we've been very successful. Hand in hand with everything else we've got, it's incredible.

"The long-term aspiration is always to increase pay alongside other terms and conditions and we just have to keep forging ahead with that."

25%

OF REHEARSAL WEEKS

— TO BE —

5 DAYS

Vivien Parry

"For the past 15 years I've been part of the West End Negotiating Party. And for all of those years, we've been met with a resounding 'No' from management who have said they will not contemplate a five-day working week.

"So this is a massive win for our work-life balance. I wish I could say that it has already started, but it's not happening until April 2028. However, from then onwards, when you begin a new West End contract, 25% of your rehearsal period will be a five-day working week.

"If that condition is not met, there will be significant overtime penalties for management, such as the sixth day being paid at time-and-a-half. What's really important is that at least the week before rehearsals, you will know when your five-day working week will be. This gives you time to put things in place if you have children, elderly parents, or caring responsibilities.

"I love being part of the union and I think this is a major victory. Onwards!"

2 MORE

DAYS HOLIDAY

Andrew Linnie

"We've won an increase to the annual leave entitlement from 28 up to 30 days – meaning people on longer contracts will get more time away from work to rest, recover and spend with friends and family, and people who are on shorter contracts will accrue extra holiday so they can have a proper break at the end of their job.

"There has been an historical injustice in the holiday system – if you work Monday to Friday you get 28 days, which is roughly five and a half weeks off. But people who work six days a week, as Equity members often do, get nothing extra for working that sixth day. That 28 days only gets us four and a half weeks of holiday, meaning we work more days and get less time off as thanks.

"It's been a priority for us for some time now, and this is a huge step towards a fairer system."

2 MORE — WEEKS —

INCAPACITY SALARY

Laura Emmitt

"I've been injured in contracts, whether it's rehearsing or actually being on stage, so I've had to take time off shows. This is a physical job and it comes with a lot of its dangers, whether it's dancing, coming into contact with people, aspects of the set, or costume. And I feel like everyone who's been performing for at least a small while has experienced this in one way or another.

"So this additional two weeks of incapacity salary when you're injured at work is brilliant. It gives you a bit of breathing space because you shouldn't be at work when you're sick. I know people who have been injured and who have wanted to go back to work sooner, but have been advised not to. Having that extra two weeks as a buffer is going to take a load off people's minds."

— STAGE — MANAGEMENT DIFFERENTIALS — AS — PERCENTAGES

Jasmin Davies

"Previously, the difference between stage management roles had been a fixed amount in pounds. But in this agreement it's a fixed percentage – it's 11% between an Assistant Stage Manager and a Deputy Stage Manager, and 21% between a Deputy Stage Manager and a Stage Manager.

"This means those differences aren't going to be eroded by inflation – it is a structural change that is protected for future agreements. And that's not to say we don't value all stage management team members, but there should be a financial incentive for taking on extra responsibility, which often comes with more safety concerns.

"Stage management have been in every single negotiation and Working Party meeting, and have worked really hard to ensure we're at the forefront of this deal. And I think that shows – obviously in the differentials, but also in the wins on work-life balance, which particularly affect stage management as we have to be in every day during rehearsals."

£65/ WEEK — FOR — SOCIAL MEDIA REPS — AND — FIGHT CAPTAINS

Matthew Forbes

"Last year, Rebecca Louis, Chair of the West End Deputies Committee, put forward a motion at Equity conference calling on the union to look into the publicity that West End workers are asked to undertake, particularly for social media.

"I seconded that motion and it's brilliant the new agreement now stipulates that workers given social media responsibilities will be paid £65 for each week they work on this. Fight captains will also be paid for their responsibility to maintain choreography – £65 or £32.50 a week depending on the complexity of fight sequences.

"For a long time, performers and stage management have been asked to create content but have not been paid for it. This issue was brought to the Stage Actors Committee, of which I am Chair, and the payment stipulated by the new agreement shows how quickly things can happen. At conference, members can have a direct influence over their working conditions. It's great to see the power that we have over our own workplaces."

APPROPRIATE WIGS, HAIR AND MAKEUP

Etisyai Philip

"In the agreement, there is now a clause stating that 'any provision of hair, wigs or makeup expertise is appropriate, having regard to the ethnicities and cultures represented across the cast and the artistic requirements of the Production'.

"It's really great that there is now something in writing that we can point to when something doesn't play out as it should – this should be the bare minimum. Things have started to get better but historically, if you weren't Caucasian, you were often expected to just do your own hair and makeup, or go and see your own stylist.

"But we should be ensuring that everyone has the same access to things in each company. When it comes to the hiring process, I think people should be able to clearly demonstrate they have both the confidence and experience to work with different types of people and hair."

MORE PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Katie Deacon

"Maternity and adoption pay, which is 90% of our average weekly earnings, has now increased from six to eight weeks, with 33 weeks paid at the statutory rate. Meanwhile, paternity pay has doubled from one to two weeks and is paid at the rate of salary.

"Any improvement just gives people a little bit more freedom when they are choosing to start families, especially if they want to continue to stay in the industry afterwards. I have an 18-month old son so I've used the maternity policy before and there needs to be more paid time off and financial security for workers like us who have very physical jobs.

"Choosing even to start a family is a big financial decision in our industry when there is so little support for parents. I would love to see much more improvement in this area."



EQUITY CONFERENCE

DURHAM 2026

This year, Equity's annual agenda-setting conference was held in Durham at the historic Miners' Hall. Read on to find out what happened and what was decided...

Words by Stephanie Soh,
photos by Troy Walker.



What is conference?

Conference is Equity's biggest event of the year, bringing together about 150 representatives from different sections of the membership to decide the agenda and rules of the union.

These representatives are sent by the union's branches and committees, alongside members who have been elected to Equity's governing Council. They put forward, debate, and vote on motions.

But that's not all that happens at conference – it's also a chance for Equity members to meet in person, share ideas, and learn more about the union.

This year, conference took place over a weekend in May at the historic Durham Miners' Hall. Built by the Durham Miners' Association in 1915, it is known as the finest, purpose-built trade union building in Britain.

Motions

Motions must be carried out by the union (or sometimes, put to a referendum) if they receive a two-thirds majority vote at conference. This year, 28 motions were passed and will now be enacted by the union – below are a few of those that will now form part of the union's agenda.

Strengthening pregnancy and maternity rights for freelancers

The Women's Committee pointed out that while the government is consulting on improving pregnancy and maternity rights, this only applies to employees rather than workers and the self-employed. The union will lobby the government to improve these rights for freelancers.

Fight arts funding cuts in opera and classical music

The Opera Houses Deputies Committee raised the issue of funding cuts leading management to degrade the terms and conditions of the workforce. The union will fight against this.

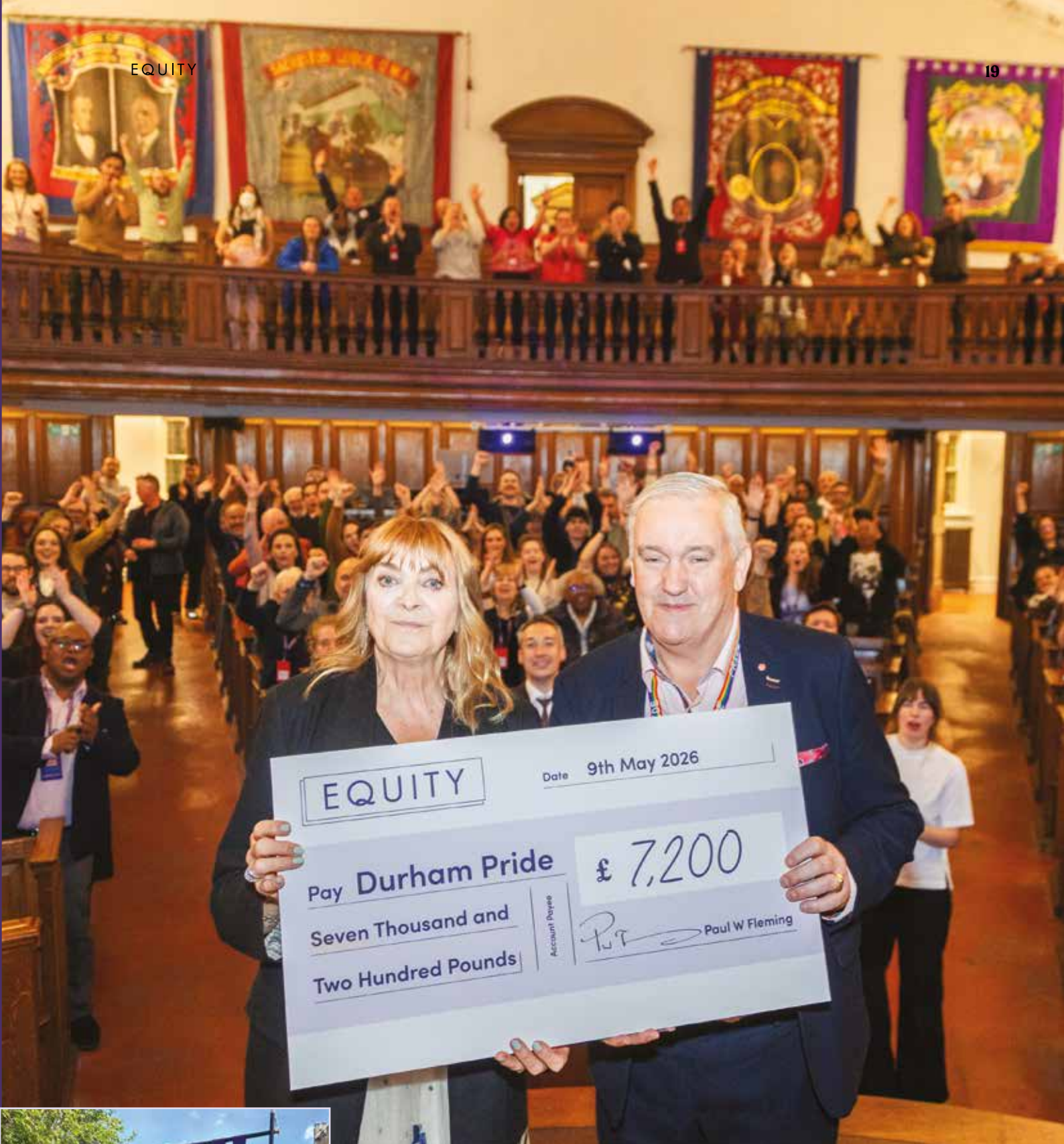
Freedom from political interference

The Northern Ireland National Committee has called on the union to campaign against political interference in the funding of arts across the UK. This followed a case where a Stormont government minister sent a letter to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland questioning the funding of a Drag Storytime event.

New rights to address AI-generated digital replicas

Council put forward a motion to be submitted to TUC Congress – the annual conference for Britain's trade unions. It asked unions to lobby the government to introduce personality rights so that performers can control how their digital replica is used. This motion was subsequently passed at Congress in September.





Durham Pride

Equity donated £7,200 to Durham Pride so that the event could go ahead after it had its budget cut by the Reform-led Durham County Council.

At a reception celebrating the region's trade union history, Equity President Lynda Rooke handed a cheque to Mel Metcalf, the organiser of Durham Pride.

Equity also announced that it had negotiated an agreement with Durham Pride for the first time in the event's history, setting minimum pay, terms and conditions for performers working there.



Support for the West End

Conference took place in the midst of an indicative ballot on whether performers and stage management would be willing to take strike action to secure a better offer from bosses for the West End agreement.

So it was an opportune time for members across the union to show their solidarity by backing the 'Pay Up! In the West End' campaign calling for better pay, terms and conditions.

Conference heard impassioned speeches from West End workers and came together for a photo call that was shared with press and as part of the campaign.

One month later, the ballot result showed that 98% of West End workers would be willing to take strike action, which propelled negotiations with the bosses forward and ultimately led to a much-improved deal, which was overwhelmingly accepted by the membership in July.

Honorary Life Memberships



Nigel Jones

Nigel started working for Equity in 1977 and stayed on for a total of 37 years. He became the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside Organiser (equivalent to an Official today) and held the record for most cast visits, visiting over a hundred companies a year. He remains a staunch defender of Equity members and the industry.

These are the highest honour Equity can bestow on a member and are reserved for those who have made outstanding contributions to the union.



Chipo Chung

Chipo is the current chair of the International Solidarity Committee (formerly known as the International Committee for Artists' Freedom), having served on it for nearly 20 years helping thousands of artists facing oppression across the world.



Trevor Fox

Considered by Equity's General Secretary to be one of the best, most effective and supportive Deputies (member acting as a union representative in their workplace) he has ever worked with, Trevor is a widely respected union activist.



Daniel York Loh

Daniel is a long-time member of Equity's Race Equality Committee and currently serves as Chair. He has played a pivotal role in shaping the union's focus on behalf of global majority members and is a passionate advocate of freedom of expression in the arts.



Pete Keal

Active in his local branch (now called the North & West Yorkshire Branch) for a number of years, Pete put forward a motion to his regional TUC conference of trade unions which established the Yorkshire and Humber Creative & Leisure Industries Committee, linking creative unions across the region.

EQUITY



A new regional Equity banner was unveiled for the North East, Yorkshire and Humber. Designed by Laura Nelson, it was created with the input of branches and features lots of symbolism from across the region.

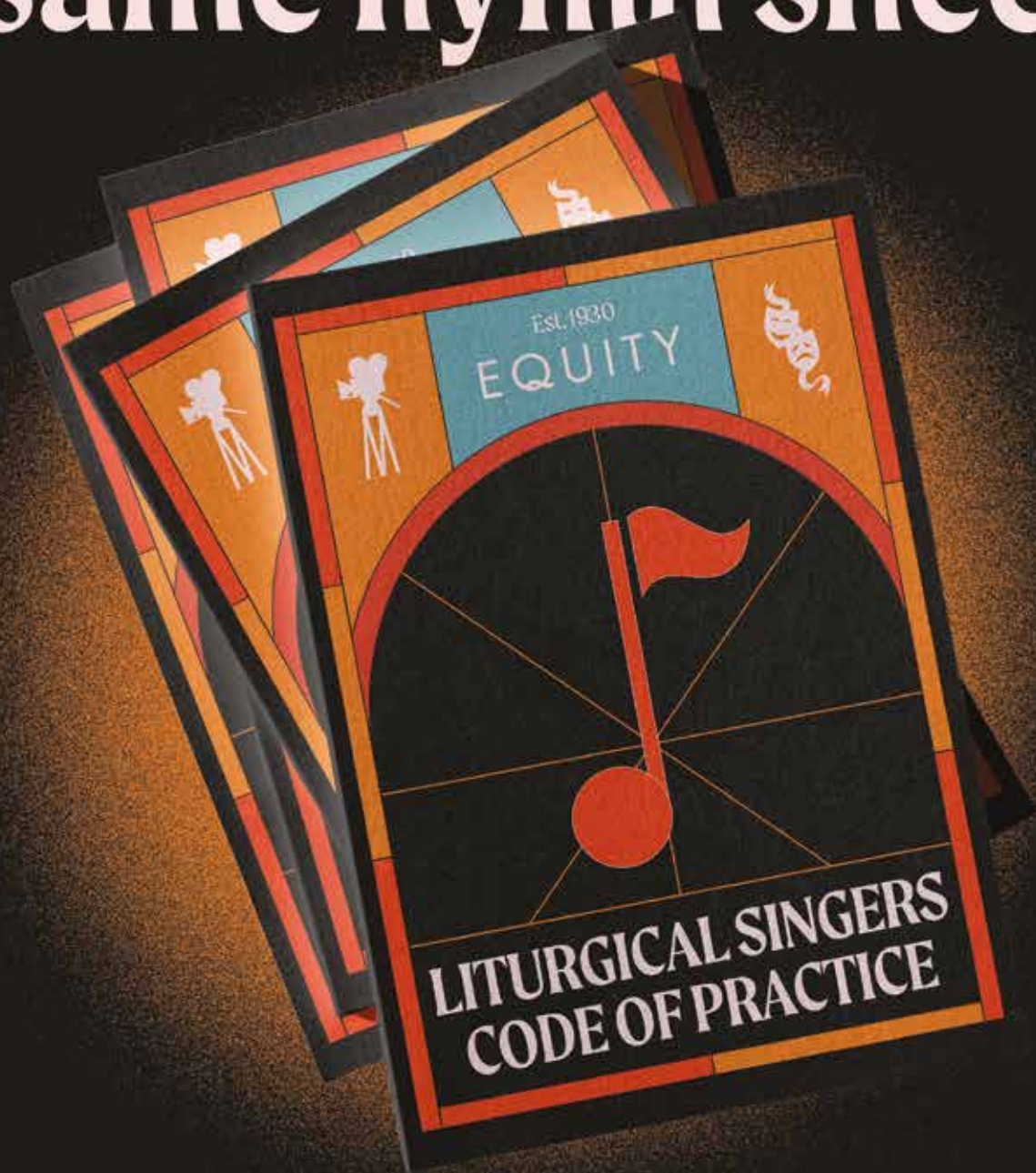


Sunday night's dinner was held at the majestic Durham Cathedral, much of which was built between 1093 and 1133.



Fringe events were held, where members could hear about and discuss the issues that affect them. This year's fringes were on topics as varied as the history of pit banners, organising in 'greenfield' areas that don't operate under union agreements, building solidarity with international unions and organisations, and more.

Singing from the same hymn sheet



Liturgical singers have come together to call for better standards on everything from wedding fees to warm spaces, transport on Christmas Day, and more. **Zoe Hodges** talks to the people behind the new code of practice.

Alcohol between services leading to poor behaviour from engagers, no travel expenses even when public transport is not available, being held in cold rooms between sets...

These are just some of the issues affecting liturgical singers, revealed in a survey conducted by Equity. And it's this survey that has been used to inform a new Liturgical Singers Code of Practice that launched in August, which aims to improve working conditions for singers working for churches, synagogues and choirs.

The Code was developed by two Equity groups working in collaboration: the Singers Committee, made up of elected members driving union policy for this profession, and the Liturgical Singers Network, which is open to all members working in this area.

"It was hearing from colleagues and listening to stories of how people have been treated in the business that made me realise: not everyone's been as fortunate as me to work for institutions that do actually have a good working practice," says Matthew Minter, a member of Equity's Singers Committee who worked on the Code. "It wasn't great hearing those stories."

Fair fees, transparent pay

Matthew began his professional career as a singer in 1993, working on BBC Radio 4's Daily Service. During that time he was also a lay clerk at Chester Cathedral before singing at St Paul's Cathedral, and then at Wells Cathedral where he sings currently.

However, a recent gig elsewhere highlighted the struggle many singers face: "I sang at a wedding – it was a professional gig, but it was £75 a singer. When you add in your travel time, rehearsal, and then the wedding itself, you've suddenly done six hours work for £75."

Pay is a near-universal issue across the arts, and liturgical singers are no exception. The Liturgical Singers Code of Practice calls for agreements about pay to be made in advance and specify what work is expected for the fee. It also states that the fee should be proportionate to the nature of the work, with commercial concerts and weddings demanding a higher fee than regular services. And it says institutions should have a regular pay review process to avoid stagnation.



Matthew Minter (Credit - Jason Bryant)

"You don't primarily become a singer with the thought that it is going to make you a fortune," says Matthew. "It is a vocation and often singers will take on other work to supplement their singing.. But we'd like to be involved in the engagement process and be communicated with if there's discussions over contracts. I think it's really meaningful to be involved in those steps."

Streaming and recording

With the rise of new technologies and the need to adapt and modernise during the Covid-19 pandemic, another issue raised was the introduction of streamed services and recordings.

"There were a lot of things that became normalised without ever having any additional fee negotiated or with consent," says Lottie Stables, Equity's Singers and Dancers Official. "The streaming of services is a change to the job that seems to have come in without much consultation. Singers have also mentioned changes in congregation behaviour – particularly for

"You've suddenly done six hours work for £75"

special services such as weddings and funerals – with people increasingly filming content on their phones.”

“It’s only a safeguarding issue if choristers are being filmed without their permission,” says Matthew. “However, if it is going to be live streamed, the singers need to know about it and be remunerated.”

The Code emphasises that work should never be streamed or recorded without a singers’ consent – the use of any live stream or recording should also be agreed in advance. And if there is to be no additional fee, the basic fee should be increased.

“You’ve got your basic service that’s happening every week, but then it could be a special event like a bat mitzvah, or a wedding,” says Sara Feldmann Brummer, who has been singing in churches and synagogues since her late teens. “If someone wants to film that, there needs to be extra fees on top.”

Sara started out as a chorister at West London Synagogue, and now organises concerts in synagogues and is part of a Jewish jazz band. She also worked on the creation of the Code of Practice. “I think we’ve had a lot of really good conversations around this,” she says, “getting something firmed up, like a proper agreement and structure of what to do in those situations.”

Regular work

One of the biggest issues highlighted by the survey was that 86% of respondents who work regular jobs said they don’t have a formal contract.



Lottie Stables Industrial Official, Singers & Dancers

Lottie says the regular commitment required, coupled with the lack of formal arrangements, is concerning. “They’re engaged continually by the same organisation for a limited time each week,” she says. “It’s often part of a portfolio career, but there’s that implicit commitment – yet a lack of clarity for both parties. Sometimes that can work when members want flexibility around their work, but you also have instances where people have been working at the same place for years, and then suddenly a church wants to disband its choir. We want singers to know that they can come to the union for advice on these issues.”

The Code outlines how institutions should treat those singers it engages regularly. It says there should be a process of consultation with regulars around decisions which impact them, and changes to terms and conditions should be subject to discussion with singers and Equity as their recognised union where appropriate.

Dignity, safety, and more

The Code addresses other issues that can affect liturgical singers. For instance, on health and safety, it calls for particular consideration to the noise levels singers are exposed to and the temperatures they are working in – they should have access to a warm space during breaks.

Speaking of breaks, the Code stipulates that there should always be one between the end of rehearsals and the start of a service that is proportionate to the overall time spent working. There should also be a break within any rehearsal that is over 1.5 hours.

After dark working is another common issue for singers, and the Code says that where a venue is not within easy walking distance of public transport, suitable transport provision should be discussed and agreed in advance. When working late or when public transport is not available, such as Midnight Mass or Christmas Day, this should result in a higher fee or other provisions, such as payment for taxis or coordinating car shares.

The Liturgical Singers Code of Practice can be read in full at: tinyurl.com/equity-liturgical-singers-code

“If someone wants to film, there needs to be extra fees on top”

What's next

Another factor that specifically affects liturgical singers, is that although they might work with a director of music, the institutions themselves do not tend to be dedicated to the performing arts. This means there are a lot of people involved in decision-making who don't necessarily understand the work of a singer. Reflecting on this, Lottie says she hopes the code will be useful for directors of music to reference as union policy and allow them to make the case in favour of the singers they work with.

In the future, Lottie hopes the Liturgical Singers Network can engage in collective bargaining – the process of negotiating binding agreements with engagers that set minimum standards for pay, terms and conditions. "We wanted to get this code in place as a first step," she says. "Something else that we might want to explore is looking at fee recommendations. At the moment, we're very much focused on terms and conditions, and what is a basic standard that any institution, of any size or budget, would be able to meet in terms of dignity at work. Looking at the rates of pay might be the next step, but we will be member-led on that as well."

Meanwhile, Sara hopes the code will make things more streamlined across the board: "Most Liturgical singers are freelance – institutions will be aware that we are not employees. But at the same time, having structure helps people, whether it's knowing when you're going to get paid or being transparent about what you're booked for." She says that word of mouth about the code and distribution are key: "We definitely want to get it out across all the singers so they know about it, as well as to musical directors and religious leaders. They should know that it's not something to be afraid of and that the unions aren't after anyone. It's about looking at this and saying, this is actually going to benefit you as an organisation."

Having spoken with his own director of music at Wells Cathedral, who has warmly welcomed the Code, Matthew is optimistic that other engagers will be receptive: "There's hope that it will come across to people as guidance on what we'd really love engagers to be offering singers in terms of fee transparency, rest breaks and temperature at work. It's outlining how we can make a universal minimum level of expectation."

If you work as a liturgical singer and would like to help raise the standards of the profession, you can join the Liturgical Singers Network at: tinyurl.com/liturgical-singers-network

"We might want to explore looking at fee recommendations"



Sara Feldmann Brummer (Credit - Chris Keenan)

"The code calls for particular consideration to the noise levels"

BEYOND



#METOO

Almost a decade after reports of sexual harassment shook the entertainment industry, there is still much that needs to change. **Sarah Woolley** hears from Equity members and finds out the union's approach to tackling a systemic issue.



Lucy Sheen (Credit - Sarah Lam)

"I'm sure I'm not the only person within this business who is painfully aware of individuals or groups who have been guilty of abuse, harassment, and sexual misconduct, and who are still operating in the business. So much of what is passed off as banter can happen so quickly on set, on location, even in the rehearsal room. And it's only when you play it back in your head that you realise what happened."

Actress and playwright Lucy Sheen is a founding member of British East Asians Working in Theatre and Screen (BEATS) and sits on Equity's Race Equality Committee and Women's Committee. She has been involved in the fight against sexual harassment for years, including the Royal Court's 'No Grey Area' day of action following the revelations about Harvey Weinstein in 2017.

"There's been a lot of protestations and written assurances since #MeToo, but nothing has really changed," Lucy says, "particularly for a workforce that doesn't conform to your normal nine-to-five."

An abuse of power can happen to anyone, but some workers face a much greater risk. TUC research in 2023 found that around three in five (58%) women surveyed said they had experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse at work. Separate TUC studies found that 65% of Black women surveyed had experienced sexual harassment, whilst more than two thirds (68%) of LGBTQ+ workers reported the same. Meanwhile, disabled people

reported significantly higher levels of sexual harassment than non-disabled people – disabled women, for instance, are twice as likely to experience sexual assault than non-disabled women.

"For people from the global majority, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and inappropriate behaviour is just another weapon that is openly used to make people feel that they don't belong – that they don't have the right to be in or work in British cultural spaces," Lucy says. "There is still this very, very strange, sexist, misogynistic attitude towards females of East and South-East Asian heritage. In this climate it feels like I'm back in the seventies."

What's more, a recent survey by Equity revealed that only 13% of members feel employers in the industry are doing enough to prevent sexual harassment. Meanwhile, 64% of members are neutral or unsure, while 23% said they did not feel employers are doing enough.

"In the entertainment industry there are specific dynamics around competition, power and freelance culture," says Dugald Johnson, Equity Official for Agents and Professional Services. "Our members are very vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual harassment by people who control access to the industry, and they're incredibly reluctant to put their head above the parapet when they're already fighting for work."

Over the past decade, Equity has worked to change things across the industry. In response to the #MeToo movement, the union set up a sexual harassment working group comprised of members who surveyed the wider membership, met with industry bodies and bosses, and produced an 'Agenda for Change' report setting out what the union and industry must do to seriously tackle the issue. Equity has also supported members who have experienced sexual harassment, produced guidance on topics such as intimacy and nudity in performance, and pushed the industry and government for stronger protections.

But now, the union wants to go further. "We want to focus on the collective levers we have as a union, rather than just individual cases and education," says Dugald. And with new legal protections coming into force, it feels like an opportune time to consider how to make workplaces safer for everyone.

"Some workers face a much greater risk"

"We want to focus on the collective levers we have as a union"

“The more precarious the worker, the higher the likelihood of harassment”

A new ERA

Becoming law at the end of last year, the Employment Rights Act 2025 (ERA) has brought with it a raft of measures designed to protect workers, including greater responsibility for employers to prevent sexual harassment at work.

Since October 2024, employers have had a legal duty to take “reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment. From 30 October this year, the ERA raises the bar to “all reasonable steps” and employers must also protect workers from harassment by third parties, such as audience members and contractors. Employers will need to anticipate risk and take preventative action, which could include making policies clear, having reporting procedures, and training. Further reforms under the ERA will also restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to silence workers who speak out about harassment or discrimination.

These are welcome changes, but the law has limits. Many self-employed members fall outside its protections, while the new duties leave considerable room for interpretation.

“To be honest, the changes the ERA makes are relatively modest,” Dugald says. “It’s upgrading the wording to ‘all reasonable steps’. That’s basically it. Real change will come from members coming together and organising. Unlike the police or broader regulatory bodies, trade unionists have the collective strength to reach detailed, industry-specific provisions and obligations through Equity-negotiated agreements.”

Such agreements can be made with engagers and set out minimum standards for the workforce on pay, terms, and conditions. With enough collective pressure, Equity could negotiate agreements that establish a clear baseline for what preventing sexual harassment means in different parts of the industry, whether it’s at an independent TV production company or commercial touring theatre.

“We would love to get something agreed with engagers that is more specific about their duties to prevent sexual harassment, particularly in our main industrial areas such as the West End and commercial theatre,” Dugald says. “That would really benefit our members in terms of what they should expect from engagers, with the security and assurance of an Equity agreement.”

That is harder to achieve in so-called ‘greenfield’ sectors where Equity holds few to no existing agreements, such as commercials, audio, and video games. But the ERA’s new preventative duties do give the union a stronger basis for pushing engagers to take responsibility, even where collective agreements are not yet in place.

Freelancers who fall outside the ERA’s protections could benefit from ‘single worker status’, which would extend employment rights to people who are technically self-employed but work in a relationship similar to an employee. But Equity is “not going to wait for the government to get into gear on single worker status” Dugald says. “In the meantime, the union is pressing engagers to take responsibility for the people they book — from travel arrangements to appropriate working facilities. We are laying the demands clearly at the door of those venues and engagers.”



Emma Jayne Park

Strength in numbers

For LGBT+ workers, speaking up about sexual harassment carries its own risks. In 2019, TUC research found two thirds of LGBT+ people who experienced harassment or assault did not report this to their employer, and a quarter of these people said it was because they feared being outed at work.

Emma Jayne Park, a dance artist and co-Chair of Equity’s LGBT+ Committee, says that risk is heightened for self-employed

workers, particularly those working in cabaret and variety. “The more precarious the worker, the higher the likelihood there is of things happening across the spectrum of harassment,” they say. “If you’re in a venue for one night and getting changed in the toilet it’s really difficult to push for systemic change.”

That is why Emma sees collective organising as part of the solution, rather than waiting for legislation or individual workers to challenge harassment on their own. “We’re very lucky that the LGBT+ Committee is made up of people who are active in other areas of activism, so everyone comes to it with quite a wide lens.”

For Park, the bigger picture of trade unions and activists working together to improve working class lives plays a significant part in how we prevent harassment in the first place. “If we can build a society of people who aren’t running on adrenaline and fear the whole time then we’ll have much more scope to see each other’s humanity.”

Meanwhile Natalie Amber, an actress and dancer who is Chair of Equity’s Deaf and Disabled Members Committee, says disabled and learning-disabled creatives can be particularly vulnerable in the workplace.

“We are often left out of sex education,” says Natalie. “This is because we are infantilised and others assume ‘Oh they don’t need to know that’. So people see us as easy targets.” Natalie says engagers need to step up so prevention isn’t reduced to box-ticking. “We can’t leave anyone out of the conversation and there needs to be far more education with bosses. We need to make sure everyone has the tools to be accountable because – excuse my language – these f***** are devious. Engagers have to actively go, ‘We’re going to be working with these people. What don’t we know? What is some safeguarding that I have to think about? How can I empower my whole team?’ We can never get comfortable because things just slip back.”

For members experiencing harassment, Equity can advise on rights, provide representation, and raise concerns directly with an employer. The union is also producing guidance and resources on this issue, including for students as this is a key early point of education for future members. Meanwhile, recent campaigns on London’s



Natalie Amber (Credit - David John)

nightlife workforce and Equity Northern Ireland’s ‘Safe Home’ have sought to highlight safety concerns affecting different groups of members.

Members can also help build the collective power needed to change the industry by becoming Equity Deputies (i.e. union workplace representatives), getting involved in union networks and local branches, and contributing to surveys, campaigns, and calls to action.

Ultimately, Dugald says, we need everyone on board. “Real change can only happen when we change the balance of power. For Equity, that means putting responsibility back on those with the power to create safer workplaces – and giving performers the collective strength to demand it.”

“Real change can only happen when we change the balance of power”

NEWS

Scaring off bad practice: Small claims victory after cancelled Halloween event

Cathy Brennan-Bradley was just hours away from starting work on a Halloween event when she received a message to say it was cancelled – and that she wouldn't be paid. Like many actors, this wasn't the first time Cathy had been unlawfully withheld pay by an engager, but this time she and her fellow performers weren't going to stand for it.

With Equity's support – both to cover the cost of the case and to provide legal support – the seven affected Equity members took their engager, the Hedges Hotel, to Antrim Small Claims Court. In May, the judge upheld their right to be paid and awarded full payment to each claimant, a total of over £6,000.

It was a win for all Equity members, says Equity Northern Ireland Official Alice Adams Lemon: "The power of the union is that the more cases we win in court, the more we have the law behind us when we go to engagers who aren't doing the right thing. Engagers must not try to shirk their responsibility for paying artists' fees – just as they refund audiences, they must pay their contracted artists."

To fellow members facing similar situations, Cathy says: "You don't have to let engagers walk over you. If you are nervous, always remember that you have the union behind you. Know that the court costs will be taken care of on your behalf by Equity as well. We are strong and we need to stand together and stop taking the s**t."

To date, the Hedges Hotel has still not paid its debts to the artists, meaning that seven notices of Enforcement of Judgement Order have been sent to the court. Equity Officials will keep pursuing this claim until the performers receive every penny of their court ordered payments.

If your work has been cancelled without payment by an engager, contact Equity at equity.org.uk/contact-us

Words by Zoë Ellsmore



Cathy and Alice (left) with the other claimants after the judgement

NEWS

Get ready to vote in the online balloting and new rules referendum

The union will be asking the entire membership to vote in an upcoming referendum on online balloting and changes to the Equity Rulebook.

As part of the Employment Rights Act, the government has introduced digital balloting for statutory trade union elections. This means members can vote online in elections for the union's governing Council and industrial ballots for the first time (online voting is already permitted for referendums and our committee elections). This will make voting more accessible to members.

To allow us to use digital balloting, the current Equity Rulebook (December 2022) needs to be revised. For that reason, Council has been going through a review of the Rulebook over the past year. A union's rulebook is its governing document.

Alongside updating the Rulebook to allow for digital balloting, Council is proposing several other changes, mostly for legal, technical or procedural reasons, or to comply with changes in union policy. The detail of the changes being proposed will follow along with your referendum ballot.

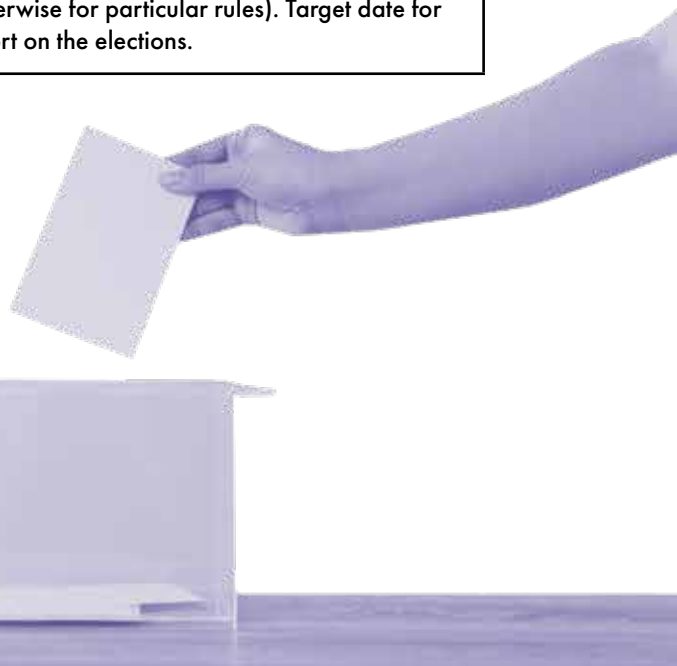
Council is now putting the revised Rulebook to a referendum of the entire membership for approval. Civica has been appointed as the independent scrutineer.

When the referendum opens later in October, members with an email address registered with the union will receive a link to vote online. Members without an email address registered with the union will receive a postal ballot paper.

Additionally, online voting links and postal ballot papers can be made available to all members on request – please email: elections@equity.org.uk

5 October 2026	Referendum document released for print.
14 October 2026	Referendum opens. Online voting links emailed to members with an email address registered with the union and ballot papers posted to members without an email address registered with the union. All members may request either an online voting link or a postal ballot paper.
2 December 2026	Referendum closes at 12 noon.
8 December 2026	Council receives the result of the referendum.
1 January 2027	New Rulebook takes effect (unless specified otherwise for particular rules). Target date for the delivery of the independent scrutineer's report on the elections.

Nominations will open on Wednesday 3 March and are managed online by our elections provider, Civica.



NEWS

Join an online Green Room to connect with fellow variety artists



If you work in one of the professions Equity classifies as 'variety' – that is, you gig and have your own act, such as being an entertainer, drag artist, comedian, cabaret or burlesque artist, circus performer, magician, club singer, and more – you might be interested in joining an online Variety Voices Green Room.

These are online spaces for variety artists to come together, have a chat, and hash out solutions to common issues.

They are the brainchild of Equity member Martin Cabbie-Reid, the Variety Officer for the union's Bristol & West of England Branch, whose role is to engage with other variety artists in his area.

Martin has opened up the Green Rooms to variety artists anywhere in the UK – not just in Bristol and the west of England – as well as to members and non-members.

"It's a good way to introduce people to Equity," says Martin, whose comedy alter-ego is Kevin Cruise – the all-singing, all-dancing modern-day jester. Martin also performs live shows with the legendary puppet Basil Brush, as well as being a panto regular at the Theatre Royal Windsor.

"For a lot of variety acts, you are just on by yourself – it's not like being in a West End company or a pantomime where there's 20 or 30 of you having a bit of banter or meeting up for lunch. So I thought this could be a good way of having a green room but online for people to gather and have a natter, but also to share any issues."

Running from May this year, Martin has led three Green Rooms so far. Discussions have ranged from attendees' experience of artificial intelligence misuse, gig cancellations, making a living as a touring act, and more. "We can also pass issues onto Equity," says Martin, who notes that some of them have since been resolved by the union.

The Green Rooms have even managed to make an impact on the union's agenda. A motion originating from discussions was moved by Martin at this year's Equity conference – and passed unanimously. The proposed campaign is called 'Pay the Act', comprising a logo that performers and engagers can display to show they will forgo unpaid gigs. Performers can then decline unpaid bookings by citing their participation.

"People can feel embarrassed to push for payment, especially when it's a charity," says Martin. "So suddenly you're doing all these gigs for free, when the venue itself is still making money from behind the bar."

"I never thought I'd be a Variety Officer," Martin muses. "But it's been such a lovely role because it's not just meetings. It's actually spending time with wonderful people and setting up gatherings like the Green Rooms. It's really joyous."

If you'd like to join the next Variety Voices Green Room, email varietyvoicesgreenroom@gmail.com



Martin Cabbie-Reid

NEWS

Equity's committee elections are your chance to make a difference

Have you ever wanted to get more involved in the union and help improve the performing arts and entertainment industry for working people just like you? Now's your chance!

Early next year, Equity will be holding elections to its committees. Committees represent groups of members' interests, related to industrial, equalities and national geographic areas.

Nominations open Wednesday 3 March – details on how to apply are below.

Committees have the power to set the union's agenda in different areas, including sending motions to Council (Equity's elected governing body) and conference (the union's flagship decision-making event), which have the potential to be enacted by the union.

Committees are a driving force behind various union campaigns, guidance, and resources, while many are responsible for negotiating collective agreements. Committee members can also take on spokesperson roles, representing the union to the press, decision-makers, and on panels.

Many committee members go on to get elected to other positions within the union, such as to Council, become a senior Officer or even President.

If you're interested in advocating for change within the industry, consider running for one of the 16 committees below. Nine members will be elected to each committee, from July 2027. All members (aged 18 and over) will be eligible to stand for election.

INDUSTRIAL		EQUALITIES	NATIONAL
Audio	Singers	Deaf and Disabled Members	Northern Ireland
Dance	Stage Actors	LGBT+	Scotland
Directors and Designers	Stage Management	Race Equality	Wales
Screen and New Media Actors	Variety, Circus and Entertainers	Women	
		Young Members	

Nominations will open on Wednesday 3 March and are managed online by our elections provider, Civica. They will send round a link to all members when nominations open.

And even if you don't stand for committee, you can still make sure you exercise your democratic union rights by voting! All members (aged 16 and over) will be eligible to vote. The ballot will be conducted by email, with a postal option for members with no email address only.

The full timetable for committee elections is:

Wednesday 3 March 2027	Nomination papers sent to all members by email and online nominations process opens. (Paper nominations form available on request).
Monday 26 April 2027	Provisional nominations deadline. Members who have started the process by this date will be offered support to complete their nominations by the final deadline.
Friday 30 April 2027	Final deadline. Nominations close at 12 noon.
Friday 14 May 2027	Online voting site prepared and ballot papers go to press.
Wednesday 26 May 2027	Voting opens. Online voting instructions sent to members with an email address. Postal ballot papers sent to members without an email address only.
Wednesday 7 July 2027	Ballot closes at 12 noon.
Thursday 8 July 2027	Target date for the delivery of the independent scrutineer's report on the elections.

The scrutineer appointed to oversee the elections is Civica.

NEWS

Could we be holding your unclaimed royalties?

We have unpaid royalties for thousands of performers and creative practitioners, as well as the heirs of deceased performers/deceased beneficiaries who are entitled to royalties. However, we aren't able to pay these out as we hold incomplete or out-of-date payment/contact details.

To find out if you're owed royalties or secondary payments, search our Royalties Checker at tinyurl.com/equity-unclaimed-royalties. And spread the word to colleagues and friends – especially those who have left the industry and may not be aware they could be due money.

In the coming months, we will be contacting people who we believe are owed royalties.

You may receive communication from us asking you to get in touch – if you do, please call us on

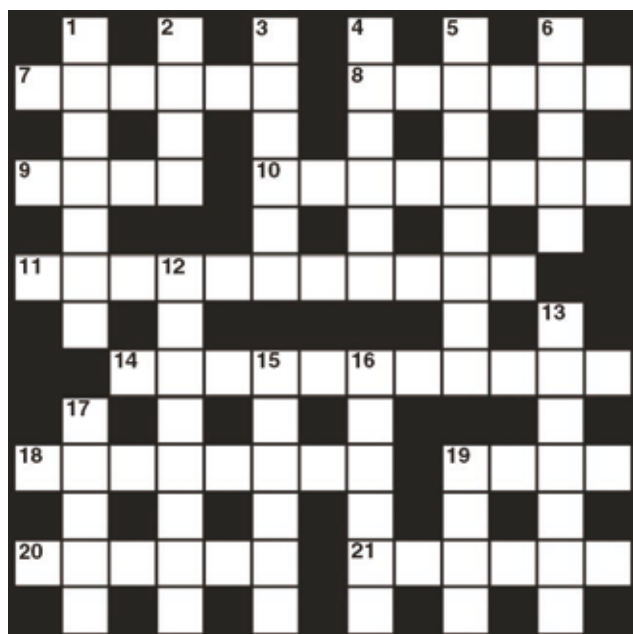
0207 670 0217

or email

membership@equity.org.uk

so we can reunite you with your royalties.

Equity Crossword



To find out the solutions to this crossword, visit tinyurl.com/equity-magazine

ACROSS

- 7 A Streetcar Named ____, 1951 film (6)
- 8 City, home to annual Miners' Gala (6)
- 9 Gallery of a theatre (4)
- 10 Managers of museum collections (8)
- 11 Eavesdropping (11)
- 14 Extra cushion on a chair for a child (7,4)
- 18 Relating to the theatre and plays (8)
- 19 ____ Council, national development agency for creativity and culture (4)
- 20 ____ of Liberty, New York landmark (6)
- 21 A classification of a film (6)

DOWN

- 1 Decentralise of power (7)
- 2 Dignity in ____, Equity campaign for improved accommodation (4)
- 3 ____ Me, much-covered 1960s R&B classic (6)
- 4 Worshipper (6)
- 5 Author's collected works (8)
- 6 ____ On, series of British comedy films (5)
- 12 Companion in shared quarters (4-4)
- 13 Selecting people for film or television roles (7)
- 15 Couch, sofa (6)
- 16 Audience's cry for more (6)
- 17 ____ Thunberg, environmental activist (5)
- 19 Divisions of a play (4)

TUAISCEART ÉIREANN



Grianghraf – Neil Harrison

Ealaíontóirí ag máirseáil ar Stormont ag éileamh ar an Aire “Na healaíona a shábháil!” i dTuaisceart Éireann

Ar an Mháirt 8 Meán Fómhair, shiúil os cionn céad aisteoir, ealaíontóir, damhsóir, siúlóirí ar chosa croise agus níos mó ná míle – go leor acu faoi fheisteas – an bealach chuig foirgnimh na Parlaiminte in Stormont. Tháinig siad le chéile ó gach achán chearn de Thuaisceart Éireann fá choinne lá gnímh a d’eagraigh Equity, chun litir Mhímhúiníne san Aire Pobail, Gordon Lyons, a sheachadadh.

Stad roinnt ealaíontóirí ar an bhealach chun aird a tharraingt ar chailliúint ealaíontóirí ó earnáil chultúrtha Thuaisceart Éireann mar gheall ar an easpa infheistíochta. D’iarr na daoine cruthaitheacha bailithe ar Fheidhmeannas Thuaisceart Éireann “Sábháil na healaíona!”

Bhí na haisteoirí Roisin Gallagher agus Alan McKee i measc na mball áitiúil de Equity ar chuir na meáin agallamh orthu, agus dúirt Gallagher nach raibh an tAire “ag déanamh a chuid oibre”. Mhaígh McKee gur “tíománaí eacnamaíochta iad na healaíona” in ainneoin na leibhéal ísle maoinithe a fhaigheann siad i dTuaisceart Éireann.

Dúirt an tAire Gordon Lyons nach raibh air “teacht amach agus labhairt libh inniu” agus chosain sé a sheasamh. “Bhí orm roinnt cinní deacra a dhéanamh,” a dúirt sé, ach

mhaígh sé gur “chosain sé na healaíona” agus go raibh “an méid is mó is féidir liom a dhéanamh déanta leis an méid a bhí agam”.

Níos moille anonn, bhuaib baill Equity le ball den Tionól Reachtach (MLA) taobh istigh de Stormont le himní a ardú faoin easpa maoinithe agus beartais ealaíon.

Sa seisiún Ceisteanna Aireachta tráthnóna, cuireadh roinnt ceisteanna ar mhaoiniú agus polasaí na n-ealaíon ar an Aire, mar aon le tagairt d’agóid Equity agus don litir mhímhúiníne. D’fhreagair an tAire ag rá “tá polasaí ealaíon ag teacht go luath”.

Agus gníomhaíochtaí an lae clúdaithe go forleathan sa phreas, lena n-áirítear ag an BBC, Belfast Live, Belfast Telegraph, agus an Press Association, beidh Equity ag coinneáil an bhrú fá choinne polasaí ealaíon agus maoiniú a rachaidh chun tairbhe na hearnála agus na bpobal ar fud Thuaisceart Éireann.

le Sian Jones

NORTHERN IRELAND



Credit - Neil Harrison

Artists march on Stormont calling for Minister to “Save the arts!” in Northern Ireland

On Tuesday 8 September, over a hundred actors, artists, dancers, stilt walkers and more – many of them in costume – walked the mile-long approach to the Parliament buildings at Stormont. They had come together from across Northern Ireland for a day of action organised by Equity, to deliver a letter of No Confidence in Communities Minister Gordon Lyons.

Artists dropped off along the route to highlight the loss of artists from Northern Ireland’s cultural sector due to the lack of investment. Chants by the assembled creatives called on the Northern Ireland Executive to “Save the arts!”

Actors Roisin Gallagher and Alan McKee were among the local Equity members interviewed by media, with Gallagher saying the Minister was “not doing his job”. McKee argued that “the arts is an economic driver” despite the low levels of funding it receives in Northern Ireland.

The Minister Gordon Lyons came out to meet the gathered protestors, saying he “didn’t have to come out and speak to you today” and defended his position. “I’ve had to take some difficult decisions,” he said, but insisted he had “protected the arts” and had “done what I can with what I have”.

Later, Equity members met with their Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) inside Stormont to raise concerns about the lack of funding and arts policy.

In the afternoon’s Ministerial Questions session, several questions on arts funding and policy were levelled at the Minister, along with reference to Equity’s protest and the letter of no confidence. The Minister responded saying “an arts policy is coming soon”.

With the day’s activities widely covered in the press, including by the BBC, Belfast Live, Belfast Telegraph, and the Press Association, Equity will be keeping the pressure on for an arts policy and funding that benefits the sector and communities across Northern Ireland.

Words by Sian Jones

SCOTLAND



Liam Sinclair and Marlene Curran signing the new term into NTS' house agreement

Equity Scotland first! Five-day rehearsal weeks agreed with National Theatre of Scotland

The National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) has become the first engager in Scotland to agree to make the five-day rehearsal week the norm, by adding this term into their house agreement with Equity.

Five-day rehearsal weeks are a long-standing aim of Equity's membership working in theatres throughout the UK. The new West End agreement, which was signed in July, pushed the practice forward in West End theatres for the first time, with a new clause stipulating that 25% of rehearsal weeks should be capped at five days.

This agreement with NTS marks a significant milestone in Equity's campaign for more sustainable working practices in theatre. "Theatre is hard work – rehearsals are intensive and a two-day break shouldn't be a luxury," says Equity's Scotland Official Marlene Curran, who negotiated the deal. "This brings the industry more in line with other workers who regard a five-day working week as the norm. It means better work-life balance and health, while avoiding burnout. And happier workers!"

"As a publicly funded national company, the National Theatre of Scotland has an opportunity to lead by example," Marlene continues. "The introduction of a usual five-day rehearsal week shows that the Scottish government's Fair Work policy

is not just a principle to aspire to, but something that can be embedded in the day-to-day experience of performers and stage management."

Alongside this new improvement comes another win for work life-balance – the production week at NTS for performers and stage management has now been reduced to 40 hours, down from 44. This means that any working week at NTS will consist of 40 hours, and any hours worked over that will be payable.

Liam Sinclair, Executive Director and NTS Co-Chief Executive says: "In 2026, the National Theatre of Scotland is celebrating 20 years of creating and producing theatre projects with Scottish artists and we are proud to have worked closely with Equity over this time period, championing fair working conditions and equitable casting."

"There is always more work to be done as we continue to adapt to mitigate against the challenging environment. This revised agreement evidences our continued commitment to achieve best working practice for performers and stage management in Scotland."

Words by Stephanie Soh

SCOTLAND



Scottish government heeds Equity's call for a Basic Income for Artists

"With any creative industry, we're not getting a regular salary," says Kirsty Miller, actress and Chair of Equity's Scotland National Committee. "Which means it cuts off people who don't have access to financial security and narrows the stories we tell. That's why something like a basic income is really important."

And it looks like that change is on the horizon. Following campaigning and lobbying ahead of the Holyrood 2026 elections, Equity secured cross-party pledges for a Scottish Basic Income for Artists (SBIA) pilot scheme, including a pledge from the SNP who went on to win a parliamentary majority.

SBIA is a guaranteed regular payment designed to contribute to living costs for successful applicants who work in the creative industries and are based in Scotland. The campaign took inspiration from Ireland's Basic Income for Artists which provides money to 2,000 eligible artists following a successful trial that launched in 2022. Meanwhile, First Minister John Swinney has committed to deliver an SBIA pilot scheme by 2031.

"Equity has been campaigning for this because we know that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not," says Marlene Curran, Equity's Scotland Official. "[SBIA] would give artists the security to develop their careers, take creative risks and stay in the sector, rather than being forced out because they simply cannot afford to keep going."

Securing the pledge was only the start for Equity members and staff in Scotland. Equity is now co-designing the pilot directly with the Scottish Parliament and holding research events across the country, where members can feed directly into the pilot, shaping what it looks like and holding the government to account. Members have been emailed about this, but you can also contact scotland@equity.org.uk if you'd like to get involved.

"I think it is really important that members look out for opportunities to put their voices in," says Kirsty, who has been part of Equity's campaign. "If we don't hear what people need, then the decisions will be made by people who don't understand what it is to be a freelance creative."

Words by Gail McAnena

CYMRU



Kit a Ceri Lambert gyda Simon Curtis, yn llofnodi'r cytundeb newydd

Cytundeb â chynhyrchwyr cabaret o Benarth yn gosod meincnod newydd i artistiaid amrywiaeth yng Nghymru

"Nid mater o gyfraddau tâl yn unig yw codi safonau," meddai Simon Curtis, Swyddog Equity dros Gymru – ac mae'r safbwynt hwn yn cael ei adlewyrchu yng nghytundeb cynhwysfawr cyntaf Equity ar gyfer y sector amrywiaeth yng Nghymru, a lofnodwyd ym mis Gorffennaf.

Wedi'i ddatblygu gyda'r cynhyrchwyr cabaret o Dde Cymru, Quill & Pearl Presents, mae'r undeb wedi sicrhau cyfres eang o safonau gofynnol sy'n ymwneud ag arferion gwaith, llesiant ac ymddygiad proffesiynol.

Mae telerau cytundebol a threfniadau talu clir, cyfleusterau newid priodol, gofynion mynediad, ffilmio a ffotograffiaeth, a pholisi canslo ymhlith y materion allweddol sy'n cael sylw. Mae perfformwyr hefyd yn cael eu diogelu rhag unrhyw anfantais neu golli cyfleoedd yn y dyfodol am godi pryderon yn ddidwyll.

"Mae'n ymwneud â sicrhau bod perfformwyr yn gwybod beth y gallant ei ddisgwyl gan ymgysylltiad proffesiynol, a bod gan gynhyrchwyr ganllawiau ymarferol ar greu amgylcheddau gwaith diogel, parchus sydd wedi'u rheoli'n dda," eglura Simon.

"Rwy'n arbennig o falch ei fod yn gwreiddio Equity mewn cynrychiadau, gyda mynediad at berfformwyr, rhannu gwybodaeth a hawl benodol i gyngor a chynrychiolaeth gan Equity. Mae hefyd yn gwneud y Polisi Urddas yn y Gwaith yn

rhan o'r contract, yn hytrach na bod yn ddyhead yn unig."

Mae'r polisi hwnnw, a ddatblygwyd ar y cyd gan Equity a Quill & Pearl, yn sefydlu mesurau diogelu rhag bwllo ac aflonyddu, gan gynnwys gan gynulleidfaoedd, ynghyd â gweithdrefnau adrodd clir a mynediad at gymorth arbenigol.

"Fel cynhyrchydd ac aelod o Equity, roeddwn am greu rhywbeth ymarferol sy'n cefnogi perfformwyr, gan roi fframwaith clir o arfer da i gynhyrchwyr," meddai'r cynhyrchydd Ceri Lambert, sy'n perfformio dan yr enw Oola Pearl. "Rwy'n gobeithio y bydd cynhyrchwyr eraill yn edrych ar y cytundeb hwn ac yn gweld bod codi safonau o fudd i bawb."

Mae'r cytundeb yn adlewyrchu ymrwymiad ehangach Equity i hyrwyddo gwaith teg, gweithleoedd diogel a safonau proffesiynol ledled diwydiannau creadigol Cymru.

I Equity, man cychwyn yw hwn. Y nod yw datblygu cytundebau tebyg gyda chynhyrchwyr eraill, gan godi disgwyliadau ar gyfer perfformwyr cabaret a bwrlesg, digrifwyr stand-yp, consurwyr, diddanwyr plant ac eraill ar draws sector amrywiaeth Cymru. Mae trafodaethau ynghylch cytundebau pellach eisoes ar y gweill.

Geiriau gan Sian Jones

WALES



A Quill & Pearl Presents cast curtain call (Credit - Evita Photography)

Agreement with Penarth-based cabaret producers establishes new benchmark for variety artists in Wales

"Raising standards isn't only about rates of pay," muses Equity's Wales Official, Simon Curtis – and this sentiment is reflected in the first comprehensive Equity house agreement for the variety sector in Wales, signed in July.

Developed with South Wales-based cabaret producers Quill & Pearl Presents, the union has achieved a wide-ranging set of minimum standards covering working practices, wellbeing and professional conduct.

Clear contractual terms and payment arrangements, appropriate changing facilities, access requirements, filming and photography, and a cancellation policy are among the key issues covered. Performers are also protected from detriment or loss of future opportunities for raising concerns in good faith. "It's about making sure performers know what they can expect from a professional engagement and producers have practical guidance on creating safe, respectful and well-managed working environments," explains Simon.

"I'm particularly pleased that it embeds Equity into productions, with access to performers, information sharing and an explicit right to Equity advice and representation. It also makes the Dignity at Work Policy contractual rather than simply aspirational."

That policy, developed jointly by Equity and Quill & Pearl, establishes protections against bullying and harassment, including from audiences, alongside clear reporting procedures and access to specialist support.

"As both a producer and an Equity member, I wanted to create something practical that supports performers while giving producers a clear framework for good practice," says producer Ceri Lambert, whose stage name is Oola Pearl. "I hope other producers will look at this agreement and see that raising standards benefits everyone."

The agreement reflects Equity's wider commitment to promoting fair work, safe workplaces and professional standards throughout Wales' creative industries.

For Equity, this is a starting point. The aim is to develop similar agreements with other producers, raising expectations for cabaret and burlesque performers, stand-ups, magicians, children's entertainers and others across Wales' variety sector. Discussions about further agreements are already underway.

Words by Sian Jones

Obituaries

Chris Melville



Words by Sarah Woolley

Scottish talent Chris Melville made twelve appearances on London's West End and spent a lifetime in musical theatre and plays. An original cast member for the London production of Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* in 1975, Chris also performed for the Prince of Wales (*An Evening with Sammy Cahn*), ran a dance school for four years, and even shared the pantomime spotlight with Twiggy (*Cinderella*) and Christopher Biggins (*Winnie-the-Pooh*).

Fellow Equity members remember Chris as a "strong and loyal" member of the union. A Chorus Councillor whose service lasted an impressive 18 years (1976-1994), Chris was also appointed as a director of the Equity Trust Fund – now known as the Equity Charitable Trust – in 1989, the year it was founded. The Trust was set up by Equity and is a separate organisation, providing performance professionals with financial support at difficult times, alongside grants for retraining and theatres.

Originally from Rutherglen, Lanarkshire, Chris started performing with the Rutherglen Repertory Company. A pure soprano, she danced and sang across Scotland as a May Moxon chorus dancer, did pantomime work with Jimmy Logan, was televised in the *White Heather Club* and *The Andy Stewart Show*, and joined the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. She also belonged to the Royal Academy of Dancing.

Chris moved to England in 1961 and her West End roles (*Ann Veronica*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *Underneath the Arches*, *Me and My Girl*, and the 1989 revival of *Anything Goes*) spanned three decades alongside television work (*Ripping Yarns*, *Taggart*, *Dead Man's Chest*, *Micawber*).

In later years Chris returned to Tillicoultry, Scotland, continued to perform, and her delightful one-woman shows (*Ah Well*, *That's Show Biz* and *Hi-Ho, The Glamorous Life*) raised money for local charities. She passed away peacefully on 6 February 2026 aged 95, "loved by family and a friend to many."

Chris Melville served on Equity's Council 1976 - 1994.

Sheila Mitchell



Remembered by Equity Honorary Treasurer & Audio Councillor David John

Sheila Mitchell, who has died at the age of 100, was inspirational, indomitable and resistant long before Equity coined the phrase "from resilience to resistance".

In audio she was a trailblazer and a strong leader. Sheila was involved in setting up the Radio Drama Committee in the 1970s and remained on the Audio Committee, most of the time as Chair, until 2023 at the age of 98, as well as serving as Audio Councillor.

She was incandescent when the BBC mooted cuts to radio drama and insisted on a meeting with Director General Lord Tony Hall to protest. Having been put off on a number of occasions, Sheila refused to give up. When the meeting finally took place, I'll never forget witnessing her tearing the Director General off a strip for daring to even consider cutting radio drama. A masterclass in speaking truth to power.

Another time, Sheila's indignation led to change within Equity when the restructuring of Council led to the Audio seat being removed over the 2014-16 term. I can still hear her voice destroying Council's argument as she inspired and emboldened the Audio Committee to take up the fight to have it reinstated. She understood full well that audio was a growing part of the industry and needed representation on the union's governing body. She was, of course, in the end victorious after writing a motion to conference and winning the required two-thirds majority, therefore enabling a referendum of the whole membership.

I was very pleased to see a healthy Equity turnout at her funeral which was held on the day of her 101st birthday. She will always be remembered by anyone who sat on the Audio Committee with her as an utter inspiration, a mentor and a wonderful example of how to be an Equity activist.

Sheila Mitchell served as a General Councillor 1982-84 and as Audio Councillor 2008-12.

Exeunt

Here follows a list of Equity members who have died and been reported as such to the union since the publication of the last magazine. This list serves as a notice to members, and organisations within our industries and beyond, that Equity has been informed of the death of the members listed below.

Steven Ashby-Howe
 Martin Bax
 Beryl Beare
 Michael Beint
 Kim Binns
 Jim Birch
 Brian Blakey
 Bernard Brown
 Judith Bruce
 Tom Chadbon
 Jeanette Charles
 Valerie Colgan
 Kenneth Colley
 Sarah Coxon
 Jimmy Cricket
 Ronald Cunliffe
 Tim Curry
 David Daker
 Owain Rhys Davies
 Anna Dawson
 Meriel Disney
 Jimmy Doc
 Bob Eaton
 Hannah Edwards
 Grandad Elf
 Brett Fancy
 Jill Farrant
 Tim Fordyce
 Brenda Fricker
 Harry Glass
 Jeanne Golding

John Greatorex
 Cheryl Hall
 Ali Hames
 Frazer Hammill
 Harry H Harris
 Anthony Head
 Rusty Hood
 Richard Horne
 Mike Hull-Wood
 Elsie Kelly
 Peter Kemp
 Timothy Kightley
 Phyllida Law
 Ronnie Le Drew
 Caroline Leigh
 John Llewellyn
 Pete Mace
 Alison MacGregor
 Glenn Maloney
 Roger Martin
 Leslie Maryon
 Sheila Mathews
 Eileen Mayers
 Nigel McLauchlan
 Colin McLean
 Sylvia McNeill
 Random Mike
 Sheila Mitchell
 John Nolan
 Michael Patrick
 Michael Pennington
 Angela Pleasence
 Susan Porrett
 Geoffrey Rose
 Alan Rothwell
 Jayne Sofiano
 Roy Spencer
 Dinkie Stapleton
 Lynne Verrall

In some cases it may be possible that another member may have used the same or a similar name subsequent to the passing of the above members.

Getting Involved

You are the union: together, we can implement real change in the industry. There are many ways you can stand alongside your fellow members and get involved in Equity's work, from joining your local branch to becoming active within a network.

BRANCHES

Wherever you are based in the UK, there will be a branch: a community of Equity members who meet as a group to discuss the issues facing the industry, both locally and nationally. Branches hold regular meetings, organise, and campaign.

East and South East

Brighton & Sussex

brighton&sussex@equitybranches.org.uk

East Anglia

eastanglia@equitybranches.org.uk

Essex & Hertfordshire

essex&hertfordshire@equitybranches.org.uk

Kent

kent@equitybranches.org.uk

Surrey & Berkshire

surreyandberkshire@equitybranches.org.uk

Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire

oxford&buckinghamshire@equitybranches.org.uk

London

London North

londonnorthbranch@equitybranches.org.uk

London South

londonsouthbranch@equitybranches.org.uk

Midlands

Birmingham & West Midlands

birmingham&westmidlands@equitybranches.org.uk

Black Country & Staffordshire

blackcountryandstaffordshire@equitybranches.org.uk

East Midlands

eastmidlands@equitybranches.org.uk

North East, Yorkshire & Humberside

East Yorkshire & Humber

eastyorkshire&humber@equitybranches.org.uk

North & West Yorkshire

north&westyorkshire@equitybranches.org.uk

North East England

northeastengland@equitybranches.org.uk

South Yorkshire

southyorkshire@equitybranches.org.uk

Northern Ireland

Foyle & West

foyleandwest@equitybranches.org.uk

Lagan & East

laganandeast@equitybranches.org.uk

North West

Greater Manchester

greatermanchester@equitybranches.org.uk

Lancashire & Cumbria

lancashire&cumbria@equitybranches.org.uk

Merseyside & Cheshire

merseyside&cheshire@equitybranches.org.uk

Scotland

Edinburgh & East of Scotland

edinburgh&eastofscotland@equitybranches.org.uk

Glasgow & West of Scotland

glasgow&westofscotland@equitybranches.org.uk

South West

Bristol & West of England

bristol&westofengland@equitybranches.org.uk

Devon, Cornwall & Wessex

devoncornwall&wessex@equitybranches.org.uk

Wales

North Wales

northwales@equitybranches.org.uk

South Wales

southwales@equitybranches.org.uk

NETWORKS

Networks are a space for members with a shared interest to meet and discuss issues affecting their area, from choreographers to storytellers. Through these discussions, problems are identified and solutions offered, which the union can then implement.

Actor-Musician Network

kmuat@equity.org.uk

Audiobooks Network

audio@equity.org.uk

Choreographers and Movement Directors Network

mocellaigh@equity.org.uk

Circus Network

circus@equity.org.uk

Class Network

classnetwork@equity.org.uk

Comedians' Network

comedians@equity.org.uk

Commercials Network

commercials@equity.org.uk

Drag Network

drag@equity.org.uk

Film & TV Network

productions@equity.org.uk

Green New Deal Network

equity4gnd@gmail.com

Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Network

imanborde@equity.org.uk

Immersive Network

nkeegan@equity.org.uk

Intimacy Directors Network

intimacydirectors@equity.org.uk

LGBT+ Network

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London Nightlife Network

nkeegan@equity.org.uk

Liturgical Singers' Network

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Models' Network

models@equity.org.uk

Puppeteers' Network

puppeteers@equity.org.uk

Storytellers' Network

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Supporting Artists' Network

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Video Games Network

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Rhwydwaith Gymraeg / Welsh Language Network

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Wrestlers' Network

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COMMITTEES

Members are elected to Equity committees to represent their fellow professionals and to improve their working conditions. Different committees cover the interests of different groups. Committees drive union policy, conduct negotiations and ensure that the needs of all Equity members are heard.

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Information on this page is correct at the time of printing. For the most up to date contact details, please visit the Equity website at **equity.org.uk**.

Do we have your up-to-date contact details? If not, you can amend them by logging into the members area of our website and going to the 'personal details' tab in your account. Alternatively, if you are having difficulties logging in, you can send an email to the Membership Team at **membership@equity.org.uk**

Equity General Secretary Paul W Fleming at this year's TUC Congress



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Jackie Clune, Vice-President
Nick Fletcher, Vice-President
David John, Honorary Treasurer

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Paul W Fleming, General Secretary
Louise McMullan, Deputy General Secretary
Adam Adnyana, Assistant General Secretary, Live Performance
Sian Jones, Assistant General Secretary, Policy & Communications
Rebecca Reese, Assistant General Secretary, Operations

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The Equity delegation at this year's TUC Congress, the annual conference for Britain's trade unions

The Battle of Cable Street



A mural showing the Battle of Cable Street (Credit – Peter Marshall / Alamy Live News), an event which took place 90 years ago on 4 October 1936. On this day, over 2,000 members of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) – also known as the ‘Blackshirts’ – planned to march through the East End of London’s predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods. Led by Oswald Mosely and receiving police protection, the march was aimed at promoting antisemitism and was a clear provocation.

But they were met by tens of thousands more anti-fascists, comprising British Jews, Irish Catholic dockers, trade unionists, the Communist Party, and other allies, who put up make-shift barricades to stop the fascists. Clashes broke out and many anti-fascists were arrested by the police, but the BUF were not able to pass.

On the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street, we remember the courage and solidarity required from us all to resist hate.

NO PASARÁN!

Or “They shall not pass!” Shouted by the anti-fascists during the Battle of Cable Street, who defied the British Union of Fascists marching through London’s East End. The phrase originated from the concurrent Spanish Civil War, where it was used by Republicans who opposed the military coup led by the fascist General Francisco Franco.

WHY JOIN A UNION?

Join a union because of who we are, together;
not just because of what you do.

Because together, our voice is loud when we make demands of bosses,
- whether in theatre, film, TV, audio,
new media, dance or variety.

Because together we will build an industry where your class, your gender,
your sexuality, your race, your disability does not limit what you can do.

Because together your lived experience becomes part of our voice too.

Because together we can fund insurances, legal support
and welfare advice - to enable artists to work.

Because together we educate each other and the industry.

Because together we put the future of our industry's workforce - freelance
and employed - at the heart of its future.

Because together politicians of every party have to hear us - and give our
industry, its workforce, and all working people the protection we deserve.

Because together we defend freedom of expression for artists
in the United Kingdom, and around the globe.

Because together we create the global society working people
and artists need to flourish - defend the environment,
fight for new housing, better transport, freedom to move.

Because together you are not alone. We are over 50,000 members,
and part of a global movement of millions, across the UK and the globe.

Together, and only together, can we say:

To all artists: good work
To all workers: good art
To all people: Equity

