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**Minutes of the Equity Devon & Cornwall General Branch meeting held on  
Zoom on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021 4pm**

**Present:** David Richey, Sarah McCourt, Tank Sherman, Jill Lamede, Michael Terry, Simon Curtis, Stefan Antoniuk, Anthony Blakesley, Vivien Jones, Barrie West, Joan Beveridge, Lynda Rooke, Alice Cadmore.

**Apologies:** David Whitfield, Nigel Howells, Wanda Blair, Katie Bottoms, Enna Michaels, Tara Casey.

**Minutes of the last Branch Meeting –** No corrections.

**Matters Arising and Updates on Actions:**

**ACTION:** Organisation of Tintagel Storyteller Award – see below.

**Chair's Report (Dave Richey):**

We now have a new email system (Action Network) thanks to the remarkable work done by Kate Jones. This means we can now send minutes out directly to each member.

We are delighted to welcome Stefan Antoniuk into the role of voluntary Pastoral Guidance contact for the branch. Stefan is a member of British Association of Counseling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Details can be found in this newsletter of how to contact him.

Committee Elections coming up – please vote. Hustings will be held online:

Tuesday 15 June: Variety Circus and Entertainers Committee

Thursday 17 June: Directors and Designers Committee

Tuesday 22 June: Scottish Committee

Thursday 24 June: Screen and New Media Committee

Tuesday 29 June: Women's Committee

Thursday 1 July: DDMC Committee

All events will begin at 18.00 and end at 19.30.

**ACTION:** DR to report to Kate Jones that we've had a few people who did not receive the email about the meeting.

**ACTION: Members to vote.**

**Area Organisers Report (Simon Curtis):**

All members are invited to Equity South West England All Member Meeting Wednesday 23rd June 2021 at 4pm. Details being sent out on Friday next week. One motion has been sent in by D&C Branch.

New Equity Green Room Podcast with Jacky Clune: Topic - Safe Spaces

<https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2021/june/listen-to-the-first-episode-of-the-equity-green-room-podcast/>

Last opportunity to put together SRC motion together 26th/27th September, at the moment looking to take place in London.

### **South West Councillor's Report (Lynda Rooke):**

Recorded media dept. organised 2 urgent meetings with all the players in film and TV, UK Broadcasters, Producers, Trade Associations, and streamers within the industry to discuss bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour within our industry. John Barclay said that "it is incumbent on all those we have collective agreements with that there are robust policies in place, the means to enforce those policies and the ability of those facing these practices to report them. It is our job to put in place measures, which will ultimately eradicate such practices and give comfort to those who work in the industry to do so without fear, distress or discrimination."

The RM dept. working with Alan Lean organised an Audio-Visual Industry Tax Forum, The Forum aimed to bring together those who had attended the existing media industry forum chaired by Deloitte, and those who may be new to such initiatives. Following a long process of negotiation, the new HMRC tax guidance for performers was finally published in September 2020 but many challenges remain and now seems like a good time to pool information and ideas and look at areas where we can work collaboratively to ensure that our audio-visual industries retains and strengthens its position as leader of high quality audio visual production and continues to welcome and attract inward investment from around the world.

The dept. has also been working with the Casting Directors Guild (CDG), the Personal Managers Association (PMA) and the Cooperative Personal Managers Association (CPMA) to produce a Code of Best Practice for Self Tape and Zoom auditions for Scripted Drama. We now have a final draft, which will be circulated, to our Self Tape Working Party.

Our members who form the Voice Over Games Working Party have now consulted with the wider VO membership, along with agents, on the draft VO Games Agreement. They hope to conclude negotiations very soon.

Shannon Sailing will take over the role of Industrial officer, Audio and New Media, including the role of secretary to the Audio Committee. Cathy Sweet will focus on the BBC and the wider TV industry.

Live Dept: There was little to report at this stage as things start to emerge from lockdown, but Hilary Hadley did introduce Hannah Plant to Council who is joining the Live Dept.

Political & Communications: Council was given a detailed list of press coverage on Equity's campaigns, including Cuts to Audio Drama slot on BBC Radio, cuts to university funding of creative subjects, Noel Clark allegations. Lobbying is still ongoing over Brexit and EU Visas. <https://equity.eaction.org.uk/fixbrexitcrisis>.

Members are asked to lobby their MPs to join our calls for:

- a bespoke Visa Waiver Agreement with the EU for the creative sector
- bilateral agreements with key individual EU Member States
- emergency funding to cover additional costs when undertaking work in Europe
- measures to reduce impact of new road haulage & cross-trade rules

Equity has also issued a number of statements on human rights issues, including the re-imprisonment of comedian Zarganar in Myanmar and also coverage of the move by the British Government to deport Equity member Ace Ruele to Jamaica.

Equity issued a statement on the Israel/Palestine conflict and also published a statement from the TUC.

Communications Working Party received a presentation on Equity's new branding themes and discussed colours/fonts/model layouts. These are starting to appear in recent activity around #TheShowMustGoOn rally and in the new magazine and branch /bulk emails.

Latest Benevolent Fund Figures: Total allocated in 2020. £1,249,503.72 Subs. Grants in 2021 £34,334.53 Nos. helped in 2021. 694 TOTAL since 01.01.2020 £1,283,838.25 This last week £698 was allocated in subscription grants.

Equalities and Inclusion: All Equality committees will meet to conclude their period in office over 2019-2021 during late April and May.

Examples of concluding areas of work:

DDMC: CDG guidelines on reasonable adjustments for self-tape and online auditions. Additionally, the DDMC will release an innovative industry guide on best practice in supporting workers who are autistic. The DDMC are also support a joint initiative with Bectu and DDTV to drive change across the UK's broadcasters in supporting the needs and interests of Deaf and disabled workers.

LGBT+: The LGBT+ Committee are working to conclude a guide for LGBT+ student members on navigating their experience of drama schools.

Women's Committee: Equity is poised to launch the dedicated on-line resource #Equity4Women, which provides a bespoke directory of advice, resources and support for women members.

REC: The REC's primary focus currently is on gaining new standards for grant awards across the UK's arts funding bodies

Motions: A motion from Sheffield General Branch requested to change their name to, Sheffield and Region General Branch. This was passed unanimously.

Council opposed a motion from the Manchester General Branch about a request for the protection of artists' names by law and the creation of a new register administered by either equity or an independent body. Equity currently protects an artist's name and would be concerned to hand government the power to control a list of those in the profession. This was opposed unanimously.

Meetings Post-Covid 19 were discussed. They will remain the same until 25th September 2021 and in the meanwhile a consultation on the future of meetings will go out to the membership. I mentioned the motion from the Dorset General Branch which was not in front of Council at this stage and raised concerns that were aired at your meeting regarding distances, weather, late night travel, the ability to invite speakers from around the UK and fellow members being able to attend from other branches, thus giving a better horizontal level of communication amongst the membership. You will be able to air your views on this consultation very soon.

Councillor Mary Lane spoke on a policy document about Variety and the issues affecting members working in this sector. The discussion was very thorough and addressed many of the issues that those in other sectors of the industry might not have been aware of. From Mary's paper I highlight these particular demands for campaigning:

Recognise that funding for cultural organisations and events can and should come from multiple departments' budgets, showing the role the arts and variety play in education, youth services, social care, regeneration, parks, libraries, and public health.

- Provide free or affordable spaces for creative workers including artists, variety performers, circus entertainers, musicians, and theatre performers in your borough.

- Ensure that planning policies place value on cultural spaces and community pubs, clubs and other venues providing work for entertainers.

## Annual Representative Conference (ARC) Working Party

The recommendations from the Annual Representative Conference Working Party were discussed at length and these will also go out to the membership to comment on.

Committee elections are about to occur for National, Industrial and Equality committees with ballot papers being sent out shortly. Can I urge members to vote, vote, vote!

### **Treasurers Report (Mike Terry):**

£578.92 in account and still due £25 from Equity which we will get in the next week.

### **Secretary's Report (Sarah McCourt):**

Founder's Cup: for Young Performer's will this year be awarded to a student at Cygnet in Exeter.

**ACTION:** DR to enquire about cost of engraving SMC contact current recipient and Cygnet.

### **Branch motion:**

The Devon and Cornwall General Branch recognizes and fully supports Equity's rule 3.1.1.9, "To promote, protect and further freedom of artistic expression and to assist performers and others working in the performing arts nationally and internationally who are suffering oppression, persecution or hardship in the pursuit of their profession". The Branch also respects the right of members as private individuals to protest politically as they see fit. However, the Branch feels there must be a clear boundary between the two, to ensure that actions taken in the name of the Union do not make its own members feel unsafe, excluded or marginalized, and do not jeopardise the vital work of this union in advocating for all its members.

Consequently, The Devon and Cornwall General Branch requests that the Council creates and publicises a document explaining these guidelines and ensures that there are clear review processes for statements and actions involving campaigns supporting workers around the world.

Proposer: Stefan Antoniuk Seconder: Joan Beveridge. Outcome: Passed unanimously.

### **Tintagel Storyteller's Award Subcommittee report:**

Each member of the committee, plus Jill will nominate a Comprehensive or SEN school (Year 7, 8 and 9). Aim is that the school will judge them and they will give us one nomination from each year. The theme is "Something I would like to have read when I was younger". Suggesting +/- 1,000 words. Awards will be given one for each year, and then one awarded 'best in show'. Intend to publish all 30 pieces in a paperback book. Also suggested we'd like to look for a sponsor for the book. Then raise money from the sale of the book which we could donate to charity – possibly SW Children's Hospice. Children in the book would get one free, and a certificate. Rotary Club is being approached about sponsoring.

**ACTION: Committee to survey branch members.**

### **Training:**

Embodying Shakespeare workshop on 17th April led by Victoria Gartner. Branch members said it was a brilliant experience, great value. An amazing workshop, and Victoria was inspirational. She came at each monologue with new and surprising angles. Victoria is interested in doing another in the future.

### **Equality and Diversity/Health and Safety:**

**Meetings:** Discussion around how we would like meetings to run to ensure they remain accessible when we go back to being able to have face to face meetings.

**Action:** Committee to survey members via email system.

**Variety:** Tank reported on his experience of the working at the moment. Merchandising at the end of shows is a no which is a loss of money. But members are being sensible. Even if full opening is put back a month it

shouldn't effect what is happening at the moment. There were concerns raised a few meetings ago about being devalued by doing 2 spots for the price of 1. However there are workable solutions to this such as doing two 30 minute slots instead of two 1 hour slots. Good to see that venues on the whole are maintaining social distancing.

**Walk On:**

Nothing to report

**Guest Speaker: Grace Plant**

Exeter Northcott Futures' Programme for Performers and Producers is culminating in a one week online festival Launch Festival: A Place on the Map 5<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> July. A range of events from emerging performers in the region who have participated in the 6 month programme. There are also two panels on Dance and Film (9<sup>th</sup> July) and Producing (10<sup>th</sup> July).

**AOB**

LR: Kneehigh sadly is closing down after 40 years. They were an important part of the ecology. Concern that their funding is not lost to region.

LR: Plymouth Studio – Hannah Harris has been in touch and is having a discussions within Plymouth City Council.

LR: Oliver Dowden's incorrect comment about the Minack receiving Culture Recovery Fund money, and the Minack's response correcting his error to this has been shared widely on twitter.

JB has been elected Town Councillor for St Ives. There is some money going into building development and St Ives Guildhall is becoming a performance venue, and there is money going into youth work. Will bring information to meetings as it happens.

**Date and Time of Next Branch Meeting: Sunday 11th July 4pm on Zoom.**

**Summary of ACTIONS:**

**ACTION:** Members to vote.

**ACTION:** DR to report to Kate Jones that we've had a few people who did not receive the email about the meeting.

**ACTION:** DR to enquire about cost of engraving SMC contact current recipient and Cygnet.

**ACTION:** Committee to survey branch members about meetings.

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If you find yourself in a position where you feel you would benefit from talking things through for support and to help you find ways to deal with things troubling you, you can set up a conversation with Stefan Antoniuk by contacting email [stefanantoniuk@hotmail.com](mailto:stefanantoniuk@hotmail.com); phone 07484 789521. Stefan is a qualified counselor/psychotherapist providing pastoral services for Equity Devon and Cornwall branch.