

# equity

MAGAZINE



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AUTUMN 2020

## HE'S BEHIND ...THE MASK!

Staying safe  
at the panto  
parade

Filming resumes  
in Albert Square

Union leads the  
fight for the circus

Goodbye,  
Christine Payne

FIRST SET VISITS SINCE THE  
COVID PANDEMIC BEGAN

LIVE PERFORMANCE  
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TASK FORCE FOR  
FREELANCERS LAUNCHED



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## IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 UPFRONT**  
New General Secretary Paul Fleming talks Panto Parade, equality and his vision for the union
- 6 CIRCUS RETURNS**  
Equity's campaign for clarity and parity for the circus
- 9 FILMING RETURNS**  
Tanya Franks on the socially distanced EastEnders set
- 11 MEETING THE MEMBERS**  
Equity's Marlene Curran goes on the union's first cast visits since March
- 12 SAFETY ON STAGE**  
New musical *Sleepless* adapts to the demands of live performance during the pandemic
- 14 ONLINE PERFORMANCE**  
Lessons learned from a theatre company's experiments working over Zoom
- 17 CONTRACTS**  
Equity reaches new temporary variation for directors, designers and choreographers
- 18 MOVEMENT DIRECTORS**  
Association launches to secure movement directors recognition within the industry
- 20 FREELANCERS**  
Participants in the Freelance Task Force share their experiences
- 24 CHRISTINE RETIRES**  
Outgoing General Secretary Christine Payne steps down after 40 years at Equity
- 26 IN APPRECIATION**  
Equity members remembered
- 33 PRESIDENTIAL OPINIONS**  
Maureen Beattie talks about her father Johnny and the future



6



24



18



26

4



# First steps to recovery

Equity's new leader sets out his vision for the union's role in reviving the entertainment industry

Paul W Fleming  
General Secretary

FOR EACH OF US AS INDIVIDUALS, the past six months have been tough. Many members haven't stopped working – whether it be caring in the home, taking up unexpected second jobs or hibernating in home studios. Equity staff have laboured tirelessly too in makeshift offices – their kitchens, gardens and bedrooms – while caring for family and friends. Activists, depts, committees and branches have pushed innovation in organising and education to new limits – very often with an unexpected pet or child muscling into the latest campaigning Zoom.

All of us have struggled with our mental health, lost chances to share our skills and wrestled with our inability to hug our relatives and friends. We know people who have lost lives to this terrible disease; we know talented artists of every profession forced to give up the careers they love.

If we were just individual working people, we would be broken. But we are not: as a collective of artists and trades unionists, we have been made strong.

Sticking together we saved shows and theatres, won remuneration for new online content, got TV shows safely back to work, and tackled harassment and abuse in casting processes. We have paid out more than £1million to members in need – money which came from the union, alongside ordinary members donating a day's pay from a supermarket job. This isn't charity for people who are vulnerable; it's solidarity to make us all strong.

Covid has put us in unprecedented situations, but in many ways it has merely shone a spotlight on the battles Equity has fought since 1930. The lack of care from government for the self-

employed, the inadequacy of arts funding, billionaire producers not giving an inch without a fight, the unrepresentative nature of a slow return to work – these are our bread and butter. Equity is here not merely to fight for members during the coronavirus pandemic, but to end the pandemic of precarity that has for too long plagued working people in our industry.

To be fit for that fight, we have to genuinely unite members from every background. If we aren't the authentic voice of our black members, members of colour, disabled members, women members, LGBTQ+ members, working



SENDING OUR ARMY OF PANTOMIME DAMES – THE MORAL MOTHERS OF THE NATION – TO PARLIAMENT SHOWS THE PRAGMATIC CAMPAIGNING PATH TO A STRONGER INDUSTRY

class members, we are not realising our full potential. For the times we haven't, I'm sorry. As your General Secretary I'm committed to making changes to ensure our voice is the full-throated roar of every working person in our industry.

Looking ahead to the next six months, we face greater challenges still. Bad producers and the government will try to capitalise on the crisis, to marketise

the industry still further and impose permanent changes to terms and conditions – to threaten the very existence of our agreements and the union itself.

However, we have a plan. Sending our army of pantomime dames – the moral mothers of the nation – to Parliament shows the pragmatic campaigning path to a stronger industry. We are strengthening and reviewing our communications to get a higher profile than ever, and we are there in the face of government.

We are battling to get members back into workplaces so we can flex our industrial muscle like never before. We have even modernised our insurances so variety members can use their talents online, and get working to save the venues our communities depend on. The lessons we have learned in lockdown have made us better connected as a union, better informed – and even angrier about injustice.

The public and the whole union movement are with us, despite what those who would seek to divide us say. Our audiobooks lifted nurses' spirits on the way to work. Online content was relief for parents and carers each evening. Children's parties haven't been the same without live entertainment. The work Equity members do has never been shown to be more essential, and your union is building alliances so government and engagers understand that.

Your Equity diary for 2021 is enclosed in this magazine, and I've already written in mine a personal motto, which inspires and reassures me, and I hope it can do the same for you:

*Every working person has the right to be an artist.*

*Every artist has the right to a dignified working life.*

*The cause of labour is the hope of the world.*

In solidarity,  
PWF 🍷



PICTURES: MARK THOMAS



In May DCMS announced that circuses – unlike funfairs, cinemas and restaurants – could not reopen on 4 July. Equity successfully campaigned to overturn this decision

With the world such a miserable, uncertain place, the escapism and innate joy of the circus is needed more than ever. Circuses should be performance spaces that are less hampered by the restrictions around Covid, as open air spaces where social distancing can be adhered to more easily than indoor theatres, restaurants and cinemas. But in lockdown, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) treated circuses differently to funfairs – in June Christine Payne wrote to DCMS outlining the unfairness and lack of logic in allowing funfairs to reopen on 4 July, but not circuses.

“A circus is effectively an outdoor event. The tent is simply a roof. Its walls can be opened, lifted up to provide ventilation, rearranged to provide exits at frequent intervals. There are no narrow corridors where people might pass too close. Seating is made to be set up in any configuration,” Payne wrote. “The whole thing is designed to be rearranged at a moment’s notice. It is what has been done down the years as circuses move from town to town. Other elements – the ticket office, the toilets, even the catering facilities – are outside the Big Top in the open air.”

Once the government relented, in July, Equity campaigned against local authorities that refused to honour pitch sites promised to circuses.

The ongoing uncertainty for circuses on what they could and could not do - alongside the nationwide lockdown, and localised lockdowns in areas with Covid spikes - continued to impact all performers and people involved in the sector.

In August, General Secretary-Elect Paul Fleming was invited on to both the BBC and TalkRadio to talk about Equity’s campaign for more clarity and support for circuses. Dan Wootton on TalkRadio echoed Equity’s concerns: for many children, especially those in working class families, it is the only live art form and performance they will see all year, and remains an inclusive category of performance, travelling to all regions throughout the year.

Equity’s organisers will continue campaigning for more clarity from the government on circuses and proper support, until parity is achieved, ministers listen and act, and circuses are treated with the respect and given the support they deserve. 🐘



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## FILMING IN THE TIME OF COVID

Lockdown was huge wasn't it? All of us dealing with our own walls, lengthened chats to friends and family by phone or Zoom, our own individual mental approach to a new confinement, with very little let-up save for an hour of outdoor exercise and a nip to the shops if necessary. And finally a release was announced – albeit a somewhat confusing announcement – when it still didn't feel safe in the outside world.

It was at this point that the nerves really began to kick in for me and I felt more paranoid than I had ever felt in my entire life. How were we possibly going to be safe on the set of *EastEnders* when there are so many people having to work in such close proximity? Where our characters are prone to a bunch of emotional outbursts and aerosol from our lips can be projectile and volatile, where we physically fight, and have to kiss each other? Are we being thrown into a high-risk health pit?



IT IS INCREDIBLE  
WHAT IS BEING  
ACHIEVED

Our producers did their very best to console our fears, but it still felt unimaginable, and I knew a leap of faith was being asked of us. I rationalised it in my head by considering that actually, with all the precautions being put into place – the two-metre social distancing, the hand sanitiser, the removal of the green-room area, etc, etc – we were probably going to be safer than at any other time before. That not only will we be protected from Covid, but also from the common cold, Norovirus, cold-sores, the lot!

We were called in for a Familiarisation Day, in small groups of seven or eight, to be able to keep our distance. I hadn't even been into a supermarket, so this was the first time I was facing more than one person at a time in 15 weeks – it was weird. Seeing your colleagues and friends after so much downtime and not being

able to hug each other. We had agreed beforehand that we didn't want cleaners in our dressing rooms. So the BBC left us a cloth bag each, which contained a roll of bin-liners, anti-bacterial spray, cloths, hand sanitiser, and a pump-bottle of hand soap. I went in early, armed with a new vacuum cleaner I had bought for my room, and blitzed it like a demon. This day certainly helped to allay the fears I had. One-way systems had been put in place; hand-sanitiser stations at the main doors to use on entering and exiting; the green-room area cleared completely; two-metre distancing being adhered to and enforced by the first assistant directors; our costumes left for us outside our dressing rooms in a cloth suit bag with notes on personal white boards of continuity with jewellery, shoes, and accessories. And we now all do our own hair and make-up. If there is something impossible for us to do ourselves, like a wound or a specific hairstyle, then PPE is worn by the make-up supervisor to be able to assist.

As for the actual filming itself, we all have to think and work in a new creative way. Acting on instinct sometimes has to be compromised; it now just isn't always technically possible. We are using Perspex screens that are tall enough to be two metres away going over the top, from mouth-to-mouth. This allows us to look as if we are right next to each other, and even kissing. We are doing a lot of conversing with tennis balls on a stand, so much so it may have put me off going to Wimbledon for a few years. This allows a split-screen to be spliced together and patched in by shooting a plate shot. We have had our partners in at times doubling so we can shoot scenes of holding hands, hugging, and touching. Supporting artists from same households have also been used to double for us. It all takes longer.

A lot longer! Directors and directors of production have had to rethink their training, creating shots in a new fashion. As actors, all we can do is be patient.

This new approach in filming is intriguing to say the least. At times it even feels like the safety is getting in the way – but we cannot, and will not for the foreseeable, relax the new strategies. It is incredible what is being achieved. The visual style of the programme has adapted and seems to have given it new energy and life, in a way that is certainly quality over quantity. The mindset of *EastEnders* has been to not focus on the virus or lockdown, for it to be alluded to, but to continue in a world of Walford normality in these abnormal times. And, so far, the measures we are using seem to be achieving just that. 🙌

*Tanya Franks plays Rainie in EastEnders*





# EQUITY BENEVOLENT FUND



Our Benevolent Fund exists to support members in times of hardship, and the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on our membership have been profound.

- Any Equity member in benefit may apply for a grant to assist with urgent one-off expenses such as bills – water, electricity, food, heating, etc.
- Any Equity member in benefit may apply for assistance with paying their subscription if they are unable to do so due to the pandemic.

If you can make a donation to the Benevolent Fund to assist fellow members in times of hardship please do so. You can apply for assistance, or make a donation, via the Equity website at [www.equity.org.uk/benfund](http://www.equity.org.uk/benfund)

## HELP YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS



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Email [students@equity.org.uk](mailto:students@equity.org.uk)

## Special Representative Conference 2020 Observers

Equity's Special Representative Conference (SRC) will take place online on Monday 30 November 2020.

The SRC brings together your elected representatives from across Equity's branches, committees and Council to review the union's progress and to make policy. Any member, including student members, can attend as an Observer.

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# CAST VISITS RESUME

Marlene Curran, our Recruitment and Retention Organiser for Scotland and Northern Ireland, is back on the road for Equity's first set visits since the Covid pandemic struck

Sunday 30 August saw Belfast-based TV drama *Line of Duty* resume filming after shutting down due to Covid. Part of my role as Recruitment and Retention Organiser is to visit every TV, film and theatre production in Scotland and Northern Ireland – to engage with members and non-members, updating members on the work of the union, listening to any concerns members may have while introducing non-members to the union, even during a global pandemic. 3 September was my first cast visit since March. I flew over to Belfast from Edinburgh – as much as I was apprehensive about the flight, it's extremely important to me and the union that members see and feel that Equity is doing all we can to support their safe return to work. That includes visiting members' workplaces.

Derek Donohoe, line producer of *Line of Duty* sent the following email after the visit: "I just wanted to say thanks to you for taking the time to come out and visit us. We really appreciated your visit and to get your kind words during the visit and the subsequent email was a huge confidence booster for us all. We have worked really hard to establish how we work safely in this Covid world and of course this has changed a lot for all the teams."

*River City*, Scotland's only continuing drama, returned to work on Monday 24 August and I arranged to visit the cast on Thursday 10 September. Equity membership is extremely important to the cast of *River City*, demonstrated by the show having the highest percentage of membership of all of the UK's continuing



Leah MacRae (left) and Sanjeev Kohli (right)

dramas. Before production was halted the membership density was 85%; during lockdown, working closely with actor and Equity deputy Iain Robertson, we saw that figure rise to 96%.

Iain said: "As a cast we know how hard Marlene and her colleague Cathy Sweet worked during lockdown, ensuring we received a fair payment from the BBC. To bring the membership up to 96% during a global pandemic and when the cast weren't working was no mean feat but shows the commitment the cast has towards the union. Without the union we'd have been in a very difficult situation financially and it's only right that those who were to benefit joined their union".

*River City* actress Leah MacRae said: "I'll never forget the help from the union, they really fought our corner during lockdown. This is the second time my union has helped me financially in unforeseen circumstances. It's a

real example of the importance of membership."

During lockdown Equity was involved in producing a set of guidelines for the resumption of TV production. Included in that document is the statement "There are specific groups of people that may need access to a set including trade union representatives and essential visits of agents or professional advisors. Visits should be made in line with the safety measures introduced for the location."

I have with no doubt that without Equity's input to this new guidance it would have been harder to push for a workplace visit during the current pandemic. As a union the safety and well-being of our members is paramount, and it was very reassuring to see first-hand the new Covid-safe procedures and protocols both these productions have put in place. 🙌

Marlene Curran



# KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

During the coronavirus crisis, it has been easy to feel hopeless about the future of our industry and worried about when work might return. Pessimism has become the norm as news of more closures trickles through, and the government remain tight-lipped about how they propose to help theatres and performers. A number of open-air theatres have been able to put on shows, but understandably very few indoor theatres have staged any productions, or even set a date for when they might. The government's ever-changing guidelines for the live performance industry has left pre-existing plans up in the air and leaves our members with even more uncertainty. The exception to the rule? *Sleepless*.

The new musical, staged at the Wembley Troubadour for the past month, has enabled dozens of our members to return to work in the midst of a global pandemic. The road back to work hasn't been easy for our members; they are all tested daily for Covid, and the stage management and technical teams had to swiftly develop health and safety guidelines in a completely new and unparalleled working environment. Every day they are faced with challenges and complications as they incorporate the latest guidance into their brand new and constantly developing health and safety policies.

## Problems and concerns

As is the case for most live and recorded productions, we arranged an Equity visit during rehearsals – an opportunity to check in with our members, giving them the chance to raise any problems or concerns directly with us, but also to investigate what this new world of work could look like while the world was gripped by a virus with no vaccine. As with our members experiencing new ways

## We visit the cast and crew of new musical *Sleepless*, who have adapted to the many changes that have had to be brought in to get their show up and running

of working, our visit was different to the norm too. We were given a Covid swab on arrival and asked to wait an hour for the results to come through, lest we infect anyone else. Once the negative result was processed, we were given a wrist band, and waited for the rest of the cast to have their tests and receive their results. Everyone kept their masks on for the duration of the talk, and social distancing was, of course, fully enforced.

Not only were we able to speak to the cast and crew – all of whom seemed relieved to be back at work, and safe under the workplace conditions and health and safety guidelines they were working under – we were also given a tour of the facilities to view the adaptations firsthand. One-way systems, masks being worn at all times other than on stage, and extra dressing rooms all enabled members to



SOPHIE MARTIN

socially distance, work safely, and put on a successful production.

Luciano Macis, stage manager for the production said: "From start to finish, the process has been highly intense but also very strange. Like we all know already, no contact and wearing masks heightens everything and makes it that little bit harder. We have been constantly assessing and observing the health and safety measures in place – it's in our nature as stage management to implement all protocols.

"I have to acknowledge how amazing our Automation, Sound, LX, Wardrobe and Wigs departments have been. We all rallied round and developed the guidelines that are now our daily routines and form our health and safety guidelines. Leading on this as a team of people who are living and experiencing the work has ensured we're all as protected as possible."

Initially, members were offered testing weekly, or twice a week. After our members expressed concern about the frequency of the testing, this was raised to daily. The fact that the virus is very often asymptomatic was key to their concerns. The shift to daily testing has been incredibly well received by members, giving them that extra peace of mind while the country is mired in a pandemic, so they can focus on their work without fears around safety, infection, or passing on the virus to their families and loved ones. Macis continues: "I'm very grateful to be tested every day, especially as we're the first show back with these new guidelines. I do think that now, after several weeks, it has proven that everything we all have



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been doing, away from work as well, is successful – we've had zero positive cases for a number of weeks now. This makes me feel proud of the efforts of each department and what they have done, but also my team, who are constantly disinfecting and wiping down props to make sure that no prop is ever handled twice without being cleaned."

## Mentally tiring

The whole experience has been a positive one for Macis and his team, he says, mulling on the advice and feedback he would offer fellow performers after the production. "When the industry goes back, take care of yourselves and your mental state. The transition back from non-theatrical work is mentally tiring and intense, especially as stage manager," Macis told me.

"I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to trial this and so fortunate that we succeeded despite some of the limitations we had but, most of all, I'm fortunate for the team I had that worked so hard to keep the company safe.

"From the audience's perspective, no one will ever see how much work every member of the technical department are doing, and have done, to keep the company safe on stage and not have an impact at all on their performance."

In this production, the strength of the membership was absolutely crucial, and has enabled us to fight for decent conditions, daily testing and much more. We've worked constantly with the Equity Deputy from the production, the stage management team and the casts to ensure they feel both safe and represented. With membership in the West End currently at its highest ever rate at 85%, the strength of the union is more evident and important than ever before. 🙌



# THE POWER OF CREATION

Few people would claim this year has been anything close to what they imagined. For many of us, we've been forced to work from home – if we're lucky enough to work at all. Video calls, previously hated by the self-conscious, have become a completely normal way of life: mentions of the video meeting app Zoom are ubiquitous, when the majority of people had barely heard of it before. Theatres are threatened with huge income loss and possible closure due to the pandemic, and actors and performers have faced staggering financial difficulty. Creation Theatre approached the global pandemic by meeting the new normal head on: exploring theatre and Zoom together, and researching how audiences and actors alike perceived the performances. Pascale Aebischer, an academic specialising in the research of theatre and technology and the author of the study on Zoom working, spoke to Equity magazine about the project.

## How did the project start?

Lockdown and the first wave of the pandemic coincided with the end of a seven-year research project on how technologies of performance are transforming how audiences experience Shakespeare and the plays of his contemporaries. What I found was that not only had theatre broadcasts, such as the cinema screenings of the most exciting live shows at the National Theatre and other important venues around the country by NT Live and the Shakespeare broadcasts by the Globe, RSC, and Stratford Ontario festival, brought top-quality Shakespeare productions to national and international audiences who could never have seen those shows in person, but the shows themselves had been undergoing a digital transformation. One thing I was particularly interested in

## When lockdown hit, Oxfordshire-based theatre company Creation Theatre began to produce new made-for-digital work for Zoom. Equity Magazine found out more from academic and author Pascale Aebischer

were the digital experiments at the RSC, which alongside its broadcasts had also started to produce made-for-digital work (e.g. a Twitter production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2010, and a Google+ virtual forest for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2013).

So when lockdown started, I was immediately struck by the fact that, whereas the bulk of theatres went to work on opening up their archives of past broadcasts and were asking for donations, which presumably were going to help the institutions but not necessarily the performers who appeared in those broadcasts, there was one company – Creation Theatre – that immediately started to produce new made-for-digital work on the Zoom platform on a ticketed basis. It was also plain to see that Creation's way of working hit a chord, with the company able to put on many more performances than initially planned, audiences gushing on social media about the visceral experience of having been able to watch live theatre in lockdown, and critics in the UK and North America reviewing and promoting a show by a local Oxford company. What excited me, and



what drove me to reach out to Creation Theatre's Lucy Askew to propose carrying out this research, was the realisation that this way of working offered a way out for companies and freelancers because it meant they could continue to create new, live work, and be paid a reliable wage for doing so.

## What did you think you'd learn from the experience? Were there any surprises or unexpected insights?

My hope was that we would learn something about how theatres might find a quick fix to bridge them over the current crisis, and that we would be able to find that this new way of working was tolerable in the circumstances, making it a viable interim option. But what we found from working with Creation Theatre and exploring the audience responses to their *Tempest* was much more encouraging than that: it is that there is a business model here which makes such significant financial and time savings on things such as office and venue hire, organising physical access to performance sites, lighting and set design, as well as travel and subsistence. It is possible to be much more agile than in a building-based and physical performance model in programming, casting, rehearsing and performing new shows – and to be much more friendly to the climate and environment, too, with really substantial carbon savings on travel for both the cast and for audiences. Working digitally, we found, is so cost-effective that it encourages risk-taking, creativity, and



PICTURES: CREATION THEATRE

collaborative ways of working that were previously difficult simply because of geographical distance and time constraints. This allowed Creation Theatre to be more resilient than other companies, and to continue to programme new work and employ freelancers, who were able to earn Equity wages.

We also found that there were real well-being benefits for both the performers and the audiences, perhaps because the performance we were examining happened during the harshest phase of lockdown. The experience for both groups was a profoundly emotional one which they appreciated for the sense of connection and community, as well as hope, that it offered. The experience was particularly valuable for audience members and performers who, in normal times, would have had issues with access: while working digitally could throw up issues around digital inequality (because of issues with hardware and broadband access, or lack of privacy), it could also now suddenly open up access regardless of disability, personal circumstance or geographical location. Perhaps the greatest surprise

was finding out that Creation Theatre and many of its audiences see a longer-term future in digital theatre: even if physical theatre were to become possible again without social distancing, the discoveries made from working with digital media, the collaborations that have become possible, and the thrill of connecting across geographical distances mean that many audience members look forward to watching digital theatre even when physical venues reopen. This points towards a future in which a hybrid of physical and digital performance could be how companies can build resilience into their business model and cope with further restrictions and seasonal fluctuations.

The final strand of our research had to do with the working conditions of performers when home-working. We found that performing on and for Zoom brings with it a unique set of challenges that require an adapted framework for employment: Zoom fatigue impacts on the hours per day that performers can be expected to rehearse, and there are implications for their living spaces and partners too, as part of their home is

converted into a working environment which restricts the freedom of movement of the people they live with. What it is reasonable to expect of a worker, and how to abide by equality and health and safety legislation needs to be quite thoroughly re-thought in this new environment, which is why we worked with Equity representatives to set up some employment guidelines.

## What next?

We have now published the first of two reports about our work; it can be downloaded from the Creation Theatre website. The report contains a digital toolkit which includes advice by Creation Theatre staff based on their experience of going digital, guidelines on employment, and a checklist for performing on Zoom. It also includes preliminary audience research that provides evidence of perceived value-for-money and the viability of charging for live performances. In an environment in which government support is mainly directed at supporting institutions and venues, this offers genuine hope for continued employment of freelancers in the industry.

We therefore expect that our work will help other UK companies see a way of shifting at least a part of their work to digital platforms where they can continue to produce live work, and that the practical advice in the digital toolkit and the encouraging outcomes of our audience research will give them the confidence and practical know-how to embark on their own digital transformation. 🙌

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**2 IT REDUCES COSTS FOR EVERYONE**

**3 INVESTING IN LOCAL JOBS AND SKILLS BRINGS BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND THE WHOLE COMMUNITY**

**4 IT ENABLES ACCESS TO AUTHENTIC VOICES AND UNIQUE LOCAL STORIES**



**CAST IT HERE**

[www.equity.org.uk/cast-it-here](http://www.equity.org.uk/cast-it-here)

Equity has reached a new temporary variation with SOLT and UK Theatre to protect the terms and conditions affecting directors, designers and choreographers as the industry seeks to recover from the Covid crisis. Under the standard terms of the agreement, if a production is abandoned after the point of contract Equity members should receive payment of their subsequent 1/3rd of their fee. The producers sought to abandon these payments, arguing the increased risk of cancellations for reasons related to Covid meant that these automatic payments would only act as a disincentive to produce work until the crisis was over.

**Detailed negotiations**

Members of Equity's elected Directors and Designers' Committee rejected the proposal as it exposed creative team members to the risk of undertaking significant amounts of work, which would go unpaid in the event of a cancellation. After a series of detailed negotiations with SOLT and UK Theatre, the committee was able to reach a position which gave some of the flexibility being sought, but crucially delivered on the union's commitment to ensure that our members' work on productions does not go unpaid.

Directors, lighting designers and choreographers will receive 25% of their fee on signature, a further 12.5% upon instruction to commence work, with further instalments of 27.5% and 35% respectively for commencement of rehearsals/design delivery and press night. If the production is cancelled at any point 60% of the next instalment becomes payable.

Theatre director Robyn Winfield Smith and Charlotte Peters from the committee said: "These were tough negotiations in difficult circumstances for everyone. Critically, this recognises that 50% of the work is undertaken before the commencement of rehearsals, which the committee has long fought to have acknowledged."

Set and costume designers will receive 25% upon signature, 10% once given the go ahead and further payments of 15%, 15%, 10% and 25% respectively for white

## EQUITY FIGHTS FOR PAY AND CONDITIONS

card deadline, final delivery deadline, approval of design and press night. If the production is cancelled at any point 100% of the next instalment becomes payable.

Production designer, Madeleine Girling who sits on the committee said: "The idea that freelancers should have to risk undertaking work that would never be paid for was simply not acceptable. The deal we've reached for set and costume designers not only protects against this, but also starts to breakdown a designer's working process, bringing further attention to the current inadequacies, and helps with our ongoing efforts to ensure fees reflect the true value of design."

The union would like to express its thanks to SDUK, the ALD and SBTD who supported the process of negotiation with advice and guidance to ensure the deal was the best that it could be.

Fiona Watt said: "This has been a long and detailed process to share the logic, expertise and knowledge of our members to secure payment stages that recognise the front loaded work and risk for set and costume designers in their working lives. We will continue with all of our colleagues in SDUK and with the ALD to support one another and Equity in achieving best practice, terms and conditions for all members of the creative team going forward." 🙌



SHUTTERSTOCK



**A**yse Tashkiran and Diane Alison-Mitchell are two movement directors who have been in dialogue about their movement work and the growth of their careers.

A recurrent topic was the discrepancy between the creative and impactful place of movement in rehearsal rooms and on productions on the one hand, and the absence of traces or recognition of that work in the wider profession on the other.

When listening to other movement directors, they noticed many common themes that required unified action. A lack of collective representation for movement directors meant many have been working without a voice, and without the advocacy or resources of organisations such as Equity or a professional guild.

In spring 2019 Ayse and Diane began preparations for a professional body specifically for movement directors.

First, they consulted a range of movement directors. Then they shared their plans with Equity, SOLT, PiPA, ERA 50:50, Casting Directors' Guild, and spoke to associations for other theatre creatives such as lighting, sound, and design. During an open meeting co-hosted with Equity in August 2020 the Movement Directors' Association (MDA) was launched.

During the meeting, a wide range of movement directors voiced concerns about pay, working conditions, credits, transfers and dissemination of work, lack of belonging, lack of wider understanding of the practice, insurance, health and safety, caring duties and schedules, ethics and protocols around contracts and rehearsal rooms, inclusivity, career progression, and well-being.

The conversation revealed a history of under-representation that has impacted working standards and conditions. Within the context of the global pandemic, where all theatre workers are facing great instability, the MDA arrived at a critical moment, highlighting the importance of naming and acknowledging the place of movement directors in the profession.

With Equity's support the MDA will work towards more fulsome, liveable

# MOVING FORWARDS

**A vital but often unsung part of the production process, movement directors have been sidelined for a long time. Now, with the launch of the new Movement Directors' Association, and a push for formal recognition within Equity, they are finally stepping into the spotlight. We talk to Ayse Tashkiran and Diane Alison-Mitchell about their craft**



prospects for movement directors in the reconstruction of the industry. One of the MDA's priorities is to drive formal recognition by the union. This will endow Equity with the means to negotiate with management associations such as the ITC, SOLT/UK Theatre on behalf of movement directors. Joint initiatives are already in development between the MDA and Equity to build a comprehensive picture of the field of movement direction in the UK.

A month later, the MDA is already growing an exciting membership from across opera, theatre, film and television. It is supported by a steering group made up of emerging and established movement directors. This is an organisation led by movement directors for movement directors that celebrates movement, instigates change, and builds community.

The support for the organisation, and its small team, has been significant with alliances forming and resources for members growing. The MDA looks forwards to its ongoing dialogue with Equity.

## Movement directors Q+A

### When did movement directors first appear on productions in the UK?

Movement directors have been around for a while; one of the first 'directors of movement' was named in a 1950s production. Through the 1960s movement directors made sizeable contributions to mainstream productions at the National Theatre (NT) and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Movement directors' work has quietly and slowly grown to permeate many performance genres such as opera, film and television. However, it is the growth of creative teams in the last two decades that has led to a flourishing of movement in productions. Film actors have been vocal about the support of movement for the realisation of the physicality of their roles. Companies like Talawa and Cheek by Jowl embedded the practice into their company structures. When you look at programmes now, frequently you will see that the movement director sits solidly within the creative team. Take a look next time – even if there

isn't an obvious movement sequence or language.

### What do movement directors do?

Movement directors work with the physical, living bodies at the heart of production. They create a movement language or physical style or manifest through performing bodies – the more enigmatic or elusive part of a text or script. They contribute creative movement ideas and invent physical processes, helping to take a production from concept to realisation. They collaborate meaningfully with other members of the wider creative team, often working closely with the director and designer. Movement directors may also work closely with a composer in relation to a complex movement section, a dance or transitions between scenes. Their movement expertise supports and empowers actors and performers for sustainable and enriching movement work for the duration of a project. Through movement, they enable performers to embody the fictional world of the work; and through movement, they help to

build an ensemble as a temporary, vividly embodied community. They have skill and insight into how bodies communicate – not only how performers' bodies communicate amongst the ensemble, but also how the bodies of those on stage communicate with those in the audience. They understand how the actors' individual and collective movement has the potential to affect the audience's bodies – they think a lot about the use of space compositionally and dynamically.

### What is the difference between movement direction and choreography?

The main difference is dance and dancing. Movement directors tend to work broadly to enable movement across all aspects of a production. It might include some dance but that is normally subsumed into the broader picture of the process. For movement directors the creative and dramaturgical collaboration with other creatives such as the director or director of photography is key. The creation of material with the actors is deeply collaborative. Movement directors make

a significant contribution to realisation of the movement within rehearsals, tech and previews, and to the maintenance of movement work during runs or transfers.

### Did you know?

An analysis of the input of movement on NT productions from 1963 to February 2020 (436 shows with movement input were considered) indicates that 'Movement Director' is the most common role title in use at the NT, followed by 'Choreographer', followed by 'Movement'. Few composite titles were used, for example 'Choreographer and Movement Director' (six instances). 'Director of Movement' credit was only used 33 times and 'choreography' 26. In the early years of the NT, variations of 'Dance by' or 'Dances arranged by' (including Dance set by/Advisor/Consultant/Coach) were the norm and account for 50 credits. 📄

**Find out about the MDA at [www.movementdirectorsassociation.com](http://www.movementdirectorsassociation.com) or contact them directly at [admin@movementdirectorsassociation.com](mailto:admin@movementdirectorsassociation.com)**



# FREELANCE THINKERS

## A new task force of freelancers is looking to shake up working practices in theatre

Few people have been as badly affected in the working world than freelancers: ineligible for the government's furlough scheme, excluded by the chancellor's rescue initiatives and facing endless uncertainty around work, in an economy that remains shaky. But for just over three months this summer, 169 freelance workers were sponsored by 150 different theatre companies from across England, Scotland and Wales to form the Freelance Task Force, bringing together practical ideas to help freelancers, and proposals to remake the industry.

Over these three months, the group of freelancers – from a wide range of professional and personal backgrounds – have worked on a variety of different reports, research documents and proposals for the future of theatre when we emerge from the current crisis. We spoke to some of the Equity members who were participating in the task force to find out more.

### Jackie Clune, Equity vice-president

"The Freelancers Task Force was a massive coalition of freelancers from across the industry which sought to make the voices of freelancers heard at the top tables in conversations about how we are to survive as workers in the sector. It quickly became clear that a multiplicity of responses and voices would emerge – ranging from those keen to enter into dialogue within existing structures – such as Arts Council England, large theatre organisations and buildings

– and those who sought a systemic re-imagining. I found my home in a group called Radical Task Force, who insisted that the Covid crisis was an opportunity to 'Burn it Down' and start again in a more equitable and fair way.

I also started a Twitter campaign called Older Women in Theatre, using the hashtag #OWIT – which swiftly gathered many wonderful older women's organisations in a rallying cry for greater representation and more agency.

Being involved gave me a keen sense of the layers of disadvantage and poverty within our industry. There is much work to do to ensure that theatre returns richer in diversity and equality for all freelancers."

**Jackie tweets at @JackieClune**

### Leo Wan

"It became immediately clear that we would face obstacles beyond our control – how could we decide how to make decisions as such a large group, hampered by the fact we were on Zoom?! It became clear that any attempt to impose a hierarchical structure upon the task force would simply replicate the system which had seen freelancers excluded thus far. And that would not do.

Moreover, across the task force there was a greater range of lived experience than I have seen brought together before – people who are disabled by society, people who experience racism, people who face misogyny, and people who face all of these discriminations. The structures that we are used to have never valued these people or allowed them to thrive. And that would not do.

Instead, a somewhat anarchic horizontal structure emerged, people gradually found their tribes and a plurality of approaches was undertaken. Those of us who desire true equity, or perhaps

even justice, learned that we must act with radical kindness and care. We learned that safe spaces are not enough – we need brave spaces.

There will be no single recommendation or manifesto. Already, an astonishing amount of output has been produced – and will continue to be produced.

And though no single recommendation has emerged, I detect a recurring theme throughout the work: more artists making more decisions about more resources. I think that's a principle our trade unions can get behind."

**Leo tweets at @leomarcuswan**

### Dan Ayling, Equity Councillor

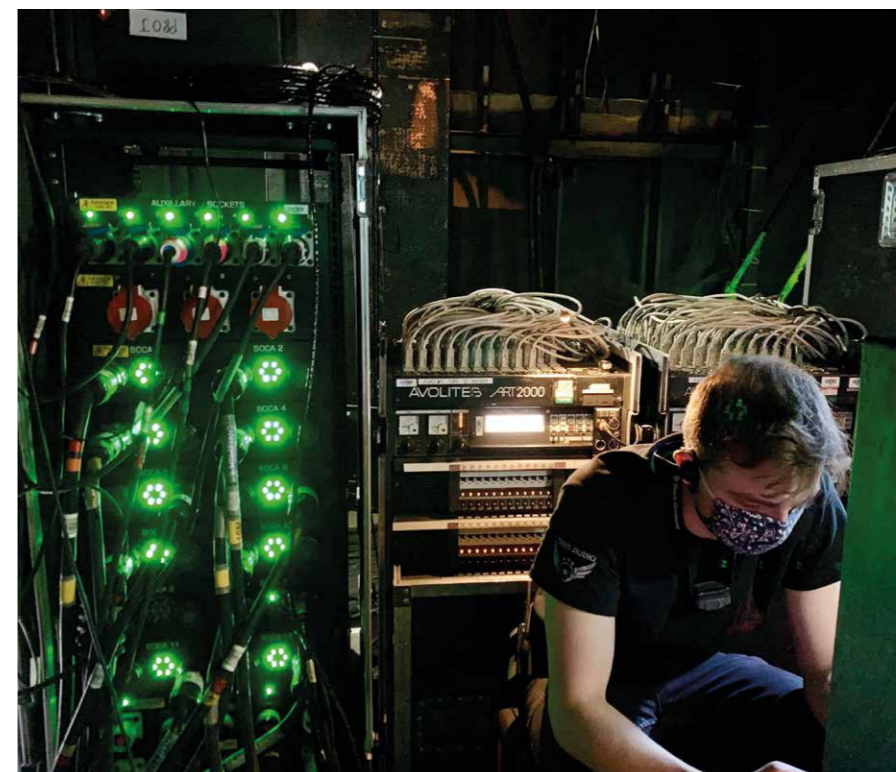
"The task force held meetings with SOLT/UK Theatre, Equity, Arts Council England, Bectu, IPSE, CIF, FMTW, London Theatres Consortium, Arts Council Wales, and Creative Scotland to name just a few.

Meetings also took place regionally or by nation (Scotland, Wales, London, North of England, South East, South West) with topics including access; anti-racist actions; remaking the industry for freelancers; universal basic income or artists' basic income; support for freelancers who have fallen through the gaps; safe working practices during the pandemic and once theatres can re-open; how the government's £1.57 billion support for the industry should be administered to ensure freelancers benefit from it, and how we change industry practice after this period of closure for the better."

**Dan tweets at @DanAyling1**

### Shannon Martin

"Being part of the task force and hearing people endlessly expressing the same sentiment – 'we need to make theatre diverse but how do we do it?' – made me



LUCIANO MACIS

want to create this database of theatre workers who experience racism and/or are D/deaf or disabled. I felt a sort of responsibility to help those who felt they weren't being given a fair chance or felt they weren't getting work because of their race. I wanted to prove to venues, and organisations that there are SO many talented people out there in the industry from myriad backgrounds that there is no excuse for a lack of diversity, and that those who feel excluded should have as many opportunities as everyone else. If people in the industry really want to increase the diversity of theatre, there should be no excuses: they now have a document proving the diversity of people waiting to work, and can extend opportunities and casting invitations to them. I also hope that theatres will become more accessible which will give those who have been marginalised some hope of being able to pursue/extend their career in theatre. I have had quite a lot of interest from producers regarding the database and some have asked to be put on the distribution list once it is complete. A few have said they're looking to start putting together productions with

more diverse people on and offstage. The feedback has been great so far and some of those who have been added to the database have said that it's a great idea, that this should have been done long ago and that they feel like it could make a huge difference in the industry."

**Shannon tweets at @ShannonAisha\_x**

### Jennifer Jackson

"As an artist who works as an actor, movement director and theatre maker, I thought I had a good grasp of our industry, but 13 weeks of discussion, listening, planning, and working alongside so many freelancers was an education. I wanted to put the work of movement directors on the agenda, and I consulted with artists through MoveSpace and with the newly founded Movement Directors Association.

I joined the Dance FTF sub-group, which was established to address the needs, demands, and conversations concerning the dance and movement art sector. We are comprised of producers, consultants, choreographers, dance artists, movement directors, movement practitioners, teachers, and artistic directors based across the UK.

We have compiled a still growing database of over 400 workers in the dance-movement sector, and sent out weekly newsletters containing industry updates, notes from industry meetings, funding news, surveys, plus additional advice/guidance that we have come across or received. We met with One Dance UK, People Dancing, Arts Council England (ACE), as well as with Equity, Society of Independent Professionals & the Self-Employed, and the Independent Theatre Council via our presence in the wider FTF.

We initiated #MovewithMomentum #Still/Moving, a visual protest on Twitter to actively populate and flood social media with movement.

A number of drives have emerged including the Five Guiding Principles Document, a fair trade model draft for freelancers pioneered by the South West FTF, Miranda Henderson and Alister O'Loughlin; IDEALLL, a working practices draft document addressing anti-racism and advocating inclusive practice; the Pay Structures Document, which evaluated current pay rates with the aim to consult with trade unions and organisations; the Anti-Racism and Inclusion Index, which identifies cross-country initiatives, resources, and best-practice examples within the arts.

The Black Lives Matter in Dance subgroup, has held discussions with ACE and are connecting with other groups focussing on this; finally, I am working with a more focused group (including Jessica Wright and Rafia Hussain) to form a National Portfolio Creative Group to discuss and generate proposals and models for more direct and longer-term investment in artists from Arts Council England.

This 13-week period is the beginning of a conversation, of a movement, and going forwards, we want to continue to build on the work we started. Get in touch with us on Twitter at @DanceFTF or on Facebook."

**Jenni tweets at @JenoirRenoir**

**You can find out more about Task Force participants and the work created so far at [www.freelancetaskforce.co.uk](http://www.freelancetaskforce.co.uk)**



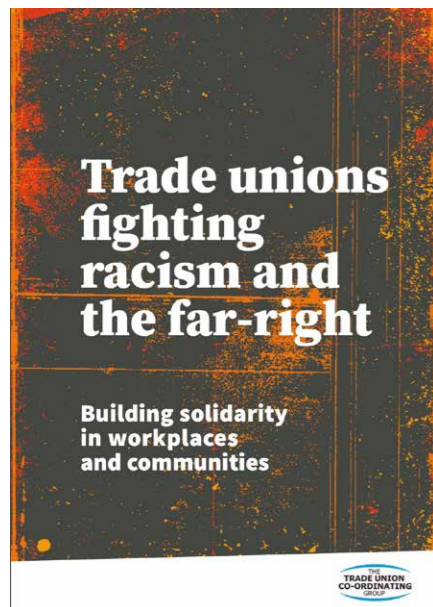
# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM AND EXCLUSION IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY: PAST AND PRESENT

2020 has been a year of unprecedented challenges for the industry and for the union in its fight to represent and advance the interests of members. This year's Black History Month event (*Equity Zooms in on Race*) enables us to explore the impact of the union's work to advance and represent the interests of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) members historically and looking towards the future.

22 October, 15.00

Get the Zoom link at [equity.org.uk/zoom](https://equity.org.uk/zoom)



### Trade Unions Fighting Racism and the Far-Right

Download a copy of the recent publication from the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TUCG) website which brings together detailed accounts of a wide range of trade union activity focused on fighting racism and fascism. The document contains details of Equity's campaign against racist reviews.



## CLARENCE DERWENT AWARDS

In February the ceremony for the 2019 Clarence Derwent awards were held in London, with the awards going to Lucy Briers for her portrayal of Mrs Helseth in *Rosmersholm* at the Duke of York's Theatre, and to Hammed Animashaun for two performances: Willie in *Master Harold and the Boys* at the National Theatre and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Bridge.

Hammed's award was collected on his behalf by fellow actor Jermaine Freeman.

The judges were producer Thelma Holt, critics Susannah Clapp and Matt Trueman, director Jonathan Munby, journalist and dramaturg Kate Bassett and Equity vice-president Ian Barritt. The awards were presented by Equity president, Maureen Beattie.

Equity also took the opportunity to give out our Student Member and Young Member bursaries, introduced in 2006. Our 2019 recipients of the Student Member bursaries were Joseph Scatley, studying at Rose Bruford, and Sharune who is studying at the Reel Scene. The Young Member bursaries were won by singer Jefferson Parlett and comedian Abigail Carter-Simpson.

### Equity Zooms In On...

Since lockdown began, Equity's Equalities Committees have been running a series of events covering all areas of the union; from models to burlesque performers, from contracts to health and safety, activism, government policy, students and much more. Over 40 events have taken place over the past six months, with around 80 members present at each event.

Giovanni Bienne, Chair of the LGBT+ Committee said: "One of the joys and

revelations coming out of the dozens of Zooms the Equalities Committees have organised together with the help of the staff during the pandemic for me has been meeting members who, either for geographical reasons or because their particular area of the industry they're active in is not one of those more prevalent within Equity, have so far not engaged with the union much; seeing them realise that the union can be a source of support to them as well and leave with a renewed belief in the union and their place in it has been

really validating for me as a member and activist."

These events have been an essential way of reaching out to members during the most difficult time the industry has faced. They've enabled members to connect, learn and have their voices heard in unprecedented times.

They have been a huge success, and have proved that we are able to create accessible, engaging events without having to leave our homes!

Amy Dawson



After more than 40 years of service to the union, General Secretary Christine Payne has stepped down

# GOODBYE CHRISTINE

Equity's outgoing General Secretary Christine Payne was awarded Honorary Life Membership at her last Council meeting before retirement on 1 September. The presentation was made to Christine at the end of the meeting at Guild House by Equity President Maureen Beattie and in the presence of a group of Equity councillors, officers and staff who have worked with Christine across her years of service.

Despite the need to adhere to strict social distancing requirements, it was a moving and emotional tribute to Christine, who has spent over 40 years of her working life at Equity.

Christine's achievements during this time include putting equalities at the centre of the union's agenda and her encouragement of young members' participation, leading to the creation of the Young Members Committee. As a result, a large proportion of our members are now under 30.

The creation of Equity's industrial committees and her contribution to the work of the International Federation of Artists were also noted, in particular the solidarity work that Christine led with our sister union in Ghana.

She achieved a place for Equity by right on the General Council of the TUC and in recent years joined the Executive. This is hugely significant in terms of bringing an understanding of the arts and entertainment industries and the working lives of creative workers to the largest representative body of unions in the UK.

In her speech introducing the award, Maureen Beattie said: "Christine is a very impressive person. This is doubly true when you think that she has been undergoing treatment for cancer for most of the last two years. She is modest and unassuming about her extraordinary body of work and her matchless contribution to where we are today - a strong and resilient trade union ready to face whatever challenges are ahead."







**Joan Blackham**

(Council 1994-2000)

Equity members were stunned by Joan Blackham's death on 6 September. Joan's fight with cancer was largely unknown and her usual bright, enquiring and committed demeanour gave little away.

There has been a vast outpouring of love and appreciation for her: she was a hugely experienced character actress working in television, film and theatre (including the RSC) and her comic talent, being recognised early on in her career, led to her appearance in a number of television sitcoms - *To the Manor Born*, *Home to Roost* and *Cry Wolf*. Kenneth Williams chose her to play Fay in his production of *Loot* at the Lyric Hammersmith.

Miriam Margolyes, who did two series with her of *Take a Letter Mr Jones*, devastated by the news, describes her as "an adorable, gifted, loyal, witty darling."

Much has been written and said in recent weeks of Joan's talent, her support of young people through her teaching and her championing of new writing.

She served for six years as a General List Councillor, on the Appeals Committee and for a number of years on the Women's Committee, and it is to her work for and with her Equity sisters I would most like to pay tribute.

It was invaluable. Former branch chair Malcolm Ward told me, "To this day I have no idea how she managed to charm and cajole so many busy, articulate, compelling speakers into giving up their evenings for nothing but a glass of wine!"

Just the most supportive, warm, kind and funny person, Joan the actress, teacher, tennis lover, activist and friend, will be sorely missed.

*Jean Rogers*

**Frances Cuka**

(Council 1974-1975, 1977-1978, 1994-2006)

Frances Cuka, who died February 2020 age 83 following a stroke, had a career spanning 60 years. She trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama after which she joined Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop. Frances shot to stardom playing Jo in Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*. The show went from Stratford East to the West End and then to Broadway. Then followed Beckett's *End Game* and John Arden's *Live Like Pigs* at the Royal Court Theatre. In 1962 Frances starred as Becky Sharp in the musical *Vanity Fair* at the Queen's Theatre, London.

Turning to TV, from 2006 to 2009 Frances played Mrs Basseby, a homeless woman in the BBC's *Casualty*. A run in *Crossroads* was followed by several episodes of *Coronation Street* plus many others. Among her films were *Scrooge* in 1970 as Bob Cratchit's wife and Catherine of Aragon in *Henry VIII and His Six Wives* in 1972.

Elected to Council, during my time as president, I can vouch for her dogged

determination to fight for any cause she believed in on behalf of our members. She was a highly respected councillor.

Frances's final role was Granny in Channel 4's *Friday Night Dinner* in which I play Mr Morris, her boyfriend. We laughed over the fact that having known

each other for some 50 years, this was the first time, we'd worked together.

A credit to our profession both as an actor and for her work in the union, she will be remembered with pride by those who knew her.

*Harry Landis*



**Roy Hudd OBE**

(Trustee)

Roy, who has died aged 83, would often recall, fondly, the debt he owed to his gran, who brought him up and introduced him to the delights of variety via regular visits to the Croydon Empire where he saw many of his comedy heroes. From thereon he was hooked. He went on to achieve so much himself - comedian, actor, author, journalist, playwright and record-breaking, award-winning radio star.

With his encyclopaedic knowledge and phenomenal memory he became a recognised authority on the history of music hall, variety and pantomime. His impressive list of achievements

throughout his public life is so well documented it is unnecessary to repeat them here. But he had a private side which is not so well known.

I first met Roy in 1975, at virtually the midpoint in his long life and soon learned how acutely he cared for the welfare of his fellow artistes. He was a champion of the underdog. For many years he was an Equity trustee and a leading figure in the charity work of the Grand Order of Water Rats. No doubt due to his own humble beginnings, wherever he encountered hardship he wanted to help.

I know he would have been heartbroken by the havoc wreaked on our industry by

this pandemic. Despite his illness, I have no doubt that, simply down to his caring and generous nature, he would have become a key figure in leading a drive to raise much needed donations for our besieged Benevolent Fund.

From that initial meeting in 1975 I worked closely with Roy during most of the remaining forty years of his life and it was an immense privilege, not only to share the copious laughter, but to get to know and love this deeply compassionate man. In an ironically theatrical fashion, it was on the Ides of March this year that we all lost an invaluable and true friend.

*Chris Emmett*





**Louis Mahoney**

(Council 1977-1979, 1980-1986, 1988-1990, 1992-2002 and vice-president 1994-1996)  
Trailblazing actor Louis Felix Danner Mahoney died at the grand age of 81 in June. Born in the Gambia, he came to the United Kingdom in the 1960s to study medicine, but he exchanged his doctors apparel after developing a passion for the arts, training at London Central School of Speech and Drama.

Always aware of the less fortunate having fewer opportunities in the field, he created workshops for aspiring young Black youth and fledgeling actors.

Louis was one of the first Black actors at the Royal Shakespeare Company, but his extensive TV and film career stretched from the 1960s up to 2020 before his passing. Such classic TV work, reflecting the depths of his ability included *Doctor Who*, *Fawlty Towers*, *Casualty*, *The Lenny Henry Show*, *Counterpart* and *The Split*. In cinema, he appeared in films including *Cry Freedom*, *White Mischief*, *Random*, and *All in the Game*.

Louis had the biggest heart, and always made you feel good about yourself when you were in his presence. He was an incomparable anti-racist activist throughout his career, and proudly represented African and Asian actors on Equity's Executive Council through the years. He was joint vice-president for Equity from 1994 to 1996.

His stellar body of work will be a vast pool of wealth for those who will be following in his footsteps and learning from the gentle master that he was. His light will shine forever: a fitting tribute during reflection on Black History Month. *Dawn Hope*

**Brenda Marsh**

(Council, 1994-2000)

Brenda Marsh was a glamorous entertainer who started her career as a big band singer. As her success progressed Brenda became a much admired artiste and enjoyed work in many nightclubs, later working on cruise ships and Combined Services Entertainments, all of which took her around the world. Her stories about the comparison of working in the relative luxury of the West End nightclubs and the deprivation of entertaining in war situations were amazing.

Brenda's wide experiences made her so knowledgeable that when the Equity variety branch in the North East of England wanted a new Hon. Secretary in 1987 Brenda Marsh was the obvious choice. The branch benefited from her knowledge and her unstinting desire to help, support and protect her members' work. In 1995, when the BBC was filming *Our Friends In The North* Brenda agreed to find all background artistes for the whole series to avoid non-professionals being used. This was so successful the BBC included a double page report with thanks to Brenda and Equity in their

internal newspaper. In 1996 Brenda became an Equity variety councillor, her many experiences making her an asset to the profession. Brenda finished as Equity councillor in 2012 and carried on as branch secretary until 2014. Brenda died in April 2020.

Those of us who knew her will miss her great personality, sense of humour and her friendship. The variety profession will miss her loyalty and dedication. Always remembered, Felix Danner Brenda Marsh.

*Yvonne Joseph*



**Robert Mill**

(Council 1994-2000)

Robert Mill, known to everyone as Bobby, was born in Marylebone in 1933. He was educated at Winchester College and Magdalen College, Oxford - though he left without taking a degree. He did part of his national service as a junior officer in Korea where his platoon included Maurice Micklewhite (Michael Caine). After a short spell as a policeman, he got a scholarship to RADA.

His screen work included *Enemy of the State*, *The Avengers*, *Dad's Army*, *The Dick Emery Show*, *Tales of the Unexpected* and *A Man For All Seasons* but his main love was theatre. He met his lifelong partner John at Northampton Rep in 1961; they were together until



John died in 2010. Bobby was a staunch supporter of Equity and represented the South-East Area on Council 1994-2000. He served on the TV Commercials Working Party at a time of great conflict with the producers. Everyone loved Bobby and Bobby loved people. His huge social conscience led to his being a founder member of ICAF (the International Committee for Artists' Freedom) and later of IPAT (now Safety Curtain).

In particular, he gave great support to the Chilean performers who fled from the regime of Pinochet. His humanity and compassion led to his becoming a prison visitor and a humanist celebrant. He died in Denville Hall on 30 August.

*Ian Barritt*

**Tommy Wallis**

(VAF and Variety Committee)

Tommy Wallis was a renowned variety artiste and multi-instrumentalist. He worked in variety theatres, summer seasons, pantomimes and various variety shows throughout the country. He later met and married his lovely wife Beryl and they became a double act known as 'Tommy Wallis and Beryl'.

In 1974, when Tommy's father died, they decided to adopt the family name and became 'The Plummers'. The act was popular with audiences, fellow performers, and variety employers alike. Tommy and Beryl played number one theatres and highly prestigious venues with great success.

When the VAF was incorporated with Equity in 1967 Tommy was one of the variety members who ensured it was not an amalgamation, changing the name of

both unions, but an incorporation keeping the name 'Equity incorporating Variety Artistes Federation' intact. He served on the variety committee from then on, and helped create the variety committee rules, including a clause stating that any change to these rules must be agreed by the variety committee before getting council endorsement. His knowledge and gentlemanly approach were appreciated, valued and a great asset to variety.

Tommy was also a member of the Water Rats. I am sure they will miss him as much as we do. Tommy Wallis died on 10 June 2020 aged 92, a wonderful theatrical life over. We send our love to Beryl. Tommy will be remembered as a consummate professional entertainer, a great supporter of the profession and a perfect gentleman.

*Yvonne Joseph*



**Hamish Wilson**

(Council 1974-1975)

Hamish Wilson was a radio producer and character actor who was both an Equity member and a member of staff in our Glasgow office.

Born in 1942, in Glasgow, Hamish was raised in Cambuslang where he discovered his love of drama and began

working professionally while still at school. He trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, graduating in 1963 and winning the award for Most Promising Male Performance. He then appeared in a range of roles in both theatre and television, with notable appearances in included *Greyfriars Bobby*

(1961), *Vital Spark* (1966), *Softly Softly* (1967) and *Doctor Who* (1968). The 1970s saw Hamish move into the world of radio production, where he took on a series of roles across STV, Radio Forth, Radio Clyde, and the BBC. By the time he left the BBC in 1999, he had won 23 awards for his radio productions.

As well as being a lifelong member of Equity, Hamish worked for Equity in the 1960s. He started in the union's Glasgow office, then located in Bath Street. He was soon invited to work in Harley Street, which he did before the lure of the stage and the studio dragged him back.

Hamish was much-loved by all of those who worked with him, and he will be greatly missed. Equity President Maureen Beattie said "I worked with Hamish many times when he was a drama producer with BBC Radio Scotland. He was a joy to work with - kind and encouraging and always with a ready ear for every member of the team. I was very sorry to hear of his passing."

Hamish died on 26 March, having contracted coronavirus. He is survived by his three daughters and four grandchildren.

*Lorne Boswell*



RUTHERGLEN REFORMER



*With regret it is recorded that since the publication of the last edition of Equity magazine we have learned of the deaths of the following members:*

A Crackers	Brian Quinlan	Doreen Morton	Hans Meyer	John Rolfe	Malcolm Terris	Patrick Fairley	Sally Jacobs
Adam Darius	Brian Sonny Nickels	Dorothy Robson	Harley Du Maurier	John Savill	Marcus Mariner	Paul Maure	Sam Scurfield
Adolphe Menjou	Brij Mohan	Dorothy Sylvia Gallon	Harold King	John Saxon	Margalo Gillmore	Paul Raymond Iles	Sarah Shipton
Aimé Major	Bromwyn Josene Jennison	Douglas Gray	Harry Dickman	John Shrapnel	Margaret Cotter	Paul Shearstone	Sean Arnold
Akim Tamiroff	Bruce Myers	E J Thomson-Macgregor	Harry Kupfer	John Tydeman	Margareta Hallin	Paul Wynndebaggge-Saunders	Segun Akingbola
Alan Harris	C P Lee	Earl Cameron	Harry Stockwell	Johnny Ascot	Margery Powell	Paula Kelly	Sergio Fantoni
Alan Turner	Canada Lee	Ebe Stignani	Heather Jean Chasen	Johnny Beattie	Maria Fromet	Paula Tilbrook	Sharron Byrne
Alastair Bannerman	Carl Barry	Edd Byrnes	Helen Latham	Johnny Shack	Marie Ashton	Pearl Carr	Shirley Douglas
Albert Dinan	Caroline Mortimer	Eddy Large	Helen Reddy	Jonathan Drew	Marie Fredriksson	Peggy Batchelor	Silvano Carroli
Alberto Lorca	Carolyn Foulkes	Eddy May	Helena Braun	Jonathan Scott	Marilyn Imrie	Penny Morrell	Simone Lloyd-Davies
Alex Clark	Catherine Kessler	Edward Holmes	Hertha Töpfer	Joseph Buloff	Marion Shakespeare	Peter Badger	Sonja Ziemann
Alfred Lunt	Chaim Towber	Effie Afton	Honor Blackman	Joy Graham	Marjorie Tallchief	Peter Stanton	Soon-Teck Oh
Alfred Oldridge	Charlie Noble	Effie Atherton	Howard Bennett	Joyce B Wright	Marjorie Thomson	Phil Hearne	Stella Farrance
Alfred Poell	Cherie Baillie	Elfriede Trötschel	Hugh Leadon	Julia Breck	Mark Lloyd	Philip Fitzpatrick	Stella Goddard
Alison Fiske	Cherrie Butlin	Elise Valee	Ian Ainsley	Julian Boote	Mark Rocco	Philip Latham	Steve Parry-Hearn
Allan Andrews	Chris Needs	Elizabeth Flanagan	Ian Halliburton	Julian Curry	Mart Crowley	Philip Waddilove	Stuart Whitman
Aloysius Valente	Christine Burn	Eric Waite	Ian Holm	Julie Felix	Martin Cosgrif	Pip Hinton	Sue Cowling
Andre Eglevsky	Christopher Stanton	Étienne Decroux	Ian Royce	Juliette Greco	Mary Miller	Randy Barlow	Sue Walker
André Ptaszynski	Claude Nollier	Eva Bergh	Ian Whitcomb	June Broughton	Max Von Sydow	Raphaël Coleman	Tami Lynn
Andree Melly	Claudette Colbert	Evelyn Friedlander	Ida Schuster	Ken Joy	Merrill Colebrook	Raymond Lee Lomas	Tasneem Gates
Andrew Jack	Claudine Auger	Farzaneh Taidi	Igor Yousekevitch	Kenneth Kennedy	Michael Angelis	Reginald Stewart	Tatiana Lieven
Ann Lynn	Clive Graefe	Fernand Fabre	Imogen Moynihan	Kenneth McReddie	Michael Dickinson	René Auberjonois	Terence Frisby
Ann Wrigg	Clive J Stubbs	Frances Cuka	India Adams	Kenneth Seeger	Michael Elliott	Richard Baldwyn	Terry Hands
Anna Cheselka	Clive Rust	Frances Davie	Ivor Danvers	Kenny Rogers	Michael Gabe	Richard Codman	Terry Haworth
Anna Karina	Colin Star	Francisco Reynders	Jack Doughty	Kerstin Meyer	Michael Hennessy	Richard Earthy	Thelma Falls-Hand
Anna Korwin	Crazy Cavan Grogan	Frank Ellis	Jack McBride	Kirk Douglas	Michael Lonsdale	Richard Ford	Tim Brooke-Taylor
Anne Bishop	Cynthia Etherington	Fred Whitham	Jackie Howe	Kristin Linklater	Michael McEvoy	Ricky Valance	Timothy Earle
Annie Ducaux	Dan Cunningham	Frederic Stebler	James Garbutt	Lane Meddick	Michael Medwin	Robert Manuel	Timothy Oldroyd
Annie Ross	Dan Van Husen	Gabriel Bacquier	James Lambeth	Laurie Morgan	Michael Mould	Robert Mill	Tom Bradford
Antonio Mairena	David Atkinson	Gabriel Gascon	Jan Cieplinski	Leighton Camden	Michael Sadler	Robert Sayer	Tom Lee
Archie Savage	David Collings	Gabriella Tucci	Jay Benedict	Len Kavanagh	Mike Walling	Robert West	Tommy Wallis
Arthur Dignam	David Crane	Gail Leslie	Jean Babilée	Leonore Kirschstein	Mirella Freni	Robin Estill	Tony Addams
Arthur Wells	David Gardner	Gary Allen	Jean Gascon	Leslie Randall	Mony Dalmes	Rodney Litchfield	Tony Garnett
B J Hogg	David Hirsch	Geneviève Guitry	Jean Guélis	Leslie Weekes	Myrna Loy	Roger Garceau	Tony Scannell
Barbara Bonhomme	David K Grant	Geoffrey Shaw	Jean Knibbs	Lewis Sewell	Nancy Gower	Roland Casenave	Trevor W.P. Ray
Barbara Crawford	David Morton	George Allen Humphreys	Jean-Louis Roux	Liesbeth List	Neil Howlett	Roland Roy	Trini López
Barbara Jefford	David Mounfield	George B. Škibine	Jeanne Mattocks	Lisa-Marie Gordon	Nelly Guillerem	Roma Tomelty	Tristan Roland Cass
Barbara Payton	David Rahe	George Lannes	Jelko Yuresha	Lisan Kay	Neville Buswell	Ron Georgeson	Véra Korène
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Berta Gersten	Dera Cooper	Glyn Welden	Jill Gascoine	Louise Thomson	Norm Nielsen	Ronnie Curran	Wendy Shepherd
Betty Wright	Des Cunliffe	Graham Ashe	Joan Blackham	Luba Kadison	Norman Bacon	Ronnie Storm	William Dufriis
Bettye Bryant	Diana Adams	Graham Martin	Joan Corfield	Luke Westlake	Olive McFarland	Rosaleen M Morrison	William Eedle
Brenda Marsh	Diana Bramwell	Gratien Gélinas	Joan Davies	Mac Poole	Olivia De Havilland	Rosemary Donnelly	William Q Cave
Brendan Barry	Diana Rigg	Graydon Gould	John Benfield	Maggie Fitzgibbon	Orson Bean	Rosie Jeavons	Winifred Williams
Brian Dennehy	Dixon James Scott	Gustav Wally	John Cannon	Magic Wiz	Paddy Croft	Roy Hudd	Wyn Thomas
Brian E Cook	Dolly Haas	Hamish Wilson	John Durnin	Malcolm Dixon	Paschal Allen	Roy Lansford	Yvonne Gaudeau
Brian Innes	Don Paul	Hannah Lawrence	John Falconer	Malcolm Farquhar	Pat Quayle	Ruth Dawes	Zoe Caldwell



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# Looking back, going on

Maureen Beattie remembers her father, and looks to the union's future

I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT about continuity in recent times. Some of you will know that my father, Johnny Beattie, who was a variety artiste and actor and career-long member of Equity, passed away in July this year. The silver lining in my family's particular Covid cloud was that the virus meant I was able to be with Dad and care for him throughout his final days.

One of the last things he did in his life was to vote for me to continue as President of our union. Alas, he didn't live to see me voted in for a second term, but I know he would have been immensely proud, as my activism meant a great deal to him.

There's a story I have told many times about the beginning of Dad's career in show business which I think bears repeating here. As a young husband and father of a newborn baby (me!), who was just starting out in show business having begun his working life as an apprentice electrician building ships on the Clyde, he was offered a one night gig at the Gaiety Theatre in Leith. He got his act together – literally! – and his costumes and his props and he took himself over to Edinburgh from Glasgow, and when he got to the theatre there was a notice pinned to the stage door "Insufficient bookings. Go home." There was no compensation and no expenses because his contract had a "No play, no pay" clause.

Having come from the passionate unionism of the shipyards, Dad saw clearly that the way forward for himself and his fellow workers in the entertainment industry was in the power of the collective, and he went about recruiting members for The Variety Artistes' Federation and what was then The British Actors' Equity Association.

The stark reality is that without Equity we're heading for "No play, no pay" once more.

When I wrote in an earlier column

that we live in parlous times, I had no idea just how parlous they were about to become. The pandemic has shone a glaring spotlight on the fragility of the workers in our industry. It has brought into sharp focus all the inequalities which are endemic in every form of live performance and recorded media.

While we at Equity have accepted this wake up call and are passionately determined to right the wrongs of the past, the powers that be – the holders of the purse strings – are using the Covid emergency to divide and therefore rule us. The gap between rich and poor is widening all the time. Why don't we have a universal basic income? Because not having one keeps us on our toes, keeps us uncertain, hungry and fearful, just like my father was back in 1953.

I have served on Council now for six years and in that time it has been my great privilege to serve alongside the magnificent Christine Payne, who has worked tirelessly for Equity for 41 years and led us as General Secretary for the past decade and a half. She is a very impressive person. She leaves us with a union which is strong, resilient and, most importantly, open to new ways forward: not least in handing the baton to her successor, Paul Fleming.

We are at our best when the inventiveness and creativity of our members dovetails with the practical business of protecting and enhancing our terms and conditions, the remit of our wonderful staff. If we are to go forward into a bright new future – which I believe passionately we can – we will do so if we remain constant to the principles that brought Christine Payne to work for Equity all those decades ago.

In his recent Radical Statement of Intent Paul Fleming said, "Our union believes in

three things: All working people have the right to be artists. All artists have the right to a dignified life at work. The cause of labour is the hope of the world."

The cause of labour is the hope of the world.

That will do me fine and I expect it would do my Dad fine, too. 🗨️



**Maureen Beattie**  
Equity President

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Equity's **International Committee for Artists Freedom** brings together activists from across our union to campaign against persecution of creative workers around the world. Right now we are supporting artists caught up in the political upheaval in Belarus, we are working with local NGOs in Nigeria to protest a death sentence imposed on a singer accused of blasphemy and express our solidarity with Hungarian drama students occupying their university in Budapest. The Covid crisis is having a huge impact on creative workers globally and we must stand ready to do all that we can to support each other. ICAF is interested in hearing from Equity members who have an interest in supporting our campaigning work, especially members from under-represented groups within our union.

To find out more please contact:  
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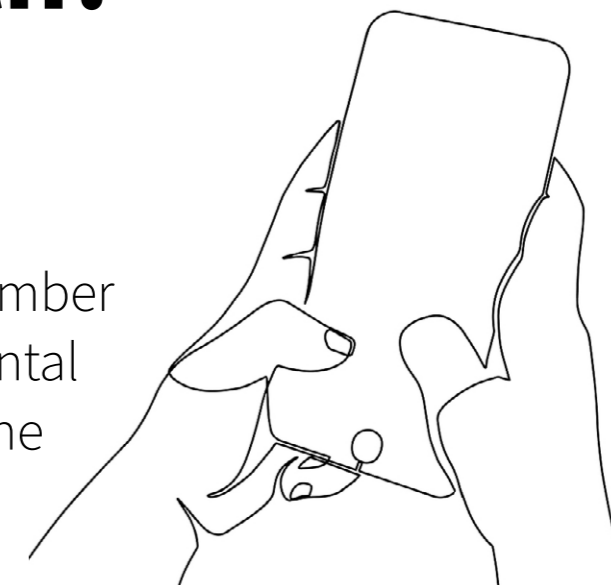
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