

## **Minutes of Essex and Hertfordshire Branch Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024 (via Zoom)**

### **Attending**

Dee Mardi (chair) Stephen Moriaty, Nikki Simon, Andrew Alton Read, Danny Worthington, Martyn Harrison, Andrew Wilkinson, Alice d'Illumiere, Tony Gardner, Connor TC Murray, Abigail Hunt, Catherine McNeil, Erin Brittle, Kerri Green, Julian Mount, Hywel Morgan (SE Area councillor)

### **Apologies**

Liz Mullen, Merilina Finlay, Brian Shaw, Lesley Ann Webb, Catherine Adams, Anna Albici, Ian Britten Hull, Sharon Eckman, Caroline St John, Charlie Wilson

### **News from the union - Hywel Morgan**

The new councillors had 1 and a half days of training. The turn out for the election was 7.53%. Which, although low is average for a union election.

Eight Equity members are taking Spotlight to court. Concerning the fees that they charge. The names of the members are on the Equity website. Charging fees to people looking for work is illegal. But there has been a loophole in the 1973 Act, which has been exploited by casting sites. There is a similar casting site in Europe. That only charges £80. Apparently Spotlight will be going into Europe. It is now owned by Americans, possibly private equity? HM. believed that £80 would still be a lot to pay just for a web page. He calculates this on the size of an individual's web page on Spotlight and compares it with the amount charged by Google and others for Cloud Storage.

There are negotiations going on with regards to advertising and it's hoped to reach an agreement with the advertisers organisations. Equity has taken legal advice that as a union they can publish a rate card as to what should be paid for commercials. It is hoped that this will bring the relevant organisations to the table for further discussions and agreements.

HM said that there is to be an anti racist, anti fascist march.

With regard to recorded media, PACT are renegotiating. They're trying to enshrine the self tape guidelines in the agreements. They have the support of. The CDG and PM A. They're trying to move towards Zoom casting rather than self tapes. Some producers were surprised to learn that casting directors were asking for 100 or more Self tapes which were then viewed briefly by associates to bring it down to a number to put to the producers. It is hoped that there will be return to more in person castings either by Zoom or in the room.

### **Speaker- Alice d'illumiere** (Equity member Darren Gooding)

Alice gave a very interesting talk. She said that she is gender fluid and appears both as Darren and Alice. She is not a drag act. She began as an actor but was unsuccessful. She was often called for auditions that were not suitable and so decided to start producing her own work in order to cast herself. She became a writer by default and had been a script reader and editor. Alice talked about the practicalities of self producing and that it is basically a cottage industry. She lives amongst her costume store. It's of her time is spent working as an administrator and 10% as a performer. Asking nicely can go a long way. Venues can be understanding when funding is late. There is help out there if you know where to look. Eg STAMP Which stands for supporting theatre artists and makers of performance [www.stamplondon.org](http://www.stamplondon.org) And house SE theatre network [www.housetheatre.org.uk](http://www.housetheatre.org.uk) One tip was not to conceal information but do not give people information that they do not need. A documentary about Eddie Izzard titled "Believe" most recommended.

### **Plug Point**

Nikki Simon Set that her film Toby will premiere on Sunday the 11th of August and tickets can be obtained from her if you e-mail [variety.essexandherts@yahoo.com](mailto:variety.essexandherts@yahoo.com)

She is also appearing at county hall in the Paddington bear experience.

Chris Gasper said that the Pier Puppet Festival will take place at Southend between the 9th and 11th of August. Details can be found on the Southend Pier website.

Alice is touring a show The Trans Lady Sings

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved- proposer Andrew Wilkinson seconded Dee Mardi

### **Showcase**

Stephen Moriarty said that progress had been made and two venues located in Covent Garden. The first is at the actors church which may be available for the charity price of £750 but this would have to be a one off events. There is another which may be suitable and much cheaper but this needs to be investigated further. Nikki Simon said that she was prepared to have a look at the venue. If this venue is suitable then if the showcase was successful it may be possible to hold further showcases in the future.

### **Reports**

**Treasurer-** Andrew said the current balance was 2358 pounds 47 and had been no expenditure since the last meeting.

**Variety** - Nikki Simon said that various variety groups were very active who stop she would like to know who our variety members are. Please contact Nikki on her e-mail [variety.essexandherts@yahoo.com](mailto:variety.essexandherts@yahoo.com) if you are a variety performer.

**Conference** – Dee Mardi attended this year's conference which was very inspiring. The motion that branch put forward proposed by David and seconded by D was unanimously passed. Her full report will be put onto the branch website.

### **Members health updates**

Martyn Harrison was attending his first meeting for a while having had surgery and was progressing well. He advised that our long standing member Faith Hines was not well and hoped the branch could send her our best wishes. A couple of other members mentioned their own particular problems and well wished well by those attending.

### **Any Other Business**

Danny Worthington said that the Towngate theatre in Basildon would be shutting down early for the summer because they have been having problems with the electrics and as a result have lost a couple of shows. The Thameside theatre is still going and he's now taking bookings to March.

Erin Brittle Is concerned at a lack of diversity and how women are portrayed on screen. She had raised this matter with Dee Mardi after the last meeting and D has contacted the women's committee but not yet had a response. She said that at conference it was suggested that she should also contact the screen and media committee and she would be chasing the lack of response.

The date of the next meeting was provisionally set for 28th September with venue to be decided