

Report

Can we improve the way jobs are advertised to provide a fairer system for all?

Sean Turner, 17 February 2015

We began by discussing what ways forward we can suggest to improve the problem. There was some conversation back and forth asking whether this was a problem at all. Is it not just that the jobs just aren't there?

As it stands production companies rarely advertise directorships and assistant positions publicly. It is therefore impossible to apply for 95% of directors, you have to know the right people and already be on the venues radar.

It is understood that freelance or contractor work is not subject to the same laws about advertising positions but major institutions such as the National seem to employ Staff Directors on an invitation only basis (even though it is a PAYE position). We all agree that we probably don't have enough knowledge of employment law at the present time to postulate further. However we think we should interrogate these practices, especially where public money is being spent.

We spoke about the idea of SDUK providing a centralised job posting service (like Arts Jobs) simply for directorial positions and opportunities. Perhaps this would tempt more people in to advertising as they know what a good pool of talent they will be reaching out to. We also recognise that there needs to be some kind of incentive for the employer but at present we don't know what that is.

One major stumbling block is time. The admin costs of receiving and reading thousands of applications is astronomical. How can employers justify it and find the time?

Another point raised was whether SDUK could persuade theatres to open up their doors maybe even once a year/season to do some general meetings with directors that are new to the theatre.

We all understand that the onus is still on us as directors to bang at doors, get to know artistic directors and find out about future programming and we spoke a little about our own practices in this regard.

There's a problem that goes along with this discussion, it's that we feel that for the most part artistic directors are not taking enough responsibility for seeing new work. It's a catch 22, they won't employ you until they've seen your work but they won't come and see your work. Again, we get that a lot of this is down to time restraints.

We talked briefly about the idea of directors showreels, should we be making sure Artistic Directors see our work by sending it to them!

Ways forward/next steps:

We think a job posting service via the SDUK website could prove a good idea and may lead to more theatres advertising jobs on there than on sites like Arts Jobs and Stage Jobs Pro as they will be reaching bona fide directors.

We think SDUK could put pressure on theatres to try and make as many jobs as

possible public knowledge. Or at least provide a means of finding out about them.