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Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ
www.artscouncil.org.uk
Telephone: 0845 300 6200
Textphone: 020 7973 6564
Charity registration no: 1036733

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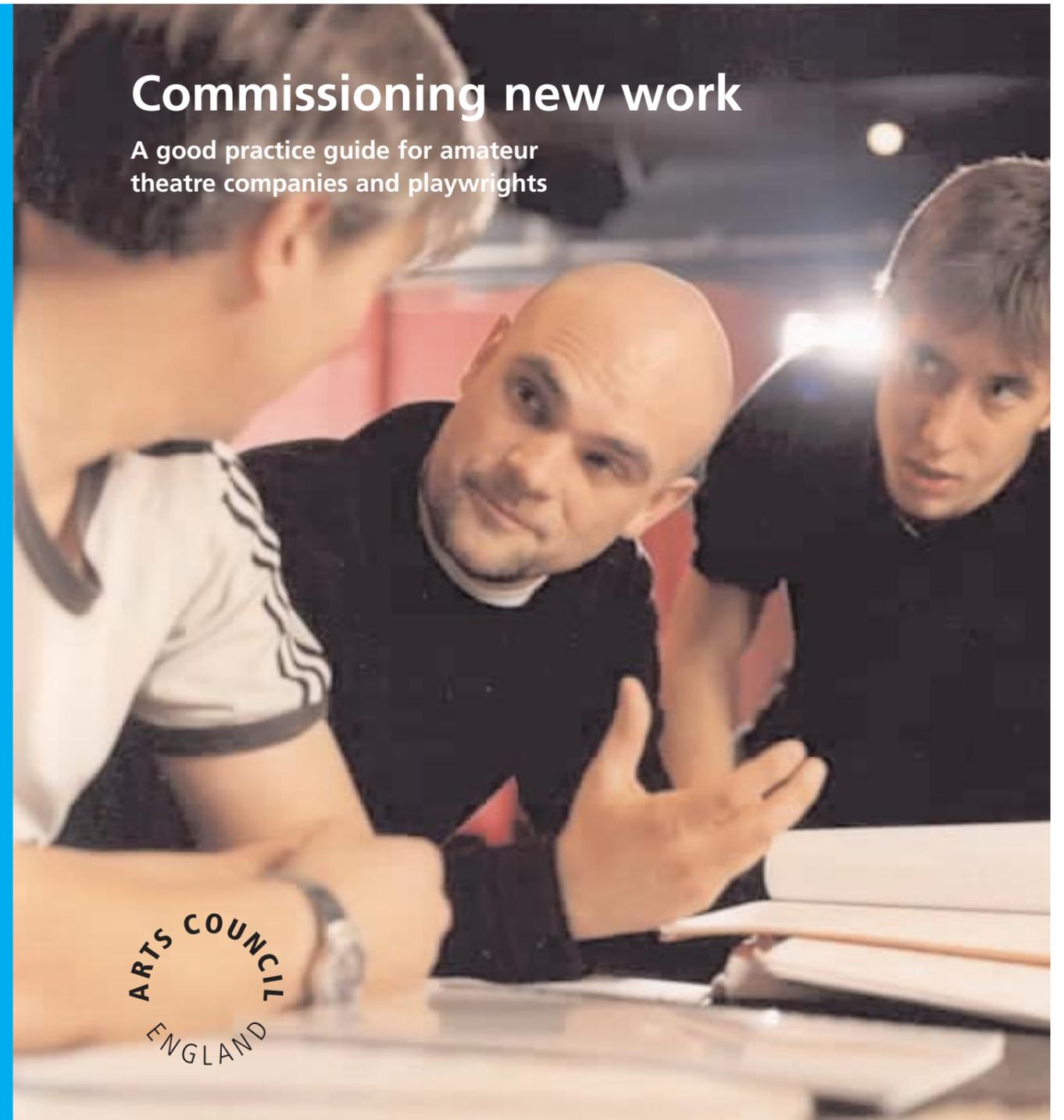
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Commissioning new work – A good practice guide for amateur theatre companies and playwrights

Commissioning new work

A good practice guide for amateur theatre companies and playwrights





Writer Jonathan Meth
writernet@btinternet.com

Front cover photograph Robin Thompson
robint@talk21.com

Editor Sue Stewart

Proofreader Alison Hill

Arts Council project director Karen McKinnon-Lilley

Publication coordinator Sarah Boiling

Designer Flag
www.flag.co.uk

If you have any feedback about this guide, or suggestions for additional information, we would very much welcome your contributions. We plan to update the information contained in this guide online at www.artscouncil.org.uk. This will allow us to incorporate your views and experiences for the benefit of other playwrights and amateur companies.

Please email us at: amateurtheatreguide@artscouncil.org.uk

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Marketing and touring

A practical guide to marketing an event on tour

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Commissioning new work

A good practice guide for amateur
theatre companies and playwrights

Jonathan Meth

Contents

	Page
Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Working together	9
Finding each other	17
Good practice guidelines	21
Copyright and contracts	33
Sources of funding for commissioning and producing new work	39
Marketing	49
Publication of new plays and further development	55
Appendixes	59
Appendix 1: Amateur theatre – the wider context	60
Appendix 2: Competitions	61
Appendix 3: Festivals	63
Appendix 4: BT Biennial	66
Appendix 5: Models of playwright/amateur theatre collaboration	70
Appendix 6: Regional and national playwrights' organisations	76
Appendix 7: Key websites for locating writers	85
Appendix 8: Key organisations	88
Appendix 9: Commissioning and agreements	93
Appendix 10: Funding	97
Appendix 11: Audience development	102
Appendix 12: Publishers	106
Further reading and other useful information	111
Acknowledgements	112

Foreword

Theatre-goers are inspired by a great performance every night of the week. For some, the inspiration will stay with them forever. The experience can be even deeper for a person taking part in a play, as actor, lighting designer or writer. This is just as true for those who tread the boards after work, as for those who try to make a living from it.

For an increasing number of playwrights, the distinction between 'professional' and 'amateur' theatre is unimportant. They realise that amateur theatre offers the opportunity to get the play on the stage, often with fewer practical restrictions on the imagination.

Working with an amateur company can give a playwright the chance to write different kinds of plays for larger casts and new audiences. At the same time, the commissioning of new work can meet a company's specific needs and those of the community they are drawn from.

I hope this practical guide will encourage playwrights and amateur theatre companies to work together more often and discover the great benefits this can bring to everyone involved.

Nicola Thorold
Director of Theatre
Arts Council England

Introduction

The English amateur theatre sector has begun to broaden its repertoire in recent years to encompass working with contemporary playwrights – commissioning, presenting and promoting new work – and has had significant successes, from the point of view of audiences, playwrights and theatres. Several theatres have asked for more guidance and information on commissioning new work than was currently available, given this increasing desire to work with new playwrights. For their part, many playwrights are also keen to work more with the amateur sector, and see this as providing valuable career development and new writing challenges. Arts Council England is responding to this emerging demand by producing this guide, which gives advice and information on all aspects of commissioning new work. It is intended to be useful for both theatres wishing to work with new playwrights, and for playwrights themselves.

Specifically, the guide is aimed at:

- the amateur theatre company wishing to work with a writer
- an individual within an amateur theatre company who wishes to drive change
- the writer, new or experienced, who would like to work within amateur theatre

Amateur theatre is a highly successful art form that brings benefits to both artists and communities. That it is evolving to encompass support for new writing is an exciting new development, which this guide aims to support and encourage. However, it is not intended to be prescriptive in any way: many amateur theatres prefer to work solely within the traditional repertoire and have much success doing so. For those within the sector, however, who do wish to initiate or consolidate this form of partnership working, and for writers wishing to pursue career development opportunities, it will provide a practical and valuable source of advice and information.

Playwrights and amateur companies working together

First of all, why new plays?

'What's wrong with another production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Ghost Train*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*? Well, new plays are more successful. The evidence suggests that theatre boards who employ artistic directors with flair and imagination – men and women for whom new writing is not a burden, or a gamble, or a chore, but the beating heart of their policy: for whom the word risk is applied to the content of the play and not the columns of a balance sheet – are actually the most successful. Look at Richard Eyre's Nottingham Playhouse, Peter Cheeseman's early years at The New Vic in Stoke, Jude Kelly's West Yorkshire Playhouse, Bolton Octagon run by Andy Hay, Ayckbourn's place in Scarborough, Alan Dossier at the Liverpool Everyman, Contact Theatre under Richard Williams... The best seasons of the RSC have always been the ones which matched Shakespeare play for play with robust new work by a living writer...

All of those directors understand that a play is a practical blueprint for the stage and it is their job to translate the blueprint as accurately as possible into three dimensions. They acknowledge that a theatre work is the product of a singular vision that is the creation of a solitary mind. The way to make that creation work is to unlock the secrets in the mind that created it, in other words get under the skin of the writer: question, pester, quiz, challenge, argue with the writer. They have understood the notion that there are two elements to theatre: creation and interpretation and that both these elements have equal status.

A theatre company cannot live without one or the other, but must have both. A theatre to these directors is not a museum and neither is it simply a palace of entertainment. A theatre, when it is successful, entertains, educates, celebrates, challenges, questions, terrifies, angers, pacifies the community. It grows from within that community and is not imposed upon it.'

Nick Darke, playwright, from a speech given to South West Arts, 1997.

Working together

Key points	10
Why should an amateur company commission new work?	11
Ways of bringing writers and companies together	13

Working together

Key points

- raise your profile
- work in new ways
- develop new audiences
- represent the contemporary
- get your work produced
- enter competitions
- find out about festivals
- partnerships create commissions
- playwrights can become producers
- actors can become writers

Working together

Why should an amateur company commission new work?

There are benefits to both amateur companies and playwrights in working together.

Benefits for the amateur company include the following:

Meeting the needs of the individual company

It is possible to meet the company's needs in a range of different contexts: for example space, if the company is based in a building that has particular challenges or duration, if the company wishes to enter a festival and the script must not exceed 50/55 minutes.

Raising the profile of a company or venue

Working with a chosen playwright can bring kudos and media publicity to a company, helping to raise its profile both in the community and on the wider artistic circuit. If the play is published or produced elsewhere, the company is also credited as being the commissioning producer.

Commissioning for specific ages, gender and cast size

Rather than searching for a script that will reflect the acting talent available, the company can work with a playwright to create one.

Working in new ways

Working with a living writer presents creative opportunities to approach work differently. It provides an opportunity for experimentation.

Extending their members' skills

Through working with a professional writer, the company can benefit beyond the chance to produce a new play. Many writers are very happy to be involved in the process of working with the company to help develop talent and pass on expertise.

Developing new audiences

Attracting new audiences can help the company grow.

No waiting for amateur rights to become available

The company can avoid the frustration of waiting for amateur performance rights to be granted.

Representing the contemporary

Professional writers can create stories that have relevance both to the present time and the locale.

Reflecting diversity

Commissioning a writer can be an excellent opportunity to extend the diversity of material with which the company engages and/or to reflect the diversity of the constitution of the community.

Many of the benefits listed above are also benefits for the playwright. Benefits for writers also include:

Writers need commissions

Even playwrights with significant track records need writing commissions. Writing for amateur companies can provide an immediate source of income for writers, and the plays written can become a source of future earnings, through both publication and performance by other companies – amateur or professional.

Writers are given opportunities to write different kinds of plays

Whether it be the appeal of a specific community context or the attraction of a large cast, writers can create work that moves them further away from the frequent restrictions of writing for a maximum of six actors in a small space.

Writers have their work produced

The goal of all writers is to have their work produced. Particularly for those writers also working in television and film, the reality is that scripts get written, but not always produced.

For an analysis of what is understood by the term 'amateur sector', see Appendix 1: Amateur theatre – the wider context.

Ways of bringing writers and companies together

There are a variety of ways in which writers and amateur companies come together to create theatre. For those who have not already experimented with what works best for them, here are some brief examples to suggest areas for further investigation.

Competitions

Competitions are an important way in which new writing is accessed by the amateur sector. They can be national, regional or local and lead to development, production and/or publication. They set writers' deadlines and provide a clear focus as well as a pathway into the amateur sector. The People's Theatre Playwriting competition, for example, which leads to an annual production of a play by a new writer in the North East, has been important for the professional development of playwrights such as Peter Straughan.

For further details, see Appendix 2: Competitions.

Festivals

Festivals act as a focus for amateur activity and also an incentive to reward new play production. Examples of umbrella bodies that oversee a large number of festivals include the All England Theatre Festivals, Association of Ulster Drama Festivals and National Drama Festivals Association.

For further details, see Appendix 3: Festivals.

National initiatives

Occasionally, national initiatives, usually sponsored by one major body seeking to raise its profile, will work with the amateur sector to create multiple productions of a new play. Working with, for example, the Little Theatre Guild, at least 60 clubs took part in the BT Biennial play *Sand Castles* by Bob Larbey. Other writers involved with the scheme include John Godber and Debbie Isitt. As a successor project to the BT Biennial, The World Wildlife Fund commissioned Tudor Gates to write a comedy for Global Applause 2002.

For further details, see *Appendix 4: BT Biennial*.

Commissions

Commissions are often the best route to take if you want something tailor-made for your needs. This could be a commission for a youth theatre, for instance, or a commission undertaken as part of a broader involvement by the playwright, such as a residency.

Further illustrations can be found in *Appendix 5: Models of playwright/amateur theatre collaboration*.

Residency

A residency can include the type of commission outlined above, but offers the company much more scope. The writer can be involved with the community for a longer period than it takes to script a play, and may offer a range of ancillary skills to support the work of the company, the community and emerging artists within it. At the same time, the writer is able to develop his or her own work.

Playwrights as producers

As a challenge to the professional system that sees very few playwrights in charge of theatre companies (exceptions include Alan Ayckbourn, John Godber and David Lan), some playwrights opt to oversee production of their own plays – and those of other writers – by working with an amateur company.

Cloud Nine is run by writer Peter Mortimer and is an amateur theatre company in the North East of England that performs new plays by regional writers. Llanymynach Amateur Drama Society is run by two writers, Neil Rhodes and Margaret Kynaston. The group produces approximately 10 new plays a year. Over the last 10 years, they have developed an audience that is not only supportive of new writing, but also committed and involved in critical debate following each production.

Actors as writers

Just as in the professional theatre, actors often turn their hand to playwriting (from Shakespeare to Pinter and Ayckbourn). New plays can emerge as a result of personal contacts between the emerging writer and the company with which they have been acting.

Community theatre

Not to be confused with the community play, the community theatre is usually a space/company that is set up to serve a particular community with a range of theatre-related activity. This may operate in tandem with a professional company.

A mixture of amateur and professional companies based in the same venue – and working effectively together – can produce very useful synergies, including providing opportunities for writers. Live Theatre in Newcastle, for example, specialises in new writing and has an education programme called Live Lines, which consists of a youth theatre, older people's group and young writers' group. These amateur groups regularly perform new plays. Another example is New Venture Theatre in Brighton, founded in 1947. It is a community theatre, committed to cultivating original work, and acts as a focus for a range of Brighton-based initiatives.

Community play

The community play is usually large in scale and features a collaboration between professional artists and local people. Although frequently produced under the aegis of a professional company, there are examples from the amateur sector.

Where a company has an association with a building (either their own or an arts centre) this can provide a useful springboard to apply for a commission or a residency.

Castaway Community Theatre observed the 10-year anniversary of its existence with Lucy Gough's new play *Mapping the Soul*, directed by David Blumfield. The play mapped the mind 'from Genesis to the genome'.

Based at the Arts Centre in Aberystwyth, the company was established by Ian Marsh, whose intention was to involve the local community in performing challenging drama. The company has produced some very varied work, including Howard Barker's *A Clockwork Orange* and work by Terry Pratchett.

Lucy went in with ideas and split the group into smaller units with suggestions for scenes, working with the director Dave Blumfield. Starting from the premise 'a soul arrives at the crossroads', Lucy played with different scenarios over three or four sessions before starting work on writing the play.

For her, it was an opportunity to write on a large scale and create big roles, working on an epic play with different textures; and with people and in a place with which she is engaged. Through the workshops and early familiarity with the company, she was able to write with an awareness of the company's strengths and weaknesses. Lucy cited the commitment and dedication of the company and their involvement with the process as 'opening her up as a writer'.

Finding each other

Key points	18
Finding writers and new work	19
Finding amateur companies	19

Finding each other

Key points

- check the national agencies
- check the regional agencies
- check key websites

Finding each other

Finding writers and new work

There are many sources of information about writers that can help amateur companies identify and select a writer who matches their requirements.

National organisations such as the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, writernet, Society of Authors and National Association of Writers in Education all have (or are soon to have) searchable databases of writers online. If you are looking to work with a locally based writer, there are a number of national, regional and sub-regional playwrights' organisations that can provide you with useful information and contacts.

For further details, see *Appendix 6: Regional and national playwrights' organisations*.

For a range of websites providing access to writers and scripts across the country, see *Appendix 7: Key websites for locating writers*.

Mercury Musical Developments, a national organisation, is a key resource for identifying writers working in musical theatre. It was formed by merging The Mercury Workshop, known for producing multi-collaborative musicals and over 30 musical workshops, and The New Musicals Alliance, provider of musical theatre training and education.

Finding amateur companies

Some amateur companies have a well-established track record in producing new plays.

The Questors Theatre in Ealing, London has long been associated with new writing, especially through a number of specific initiatives. The company encourages playwrights to send in new plays, and discusses work with them.

Writers who would like to make contact with amateur drama, opera and musical theatre companies should go through the key umbrella organisations that serve the amateur sector.

Since the demise of the British Theatre Association (formerly the British Drama League), there has been no single national organisation dedicated to serving the needs of amateur drama groups in England. The Central Council for Amateur Theatre (CCAT) does, however, act as an umbrella organisation for some 15 smaller national organisations representing various strands of amateur theatre in the UK. These include the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA), Little Theatre Guild (LTG) and National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA).

NODA has a membership of some 2,300 amateur societies and 3,000 individual enthusiasts throughout the UK, staging musicals, operas, plays, concerts and pantomimes in a wide variety of performing venues, ranging from the country's leading professional theatres to tiny village halls. LTG now comprises nearly 100 member theatres throughout the UK. The NDFA is an association of local drama festivals and other groups, and individuals interested in encouraging and developing amateur theatre, in particular through the organisation of drama festivals. There are now 50 member festivals throughout the UK, who between them organise 21 full-length and 40 one-act festivals.

A different situation exists in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These have their own designated national umbrella organisations, the Drama Association of Wales (DAW), the Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA) and the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals (AUDF), which are all in receipt of public funding.

For more information and contact details, see [Appendix 8: Key organisations](#).

Good practice guidelines

Key points	22
Definitions	24
Trouble spots	25
Advice for the writer	26
Advice for the company	28

Good practice guidelines

Key points

- do your research: really find out about each other
- communicate: establish working dialogue
- plan: anticipate sticky moments
- context: understand the background and the givens
- celebrate: make it fun!

Good practice guidelines

This section offers good practice guidelines, including suggestions on how to create a good working relationship between a writer and a company.

Playwright Bryony Lavery illustrates a writer's challenge in working with a company:

'There is a desire to be free of constraints, yet there is also a desire for constraints – such that they form a divine architectural puzzle to be solved. Writing a pantomime, the constraints are the style, the original known story and having to be funny. I didn't know what a physical theatre piece was and had to get used to new methods of working. After the initial rage at the dismemberment of my writing, I saw the very beautiful results. In this case, the constraint was having to write for visual enthrallment. For *Monstrous Regiment*, Clare Venables asked me to "write the play you always wanted to write", which is very scary because you have to be your own self-censor and choose your own constraints – but also because it teaches you not to be afraid of writing a big play. In all cases, what was important was that the director and writer agreed on the same constraints, which have to be artistically exciting: establishing a vocabulary whereby the architectural puzzle – a house I have never seen, that I both recognise and am surprised by – can be solved.'

From Rules of Engagement, 1993 – a seminar organised by New Playwrights Trust in collaboration with London Bubble Theatre Company.

Definitions

In order to achieve the practicalities of ‘seeing, recognition and surprise’, it may be helpful to refer to some working definitions of terms:

A commissioned play

A play which an artistic director or literary manager has requested should be written.

Unsolicited manuscript

A play submitted to a theatre company on spec; that is, the company hasn’t commissioned it, and the artistic director or literary manager hasn’t asked to see it in advance of it being written.

Treatment

A one- or two-page document giving a clear idea of the form and content of the piece. It should include a plot synopsis, a statement on the main themes and some outline of the major characters. It should also provide a breakdown of the number of characters and settings in the play. (A treatment may or may not be required, depending on how companies like to make decisions.)

Brief

A document agreed upon by both company and writer at the point of commission, which should include: working title; subject of play; length of play; intended audience; cast size (including integrated casting information); touring requirements (if appropriate); design; working method; and deadlines for the drafts.

Short play

A play timed to run during an ordinary performance for not more than 70 minutes (excluding intervals). Rules for amateur one-act drama festivals specify maximum 50 or 55 minutes.

Full-length play

A play timed to run for more than 70 minutes (excluding intervals).

First draft

The first time the writer reaches the end of the play: something that can be read through from start to finish.

Rehearsal draft

The draft of the play that the theatre company agrees to take into rehearsal. This is not necessarily the final script, as work may still be done on the text during rehearsals.

Final script

The play that is performed on the first night.

Royalties

Monies due to the writer for plays performed after the initial commission.

Trouble spots

To avoid any misunderstanding, agree all your definitions (both the standard definitions above and any subsidiary definitions) at the point of commission so that both parties know their individual and shared aims. As with all good practice, keep communication channels open throughout the writing process, and don’t assume that the other party understands a legal or technical term.

A national seminar on the writer/director relationship* identified seven key areas to focus on:

- honesty, especially at the beginning of the process, and the development of trust throughout, in order to negotiate any differences
- adequate resources: time, space, money and people – for both development and production

*Rules of Engagement 1993 – a seminar organised by New Playwrights Trust in collaboration with London Bubble Theatre Company

- clarity and agreement on each individual's role and responsibilities
- maintaining respect for all involved
- appropriate awareness of contracts, terms and conditions
- good management of contributions from all parties/elements in the process: actors, designer, etc
- awareness of the differences between job descriptions and the contexts within which each is working: for example, a director can have artistic and administrative duties in a company, while the writer is freelance, and would have to cost in such activity

What follows is advice both for the writer and for the company on how to achieve the above.

Advice for the writer

You are the best advocate for your work

Working to commission requires good discipline and organisational skills, as well as a creative approach. You should be able to:

- go and see the company's work
- talk coherently about your work to others. Be aware that you may need to convince a number of different people – you may be dealing initially with a committee and only subsequently working with a director
- make yourself available and approachable
- make others feel enthusiastic about your work, and involve the whole company
- plan your time well, fitting new work around other commitments
- make and keep detailed notes of arrangements with a commissioning company, whether made in person or over the telephone
- consider the greater variability of time within which the project can be realised. It will not be three full weeks of rehearsal time

While being alert to script calls or commissioning opportunities, as a writer, you may need to be more proactive in initiating contact with an amateur company that you think might be interested in working with you.

Questions writers should ask before working with companies

- do I want to work with this theatre company?
- do I know and trust the personnel?
- do I know and value the quality of their work?
- do they know and value the quality of my work?
- will I benefit from working to the specific requirements of this theatre company?

How much involvement does the company want from the writer?

The only way for a writer to know which procedure a company uses is to ask. The writer should make sure he or she is not in the dark about how the company actually works, or is planning to work. Experienced companies will be used to taking a lead in this early negotiation, and will ensure that prospective writers know exactly what is expected of them. However, if this is a new departure for the company, and there are any unanswered questions, then the writer should not be afraid to take the lead on establishing working procedures, and/or refer the company to this guide.

After selecting a writer, some theatre companies will not require much more than one sentence on what the play will be about. The writer will then talk through the play with the artistic director and they will reach a point where the artistic director feels sure that the writer knows what play he or she wants to write. The writer will then go away and write the first draft. This can take up to six months, but varies depending on both the working methods of an individual writer and the needs of the company.

An amateur company – especially one that is relatively inexperienced in commissioning – may well require a much more substantial level of involvement from a writer than delivery of the first draft. The more a writer can be involved in the ways in which the company actually works, the better the likelihood of success.

Advice for the company

If you are intending to advertise for play scripts, be very explicit about your company's cast size and technical requirements.

If, after reading the scripts, you return them responsibly and make comments on them, you will get to know a number of writers and develop a good reputation among them.

If you can hold readings or workshops of plays that are under consideration, whether publicly or just among the company, that will help you and the writers get to know each other's work further. If you can, spend a day rehearsing the reading.

Go and see writers' work being read or produced by other companies.

Give yourself plenty of lead time

Whether commissioning or optioning a script, give yourself plenty of time, ideally a year ahead. The playwright may need six months or more to complete the play, especially if research is involved, and you may need some development time if you are applying for grants.

You will also need a substantial amount of time to read and discuss the delivered script. If translations or adaptations are required, additional time is needed to secure the necessary rights.

Questions companies should ask themselves before working with a writer

- do we want to produce this writer's work?
- do we know and trust the writer or do we know and trust the quality of their work?
- does the writer know and value the quality of our work?
- will the writer benefit from receiving a production from this specific company?
- does working with this writer fulfil our artistic/audience policy?

Make sure there is maximum communication between you both

Discuss the project thoroughly in advance, leaving as little room for misunderstanding as possible. Do not expect a synopsis to define everything; there has to be some room for spontaneity.

Use an Independent Theatre Council/Writers' Guild of Great Britain (ITC/WGGB) standard contract. These enshrine agreed practice over timing, payments, rehearsals, etc. When it comes to negotiating the fee, remember it represents several months' work and is someone's livelihood.

For fees and a quick-reference guide to the main points of the ITC/WGGB contract, see [Appendix 9: Commissioning and agreements](#).

Apart from the contract, write down in black and white everything that is important to you about the project. Standard contracts only deal with the basic requirements, and you may need to vary artistic clauses. If you do have any differences in interpretation, it is better to iron them out at this stage, rather than six months and several thousand pounds down the line.

Keep the writer informed of any changes in your schedules, and make sure that all payments to the writer are made promptly.

Don't see the playwright simply as a writer-for-hire

Like most artists, playwrights are in it more for job satisfaction than money. Do not expect them to write the play in your head. While you can be clear about the context for the play, allow the writer to explore his or her own ideas.

When a draft is hot off the press, playwrights need feedback to confirm or confound their hopes or fears. While this may seem an obvious point to make, it helps, in the event of any negative feedback, to use diplomacy in your first response. For instance, if there's something that baffles or irritates you, ask about it before you suggest changes. Emphasise the aspects of the play that you do like, so that the playwright gets an idea of what you are aiming for.

Plays go through several re-workings before the journey from first draft to final draft is completed. The writer should keep an open mind, keep in sight of the intentions for the piece, and be prepared not to stop working on the text until the curtain comes down at the end of the run.

Companies, however, must be aware of what can reasonably be regarded as rewrites, and mustn't expect a writer to keep writing the play indefinitely. Before each new draft, both parties must agree on what they expect from the next period of work.

If an amateur company is involving a number of people in the creative feedback process, nominate the director or one other key person to give this feedback to the writer. This is generally more productive than the writer receiving feedback by committee, as both parties will be more relaxed and open to constructive discussion of all the issues.

During production

The writer's involvement with the newly created work does not end when it is handed over to your group. A writer's reputation may be at stake, and it is likely that the author will wish to have some involvement with how the group will use the work. Some writers continue to be involved with the script throughout the rehearsal process.

Seek out the writer's suggestions on casting and design, even when dealing with a company of actors whom the director may know well. In the early stages of rehearsal, they still know the play better than anyone else, and may have useful insights to offer. Much of the pleasure of writing to commission comes in the early days of rehearsal, and while the company will of course have the final say in all aspects of production, it will pay dividends to be confident and generous about the playwright's involvement, as this will enhance the experience for all concerned.

Copyright and contracts

Key points	34
Copyright	35
Contracts	36

Copyright and contracts

Key points

- take responsibility for knowing where you stand
- talk to your union or management body if you need more information, advice or guidance
- use the union/management body agreed contract as a template – try to stick to it, but if you can't, be clear
- balance the letter of the law with the spirit of the law
- agree your interpretation of the above as soon as you can

Copyright and contracts

Copyright

Copyright is a property right, which means that the owner can sell, transfer or grant a licence to another person or body in much the same way as an owner of land can sell or lease his/her property. Where land is sometimes referred to as 'real' property, copyrights are called 'intellectual property' rights.

What is protected by copyright?

A work will be protected by copyright if it is original, ie not a copy of an existing work. With a new play, the copyright belongs to the playwright. Copyright is automatic as soon as the work is recorded in a permanent form.

It is not necessary to lodge your script with an agency. For those concerned with litigation, your cheapest option is to post yourself a copy and keep it unopened. This will prove the date when the work was created, should legal action ever be required.

An existing work may consist of several different elements, each protected by a completely separate copyright, any of which could be owned or controlled by different people. For example, a writer is brought in by an amateur company to work on an adaptation of a musical, based on an existing play, which is in turn based on an existing book. The author of the original source material will own the copyright in the book, but the script for the show, the lyrics and the melodies will each also be protected in their own right. If any element is later recorded, that recording would also attract its own copyright protection.

What is not protected by copyright?

A title to a play will not normally be protected by copyright. However, if a title to a show is chosen because it is the same or similar to the name of an existing show – so that the public will book tickets thinking that they are going to see the original – then this can give rise to another legal claim known as ‘passing off’.

Copyright does not exist in the idea of a show. Anyone can write a pantomime based on the idea of a young lad and his magic plant. However, while any company can write its own version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, it cannot produce an unauthorised copy of John Morley’s version of the pantomime: this would be a breach of copyright.

Once a copyright has expired (customarily 70 years following death), the work is no longer protected, and can be freely copied or performed, although the source will still need to be acknowledged in all publicity and promotional material.

Contracts

The most appropriate contract for the engagement of writers with theatre companies is the ITC/WGGB small-scale theatre writers’ contract. Minimum fees for commissioning a writer are agreed annually between the Independent Theatre Council (ITC) and the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) in line with the agreement on minimum terms and conditions. These are minimum fees and should not automatically be regarded as the going rate.

Whenever possible, an amateur company should aim to comply with the ITC/WGGB (or Society of Scottish Playwrights) contract, fees, and terms and conditions. This contract is negotiated between management and union representatives of the companies and the writers, and explains all the terms and conditions of commissioning. It should be referred to by both company and writer during the commissioning process.

There is no excuse for a writer to be unaware of his or her rights. Similarly, theatre companies should be conversant with the working of their relevant contract, and should understand its implications before entering into a commission. If companies ensure that copies of the contract are readily available, and talk it through with the writer before they sign a commission, there should be few problems in making the terms and conditions work. As always, open lines of communication between both parties will ensure good practice.

Writers’ rights

In addition to any agreed level of involvement, playwrights have moral rights that are enshrined in law. The playwright has the right to be identified as the creator of the work, and the right to veto any distortion of the work that would prejudice his or her reputation.

Script changes

No script changes should be made without the writer’s permission. While this is the letter of the law, most writers are flexible when approaching rewrites beyond delivery of the final draft, but it is important to follow procedures agreed by both parties as outlined in the previous section.

For fees and a quick-reference guide to the main points, see [Appendix 9: Commissioning and agreements](#).

Sources of funding for commissioning and producing new work

Key points	40
Introduction	41
Sponsorship	42
Earned income	42
Government	42
Arts Council England	43
Charitable trusts and foundations	45

Sources of funding for commissioning and producing new work

Key points

- identify different funding sources
- establish clearly all costs
- agree a budget
- seek advice from national or regional organisations
- don't be afraid to ask

Sources of funding for commissioning and producing new work

Introduction

There are broadly four types of potential funding available for amateur companies and playwrights:

- sponsorship
- earned income
- government (Arts Councils)
- charitable trusts and foundations

When producing a new play, companies may want to consider the following potential areas of specific expenditure:

Development costs

- commissioning and buying work
- script development, workshopping and rehearsed readings
- managing the commission

Production costs

- appropriate extended rehearsal periods
- guaranteed rates for writers
- additional marketing costs

This does not mean that all of the above will be required, rather that – especially when assembling a bid for funding – these factors are taken into consideration.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is, to a large extent, dependent on the relationship between the company and/or the play being produced, and the context of the production. For example, while a major festival might generate high-profile coverage, a play that is community-specific, targeting a particular section of society, might appeal for different reasons. A new play can, of course, provide such contexts much more readily than an existing one.

It is likely that, as a company, you will already have a pool of local knowledge about any potential sponsorship candidates, and the only other major difference between gaining sponsorship for a new play and an existing one is whether the writer adds cachet.

Each region of the country now has its own branch of Arts & Business, whose purpose is 'to help strengthen communities by developing creative and effective partnerships between business and the arts'. See www.aandb.org.uk for further information.

Earned income

Earned income will depend upon marketing (see *Marketing* on page 49) and whether you can trade on the reputation of the writer: for example, a new Frank Vickery play will probably sell itself in South Wales, and Sylvia Walker will easily fill the Hyde Festival Theatre for a week each year.

Government

Companies should contact their national Arts Council for information on their various funding schemes. As most companies and writers may know, Arts Council England national and regional offices merged in 2002 to form one organisation, and Scotland and Wales also have a single point of entry. In Northern Ireland, it is advisable to contact both the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Irish Arts Council.

It will be rare that a funding box comes marked with a bright label reading 'money for playwrights and amateur companies', as more and more government funding is becoming generic rather than artform-specific. However, with an increasing focus on participation and community, there is more money than ever before to be gained from government. What is required is some lateral thinking and a little more research into local, regional, national and even international sources.

Some examples are given in *Appendix 10: Funding*.

Arts Council England

Now that Arts Council England is one national organisation it has simplified its funding programmes. Grants are available for individuals, arts organisations and other people who use the arts in their work. They are for activities that benefit people in England or that help artists and arts organisations from England to carry out their work.

The new programmes – grants for the arts for individuals, organisations and national touring – have the following features:

- consistency across England with the same opportunities to apply for funding regardless of where you live or what arts activities you want to do
- a single application pack
- applicants always apply to the region in which they are located
- 10 per cent partnership funding is normally expected, although in special circumstances they will provide a grant for the total cost of the activity
- grants are available for all types of arts activity, which might include:
 - projects and events
 - commissions and productions
 - research and development
 - capital items (such as equipment)
 - professional development and training, including travel grants
 - bursaries

- fellowships
- residencies and touring
- audience development
- marketing activities
- organisational development to improve the long-term stability of arts organisations
- education activities
- activities for people to take part in
- grants to individuals normally range from £200 up to a total of £30,000
- grants to organisations normally range from £200 up to a total of £100,000
- most grants are under £30,000

Grants for the arts replaces all the previous grants programmes run by the Arts Council and the former regional arts boards. This means that there are no longer grants programmes for specific artforms or areas of activity. This reduces the danger of activities falling between the remits of different departments or offices. It also allows for greater collaboration between artforms and for applicants to think more creatively about the activity they want to do.

How to apply

Applicants are strongly advised to speak to their regional office before applying. There are no deadlines.

See Appendix 10: Funding for a full list of national and regional arts councils.

An application pack is available by calling 0845 300 6200, or visit the ‘funding’ section of www.artscouncil.org.uk for further information about grants for the arts.

Assessment criteria

The assessment process has simplified and consistent assessment and monitoring procedures. Each application is assessed against the five assessment criteria which are:

- the artistic quality of the activity or its ongoing effect on the applicant’s artistic practice (or both)
- how the activity will be managed and its ongoing effect
- how feasible the activity is financially, and its future effect
- how the public will benefit from the activity, immediately or in the longer term
- the contribution of the activity to meeting the aims of grants for the arts (details of the aims can be found in the application pack)

Decision making

Decisions on grants are made quickly – six weeks for applications for £5,000 or less and 12 weeks for applications over £5,000.

Charitable trusts and foundations

Depending on the context in which the playwright and company are working, it may be worthwhile exploring charitable trusts and foundations. It is possible that they may support the work of a professional writer, but they are more usually concerned with the arts in relation to social inclusion agendas.

However, there are exceptions, for instance:

The Peggy Ramsay Foundation

The Foundation was established in 1992 in accordance with the will of Peggy Ramsay, the well-known theatrical agent. The value of the Foundation in 2002 amounted to a capital sum of nearly £5 million and it spends some £200,000 each year.

The purpose of the Foundation is to help playwrights and writing for the stage. Grants are made:

- directly to writers who have some writing experience, who need time to write and cannot otherwise afford to do so
- to companies who might not otherwise be able to find, develop or use new work
- for projects which may facilitate new writing for the stage

The trustees meet some four or five times a year. Applications are also dealt with between meetings, but a delay of up to eight weeks must be expected for a definitive answer. Applications should be brief, preferably in a simple letter stating the past record, the need and the amount requested. Scripts should not be sent.

The trustees are G Laurence Harbottle (to whom correspondence should be addressed), Simon Callow CBE, Michael Codron CBE, Sir David Hare, Baroness (Genista) McIntosh of Hudnall, John Tydeman, Harriet Walter CBE and John Welch.

Hanover House
14 Hanover Square
London W1S 1HP
Telephone: 020 7667 5000
Fax: 020 7667 5100
laurence.harbottle@harbottle.com
www.peggyramsayfoundation.org

The Peter Wolff Theatre Trust

The Theatre Trust was founded by Peter Wolff, a textile entrepreneur who has had a great love of the British theatre all his life. In January 1998 he created a non-profit-making Trust to encourage the work of emerging British playwrights and to bring their plays to a wider audience. The Trust welcomes submissions for wholly original projects seeking its support and wishes to encourage plays by non-established British playwrights that are likely to have a broad appeal, in order to help bring new writing out of the studio and onto the main stage. Plays should therefore have the capability to suit the ambition and scale of a main house; they should also have the potential to attract the larger audiences required for main house work. The Trust is pleased to consider a play that might have originated in a small space and could subsequently benefit from the Trust's support to reach a wider audience. Once the Trust has chosen to support a play, it can help with financing the production, extending options, securing longer runs or transfers – anything that will ensure the play is seen by the widest number of people. It is not able to support adaptations, translations, company-devised plays or musicals.

The Trust wishes to keep the process as easy as possible: there are no deadlines or application forms. In order for it to consider projects for support, the Trust simply requires the script to have been accepted by a production company for a specific theatre that requires additional funding.

Production companies or individual theatres should contact Peter Wolff at:

The Peter Wolff Theatre Trust
Flat 22, 7 Princess Gate
London SW7 1QL
Mobile: 07767 242552
pmwolff@msn.com
www.peterwolfftheatretrust.org

Marketing

Key points

50

Marketing

Key points

- you know more than you think you do – act on it
- know your audience
- agree the premise on which you are selling
- think laterally
- think long term

Marketing

Marketing is a much used and abused term. At its worst, when there is not the confidence outlined by playwright Nick Darke in the opening of the first section of this guide, it can result in a skewed relationship between creative origination and audience engagement. But at its best, it can yield very positive relationships between those making work for the stage and those for whom it is being made – especially when the boundaries between these two sets of people become blurred.

Marketing covers a variety of tasks from selling, advertising, production, publicity and public relations to pricing and distribution, which enable the company to meet customer needs and communicate as effectively as possible.

Marketing helps you to:

- set realistic objectives
- identify clear targets for achievement
- evaluate the performance of your organisation
- get to know your particular market
- get to know your product
- understand what influences the effectiveness of the organisation both within your organisation and outside in the market environment
- communicate efficiently and effectively with your market
- monitor and evaluate your progress

From An Introduction to Strategic Marketing, Geri Morris, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

There are many guides to generic arts marketing that can be purchased or downloaded from a range of arts marketing specialist companies, for example the Arts Marketing Association on www.a-m-a.co.uk

In choosing what to produce, an amateur theatre company needs to undertake effective risk evaluation. To opt for a new play, it is worth considering the following factors.

At any one time, around 50 per cent of work in the West End can be described as either new plays or new musicals, so the idea that new work does not sell is simply not true. Where new plays can fare less well is when they are not afforded the same resources as existing plays, for example a comparable print budget, or the acquisition of a star name to play the lead.

With a new play, you will not be able to benefit from the cachet of an established play, but you may be able to market either the loyalty and trust of your own audience base, the reputation of the playwright, or both.

In some cases, you will decide to sell the new play as just that, as you know that you will be able to tap into audiences that are eager for something new and distinctive. In other cases, you may decide not to emphasise that this is a new play; simply announce the title as part of a season and allow audience curiosity and faith in the company's work to generate interest.

It may be that no matter what you decide to produce, you can be confident that audiences will come because of the prestige of your company, irrespective of what is on, or, where the company has found a way to involve the playwright extensively in the process, the participation within the community has snowballed interest in seeing the finished product.

In all cases, you would be well advised to try and obtain data on audiences for other new plays already produced in your area and mail shot accordingly (data protection allowing).

[For a longer term and broader approach to marketing, see the case study in Appendix 11: Audience development.](#)

The section on marketing in *Essential Theatre* by Crispin Raymond (Arts Council of England 1999) is also useful for its common sense approach to marketing plays both new and old.

[For further details, see Further reading and other useful information.](#)

Publication of new plays and further development

Key points	56
What next?	57

Publication of new plays and further development

Key points

- establish the context for publication – who else might want this? – then pitch it
- tour to amateur festivals, both UK and abroad
- use the amateur theatre networks to push for second and subsequent productions
- plug into any regional Arts Council England strategies
- approach global English-speaking theatres
- approach other (non-theatre) organisations interested in production

Publication of new plays and further development

What next?

What happens to a play once it has been commissioned and produced for the first time? All too often, nothing. However, it is possible for new plays to have a more extended life, as some amateur companies have shown. Firstly, there is publication.

Samuel French is acknowledged as the focal point for publishing new plays that engage with the amateur sector. There are several other smaller outlets including educational publishers, for youth and community work.

For a list of publishers, see [Appendix 12: Publishers](#).

But beware vanity publishers – those who cash in on a writer's desire to see work in print without providing either a sound commitment to distribution and marketing, or a realistic analysis of demand. Take advice from your Arts Council England regional office if you are unfamiliar with a publisher.

There are four major publishers of playwrights in the UK: Methuen, Faber & Faber, Oberon and Nick Hern Books. Conventionally, these publishers will tend to publish only when the play is given a professional production, and then usually only when produced by certain metropolitan theatres. There are a few exceptions, however, often when publication can be tied to a specific context (for example, educational). In general, Methuen and Oberon are taking on more new plays by new writers than Faber & Faber. Nick Hern Books has recently moved into the amateur rights market.

Secondly, there is a range of options you might like to consider, building on the strength of the play's first run:

- tour to amateur festivals, both UK and abroad
- use the amateur theatre networks to push for second and subsequent productions
- plug into any regional strategies, for example Arts Council England Yorkshire is piloting an internal regional touring initiative for work of proven quality
- approach global English-speaking theatres, for example the Victoria Drama League, Nova Scotia Drama League or Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies
- approach other organisations interested in production, for example Young Farmers, Women's Institute, Townswomen's Guilds, Civil Service Drama Federation, RAF/Army groups in Europe
- consider Ireland as a model – Ireland has a strong amateur festival circuit, summer schools and drama training weekends/courses throughout the year (with a thin dividing line between amateur and professional) and The Drama League of Ireland

Appendixes

1	Amateur theatre – the wider context	60
2	Competitions	61
3	Festivals	63
4	BT Biennial	66
5	Models of playwright/amateur theatre collaboration	70
6	Regional and national playwrights' organisations	76
7	Key websites for locating writers	85
8	Key organisations	88
9	Commissioning and agreements	93
10	Funding	97
11	Audience development	102
12	Publishers	106

Appendix 1: Amateur theatre – the wider context

Arts policy consultants Hutchison & Feist noted back as far as 1991 that:

‘the amateur and professional arts are intertwined and interdependent: the term “amateur” is not unambiguously separated from “professional”; rather than a clear amateur/professional divide, there is a complex amateur/professional continuum or spectrum of ambition, accomplishment and activity.’

As Janet Summerton, University of Sussex, and Sue Kay, Dartington College of Arts, noted in their paper *Hidden From View: The Shape of Arts Work & Arts Organisations in the UK*, a paper for AIMAC (International Association for Arts and Cultural Management), Helsinki, July 1999:

‘Attitudes expressed in terms of the supposed lack of quality and integrity of unpaid work in the arts are rooted in misunderstandings of this issue’.

It is only with the further breaking down of assumptions around how work for the stage is made by people for other people that different constituent elements along the amateur/professional continuum can work together more systematically.

In continental Europe the terms ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ are sometimes accompanied by ‘semi-’, and work will cover areas that in the UK are more often called Youth Theatre or Community Theatre. The Netherlands is pioneering this type of approach by creating a Fund for Amateur Art and the Performing Arts, which assesses project-funding bids from both the amateur and professional sectors with the same panel of advisors. The fund was established in 2001 ‘to encourage greater unity between the work of amateur, semi-professional and professional artists working in the performing arts’, and to promote international activities and cultural diversity.

Appendix 2: Competitions

The Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain (LTG)

The LTG runs playwriting competitions every two to three years. The last one was adjudicated by Samuel French, and the winning full-length play was performed at the Edinburgh Festival fringe. The one-act winner has been published by French’s and is performed with some success. Details of the competition are available from the National Secretary Barbara Watson (barbaraw@carlisle-city.gov.uk).

The National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA)

The NDFA also sponsors two playwriting competitions – the George Taylor and the Nan Nuttall Memorial Awards (the latter being specifically for Youth Theatre). The objective of these competitions is to promote new writing for the theatre. Adjudication is carried out by a panel of judges and the winners receive a certificate and a cash prize.

The Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA)

The SCDA organises Britain’s largest competition for new short plays and encourages playwriting at all levels. The top three entrants to Play on Words have professional writers attached to support their professional development.

Drama Association of Wales/Cymdeithas Ddrama Cymru (DAW)

The DAW organises an annual playwriting competition for one-act plays written either in Welsh or English and with a running time of 20 to 50 minutes. Typically, the competition attracts 250 entries from all over the world and shortlisted plays are considered for publication. In some years, entries are invited under a specific theme. Barclays Bank PLC currently sponsors the competition. There is an entry fee and further details can be obtained from the Member Services Officer, telephone: 029 2045 2200.

The Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy

This is awarded to the best original unpublished play receiving its première in the first round of the National Festival of Community Theatre anywhere in the UK.

For more details, see *Appendix 3: Festivals*.

Appendix 3: Festivals

The National Festival of Community Theatre (NFCT)

The NFCT, established in 1927, is a celebration of amateur theatre at local, national and UK level. Each year, the national amateur organisations in the home nations promote a series of one-act play festivals and, through various eliminating rounds, take part in the final stage, the British Final Festival, when companies and enthusiasts from all over the UK come together to learn and celebrate. A Standing Committee of representatives of the four countries has overall control of the Festival, with each country in turn taking the responsibility for organising it.

The four partners in the NFCT are the All-England Theatre Festival (AETF), the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals (AUDF), the Drama Association of Wales (DAW), and the Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA).

The festivals provide an opportunity for amateur companies to appear in new and varying venues before widely differing audiences, to receive constructive criticism from a qualified adjudicator, and to compare the standard of their own work with that of the other companies taking part. For audiences, the public adjudication of performances offers a deeper understanding and appreciation of theatre.

Local festivals lead selected companies to a National Final Festival in each country, from which one company is selected to represent its country at the British Final Festival. All four annual rotating host countries of the Final remain in contact throughout the eliminating competition.

The British Final Festival consists, therefore, of four well-established productions from Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all of which have been publicly adjudicated at each stage. The company that the adjudicator considers to have presented the best production receives the Howard de Walden Ewer award.

AETF Secretary
Mike Linham
mike.linham@BTInternet.com
www.aetf.org.uk

DAW
The Old Library
Singleton Road
Splott
Cardiff CF2 2ET
Telephone: 029 2045 2200
aled.daw@virgin
www.amdram.co.uk/daw1.htm

AUDF Secretary
Alan Marshall
34 Shorelands
Greenisland
Carrickfergus
Co. Antrim BT38 8F8
Telephone: 028 9086 1234
www.audf.org.uk

SCDA
5 York Place
Edinburgh EH1 3EB
Telephone: 0131 557 5552
headquarters@scda.org.uk
www.scda.org.uk

The National Drama Festivals Association (NDFA)

The NDFA is an association of local drama festivals and other groups and individuals interested in encouraging and developing amateur theatre in all its forms, in particular through the organisation of drama festivals. There are now 50 member festivals throughout the UK who, between them, organise 21 full-length and 40 one-act festivals. These provide an opportunity for amateur clubs to present their works in a competitive environment to festival audiences. The Patron is Sir Derek Jacobi.

Each year, the NDFA organises the British 'All Winners' Festival where the very best of British amateur theatres take part in a week-long celebration of theatre. The winners of all NDFA member festivals are eligible to be invited.

Membership of the NDFA is open to all drama festival organisations and also to theatre groups and individuals interested in taking part and supporting drama festivals throughout the UK. Members receive an annual directory giving details of all member festivals, and a quarterly newsletter providing the latest information about festivals and other relevant news.

Tony Broscob
Bramleys
Main Street
Shudy Camps
Cambridge CB1 6RA
tonybroscob@compuserve.com
www.uktw.co.uk/ndfa.html

Appendix 4: BT Biennial

Two Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA) amateur companies give some of their thoughts on their involvement. Finally, Peter Whelan sounds a cautionary note from the writer's point of view.

Dunlop Players

Jim Croft, Artistic Director of Dunlop Players, commented:

'This is our first venture with BT Biennial, which started life in 1989 and is in its fifth cycle. It was originally designed to encourage amateur dramatic societies to perform new works and develop membership and audiences.

We auditioned not only our club membership, but opened it up to other dramatic clubs in our area, such as Stewarton, as we had done earlier this year with *The Thrie Estaites*, which had actors from four clubs, including Young Farmer groups.

Sand Castles is superbly written, as you would expect from an author of Bob Larbey's standing, and a tremendous challenge as it is high comedy, full of strong characters and is about chaos on a British beach.

As Director, I found that, apart from the obvious comedy in the written word, there was so much more to be found in the interpretation and this aspect tested all of my knowledge and that of the actors.

As I write this article, we have already performed the opening night – world première – simultaneously with four other clubs in Scotland and 96 in the rest of the UK. I hope that all productions were successful – ours, if the audience reaction was anything to go by, was a hit!

Three more performances to go which we feel sure will put Dunlop Players and all amateur groups more firmly on the map, making more people interested in watching and perhaps participating on or off the stage. The play will be adjudicated as part of the Western Division Full-Length Play Festival, by Margaret Tomlinson.

BT does make it achievable for everyone by supplying quality programme covers, A4 posters, A5 flyers and colourful postcards, practically as many as you want and, of course, there are no author's fees or scripts to pay for.

Dunlop Players will certainly be applying to take part in two years' time, as it's been such a thrill to be part of this scheme by BT, which can only get bigger and more successful.'

Abbey Theatre Club

The Abbey Theatre Club formed in 1947 as the Arbroath Amateur Club, and changed its name in 1964 when members converted a small theatre. Brian Bruce, Director for Abbey Theatre Club, gave his club's views on *Sand Castles*, and on their performance of the play:

Sand Castles was 'a comedy based on the reactions of disparate groups of people brought into contact by holidaying at a British seaside resort, or, more particularly, running into each other on the beach. The story revolved around three beach huts, their occupants and sundry others who are on the beach. The play had a cast of 15 adults and two young children (which meant casting four children to play alternate nights). It had to open on 14 October and close on 21 October, because of BT requirements. Like most of Bob Larbey's work, *Sand Castles* had quite a bit of business and just a touch of pathos, which helped the comedy . . .

BT gave the club every help in publicising the play, including the free posters and flyers. Their suggestions also resulted in our being given quite a bit of free publicity in the

local press and on the local radio. The result was a complete sell-out – 100 per cent box office! While some of the audience were “regulars”, there were quite a lot of new faces in the theatre. Hopefully, the quality of Bob Larbey’s writing, coupled with the performance of the cast, will convert the new faces into regulars.’

The script of *Sand Castles* by Bob Larbey is now published by Amber Lane Press, Church Street, Charlbury, Oxon OX7 3PR, telephone/fax: 01608 810024.

A playwright’s view

With so much activity on such a large scale, it is perhaps inevitable that a certain level of standardisation will result.

Playwright Peter Whelan commented on his own experience of being produced as part of the BT Biennial:

‘My main conclusion from my experience with the BT scheme is that sponsorship is a very mixed blessing. Basically, they had their own agenda, which was PR, and so wished to spread the number of theatres taking part as far and wide as they could. They also used a consultant to act as go-between. The result was that individual theatres, I feel, lost connection with it in a proper writer-to-theatre way. My belief has always been that only small groups of theatres, able to meet often enough to steer the process, should undertake it. After all, if the sponsor leaves the theatres with little to do except say yes or no to a play, then it’s fine for the playwright but not so good for the theatres.’

Other writers involved with the scheme include John Godber and Debbie Isitt.

Global Applause

As a successor project to the BT Biennial, The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) established Global Applause, which aimed to commission a top playwright to create a brand new comedy for amateur groups to perform free of charge. In return, the WWF asked these groups to help fundraise for the charity by selling a souvenir programme. For Global Applause 2002–03, the WWF has commissioned Tudor Gates to write a drawing-room comedy.

Tudor Gates has close links with the world of amateur theatre, as a former President of his local group in Kent, for whom he wrote and directed a production that won the British Drama League Award as the Best One-Act Play. Tudor was also responsible for the hugely successful play *Ladies who Lunch*, which he wrote especially for the BT Biennial, run by Amateur Stage, for amateur groups to perform. John Godber has agreed to write the Global Applause play for 2003–04.

Global Applause WWF-UK
 Freepost SCE 729
 Panda House
 Weyside Park
 Godalming
 Surrey GU7 1BR
 Telephone: 0845 766 8860
 events@wwf.org.uk
www.nodanw.demon.co.uk/global_applause/introduction.htm

Appendix 5: Models of playwright/amateur theatre collaboration

The Essex Group

This was founded in 1990 with the objective of bringing together the very best performers in Essex.

The world of musical theatre is probably one of the most difficult mediums a writer can try to break in to, but it is something that Essex writers Gary Sullivan and Chris Hatt experienced when their new musical *Destiny* received its world première at the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch in January 2001.

In 1993, Gary wrote the book and lyrics to an adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It received its première at the Thameside Theatre, a number of local performances in Chelmsford and Hornchurch, and, in 1997, had a brief run at the Mermaid Theatre in London. In 1998, it was published by Samuel French in London and has now seen productions throughout the UK.

The Essex Group is well known for its high-energy productions and has achieved international acclaim with over 20 awards to its credit for both performance and technical staging.

www.britishtheatreguide.info/amateurtheatre/destiny.htm

Liverpool Network Theatre Group

Established in 1984, the Network aims to make theatre available to everyone. This belief that theatre should be for all and should reflect the community is their guiding principle. The group tackles plays from such renowned and respected playwrights as Howard Brenton and Vaclav Havel, and also encourages new writing, with the recent production *Cool Britannia*, written by local writer John Forde.

Chichester Festival Theatre

To mark the beginning of Chichester Festival Theatre's 40th anniversary celebrations in 2001, *The Devil's Dancing Hour*, a new play by Nick Whitby, was commissioned. This told the true story of the siege of Chichester, one of the key local political and military events of the Civil War that engulfed England from 1642. Men and women from all levels of the city's society, often friends and family, took different sides on issues of principle and fought to the death. The play was performed by a community company of over 400 actors, singers, musicians and technicians.

Future Tense

This was the largest project that New Writing North has ever undertaken in terms of finance and scale of activity. Future Tense involved commissioning and producing five new plays for five youth or community theatre groups across the Northern region of England.

In retrospect it was a crazy thing to attempt, but back in 1998, with the help of a very large Arts 4 Everyone grant and two years of sponsorship from Marks & Spencer, it seemed like a pretty simple idea.

The plays would be commissioned from professional or up-and-coming writers and produced by a team of professional directors, theatre designers and technicians, who would work with the groups to produce shows in their home towns and then help them to tour the plays to be part of a week-long Future Tense festival at Newcastle Playhouse in spring 1999.

The Future Tense project involved somewhere in the region of 400 people, as artistic staff and participants. They worked with adult non-professional theatre groups in Berwick-upon-Tweed and Stockton-on-Tees and with youth theatres in Bishop Auckland, South Tyneside and Barrow-in-Furness. The five writers that they commissioned were Jeff Williams, Peter Straughan, Bill Martin, C Byrnes and

Ann Coburn. Each play had a very individual journey and development process and the final five plays were diverse in subject matter, style and conception. The project allowed New Writing North to commission more plays than any other theatre company in the region that year and to give non-professional theatre groups unrivalled access to professional artists.

MSD Productions

Having moved back into the region, Rhona Mitchell found existing youth groups doing a good job with musicals in a small town in Aberdeenshire. Rather than setting up in competition, Rhona concentrated on drama, so as not to compete for what was then a relatively small pool of young people. She has commissioned six times to get works where all the young people in the drama group have something to do, sometimes from the same author as before, once from a bigger 'name'. She has also commissioned music.

Rhona Mitchell
MSD Productions
10 Cunninghill Avenue
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire AB51 3TZ

For a full guide to Youth Theatre across the UK, see www.nayt.org.uk

Live Theatre

Live Theatre in Newcastle specialises in new writing and has an education programme called Live Lines, which consists of a youth theatre, older people's group and young writers' group. These amateur groups regularly perform new plays. The Director of Live Lines is Paul James and the Associate Director for New Writing is Jeremy Herrin. Both can be contacted at Live Theatre in Newcastle on telephone: 0191 261 2694.

New Venture Theatre, Brighton (NVT)

The NVT was established in 1947. It is a community theatre, committed to achieving the highest standards on stage, and to cultivating original work. It acts as a focus for a range of Brighton-based initiatives.

The NVT hosts two writers' groups: HotBed and Sussex Playwrights' Club.

HotBed is a connection point for anyone interested in creating new work for live performance. It is a place to hone skills, think, discuss, experiment, receive feedback, make contacts and develop scripts. Meetings are varied and can include readings of scripts, guest speakers, debates, practical workshops and theatre outings. HotBed also generates new work for production at the NVT: HotShorts (new short pieces), full-length performed readings and full-length plays.

Julie Everton has recently taken on the role of HotBed Literary Manager. She has written extensively for the stage, as well as for television and radio. She was a previous winner of the Royal Court Young Writers Festival, and her latest play (which she directed) was produced at the Soho Theatre, London. She has led many workshops on various aspects of dramatic writing, from stagecraft to writing for children.

The Sussex Playwrights' Club's purpose is to encourage new work from writers throughout the country (Sussex just happened to be where the club started up in 1935):

- meetings are held monthly, on Sunday evenings, when plays by members are given readings
- each play is discussed and constructively criticised
- suggestions are made as to how the play might be improved and eventually marketed

- the readers are usually members, most of them experienced actors with local drama groups
- all members are encouraged to attend and take part in these discussions

The Sussex Playwrights' Club participates in events such as the Brighton Festival and often enjoys the support of professional actors to read at such times. The club also organises national playwriting competitions.

The NVT also hosts a range of local theatre companies:

- Sweetspot Theatre Company presented two very successful productions at the NVT last year and has been offered a residency
- Accidental Theatre has developed close links with the NVT recently, through productions such as *Assassins*, *Risk* and *Accidental Scandals*
- Breakthrough Theatre is an independent group, based in Brighton & Hove, focusing on workshops, reviews and plays
- Second Impression Theatre Company is a Brighton-based, non-profit-making theatre company, committed to staging innovative and engaging theatre, with a speciality for the absurd
- Helen Nelder's *Worn*, a story of domestic violence that premièred at the NVT in 2000, is now being used in support of various police and local authority initiatives to counter domestic violence
- Anita Sullivan (aka Anita Hickmore) has written a number of plays that have been produced at the NVT and is the driving force behind the NVT's HotBed writers' group and HotShorts showcases

www.newventure.org.uk/spcintro.htm

Local authorities

Many local authority venues are looking at new ways to programme drama and develop their audience. A small number of these have taken the step of entering into partnerships with regional producing companies, and their distinctive programming policies are initiating change in their local market. To take the South East of England as an example, here are some ways in which these relationships might work:

The Electric Theatre, Guildford is a local authority venue run by professional administrative staff on behalf of a consortium of local amateur societies. Although the work is mainly repertoire, Guildbury Productions, Surrey Women's Institute and Herald Players have all staged commissioned plays from amateur writers.

Ashford Borough Council has no professional companies based in the Borough, but instead works with local companies such as Changeling. It is an affluent rural community that has a lot of active amateur dramatic societies. This pattern of a high density of amateur activity in affluent rural areas is echoed throughout Sussex, Surrey and the rest of Kent. Channel Theatre also has links with amateur groups in the area.

Sevenoaks is part of a consortium that administers the Applause Rural Touring Scheme, which supports local companies. There is a healthy amateur sector, including very active youth theatres.

Woking Borough Council has a high level of amateur drama activity, with the Woking Drama Association (WDA) representing the many societies in the area. The WDA presents its work at the Rhoda McGaw Theatre, which is the 300-seat affiliated theatre of the New Victoria Theatre, a commercial touring house owned and run by Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG). The venue has a unique relationship with the local council, whereby the council handles all the administration for the theatre, with the staffing and technical facilities run by the ATG. The council hires the theatre for four weeks each year to present professional touring product (mostly one person shows), with the rest programmed by the WDA and local dance and drama schools. The WDA also hosts an annual amateur playwriting competition and the WDA two-week drama festival, held each October, features several new plays.

Appendix 6: Regional and national playwrights' organisations

Companies looking to work with a locally based writer will find it useful to consult with one of the regional or sub-regional playwrights' organisations in their area. Here are some examples:

Eastern England

Playwrights East

Playwrights East, operating at the Maddermarket Theatre, 'puts the living writer at the centre of the living theatre', and offers a good example of the amateur/professional continuum. They locate the development of professional writers within a company that combines professional artistic personnel with those drawn from the community in and around Norwich.

Playwrights East offers training, support networks, readings and workshops, along with Writers Week, the festival of new writing mounted in June 1999, which is now an annual event. The Maddermarket has also committed itself to producing one new play in its annual season.

Kirsten Riley
Creative Coordinator
Playwrights East
Maddermarket Theatre
St John's Alley
Norwich NR1 1DR
Telephone: 01603 626560/664920
kirsten@44riley.freemove.co.uk

Wolsey Writers' Group

This provides a network of support for playwriting across the whole of Suffolk. The group is currently applying for National Lottery support for a project involving professional writers, directors and actors, script surgeries, workshops and preparation for production.

The goal is to produce scripts of a professional standard for a festival of New Writing to be held at The New Wolsey Theatre – see www.wolseytheatre.co.uk – and elsewhere. The intention is to encourage aspiring writers to participate.

Contact Peppy Barlow at: peppytrack@aol.com

East Midlands

East Midlands Theatres

The East Midlands Theatres appointed a regional literary manager, Esther Richardson, in 2001, with the brief to give dramaturgical and writer development support to all the region's theatres. In the course of her work, Esther is building up a significant knowledge of writers based in the region.

Esther Richardson
Theatre Writing Director
Theatre Writing Partnership
Nottingham Playhouse
Wellington Circus
Nottingham NG1 5AF
Telephone: 0115 947 4361
esther@theatrewritingpartnership.com

Northern England

New Writing North

As the writing development agency for the Northern region, New Writing North is the primary force for the development of new writers in all genres (poetry, fiction, theatre, film and new media) from the region. It works closely with writers, producers, theatres, educational establishments, publishers and others to achieve its objectives.

Claire Malcolm
 Director
 2 School Lane
 Whickham
 Newcastle upon Tyne NE16 4SL
 Telephone: 0191 488 8580
 Fax: 0191 488 8576
 subtext.nwn@virgin.net

North West England

North West Playwrights (NWP)

The NWP is an independent organisation that develops and promotes new writing for theatre. It is not membership-based, but anyone over the age of 18, living or working in the Arts Council North West region, can submit a play to the free Script Reading Service and call for relevant advice. The NWP operates various award schemes to enable theatre companies to work with writers, and also runs classes and workshops in writing skills.

Chris Bridgman and Judith Rose
 Co-Directors
 18 St Margaret's Chambers
 5 Newton Street
 Manchester M1 1HL
 Telephone/fax: 0161 237 1978

South East England

Pier Playwrights

An organisation run by playwrights for playwrights, Pier Playwrights supports and develops writers and their work. Membership is open to all playwrights in the Arts Council South East region – both aspiring and professional – and to companies with an interest in new writing. The company is based in Brighton, but welcomes members from throughout the area.

Chris Taylor
 Coordinator
 Pier Playwrights
 PO Box 141
 Brighton BN2 1LZ
 Telephone: 01273 625132
 Fax: 01273 675922
 chris.taylor@clara.co.uk
 www.pierplaywrights.co.uk

South West England

Southwest Scriptwriters

Established in 1994 to encourage and promote new drama writing for stage, screen, radio and television throughout the region, this group has grown rapidly during the last five years and now has over 100 members.

Southwest Scriptwriters' main aim is to help members achieve professional productions of their work. Several members have enjoyed success with a London theatre production, BBC Radio 4 drama broadcasts, Channel 4 screenplay and HTV production. Members' scripts have also been performed locally in theatres, amateur productions and rehearsed readings.

info@southwest-scriptwriters.co.uk
 www.southwest-scriptwriters.co.uk

West Midlands

Script!

Script! (formerly Stagecoach) aims to discover and develop West Midlands writers to the point where they can work professionally in the region and beyond. Script! offers services to writers at all levels, from earliest aspirant stages through to first commission and beyond. These include a Script Reading Service, Open Access Workshops, Skills Development Workshops, New Writing Festival with script workshops and rehearsed readings of selected plays (entry through the Script Reading Service), and a free quarterly newsletter, *Staging Post*. They have a database of over 900 individuals and companies in the West Midlands. Script! is funded by Arts Council England, and its services are available to anyone who lives, works or studies in the West Midlands region.

Peggy Paterson
 Director
 Script!
 Unit 107, The Custard Factory
 Gibb Street
 Birmingham B9 4AA
 Telephone: 0121 224 7415
 peggy.paterson@script.custardfactory.co.uk

Yorkshire

Yorkshire Playwrights Limited

A registered charity, Yorkshire Playwrights Limited was founded in 1989, and now represents over 80 professional and aspiring professional playwrights for stage, TV and radio. It encourages new writing for performance across the region and, to this end, holds regular craft meetings, public workshops and seminars, and publishes a monthly newsletter giving details of opportunities for writers. It also initiates its own projects for writers resident within the Arts Council England, Yorkshire region, including, in 1999–2000, Mainstage/2, which sought (with financial incentives) to encourage

previously performed playwrights to write a new full-length play and mounted a fully professional production of the two best submissions.

Liz Ryan, Chair
 Flat 3
 49 St Mary's Avenue
 Hemingborough
 North Yorkshire YO8 6YZ
 Telephone: 01757 630742
 lizemryan@hotmail.com
 www.yorkshireplaywrights.co.uk

National organisations

Writers' Guild of Great Britain

The Writers' Guild is a trade union for writers working in television, radio, film, theatre, books and multimedia. It is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress and has over 2,000 members. Its mission is to represent writers in all media.

Writing is by its nature a solitary occupation, but membership of the Writers' Guild means that writers need not be isolated. Their minimum terms agreements and advice services are safeguards against exploitation. Their professional, cultural and social activities enable writers to be part of a community, in touch with each other and with new ideas.

Writers' Guild of Great Britain
 15 Britannia Street
 London WC1X 9JN
 Telephone: 020 7833 0777
 Fax: 020 7833 4777
 admin@writersguild.org.uk
 www.writersguild.org.uk

writernet

writernet's mission is to give dramatic writers the tools they need to build better careers, and redefine the culture in which they work. Its aims are:

- to connect writers to the industry and to each other, through a network
- to use the internet to support writers and those who work with them
- to provide a safety net

writernet is:

- a service that provides information, advice and guidance on all aspects of the live and recorded performing industry to writers working in performance mediums – and those who want to work with them
- a service which provides information, advice and guidance for writers working in diverse contexts
- a national, not-for-profit organisation funded by earned income from subscription, trust fund support and project funding from Arts Council England

writernet

Cabin V

Clarendon Buildings

25 Horsell Road

London N5 1XL

Telephone: 020 7609 7474

Fax: 020 7609 7557

writernet@btinternet.com

www.writernet.org.uk

Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA)

The SCDA has a large collection of play scripts available through its libraries in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Kirkcaldy.

Scottish Playwrights Studio

A new initiative launching in early 2004.

Julie Ellen

Director

c/o Neil Murray

The Tron Theatre

63 Trongate

Glasgow G1 5HB

Drama Association of Wales/Cymdeithas Ddrama Cymru (DAW)

The DAW operates the largest specialist script lending library in the world. The collections include: the play sets and single copies collections of the former British Drama League/British Theatre Association, the former Inner London Education Authority play library, the UK reading room for the Playwrights Canada Press, and critical and reference works, all available by return of post.

Sgript Cymru

Sgript Cymru's mission is to discover, develop and produce the best work of contemporary Welsh and Wales-based playwrights.

Formed in May 2000, Sgript Cymru evolved out of the successful Welsh language company Dalier Sylw, led by Artistic Director Bethan Jones, which enjoyed 10 years championing a fresh generation of Welsh language playwrights to audiences throughout Wales.

As part of its core activity, Sgript Cymru offers a reading service, commissions new plays in Welsh and English, regularly hosts a development forum for new work called Sgript Xplosure! and presents its own productions, such as *Art and Guff* by Catherine Tregenna, as well as working in coproduction with companies such as Paines Plough, on *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco* by Gary Owen, and Theatr Gwynedd, on Meic Povey's double bill *Diwedd y Byd/Yr Hen Blant*.

Chapter Arts Centre
Canton
Cardiff CF5 1QE
Telephone: 029 2023 6650
Fax: 029 2023 6651
sgriptcymru@sgriptcymru.com
Artistic Director: Simon Harris
Artistic Associate: Bethan Jones
Literary Manager: Caron Edwards

Appendix 7: Key websites for locating writers

There is a range of websites providing access to writers and scripts. Here is a sample:

www.artscape.org.uk

Over 1,200 writers working in all mediums with an emphasis on education and community experience.

www.writernet.co.uk

Over 400 writers across the UK with dramatic writing experience.

www.writersguild.org.uk

Coming soon, the online Writers' Guild Directory.

www.doollee.com

Database of playwrights whose plays have been produced or published in English since 1956.

www.scriptography.co.uk

A catalogue of plays by 10 authors experienced in community theatre. All the plays are written by the winning competitors in the SCDA Play on Words and Scott Salver competitions.

www.amdram.co.uk

Individual writers and script sources.

www.amdram.co.uk/services_search.htm

Substantial play/production database.

www.opentheatre.co.uk/cpad

The national community plays archive database. C-PAD has recorded details of over 300 large-scale community plays that have taken place in Britain since the 1970s.

www.writerscentre.ie

Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild Members' Directory and Register of Plays.

www.foxplays.co.uk

Plays and musicals.

www.schoolplayproductions.co.uk/schoolplay.htm

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd was established in 1989 to promote theatrical works for performance by youth groups and schools. It publishes over 140 plays and musicals covering the whole age range up to 19: one-act and full-length shows, with casts of all sizes and a very wide range of themes and styles. Several are also suitable for performance by adult groups.

www.playsonthenet.com

This site has been designed for writers wishing to promote themselves by uploading their plays. Anyone wishing to read or listen to a play can download from the Play List page.

www.mercurymusicals.com

The Backstage section of this website is for Mercury Musical Developments (MMD) associates only. It contains a wealth of information for writers and composers of musical theatre, as well as others in the industry, including the following:

- details of all MMD upcoming events
- details of worldwide competitions, awards and workshop groups
- guidelines on finding an agent, publishing deals, production deals, sending unsolicited scripts, setting up your own workshops, etc
- information about legal issues such as copyright, royalties, signing collaboration agreements, etc
- exercises and techniques used by professional writers and composers, shared freely with MMD associates for their own use
- a comprehensive list of internet links tailored specifically to the needs of musical theatre writers and composers

The site has two bulletin boards, MMD Associates only and Open Access.

Appendix 8: Key organisations

The Little Theatre Guild

The Little Theatre Guild grew out of a common idea that independently controlled amateur theatres might benefit from regular meetings to discuss problems, experiences and standards. The idea was first mooted in the 1930s as more and more companies began to open their own theatres, and in 1946, nine theatres came together to establish the Guild. Over the years, the Guild has expanded and now comprises almost 100 member theatres throughout the UK, all listed on their website www.littletheatreguild.org/ltgmembr.htm.

Barbara Watson, National Secretary
181 Brampton Road
Carlisle CA3 9AX
Telephone/fax: 01228 522649

The National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA)

NODA was established in 1899 'to protect and advance the interests of operatic and dramatic art, and of societies engaged therein'. It has a membership of some 2,300 amateur societies and 3,000 individual enthusiasts throughout the UK, staging musicals, operas, plays, concerts and pantomimes in a wide variety of performing venues, ranging from the country's leading professional theatres to tiny village halls.

NODA is divided into 11 areas, each headed by an area councillor who sits on the National Council (the ruling body of the Association), supported by a network of regional representatives. The Association is administered from a headquarters with a knowledgeable and friendly staff able to deal with virtually any enquiry relating to amateur theatre.

NODA represents the broad spectrum of ages involved with amateur theatre (dramatic or musical) nationwide, from youth groups to adult companies that meet the needs of all levels of performers, and enthusiasts involved backstage, front of house or in administration.

NODA aims:

- to give a shared voice to the amateur sector
- to help amateur societies and individuals achieve the highest standards of best practice and performance
- to provide leadership and advice to enable the amateur sector to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century

NODA House
58–60 Lincoln Road
Peterborough PE1 2RZ
Telephone: 0870 770 2480
Fax: 0870 770 2490
everyone@noda.org.uk
www.noda.org.uk

Drama Association of Wales/Cymdeithas Ddrama Cymru (DAW)

Established in 1934, a registered charity since 1973 and revenue funded by the Arts Council of Wales since 1974, the Drama Association of Wales (DAW) is the umbrella body for participatory theatre in Wales, offering a wide and varied range of services to participatory theatre. Working in the two majority languages of Wales, the function of the Association is to increase opportunities for people in the community to be creatively involved in drama that is fun and of a high standard.

The DAW has the largest specialist drama lending library in the world – over 300,000 volumes that include: the playsets and single copies collections of the former British Theatre Association, the former Inner London Education Authority play library, the UK reading room for the Playwrights Canada Press, and critical and reference works.

Members in the UK, Europe and worldwide are served by return of post from Cardiff.

As part of an extensive programme of services that includes organising festivals, training, sector advocacy and an international programme, the DAW runs several new writing schemes to identify and nurture the next generation of dramatists:

- script reading service – scripts written for the theatre are read by experienced professionals, who give a written critique. The service costs £15 per script. Plays suitable for the amateur theatre market are considered for publishing
- playwriting competition – annual playwriting competition for one-act plays written in either Welsh or English of a running time of 20 to 50 minutes. Typically, the competition attracts 250 entries from all over the world and shortlisted plays are considered for publication. An entry fee applies. The competition is currently sponsored by Barclays Bank plc
- DAW publications – 70 titles published for the amateur theatre market since 1991, featuring both experienced and new writers from Arnold Wesker, Pam Gems and Frank Vickery to brand new writers achieving their first publication. The DAW promotes the plays through its extensive network of amateur theatre companies both in the UK and internationally, and acts as agent for amateur productions of the plays they publish
- translations – the DAW commissions translations of plays into the Welsh language
- training – the DAW periodically holds new writing courses as part of its training programme
- networking – the DAW acts as point of contact for many new writers for the theatre in Wales and beyond, and works closely with Sgript Cymru, the new writing theatre company for Wales

Drama Association of Wales/Cymdeithas Ddrama Cymru
The Old Library
Singleton Road
Splott
Cardiff CF24 2ET
Telephone: 029 2045 2200
Fax: 029 2045 2277
aled.daw@virgin.net
www.amdram.co.uk/daw1.htm

Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA)

The SCDA is a voluntary organisation, established in 1926, which works to promote all aspects of community theatre in Scotland. Membership comprises over 1,200 individuals and theatre clubs throughout Scotland.

National Office
5 York Place
Edinburgh EH1 3EB
Telephone/fax: 0131 557 5552
headquarters@scda.org.uk
www.scda.org.uk

Association of Ulster Drama Festivals (AUDF)

The principal umbrella organisation for amateur theatre groups in Northern Ireland is the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals, which is in receipt of public funding from the Arts Council for Ireland (ACI).

The AUDF organises full-length and one-act drama festivals, but original plays are a rarity in both. There are no amateur-generated original play competitions in Northern Ireland, although entries to the one-act festivals are eligible for entry to the British One-Act National Finals. Such new plays are also eligible for the annual Geoffrey Whitworth Award, presented to the best play entered/performed in this competitive festival each year. This award is administered by the All-England Theatre Festival (AETF).

For further information, see www.audf.org.uk

In addition to the AUDF, the Northern Amateur Theatre Association (NATA), which represents drama companies across Ulster, has been principally involved in running drama-training courses, funded by the ACI. However, these gradually became Belfast-orientated, largely around the Group Theatre in Belfast, and the ACI declared a moratorium on small grants of this nature. There is, however, now a move to regenerate interest in the NATA, and make it a proactive group across the province, with the support of the ACI.

Appendix 9: Commissioning and agreements

Copyright

Controlling the terms on which copies may be made, or performances given, are two of the rights ('copyrights') granted to an author of an original 'literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work' by the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 ('the Act'). Books, scripts, diaries and letters are literary works, and can be protected by copyright if the provisions of the Act are fulfilled.

An original handwritten script may attract copyright protection, whereas an improvised production would only be protected if it were recorded (perhaps in writing, on tape, or on film).

ITC/WGGB contract

As outlined in the *Copyright and contracts* section, the most appropriate contract for the engagement of writers with theatre companies is the ITC/WGGB agreement covering theatre writers' terms and conditions. Minimum fees for commissioning a writer are agreed annually between the Independent Theatre Council (ITC) and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) in line with the agreement on minimum terms and conditions.

Established in 1974, the ITC welcomed its 500th member in 1999–2000. It represents a wide range of performing arts organisations, venues and individuals in the fields of drama, dance, opera, music theatre, puppetry, mixed media, mime, physical theatre and circus.

The WGGB is a trade union for writers working in television, radio, film, theatre, books and multimedia. It is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress and has over 2,000 members.

From 1 April 2003, the fees under the agreement are no less than:

- £5,817 for a play over 70 minutes
- £3,878 for a play between 30 and 70 minutes
- £1,939 for a play under 30 minutes

These are minimum fees and should not automatically be regarded as the going rate. For the full text of the ITC/WGGB writers contract, setting out the minimum terms and conditions, Guild members should log into the Members' Area of the Guild website on www.writersguild.org.uk and go to the Theatre section. Non-members can obtain a copy for £10 from the Guild. For theatres, the contract can be found on www.itc-arts.org

Quick-reference guide to the main points

- a treatment: may optionally be commissioned for 10 per cent of the full commission fee. Delivery date for the treatment is to be mutually agreed, after which management has four weeks to proceed to full commission, or not
- commission: 50 per cent of the full fee is paid on signature (40 per cent if a treatment has been paid for and 70 per cent for an existing unperformed script). A further 25 per cent is paid on the delivery of the first full draft of the script
- rewrites: where rewrites are required, the maximum period for delivery is six weeks. Management then has three weeks to decide whether or not to produce the play (10 per cent will be paid on delivery of rewrites for an existing unperformed script)
- production process: on the decision to produce a new play, a further 15 per cent of the full fee is payable (for an existing script, a further 10 per cent is payable)
- director, designer and actors are mutually agreed
- management may require the writer's attendance at six days of rehearsal (for which payment is included in the commissioning fee). Further required attendance is paid at the rate of £42.55 per day. However, the writer has the right to attend any other rehearsals at his or her own expense
- first performance: triggers payment of the final 10 per cent of the fee
- royalties: eight per cent of net box office receipts are paid to the writer after management has received the first £39,190 net box office receipts
- management participation: eight per cent of his or her income from any further use of the play (excluding foreign language exploitation) will be paid by the writer to management once he/she has earned in excess of £22,394 from the play during a period of five years following the first full performance
- further productions: a minimum royalty of £39.20 per performance or eight per cent of box office, whichever is the greater, shall be paid to the writer by any ITC company producing the play subsequent to the première production
- performance rights: while copyright remains at all times with the writer, management has exclusive rights to the play in the UK (bar the West End) for 12 months from first performance. An option for a further 12 months' exclusive rights period may be taken up on payment of £559.86. A subsequent non-exclusive rights period of 12 months may be taken up on payment of £111.97. Royalties at eight per cent are payable to the writer during any of the option rights periods above (regardless of net box office thresholds)

Both parties should obtain a copy of the full agreement prior to any engagement.

Independent Theatre Council
12 The Leathermarket
Weston Street
London SE1 3ER
Telephone: 020 7403 1727
Fax: 020 7403 1745
admin@itc-arts.org
www.itc-arts.org

Writers' Guild of Great Britain
15 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9JN
Telephone: 020 7833 0777
Fax: 020 7833 4777
admin@writersguild.org
www.writersguild.org.uk

For further guidance on the playwright/director relationship see the report from the seminar Rules of Engagement, which you can download for free at www.writernet.co.uk/php/news.php?id=52

Appendix 10: Funding

Arts Councils

While this guide has outlined in detail the Arts Council England grants available from 2003 onwards, you can check details of current funding programmes at www.artscouncil.org.uk, telephone 0845 300 6200, or by contacting one of the offices below.

Please note that the telephone number for all Arts Council England regional and national offices will be 0845 300 6200 from March 2004.

Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ
Fax: 020 7973 6590
Textphone: 020 7973 6564

Arts Council England, London
2 Pear Tree Court
London EC1R 0DS
Fax: 020 7608 4100
Textphone: 020 7608 4101

Arts Council England, East
Eden House
48–49 Bateman Street
Cambridge CB2 1LR
Fax: 0870 242 1271
Textphone: 01223 306893

Arts Council England, North East
Central Square
Forth Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3PJ
Fax: 0191 230 1020
Textphone: 0191 255 8500

Arts Council England, East Midlands
St Nicholas Court
25–27 Castle Gate
Nottingham NG1 7AR
Fax: 0115 950 2467

Arts Council England, North West
Manchester House
22 Bridge Street
Manchester M3 3AB
Fax: 0161 834 6969
Textphone: 0161 834 9131

Arts Council England, South East
Sovereign House
Church Street
Brighton BN1 1RA
Fax: 0870 242 1257
Textphone: 01273 710659

Arts Council England, South West
Bradinch Place
Gandy Street
Exeter EX4 3LS
Fax: 01392 229229
Textphone: 01392 433503

Arts Council England, West Midlands
82 Granville Street
Birmingham B1 2LH
Fax: 0121 643 7239
Textphone: 0121 643 2815

Arts Council England, Yorkshire
21 Bond Street
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire WF13 1AX
Fax: 01924 466522 or 0870 242 1267
Textphone: 01924 438585

The Arts Council of Ireland
70 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
Republic of Ireland
Telephone: 00 353 1 618 0200
Fax: 00 353 1 676 1302

Arts Council of Northern Ireland
MacNeice House
77 Malone Road
Belfast BT9 6AQ
Telephone: 028 9038 5200
Fax: 028 9066 1715

Scottish Arts Council
12 Manor Place
Edinburgh EH3 7DD
Telephone: 0131 226 6051
Fax: 0131 225 9833

Arts Council of Wales
9 Museum Place
Cardiff CF10 3NN
Telephone: 029 20 376500
Fax: 029 20 221447

Regional writers' development agencies

Some regional arts funders devolve certain types of funding to regional agencies. For example, North West Playwrights' awards exist to aid the professional development of writers living or working in the Arts Council England, North West region, and to encourage collaborations between writers and companies.

There are four types of standard award:

- to support the commission of a script for production
- to support the production of an existing script
- to support a residency by a writer with a company or organisation
- to support a writer developing a script for production by a non-revenue-funded company

North West Playwrights also considers funding projects which develop writing for the stage in the region, but which do not fall under any of the above categories.

Government funds (non-arts specific)

Amateur companies and playwrights can also benefit from government funds that focus on community.

Here are two examples from 2002, but you should check to see what is available at any particular time by looking at relevant government websites.

Awards for All in England

Awards for All is a lottery grants scheme aimed at local communities. It awards grants of between £500 and £5,000 in a simple and straightforward way.

A sample of awards from the Southern and South East region illustrates the kinds of organisation and work supported.

Bhumika Asian Theatre in Slough was awarded £5,000 for running workshops and putting on a drama production. Costs included a director and writer, publicity, venues for two events, production costs and administration.

The Astor Theatre Arts Centre in Dover was awarded £5,000 towards undertaking its first venture into community theatre with the creation of three different versions of *Black-eyed Susan*.

The Gantry Youth Theatre in Southampton was awarded £3,090 to commission a new piece of work that focused on the changing face of the city's centre in the last 100 years. The writer worked with older members of the community to research information.

Theatre Utopia in Worthing was awarded £4,815 to run a series of six workshops for 45 people led by experts in creative writing and performance skills, culminating in a public performance. Costs covered artists' fees, rehearsal space and theatre hire, overheads, marketing and administration.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Community Champions Fund

The Community Champions Fund was set up to help people who can inspire others to get more involved in renewing their neighbourhoods through participation in community groups. It can also support a limited number of small-scale community-inspired projects. The aim is to help people build on skills they already have and encourage them to help others become more involved in community and regeneration activity.

The fund is managed by government offices in the regions, in partnership with voluntary organisations. It can provide small grants to support a wide range of activities, especially those that help spread good practice. For further information, see www.dfes.gov.uk/communitychampions

The Liverpool Theatre Network (LTN) is committed to developing interest and activity in theatre at all levels and produced *Cool Britannia*, a first play by local playwright John Forde, in May of 2002. LTN successfully applied for funding from Community Champions for their New Playwrights Project, to develop its relationship with new writing for the stage. During 2002–03, it made contact with writing groups across Merseyside, inviting scripts for selection and presentation at the Unity Theatre in 2003.

The New Playwrights Project
Liverpool Network Theatre Group
6 Falkner Street
Liverpool L8 7PZ

Appendix 11: Audience development

Amateur companies often rely on the professional non-arts based skills of their members, and this can include marketing expertise. When considering the issues around the marketing of new theatre writing it is difficult, not to say unwise, to provide a simple list of dos and don'ts – partly because the amateur sector operates in such a wide range of contexts (see *Working together* section). Instead, what follows is an approach to marketing which concentrates on audience development.

Case study – new writing at The Birmingham Rep

One of the most significant investments in the development of new theatre writing in the last generation has been The Door – the Studio at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre – where Trevelyan Wright was until recently Education Director. In outlining their approach to marketing new writing, it is hoped amateur companies can take inspiration and pursue what works for them.

What used to be The Rep Studio has been for the past three years the centre of a unique new writing programme: unique most clearly in the number of productions of new plays – 26. Tony Clark, the Associate Artistic Director, believed that before The Door started, the sporadic nature of The Rep's production of new plays was preventing them from reaching an audience.

Trevelyan Wright illustrated this in the *writernet bulletin* of February 2001:

'Because we didn't have the consistency, we didn't get the possibility of developing the tastes of an audience. You might get the odd piece of Asian theatre or children's theatre, you might get the odd new play that dealt with some burning topical issue, but then you wouldn't hear that voice or work in that style for a couple of years and so the audience you reached would have lost faith in your ability to value that work.

Tony and The Rep wanted The Door to address this issue. Not only would The Door produce exclusively new work, it would reach a new audience: a younger and more diverse one than attended our Main House. The Door has now completed three years of work, which has included productions by writers as diverse as Sarah Woods, Roy Williams, Judy Upton, Charles Mulekwa, Declan Croghan and Tamsin Oglesby. If The Rep can say The Door has found a consistent audience for new work, it has done so because of two things: Tony was correct about the consistency of production; and many different departments across The Rep have worked together on a wide and continuing range of projects that have brought new writing and new audiences together.

To launch The Door, the Marketing, Education and Literary Departments put in motion a number of initiatives to actively find and bring in a young audience. 'Mad to Miss Mondays', in which a normal £9.00 ticket costs £2.99, has brought in an audience of under-26s from the start: so successful has it proved that this scheme now runs three days a week and has been extended to cover Main House shows. More recently, the Student Megapass has offered all three shows in The Door and a Main House show for £10.00.

My department, Education, has been more closely involved in Page To Stage: an educational initiative that has run since the first Door season. It links students from further and higher education – typically on a BTEC Performing Arts course – to all the shows in a particular season. Students get a season ticket, which entitles them to tickets to all the shows, two workshop sessions and copies of the published play scripts. Tony Clark has been clear that Page To Stage is a central part of The Door's mission to widen taste at a young age, so that the chance of finding new work an exciting proposition in the future will be that much greater.

That audience returning two years after they've left their sixth form college might be a spin-off, but that is not the purpose of the exercise. Art is not an exercise through which you can guarantee future profit, either spiritual or material. However, you don't stand a chance (of attracting audiences to new work) unless that chance is there.

Our work on transmitting the buzz of The Door has also brought us into working with the Adult Education Service in Birmingham. Just as there is a tendency to equate new writing with young writers, so there is a tendency (at The Rep as no doubt elsewhere) to assume that the audience for new work must be just the young. The Education Department is in the middle of a year-long project in which writers are working in three Adult Education centres across Birmingham. The first course took place in the south of the city during the autumn with the writer Kaite O'Reilly, and ran at the time her new play *Belonging* was being rehearsed and produced at The Door. Though Kaite has tutored writing courses previously at centres such as The Arvon Foundation or on university courses, the diversity in age and background of the participants was much wider and their excitement at being involved in the writing process unlike anything she had encountered in teaching previously.

What conclusions can we draw? That it is the quality and range of the work itself, produced consistently over three years, that has built up The Door audience: Paul Lucas' first play for The Door, *All That Trouble We Had*, played to 905 people. Eighteen months later, his next play, *A Slight Witch*, played to 2,100. The average audience totals for a Door play in autumn 1998 was 611, in autumn 1999, 1,069 and in autumn 2000, over 1,700. Page To Stage has formed a key part of this growth: in the spring 1999 season, there were 330 tickets taken up by participants; by autumn 2000, the figure was over 600. The fact that a steady stream of high-quality new plays has emerged has helped Education build up links with partners such as Adult Education rather than go for the 'quick fix' Audience Development Project set up to deliver an audience for an isolated piece of new work.

Students (of whatever age) have benefited from both thematic and skills-based modes of participation. What is common to all the work that is inspired by The Door is that we are providing an individual connection for each person to the process of writing and producing new work. This, I think, is what we might have learnt over the past few years about engaging audiences. An existing work such as *Romeo and Juliet* provides each potential audience member with all sorts of individual connections to the production itself: they might think of the film, they might think of other Shakespeare plays, they might think of the storyline and the characters. A new play such as *Belonging* or *A Wedding Story* can't rely on potential audiences making these connections merely from the advance marketing and publicity. Instead, we have set up opportunities for potential audience members to make connections to the writing process. Audiences can't work with Shakespeare: they can with Kaite and Tony and that's what's so exciting about a project like The Door for Education. It is sometimes a demanding route to take and it asks writers to be generous in public with their work and their methods. But like The Door itself, consistency in making the process as transparent and involving as possible, has been the secret behind the achievements to date. The future can only take us further down this road.'

Trevelyan Wright, writernet bulletin, February 2001

For further information on audience development, see *A Guide to Audience Development*, by Heather Maitland (updated in 2000), Arts Council England.

Appendix 12: Publishers

The Drama Association of Wales library is in receipt of review copies from all the publishers listed below, all of which produce their own catalogues. Most of these catalogues may be obtained free of charge, except that of Samuel French Ltd.

A&C Black Ltd
37 Soho Square
London W1D 3QZ
Tel: 020 7758 0200

Alex Scott Publications
44 Penton Road
Staines
Middlesex TW18 2LD

Alyson Publications Inc.
PO Box 4371
Los Angeles
CA 90078
USA

Amber Lane Press Ltd
Cheorl House
Church Street
Charlbury
Oxon OX7 3PR
Tel/Fax: 01608 810024

Anecdotes Publishing
100 Northwood Lane
Clayton
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffs ST5 4BN
Tel: 01782 626053

Beetleheart Publishing
PO Box 212
Banbury
Oxon OX15 5YX
Tel: 01608 685739

Blizzard Publishing
C/o Gazelle Book Services
Falcon House
Queen Square
Lancaster LA1 1RN

Bloodaxe Books
PO Box 1SN
Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 1SN
Tel: 01434 240500
Fax: 01434 240505

Broadfield Publishing
71 Broadfield Road
Manchester M14 4WE
Tel: 0141 4291234

Brophy International
Publishing Limited
108 Sundrive Road
Dublin 12
Republic of Ireland

Brown, Son & Ferguson
4–10 Darnley Street
Glasgow G41

Calder Publications Ltd
126 Cornwall Road
London SE1 8TQ
Tel: 020 7633 0599

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge CB2 2RU
Tel: 01223 312393

Coach House Press
401 Huron Street
Toronto
Ontario M5S 2G5
Canada

Columba Mercier Distribution Ltd
55A Spruce Avenue
Stillorgan Industrial Park
Blackrock, Co. Dublin
Republic of Ireland
Tel: 00 353 1294 2560

Cressrelles
10 Station Road Industrial Estate
Colwall, Malvern
Worcestershire WR13 3RN
Tel: 01684 540154

Currency Press
PO Box 2287
Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012
Australia
Tel: 00 61 2 9319 5877
Fax: 00 61 2 9319 3649
enquiries@currencypress.com.au

Dramatic Lines
PO Box 201
Twickenham TW2 5RQ
Tel: 020 8296 9502

Dramatists Play Service
440 Park Avenue South
New York
NY 10016
USA

Eric Fowler
5 Riverside Court
Station Road
Pulborough
West Sussex RH20 1RG

Faber & Faber Ltd
3 Queen Square
London WC1N 3AU
Tel: 020 7465 0045

Fifth House Publishers
620 Duchess Street
Saskatoon
Saskatchewan S7K 0R1
Canada

Flying Ducks Publications
Station Road
Highley
Shropshire WV16 6NW
Tel: 01746 861641

General Publishing
30 Lesmill Road
Don Mills
Ontario M3B 2T6
Canada
Gomer Press
Llandysul
Ceredigion SA44 4QL

Hanbury Plays
Keeper's Lodge
Broughton Green
Drotwich
Worcs WR9 7EE

Harrap
Larousse Place
24–30 Great Titchfield Street
London W1P 7AD

Jasper Publishing
17 Avebury Court
Mark Road
Hemel Hempstead
Herts HP2 7TA
Tel: 01442 263461

Jonathan Cape Ltd
Random House
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 2SA

Joseph Weinberger Ltd
12–14 Mortimer Street
London W1N 7RD
Tel: 020 7580 2827

Kevin Brophy
Campus Publications
26 Tirellan Heights
Galway, Co. Galway
Republic of Ireland
Tel: 00 353 9152 4662

Literary Press Group
260 King Street East
Toronto
Ontario M5A 1K3
Canada

McClelland & Stewart
481 University Avenue Ste 900
Toronto
Ontario M5G 2E9
Canada

Mercier Books
18 Academy Street
Cork, Co. Cork
Republic of Ireland
Tel: 00 353 2142 75040

Methuen Drama
215 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 1EJ
Tel: 020 7828 2838

Motley Press
104 De Montfort House
100 Oxford Street
Leicester LE1 5XQ

Musicscope Ltd
95 Whitelion Street
London N1 9PF
Tel: 020 7278 1133

Nelson Thornes
Delta Place
27 Bath Road
Cheltenham GL53 7TH
Tel: 01242 267100

New Century Drama
Order Department
22 Trotsworth Court
Virginia Water
Surrey GU25 4AG
Tel: 01344 843626

New Theatre Publications
13 Mossgrove Road
Timperley, Altrincham
Cheshire WA15 6LF
Tel: 020 8749 4953

Nick Hern Books
The Glasshouse
49a Goldhawk Road
London W12 8QP

NuAge Editions
PO Box 8
Station E
Montreal
Quebec H2T 3A5
Canada

Oberon Books Ltd
521 Caledonian Road
London N7 9RH

Oxford University Press
Walton Street
Oxford OX2 6DP

Parthian Books
41 Skelmuir Road
Cardiff CF2 2PR

Pedersen Press
44 Redburn Road
Whitelees, Cumbernald
Glasgow G67 3NR

Penguin Books
Bath Road, Harmondsworth
West Drayton
Middlesex UB7 0DA

Player Playwrights
76 Vineyard Hill Road
London SW19 7JJ
Tel: 020 8946 5949

Playwrights Canada Press
2nd Floor
54 Wolsely Street
Toronto
Ontario M5T 1A5
Canada

Random House
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 2SA
Tel: 020 7840 8638

Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE

Samuel French Ltd
52 Fitzroy Street
Fitzrovia
London W1T 5JR
Tel: 020 7387 9373

School Play Productions Ltd
15 Inglis Road
Colchester
Essex CO3 3HU

Seren
First Floor
2 Wyndham Street
Bridgend CF31 1EF

Suzie Halley
Rosica Colin Ltd
1 Clareville Grove Mews
London SW7 5AH
Tel: 020 7370 1080

Talon Books
201–1019 East Cordova Street
Vancouver
British Columbia V6A 1M8
Canada

Theatre Script
Upton House
Southey Green
Halstead CO2 3RN

Uitgeverij International Theatre
Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 21 VII
Amsterdam
The Netherlands

University of Toronto Press
5201 Dufferin Street
Downsview
Ontario M3H 5T8
Canada

Williams Wallace Publishers
PO Box 756
Stratford
Ontario N5A 3E8
Canada

Women's Press
233–517 College Street
Toronto
Ontario M6G 4A2
Canada

Wonderful World of Panto
Penkiln Garden Flat
Cumloden Road
Newton Stewart DG8 6AA
Tel: 01671 403724

Further reading and other useful information

The Methuen Amateur Theatre Handbook, Keith Arrowsmith, London 2001

ITC/WGGB A Practical Guide for Writers & Companies, Stewart Harcourt 1993

The Community Arts Directory 2002/2003 – the first-ever concise listing of amateur theatre groups in the UK, plus details of professional and amateur venues, Arts Council England, drama schools and training centres, theatrical sources, theatre websites, publishers, services and suppliers and musical rights holders. Available from Platform Publications, Hampden House, 2 Weymouth Street, London W1W 3FD, Telephone: 020 7636 4343 Fax: 020 7636 2323, cvtheatre@aol.com

Essential Theatre, Crispin Raymond, Arts Council of England (now Arts Council England) 1999 – includes a common sense approach to marketing plays both new and old. Available to order at www.artscouncil.org.uk

Arts Marketing Association

The professional development body for those promoting the arts and cultural industries. For details, see www.a-m-a.co.uk

Arts Council England's New Audiences programme

New Audiences was a programme of action research designed to bring new art to audiences and new audiences to the arts, which ran between 1998 and 2003. The programme helped to establish several innovative schemes. Details of projects supported and lessons learned can be found at www.newaudiences.org.uk

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Commissioning new work

A good practice guide for amateur theatre companies and playwrights

Jonathan Meth

ISBN 0-7287-1001-3

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