

OUDS Meeting: Trinity Term Week 2

8th May 2020, via Microsoft Teams

Present: Alasdair Linn, Ana Pagu, Henry Calcutt, Ros Ballaster, Alison Hall, Emma Hawkins, John Watts, Krishan Emmanuel, Lola Beal, Mina Moniri, Ariadne Si Suo, John Livesey, Georgina Dettmer

Apologies: Katie Friedli Walton

Agenda

1. OUDS accounts

AP gave a summary of the accounts from last year. Overall, OUDS made a loss of approximately £1000 - as usual, the losses are coming from Fringe shows and Playhouse shows, so this was more or less expected; there is currently almost £26,000 in the account.

AP said that it didn't necessarily matter that we did not fund anything this term. RB said that having this money we're sitting on by not funding shows means we could potentially take risks and dip into the accounts a bit more this year to try and re-accelerate drama when it does pick up again.

AP also raised that it's very unlikely that we'll get VC funding next term.

2. A Virtual OUDS

AL thanked EH and KFW for the online resources that they have compiled. AL has been in touch with Debra Warner, the visiting professor, about both the prospect of a Zoom Q&A or seminar on staging the classical text, and whether she might be willing to do something involving Fiona Shaw - he has not heard anything from her yet. He is also looking to organise a lecture on the implications of screening theatre. AL invited JL to expand on this, who is looking into reviving other cancelled events which were supposed to take place this term.

AL asked if anyone else had any other ideas for events such as these. RB brought up the TORCH Online Big Tent, and JL said that he would message their events organiser, Holly Knights.

AL had the idea of a monologue festival where - through a form - actors, writers and directors would be matched together. Actors could submit a monologue, or request one that fits a certain criteria; writers could either submit work they've already written or give details of something they would go on to write; directors could specify what kind of piece they might like to direct.

For welfare purposes, these individuals would be emailed in advance and asked whether they would be happy to work with one another. They would then all go off and have a period of rehearsal time, which would culminate in a festival where all the projects would be put together and presented to the OUDS members.

JL thinks we should release some advice to directors in advance, a kind of press release with a bit more information, to make sure there are no welfare concerns. AL is going to keep going on this. This callout will contain:

- 1) A form to begin with - AL will talk to HC about this.
- 2) A TAFF callout to someone who might want to edit the final video all together.

AP wants to organise an event to increase awareness regarding how funding works, and what production teams should expect from the interviews. She noted that when this takes place is contingent on when bidding for MT will take place.

Other ideas AL had included both an OUDS reading club and a drama pub quiz. AH suggested the creation of an OUDS writer's room, where people would submit their work and receive advice.

3. Bidding for MT

JL said that shows cancelled this TT will be rescheduled, though some may drop out. The plan will be to talk to those cancelled shows first, and then do the bidding process from the remaining slots.

JL would like to release a timetable and set of advice in the next week with a unified policy across all venues including how bid interviews will be taking place. At the moment, his advice is to leave bid submissions and online interviews until much later in term (June or even the start of July).

JL raised the possibility that we might not be able to do shows in Michaelmas - when bidding does take place, we need to be aware of the need for contingency planning.

RB said that the university is set to be open but entirely socially distanced, floating the possibility of a hybrid where shows get some audience capacity and are also broadcast online.

JL said that, in instances where shows need socially distanced audiences and can't fill 50% capacity, they won't be financially viable. JL has put a proposal to the Cameron Mackintosh board - an 'alternative theatre' fund - where grants are awarded on the presumption that shows might take place under completely different guidelines. JL says that policies that go out should use the same structures OUDS usually uses, but with contingency planning.

4. Vice-Chancellor Funding

AP says that we've received £3500 from the VC Fund - which is supposed to be used for Fringe (which has been cancelled), and for the NWF (which didn't cost anything). AP thinks we should redistribute this money as follows:

1. £1000 to next year's Fringe Fund
2. £1000 for next year's National Tour
3. £1000 to make losses for Playhouse shows
4. £500 for OUDS events like the NWF (which could take funding), workshops, etc.

AL is going to consolidate and send information to LB and AH this weekend about both Cuppers and the NWF. From there, they will organise a call, before involving AP to discuss money.

5. Fringe Fund

As it stands, the Fund awards individual grants of £50-£100. AP thinks we should have a better way to assess applications as we currently have no formal way to ascertain how individuals would actually benefit from these grants. One idea she had was to involve the university, which has actual financial information about each applicant - making steps towards this would be productive for when the next committee does reopen applications for the Fringe Fund.

JW doesn't think that the university would be happy to do that - this information is highly precious. Instead, last term, Ros and John tried to assess the claims and needs of applicants. Asking questions more pointedly about the needs of these individuals might be better.

JL suggested putting money into schemes for individuals that come from certain backgrounds. He says that if they send the applications to him, then he can send them on to the senior members.

6. Registering Production Companies

AP was wondering whether it would be possible to have a list of registered companies on the website; ASS says that she will sort that later today.

HC said that he receives emails from registering production companies, ASS is going to see if she can get the full list. AP thinks that the process of registering companies should be more formalised - with terms, conditions, and insurance information.

7. DisDram

AL said that he has received emails about the potential of setting up a society similar to OxBame for the disabled community at Oxford. He read from the manifesto they sent him, which spoke about the lack of accessibility surrounding the black box theatres in Oxford. Not only are the actual spaces inaccessible, but individual shows could do more to improve their accessibility (e.g. house lights on during some performances, allowing talking).

DisDram wants to create a manual for putting on shows appropriately - including matinees, one-night relaxed performances, and lobbying the theatres to improve actual theatre access are some of their ideas. They want people to become more aware of the Pilch's stair lift, and the lift at the BT. They are in the process of becoming a club.

JL to propose a motion which extends a standing invite to the committee that they can accept once they have been set up. HC will look into the rules and regulations about this. RB said that we can invite someone to come to meetings.

KE highlighted that it's hard for non-established clubs to get funding from funding bodies. For the coming terms that are going to have actual plays, the university is not going to have the money to deal with more complicated versions of current disability access - a problem from a financial perspective. Although DisDram might want to get involved with this, they might find it hard to get that going.

JL said that we should think about ways OUDS can support DisDram beyond a standing invite.

AL said that he hasn't heard recently from DisDram. JL is having another meeting with them next week - the funding and vision they had has been stalled because of coronavirus. If they set up all the infrastructure now, they can get started next year.

8. OUDS Open Day

AL said that an initial aim was to set up an OUDS open day at the Playhouse in conjunction with the Oxford Open Day, though currently the June open day is not happening. We have two options - either we can wait it out and hope that September open day takes place, or create an online applicant's guide to Oxford drama, including information about bidding, TAFF, etc. If it were to take place physically in September, we should have stalls in the foyer with general information, and have the different theatres represented etc.

JL believes this is all part of incorporating student drama into outreach and encouraging prospective students. For him, the 'in the flesh' version would be better, but we could put together a brief video - a small gesture with the intention of putting something on in real life in September.

9. Access & Outreach

AL introduced GD, a representative from the Access and Outreach program - something that started with the previous committee.

GD explained the two things that this program aim to achieve:

- 1) Establish an Outreach/Access representative within OUDS.
- 2) Receive OUDS support and funding for their projects.

GD will share the full document about these projects and initiatives with AL. The only thing they need funding for is travel - bus fares for student volunteers, otherwise the workshops are completely free.

GD said that this would be better inside of OUDS and is not just about outreach to school, but can cover various issues.

RB says that funding from central university for this would be easy to get.

AL asks JL how the welfare officer role was created. JL says that a motion was put forward for someone to co-opt an Access and Outreach officer.

EH said that people have brought to her the prospect of a Diversity Officer. AL thinks that the Access and Outreach officer would cover that, and doesn't want to overload the committee with various specific jobs.

JL said that the constitution requires for there to be an Equalities Rep, who serves as a negotiator between other societies. AP has checked the by-laws, and can confirm that this role should exist. AL is keen to look into these different roles that have been suggested.

10. Next year

AL highlighted the NWF and Cuppers as the biggest things to deal with and think about. He is keen to do another Trinity showcase - last year, this took place at the Old Fire Station, with scenes, monologues, and dialogues.

JL said that, if we want to do a showcase, it would be best to go back to the Old Fire Station. It would be something put on after we've finished our term as committee, but best to be put in motion.

AL has been in touch with the President of TAFF, Harvey - he wants to do workshops on tech, with basic and intermediate teaching for the BT and Pilch. Harvey would like a system where TAFF and OUDS work together both in terms of advertising, and for Fresher's Week as well - encouraging students to join their mailing list.

AL will be in touch with AH about the drama fair, he's also keen on there being more socials taking place next year.

MM said that OUDS have a standing invitation to TAFF meetings, but that she is at both meetings anyway.

Action Points

1. If anyone has any ideas about 'virtual OUDS' events, they should make sure to get in touch with Alasdair, Katie, or John L.
2. Alison to send Alasdair an email with some more information about her idea for a potential OUDS Writers' Room.
3. John L to research the ways that other scholarships get information about grants through subtle and discreet ways of asking about needs - he will get in touch with Ana about this.
4. John L to introduce an agenda point next week regarding the formalisation of the process of production company registration. If anyone has ideas about how this could work, they should get in touch with him.
5. Henry to look into co-opting an OUDS Access and Outreach officer, and running an election for this role.
6. The Juliet Bernard prize to be put on the agenda for next week.