



Theatre Practitioner brief

Background

We have secured Arts Council funding to engage in a three-month process of company development which will provide the opportunity to reflect on our practice, encounter new and exciting artistic methods and engage with new creative partners. We now seek to recruit a group of talented practitioners to lead on two separate (short) puppet plays that will be presented as part of the Bognor Puppet Festival in July.

How we work

MTGS has for 10 years developed a participatory method of working that involves the creation of a short theatre production for small children presented in a specially designed pop-up theatre and which may be toured to schools and community centres. The production team includes a group of people who take on the roles of set builders, scenic artists, stage crew, costume makers, sound engineers and lighting designers but do not usually perform in the show. They are supported by a team of professional practitioners led by Hilary Strong who ensure that the process is achieved within the very short space of time (1-3 weeks) and to a high standard. In recent years the company has progressively used puppetry and occasionally the work is filmed, rather than performed to a live audience. Depending on the funder, the 'participants' may be referred by agencies supporting people with mental health difficulties or learning disabilities; they may be long-term unemployed or excluded from school.

Our methodology offers a unique way into the arts that has been neglected by most mainstream enterprises, especially since the decline of in-house production workshops. The making of sets, props, costumes and especially puppets can be achieved at a high level, even if the participant has little prior experience. Breaking down the tasks to very small components encourages risk-taking, increases confidence and employability skills, making it more likely that the individual will progress to more challenging tasks. Participants are encouraged to reflect by answering two questions: What do I love doing? And what am I good at? Practitioners we work with must be sensitive to the needs of the participants ensuring that their input is valued whilst also encouraging them to tackle creative and technically challenging work. The emphasis is on transferable skills (i.e. team work, task management, communication) that will support them in their search for work.

All our projects are now created in the Bognor Makerspace, a large warehouse located close to the centre of Bognor and which is being steadily converted into a community resource, equipped with art & craft rooms, carpentry workshop and a training kitchen.

Person specification

We wish to recruit 4 theatre practitioners with leadership skills who may be drawn from a range of disciplines; for example design, dramaturgy, puppetry, community arts, youth theatre or secondary school performing arts department. They must be based within easy commuting distance of Bognor Regis and either have a lived experience of mental health issues and/or neuro-diverse conditions or who understand the barriers faced by these sectors. We are looking for people who can inspire and lead a group of people who have no previous experience or interest in theatre and may (sometimes) feel coerced into attending. In return, we can offer practitioners the chance to extend their own knowledge and experience of participatory work. We are also

seeking to enhance the company's artistic leadership so that future projects are not dependent on Hilary Strong who has led the company from the very beginning and combines both significant theatre producing experience with a background in developing training and learning programmes.

The ideal candidates will have the following experience:

- At least 3 years' experience of leading community or participatory theatre projects
- Have the knowledge and skills to produce a play and supervise a full range of tasks
- Confident to manage a large team of participants including those who may present with challenging behaviour
- An understanding and empathy for people struggling with mental health difficulties or learning disabilities
- Be endlessly positive, optimistic and cheerful!

Schedule and fees

The practitioners will work together to create 2 short puppet plays for performance in the 2nd Bognor Puppet Festival in July. The dates are as follows:

4 – 8 July	Production work with up to 12 participants
11 – 15 July	Complete production work, technical and dress rehearsals
18 – 22 July	Performances in the Makerspace and in a local school plus follow-up work with participants during the festival

Each practitioner will be paid a fee of £1,800 (£120 a day) and the usual hours will be 9am – 4pm.

To view a short film showing how a Making Theatre Gaining Skills project is developed click on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX3td5fGqAk&t=217s>

And to see the finished puppet film which was made in just one week:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMk_2vui2UM&t=21s

How to apply

You can apply as an individual or in partnership with another practitioner. Send your CV with a covering letter outlining why you are interested in working with us and how your skills and experience would support our work. If you can, please do join the Webinar on 30th May (a recording will be available) when a panel of past practitioners will join Hilary to outline how the project will run.

Deadline for applications: Friday 10th June. Email: Hilary Strong on hilary@makingtheatre.co.uk

Hilary Strong (Director)

Making Theatre Gaining Skills C.I.C.

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