

The People's Theatre Company Nottingham

# Members' Handbook

2017/18

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## 1. Why this document exists

It was agreed at a PTC committee meeting in 2017 to create a digital members' handbook that can be accessed electronically by members and shared on the PTC website. As such, it is a 'living' document that will be regularly updated. A list of version numbers with a summary of changes will appear at the end of each handbook released.

This document will become the main resource for members new and old to be reminded on how the company operates, its policies and procedures, the roles of the volunteers who keep the company running - and information on how people can get involved and help.

Information about rehearsals, show weeks and the level of commitment we expect from members who are cast in onstage and offstage roles will also be detailed.

If you have any questions about the contents of this document please contact the company by email: [ptcnotts@gmail.com](mailto:ptcnotts@gmail.com).

## 2. Introduction

Welcome to the Peoples Theatre Company (PTC), Nottingham. We are based at the Nottingham Arts Theatre (NAT), George Street, Nottingham NG1 3BE.

PTC exists to:

- advance, improve, develop and maintain public education and appreciation of the art of theatre in all its aspects
- provide means whereby members can participate in many aspects of live theatre, especially by the production of live works and to present, promote, organise, provide, manage and produce plays, dramas, comedies, musical productions, concerts and entertainments
- stage theatrical productions and to further the following aims:
  - To promote excellence in the performing arts within the community.
  - To provide an environment of friendly co-operation in which all members, both those with amateur ambitions and those with professional aspirations, may develop their talents to the full
- organise fund-raising events to make these productions possible.

We hope your time with us will be rewarding and enjoyable. This handbook will hopefully give you the information you need to know about the PTC and NAT, but if you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

## 3. History

The PTC was established as an amateur dramatic society in 2011 when it was separated, by agreement, from Nottingham Arts Theatre (NAT).

NAT is the limited liability company which runs the theatre. It has charitable status and is run by a voluntary Board which currently consists of 3 members. NAT has its own membership which elects the Board of Directors to run the company from its full membership. The Board members are bound by both the Companies and Charities Acts Legislation, they are also known as the trustees of the charity. Board members have responsibility for specific areas: publicity, finance, buildings, health and safety, fundraising, marketing and the strategic plan.

NAT employs staff, all of whom work part-time. They include a manager who is responsible for the administrative business of the theatre which includes liaising with other companies and organising bookings. Other staff include Front of House Manager who is the licensee for the bar, front of house staff, Maintenance Caretaker and a cleaner. Other bodies engaged in supporting the business include an accountant from CAPlus to keep the books straight, and technicians employed by the City Council for all technical aspects.

An historical overview of NAT and the amateur dramatic companies affiliated to it is detailed in Appendix A.

#### **4. PTC Executive Committee**

The PTC's Executive Committee (referred to as The Committee) comprises nine officers elected from the membership at an Annual General Meeting held around October. The committee is responsible for all aspects of planning and performance of the Company's productions and other activities.

The Committee consists of officers that undertake the following roles:

- Chairperson – specifically elected at the AGM, the Chairperson is the public face of the PTC who oversees all aspects of the company's management
- Vice Chair – deputises for the chair as and when necessary.
- Treasurer – specifically elected at the AGM, the Treasurer oversees all financial matters and ensures that financial risks are recognised and mitigated
- Secretary – handles general correspondence and grant applications. They also ensure policies and procedures are kept up to date. They also take minutes of committee meetings and the AGM
- Membership Secretary – maintains a database of members and supporters of the Company and collects membership and show fees
- Artistic Director – takes responsibility for suggesting shows and production teams to the committee
- Technical Director – advises the Committee on all technical aspects of the Company's productions and activities, including changes to legislation and technology options regarding sound, lighting and special effects equipment. Oversees all issues regarding the health and safety.
- Publicity Officer – acts as the public relations officer and takes responsibility to ensure the best possible publicity for the Company's productions and activities.
- Social Secretary – organises social events and fund raising activities
- Newsletter Editor – produces a monthly newsletter

Any member of PTC may be nominated by another member for election to the committee. The tenure of office is for a one-year period and committee members may stand for re-election, unless they have served a consecutive period of five years.

Anyone wishing to support the committee and get more involved is welcome and should approach a committee member to offer their help. Volunteers are always welcome to help with the running of the Company.

The Committee usually meets once a month to receive progress updates of current productions, review its overall financial position, agree the programme of events as recommended by its Artistic Director, agree the budget for each production as recommended by its Treasurer and set direction for the promotion and publicity of its productions.

The Committee will also appoint a production team for each production, to include: Director, Musical Director (where required), Choreographer (where required), and a Production Manager. The Production Manager will oversee the organisation and running of the production and if they are not a member of the Committee, they will provide regular reports at meetings of the Committee. A Production Team handbook is being prepared.

If you have any ideas or feedback concerning the running of the company, please contact any member of the committee.

## **5. Meet the Committee**

The Committee for 2017/18 was elected at the AGM on 5 October 2017 and comprise the following membership:

Chairperson: Mr Meng Khaw

Vice-chair: Mr Roy Smith

Treasurer: Vernon Lloyd

General Members: Barbara Benner, Adam Chapman, Laura Ellis, Joseph Smith, Roy Smith

Two vacant positions are available and members are actively being co-opted to join the committee.

The committee roles will be fulfilled as follows:

Secretary – Meng Khaw

Membership Secretary – Meng Khaw

Artistic Director – *To Be Confirmed*

Technical Director – Joseph Smith

Publicity Officer – Barbara Benner

Social Secretary – Laura Ellis

Newsletter Editor – Adam Chapman

## **6. Membership**

As a member of PTC we trust you will support the PTC in reaching out to the community and share our goals to:

- promote equality of opportunity for all
- accept and value diversity, providing opportunities for all regardless of gender, social, racial, political, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation
- adopt an ethos which encourages mutual respect in a safe and secure environment
- promote participation in the Arts across the East Midlands
- cultivate a view of the Arts as a worthwhile and life-long activity
- encourage adult education and youth work
- value the achievements of all PTC members

- establish partnerships with groups, both audiences and participants whose access to the Arts may currently be restricted

#### The Benefits of PTC membership

- An affordable activity
- An outlet for creative ideas
- Involvement in public performances both on and off the stage
- Insurance cover
- Informal and formal training and development of new skills
- Involvement in social activities and interaction with people of all ages and from all walks of life
- Voting rights at meetings
- Eligibility to sit on committees (restricted to Adult members)
- Regular members' communication by e mail or post

### **7. Membership Charges**

The charges for membership as of 5 October 2017 are:

Adult Members: £30

Junior Members: £30

Staging Members: £0 (Not eligible to vote)

Life Members: £0

These new charges will apply to anyone auditioning after 5 October 2017.

In addition, for members involved in production, each production incurs a show fee, which is currently £5.

For all new members, the annual membership will run for a period of twelve months either from the date of payment of membership fees or from the first date of rehearsal for the production in question, whichever is the earliest.

Annual membership fees are due at the start of rehearsals for each production or at the expiry of existing membership. Members are requested to be prompt in their payment to avoid unnecessary administrative work and to help with the Company's cashflow. Without prompt payment by all members, there is a financial risk that the Company may not be able to pay its debtors on time.

In seeking to be inclusive, PTC seeks a very modest contribution from its members in comparison to the cost of putting on a show. On occasion, we ask members to make additional modest contributions where items cannot be hired and the cumulative cost is prohibitive.

We do not ask our volunteers for a fee, although you are welcome to join the Company to support its activities. Volunteers can help in a variety of ways:

- Backstage with props, set changes, lighting, sound or prompting
- Front of House, welcoming our patrons and selling programmes, merchandise or raffle tickets
- Set design, building and painting

We allocate backstage jobs for each show and require the same level of commitment as those who are on stage. If you agree to do a particular role you are expected to do it for all performances. The continuity and experience of backstage people throughout rehearsals and show week helps make our sets changes polished and professional and adds a great deal to the final performances. Helping backstage is a great way of learning more about stage work.

## **8. Productions and auditions**

Whilst it is PTC's intention to be inclusive, membership of PTC does not guarantee you to be cast in every production. Shows are cast from open auditions, and as such, they are open to non-members as well as members.

We realise that the opportunity to perform in a show is an expectation from our members, but occasionally, some members are disappointed when they are not selected to perform in a production. Sometimes, there are constraints of space that limit the cast in any production and sometimes, there is simply too much choice from our large and talented membership. We therefore ask the members who are not cast accept casting decisions with good grace and be pleased for your colleagues in the company who have been cast.

From time to time, there will be justifiable cause for complaint as a result of casting decisions. Such grievances should be raised in confidence with any member of the Company or by email to: [ptcnotts@gmail.com](mailto:ptcnotts@gmail.com). These matters will be dealt with by the Company's Complaints and Disciplinary Policy.

For musicals we have to hire scripts which must be returned in good condition and on time. Any breaches will subject the Company to a fine. Therefore, we may charge a £25 deposit for hired scores, returnable when the score is returned in good condition, which includes the removal of pencil markings.

## **9. Rehearsals and absences**

Members should commit to attend rehearsals unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as work commitments or sickness. Any planned leave should be communicated to the Production Manager so that this is considered in the scheduling of rehearsals. If you are facing a busy time at work, or if you have family or other commitments that will prevent you attending rehearsals **regularly**, we ask that you reconsider accepting any part offered to you. We will also ask auditionees for any planned absences before the show is cast and these will be taken into account in the casting decision.

Our productions generally rehearse every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for adults with weekend rehearsals for both adults and children. We will endeavour to publish a rehearsal schedule as promptly as possible.

In the early weeks of rehearsing a show you may not be needed at every rehearsal. Please consult the rehearsal schedule that will be sent out to you - or posted on the website - to ensure you know when you are needed to attend.

In the early stages of rehearsing a production, rehearsal times are usually 7.30pm to 9.30pm. As a production draws nearer rehearsals may start earlier than 7.30pm and continue beyond 9.30pm. Consult the rehearsal schedule for full details.

If you cannot attend a rehearsal - we realise that work, school commitments, holidays and sickness mean that people may have to miss rehearsals sometimes. Don't just fail to turn up - please contact the Production Manager as soon as possible.

Every member of the company and cast involved in a production is **equally** important. It ALWAYS DOES MATTER that members attend the rehearsals as scheduled. By not turning up, it makes life more difficult for fellow performers and the production team.

For each production, we aspire to create a facebook group page where we will post rehearsal schedule and other documents required for the production. (Please let the Membership Secretary know if you do not have access to the internet or emails) In the highly unlikely event that we have to cancel a rehearsal - for example in the most extreme weather – we will inform the cast by all means possible. This includes a notice on the home page of our website and notification on Facebook group pages set up for the production.

### **10. What happens during show week**

As a rule, our performance week runs from Tuesday to Saturday - usually with a Saturday matinee. Occasionally, there may be shorter runs. During show week, we need you to be available from Sunday to Saturday to help with the get in, collect costumes, and attend the dress and technical rehearsals. Help is also welcomed on the get out after the Saturday show. The more people who come to help - the sooner we can all get home and enjoy a well-earned rest.

After most of our shows we have an after-show party either on the evening of the last performance or at a later date.

### **11. Publicising our shows**

As a member of the PTC we do rely on you to spread the word to family, friends and colleagues about ALL our shows, not only the ones you are cast in. It is only through getting audiences in to see our shows that we can raise the money which enables us to continue to stage exciting and challenging plays and musicals.

We also like to see members attending shows that they are not appearing in.

If you have an idea for a publicity angle for a forthcoming show, please contact the Publicity Officer so they can co-ordinate the approaches to the local press. The Publicity Officer will typically establish a publicity sub-committee, including members of the company involved in each production.

The Publicity Officer is always keen to hear news and information from members for the email newsletter. Please don't be shy!

### **12. Company Newsletter**

The PTC newsletter is currently distributed to about 500 local people so it's a great opportunity to showcase your achievements and promote the company in general. We are always looking for news items and updates. Anyone interested in making a contribution, please contact the Newsletter Editor.

## 13. Policies and Procedures

Our policies and procedures are available on the PTC website ([www.ptcnotts.org.uk](http://www.ptcnotts.org.uk)) and will be updated from time to time. We will be developing other policies to reflect changes in legislation, for example, on data protection. We are also writing a Production Team Handbook as a guide for specific roles, such as Director and Producer.

### 13.1 Child Protection

Our Child Protection Policy and Procedure outlines the way in which PTC fulfils its legal duties. We have an appointed Child Protection Officer and their role is detailed in the policy and guidance document.

### 13.2 Complaints and disciplinary action

We believe that members of PTC have a right to enjoy their membership of the society in the knowledge that they will be valued and respected. However, from time to time, there are complaints about other people or activities and our Complaints and Disciplinary Action Policy allows people a safe and sensitive process to deal with their grievances.

### 13.3 Equality and Diversity

PTC values its members, no matter what their background, experience or skills. We are an inclusive community theatre company and we value diversity. In pursuing our objectives we are committed to being inclusive and non-discriminatory. We have an Equality and Diversity Policy that sets out our position on this important issue.

## 14. Contact details

You can write to us at:

The People's Theatre Company  
c/o Nottingham Arts Theatre  
12 George Street  
Nottingham NG1 3BE

Email: [PTCNotts@gmail.com](mailto:PTCNotts@gmail.com)

Email: [PTCChair@gmail.com](mailto:PTCChair@gmail.com)

Website: [www.ptcnotts.org.uk](http://www.ptcnotts.org.uk)

Facebook account: [www.facebook.com/ptcnotts](https://www.facebook.com/ptcnotts)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ptcnotts](https://www.twitter.com/ptcnotts)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/ptcnotts](https://www.instagram.com/ptcnotts)

## 15. Version Control

Version 0.1	3 Sep 2017	First draft presented to Committee 0917
Version 0.2	8 Sep 2017	Revised to be consistent with Constitution and suggested edits
Version 0.3	10 Oct 2017	Revision following AGM and election of new committee
Version 1.0	1 Nov 2017	Inclusion of the history of NAT as an appendix
Version 1.1	19 Nov 2017	Final version following amends

## **A History of Nottingham Arts Theatre**

Nottingham Arts Theatre is one of Nottingham's best kept secrets centrally placed within the new, vibrant Creative Quarter. The building has a seating capacity of 320 in the auditorium and a selection of smaller rooms for hire. A traditional community and educational venue, it now also plays host to an increasing range of exciting and innovative arts events.

Nottingham Arts Theatre has its origins in the Co-operative movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Co-op Choir was formed. In 1900 the choir won a gold medal at the Crystal Palace and the Choral and Operatic groups performed for many years in the Co-operative Hall of Co-op House in Parliament Street in Nottingham. By 1946 the combined forces of the Choral, Operatic and Drama groups had outgrown their base at Co-op House and the Board of Directors decided that a new centre was needed for the development of the Arts and their attention turned to the George Street Particular Baptist Church as an option.

The George Street Particular Baptist Church was designed by architect Edward Staveley and was completed in August 1815 at a construction cost of £6,000. It remained a Baptist Church until 1946 when it was bought by the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS). In 1948 it was converted into a community theatre with alterations by architect A.H.Betts. The People's Theatre, as it was then known, opened with a production of J.B.Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*.

As well as presenting seasons of plays, musicals and pantomimes and opera, the theatre rapidly became the breeding ground for a number of actors, actresses and directors who would find fame in the profession. It also gained a national reputation; the composer Vaughan Williams chose it to premier his opera *Hugh and the Drover* and in the 1960's the then Minister for the Arts visited the building on a fact-finding mission to discover how theatre could be brought to the people.

In 1999 the CWS announced its intention to close the theatre and sell its prime city site for re-development. The 1000 strong theatre group formed Nottingham Arts Theatre Limited, an educational charity whose mission was to create a community theatre to serve the greater Nottingham conurbation and started a campaign to buy the building from the CWS. In partnership with Nottingham City Council and the Broadway Media Centre, the asking price of £150,000 was raised and, after a regional and national campaign, CWS eventually agreed to sell the building to Nottingham Arts Theatre Limited.