

Honesty Hour – October 26, 2018

Question 1: *“It’s not unusual to see the same performers over and over on stage. Have we ever considered capping how many shows people can do in a row?”*

ANSWER:

Meg: Used to do in Kingston, 5 show max. Pretty unusual to get to 5 shows being at Kingston for 4 years. Keep it fresh and bring new people in. Not something we had thought of for Toronto but it has come up a bit. Naturally, people mature, except in our group! *laughs were had* No hard and fast rule, but Matty can speak to it. People getting involved in other ways, moving to other areas in the company

Matty: Fun to be involved in Players, doing it once, hard not to do it again. First and foremost is finding new voices, so recruitment is important, but we also want to put on the best show possible. No one hindered in earning a role by being great and being great consistently. Don’t want to hinder new talent by old voice. Best for the role, best for the show. Cognizant to encourage people to try new roles in the company and give back in other ways. Sustain the future.

Peter: We have over time had a soft target of 25% new people every year. Very soft. But it naturally happened. 26% new over the past 2 years, so we are hitting that target well. Many of us who have auditioned for roles, some have been rejected. Not a guarantee. Being in a show once doesn’t mean you’re in.

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Question 2: *“How are we looking to evolve the BNO/GNO theme going forward in order to make it less gender exclusive?”*

ANSWER:

Peter: This came up in the Seamlessness Survey as well. 2-3 people asked it in different ways. The general feeling amongst the board is that the BNO/GNO have become too set in their ways in different ways. A bit unhealthy. A new thing going forward that will honor the fun and adjust what needs adjusting. PNO - Players Night Out! Two teams divided randomly. No gender divide, just random but still secret! Secret costumes. Two sperate parties that come together. Uber masculinity and femininity have been downplayed. We'll see how it goes! Obvious to us as well, we needed change!

- **Follow-up question:** *In future shows, as an extension of that, the boys and girls song. Are we looking at this, too?*

Peter: Don't feel like we've hit a resolution yet, not as aggressively bad as the other was getting. Received complaints about both the BNO and GNO this year. We will be exploring this, but this is on a different plane. Audiences might not notice this one, but we will figure out if it needs to be fixed one way or another.

Matty: Evolved the script process, the orders have changed. Put them where they need to make sense and serve the story.

Peter: Talk around the divide of casting. Still represent characters, but finding another way to say 5 and 5. Gender balance needs to be maintained but have it more open-ended.

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Question 3: *"I love the new beer system, but the amount of beer Players receive on stage is a little underwhelming. Are there any plans to iterate on this in order to make it a little more exciting?"*

ANSWER:

Andrew: Came up a little bit as well, praise for the new system working functionality, lack of interruptions, but as well the extra donations that we can raise through those beers. All of that is positive but this has come up. Ensure that we have a set mark that we hit for each one so that people feel it is being given and the \$5 is going somewhere (not an inch of beer in a cup). We are also looking at different cups, they are full pint sizes. A smaller cup half full might work better. In the line where those on stage are protected, but also high enough that people aren't grumbling about their funds not going where they thought it would.

Peter: First mission - the safety of the cast. Keep this in mind. The suggestion is to do something, like a 50/50 split between Steam Whistle and Partake. We will experiment with this and see what works. We don't want to screw with the safety element.

Merritt: Short glass, new system, you will give them this - and show them the beer so that they have an expectation.

Leila: Naturally, some characters get a lot of beer and connect with an audience. We need to consider this as well.

Andrew: They don't know what beer it is they paid for, the visual should help deflate the sense of disappointment, the benefit of the mystery of the table, split that amongst the cast and make it even.

Tom: Actors worried about screwing up their scene, consider the writing process and building in beats and scenes for these moments. It feels more part of the flow. Flag for the director/writers.

Meg: I miss the full pint, are you a tank? Are you Merritt? But there is something exciting when this happens.

Jeff/Derek: Pitcher system for the band is a HUGE improvement.

Andrew: Issue that we're facing is perception and expectations. Different ways to set that up, work in progress, but we are better off now than we were a few years ago.

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Question 4: *“Are we planning on getting more involved with our charities at a hands-on level? Maybe visits, etc.?”*

ANSWER:

Meg: Yeah! It’s something we’ve talked about and depends on the charities that are chosen. We have so many people who have energy and are willing to put hours together. Came up a few times this year and is a matter of getting organized. Using people on the social committee to activate the membership. Next week, we might do a 10 Km run, we might go volunteer, sign up list. Is someone not on the board is closely connected to a charity, then they can even spearhead those activities.

- **Follow-up Question:** *How often are the charities reviewed?*

Andrew: Once a year.

Peter: Shortly after the AGM we send out an email requesting the proposed charities.

Meg: Our social media has been engaging with our charities even more. Reach out to the full alumni base, get people engaged again. The board will try and get the greater community involved

Amy: Gala to support a charity, etc!

Merritt: Raffle at events, a performance, etc.

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Question 5: *“Do board members also have to refrain from performing in the summer show?”*

ANSWER:

Dave: *laughs*

Peter: No official rule, not in the constitution.

Meg: Talked about the idea of being done with summer shows, run for the board. However, those who want to be involved and have the energy, we would do ourselves a disservice. People wouldn't want to run for the board. We had thought about it and figured it would hurt us.

Jeff: Board members who are involved also abstain from production specific discussions.

Peter: Board hires the AD, AD hires the production team, production team hires the cast. Changes to the script was an issue this year and how do we start the show (god save the queen). Effects the show, but the script was decided by the board long before it was written. We wanted people of colour in the show but if they are not cast, the characters would be re-written. This was in place well beforehand. Miscommunication, but we made sure it happened. Enforcing a decision that has been made. God Save the Queen, which was not brought up tonight. This came up early in the board year that the inclusion of GSTQ was problematic, and many discussions were had. It could be seen as insensitive to those who have suffered under colonialism. Banner of that, one of our charities was the Downie/Wenjack fund. Not because of this solely, but separate. Many heated debates, the longest topic even seen at the board. Very long to get to a decision. Carefully considered and in the end, it was removed and replaced by the TTC chimes.

Matty: Call to arms that GSTQ represented, starting now, the TTC chimes replaces that in a quirky, Players-esque way.

Meg: Moving away from Queen's University branding. Why did we do GSTQ? Just something from Queen's. We wanted our own traditions.

Andrew: This is about inclusion. More decisions might be made over the coming years around this theme. Reflect the community we are part of, not imposing an identity from another community. The feeling we are in Toronto and we are all Torontonians, let's go for it!

- **Follow-up Question:** *What decisions are board members not involved in if they are involved in the cast?*

Meg: Prior to the AD, the board chose the script and production team, but if you were going to audition, you were removed. No script read-through, nothing. No bias. If you applied to direct, no vote for anything, etc. Now that we have an AD, Matty will decide through recruitment what decisions are, but he gets the board's "blessing". We might have feedback to help him sculpt the show. If something really bad happens, the board is a sounding board for the artistic director.

Peter: Writer a script, you cannot be involved.

Meg: Choose production staff, the board is not involved at all.

Matty: Proposed change to codify that the AD will not participate in summer productions going forward. Be above the fray and make sure the process is as democratic and professional and free of controversy going forward. The board members then are free of bias in terms of how they are involved. Artistic Director can fully take over this.

- **Follow-up Question:** *Character was changed due to colour, will this continue going forward?*

Meg: Posters advertised the characters as the black actors that played those characters in an effort to try and attract a more diverse audition base. Going forward, no more whitewashing of characters that are not traditionally white.

Matty: Also colour blind in casting, so it's a balance.

Peter: We might have to re-write roles every year, who knows. Best person for the role, regardless of shape, size, etc.

Meg: We want people to bring things to the board. Reach out to anyone on the board, but we are going to create an anonymous portal for year-round questions

- **Follow-up Question:** *How is the sketch troupe picked?*

Meg: Call for auditions, as many people apply as we had positions. We cast the sketch troupe similar to the summer shows. This year, it was people we were familiar with.

- **Follow-up Question:** *Any concerns about how few people we have going forward? The AGM used to be packed, concerns about this or plans to re-expand?*

John: I want to step forward to find more people in this legacy in the sketch world

Matty: We will touch on this question and the response for the coming season

Dan: Not just actors, but band and production, etc.

Peter: It is a concern, the audience is in the same boat, we are worried about this and Matty will talk more about this. Queens Players is declining itself, less important on campus. Graduating fewer fans and alumni. Jeff and Steph are the most recent grads who have gotten involved.