

As Us Anything – October 25, 2019

Question 1: *“Is the AD a paid position given its size/role? (Interested in applying!)”*

ANSWER:

Peter: At present, it is not a paid role, as every other role in Players is volunteer based. There have been internal discussions about a possible honorarium for this position, but this is tricky. This would be something that would require a full board vote and a full membership vote if we made that type of change - for any role, not just the AD.

Meg Mack: Some people professionally do what they are not paid to do here, so it would be tricky to pay one person and not others.

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Question 2: *“I may be wrong, but why can't the AD vote in the board elections?”*

ANSWER:

Meg Mack: The Board appoints the AD and then the AD is beholden to the board. For the AD to vote in Board elections would be a conflict of interest.

Peter: AD is required to be a social member by way of the constitution. Transparently, any person applying for the AD will know this rule.

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Question 3: *“What happens if the board disagrees with an AD's artistic decision, has this happened?”*

ANSWER:

Peter: It has happened. In the constitution, there is a clear line for certain decisions. AD is hired for a 2-year mandate and can be re-upped each year for another year, maxing out at a 5-year term when the position is re-posted publicly...

(Note from Peter: I then lost my train of thought and handed it off to Meg who salvaged the point...)

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Meg Mack: The AD can make decisions within their mandate: for a season or two, or for a show. But they can't transcend their mandate or make changes to how we operate as an organization. If it goes towards the structure or what makes Players Players, then the Board will discuss further. Will this affect us artistically for more than two seasons? No? Then the AD can make the decision - but if it is more broad or fundamental to the organization, it will need Board review.

Matty: 99% of the time, the Board and AD operate collaboratively. The Board will also seek AD suggestions from time to time, too. We have disagreed in the past, but we work towards a collaborative decision.

Peter: For example, when we removed "God Save the Queen" - this went beyond the AD. This will last beyond any one mandate. It is an artistic decision, yes, but it will definitely affect the company for a long period of time. Matty was in the room the entire time this was being discussed, and even though he had had no vote on the matter, he participated and was consulted. The Board had the ultimate decision here.

We have not overruled Matty on script decisions, production team hiring, etc. He consults us, but these are his decisions and we'll back him.

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Question 4: *"If a new AD is elected, what happens to the old AD? Can they continue in the company? Will they be recognized like an outgoing Exec?"*

ANSWER:

Peter: Any AD can have a max of 5 seasons. After that, we reopen the position and the AD can reapply. This position will be publicly reopened every 5 years and it's built so that it starts at the beginning of the 5th season. We will announce details later, but this calendar year (Jan - Dec), Matty has started his 5th season and we will be opening the role publicly and seeking applicants, aiming to make a decision on who is hired in the New Year (no hard dates set yet). The idea is that if the AD is someone new, the person will have the opportunity to shadow Matty for half a year to get up to speed. By the time Matty's 5th season ends, then the new AD will start their season. Matty could also be hired again, and no shadowing would need to take place.

No one is being tossed aside, we want this to be orderly and Matty understands why this is being done. Structurally, there should be a reopening of the role so that we can make everything as transparent as possible.

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Question 5: *“What is the board’s plan for sponsorship next year, given the drop off this year?”*

ANSWER:

Meg Mack: It was highlighted as needing to be a large focus next year, and it would be wonderful if we could re-engage our larger membership with that task. We can’t wait until the Summer show to start sponsorship efforts. We now have a full season of sponsorship, so things have changed slightly (cost, etc.). That being said, a lot of sponsors were legacy sponsors and had been with us for a long time. They were also tied to people who are no longer involved, employed there, etc. We need to renew those ties with people who are involved now. This will be the task of the new Board and sponsorship committee to take this on. New people joined the Summer show and they weren’t going to be the ones to ask, but now that they have been with us for a year, things could change. Now that we are seeing new organizational growth, we’re hoping that it leads to new sponsors.

Peter: Other than a brewery, anyone is a go. We still have some generous sponsors, but this will be a large Board focus for the coming year. Ideally, we want enough to cover the cost of the show so that every ticket sold is a straight donation to charity.

Matty: You don’t need to be on the Board to contribute. It’s easy to sit here and talk about sponsorship, but it is a huge focus and we need your help, ideas, and connections. Feel free to get involved! “Help fund the Not-For-Profit that will help fund charities”

Peter: About half of our sponsorship is in kind. Steam Whistle gives \$4,500 worth of beer, etc.

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Question 6: *“What led to the company having so many new people on and off stage this year? What was done differently?”*

ANSWER:

Matty: In terms of what was done differently, we identified that one of our chief goals in the past was financial. This past year, we switched our focus to better reflect the Toronto community on and off our stage. We’ve seen this with other companies. We’ve welcomed that next wave in, with buy-in from the top down. We stepped out of our comfort zone and trusted that new people would get it and kill it - and it fucking happened! And we can see that. We’re at the top of the hill but we need to keep the snowball rolling. New people, new friends - even if only one wants to get involved, that’s amazing. This will keep Players fresh and consistent.

Meg Mack: Younger people, too! Something to be said about that as alumni transition into new phases of their lives.

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Question 7: *“Are there any plans to rekindle a relationship between Players and Queen's Players? Or are we trying to distance ourselves from those roots as much as possible?”*

ANSWER:

Meg Mack: The relationship is always there. Peter went to see their show this year and we do buy tickets for their shows.

Peter: We've never tried to distance ourselves. We are separate, but we know where we came from. We changed our name to be more welcoming to anyone who didn't go to Queen's, not to cut ourselves off from Queen's. The main challenge is every year their Board changes, full over, top to bottom. They have rules that result in turnover and lots of new people involved who are not fully aware of us. We try and reach out every year, Matty does, too. Blair also has great connections as a new graduate.

Blair MacMillan: There is definitely a connection and people know that Players is here. Queen's Players has crazy turn over and people don't always stay with it. It has changed drastically even in the past 4 years. However, they like Players, they like the differences. We should lean into the fact that we are taking the format and perfecting it, in a way.

Peter: A few things on this. They have a 5 show max rule (Note: may not be in place anymore) and 50% of the cast needs to be rookies.

We want fresh blood and Blair is a great resource for that. We intend every year to reach out and send people to see their shows. We will continue to nurture it, but every year is different.

Meg Mack: There could even be an opportunity for us to go there and mentor, talk to the Board about the shows we put on, the history that we know, etc.

Blair MacMillan: That wouldn't be a bad idea. The issue would be getting the message to the right person.

Peter: How about I email all voting members, and not just the Board, to see who wants to go to future shows? This would be a social initiative. However, they have a 6 alumni max on tickets...maybe we can come to their drunk run? We can discuss this further.

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Question 8: *"Is it possible to submit for production roles as a "duo"? For example, having a director and an assistant director worked really well this year. Might continue to give community members an opportunity to be coached into a new role."*

ANSWER:

Matty: Yes, this is an option. Absolutely. No restriction to what we will consider.

Steven: Tanya and I applied separately.

Tom McGee: They were a great duo - should this be made more public? Assistant directing? "The Tanya Clause" - Including this in the documentation would be cool. It's really hard to get directing experience. Apply to learn, help and learn, etc.

Matty: This was new this year - a humble opening to learn and be involved in any way. Kudos to Tanya for being open to that and to Steven as well. It worked really well. Nothing hurts us from having the option of an assistant director as an application. It allows people to invest in their own knowledge and training, learn what directing is, etc.

Meg Mack: Might be an opportunity for the roles to be shared, depending on the experience levels of the applicants, etc. It can be broad. Matty has had conversations with people once they have applied to coach, guide, etc.

Tanya: Based on my own experience, I wasn't seeking that position, so to speak, but if I can say one thing it's to be honest in your application. "If there are any opportunities, even if it's not this, let me know." The opportunity then presented itself for me.

Jeff: Don't be afraid to apply with someone. It doesn't hurt your application at all.

Steven: If people are aware that the position is flexible, they will likely be more apt to apply.

Matty: The recruitment process is a dialogue. Easy to revisit and make this more obvious. It's definitely on the to-do list to add an assistant director application - we want new and young people involved - it's hard to direct Players without knowing it, so adding this position will broaden the pool. Same with band, ASMs, etc.

Chris O'Bray: It was great having two people and allowed for different opinions and feedback as an actor. Great to see more of this.

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Question 9: *"As the people guiding the ship, what is the Board most excited about?"*

ANSWER:

Matty: I think one thing that I'm way less worried about is that people get it and that the mantel can be passed. What makes it strong is going to continue. The early years, it was a small group of people contributing heavily across many streams. In the past, we've also looked at having 6 vets, 4 rookies. This year, we had 7 rookies and 3 alum. You can contribute and get it without having been previously involved or have gone to Queen's. It's a huge sigh of relief that if people need to move along, the organization will be in good hands because the process works. New people, keep up recruiting, stay true to our pilsners - Players is a place where people can be themselves, grow, make great friends, put on a great show and feel safe.

Meg Mack: We also had 2 people who were rookies who made SO MANY PROPS. You drank the kool aid and dove right into it and embodied it - we love that you are both here. That's what I'm excited about. Rookies who are not "one and done" - you were involved, you get it. The future is bright.

Merritt: I also love that Blair is here tonight. You keep that connection strong for us and we see ourselves in you. It's great to see.