

# Now is the time for all good men

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The theatre world has many organisations, but surely room could be found for one more. I therefore propose to found, (with, of course, a little help from my friends) the *Technical Association for Touring Theatricals*—to be known as TATT.

The need for the new organisation should be obvious. In the days of Number One Tours, a company would tour a Company Manager, a Stage Manager, a Production Manager and an Electrician. Today, only subsidised companies afford this, but the lines of communication have not changed. What has changed is that a present-day Company and Stage Manager is expected to perform all four jobs; without, needless to say, a salary four times bigger.

Certainly, commercial tours are in jeopardy but we are fortunate that private backers are still prepared to send out shows. This is where TATT would come into its own. Firstly to help those poor people in stage management to cope with the extra knowledge required, both technical and personal; secondly to provide a forum for intelligence about dates; and thirdly to fulfill a social need.

Now, as to organisation. Equity are still struggling with the prospect of a branch and delegate structure: this would seem to be ideal for TATT. As most of the prospective membership are continually touring, a central base would not be needed. Control and formalities would be kept to a minimum, although a national network of meeting places and an information sheet are necessary. This is where we approach the crux of the problem, for usually such matters require (a) finance and (b) steering committees.

Now for the master stroke. You may, or may not, be surprised to realise that the basis for the whole operation already exists. Just think of the number of pro bars, or "little pub around the corner" from all stage doors. What a splendid national network of meeting places—and ones that are presently in use so that there would be no problem in obtaining the minimal quorum for meetings.

In addition, the time schedule for the agenda would be very flexible for, depending on whereabouts in the country, the hours available cover from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Also for those extra special meetings in times of theatrical crisis or technical need, certain of the meeting places provide afternoon and post-11 p.m. meeting times. But only, of course, for the more dedicated and regular members of the Association.

So far, so good. But what, you may say, about the need for circulating information and membership lists. The answer is in existence and lies on many bookstalls. A brief addendum to the Good Beer Guide should fill the bill, and the main information (i.e. venues and times) is already listed

in the main pages.

And what would TATT seek? Basically, I suppose, it would seek as many viewpoints as the number of members. Ranging from a demand to Equity insisting on shows being re-timed to fit into closing hours, to a need for NAATKE to stipulate that lighting bars must be not more than six feet off the ground (to obviate the possibility of members in a tired and emotional state falling off a ladder). On the more technical side, a need to return to variety-style lighting (easy to focus Frenca's, 43's or 49's on wing towers) combined with a return to direct-operated boards on the grounds that walking along a Grandmaster for each cue helps to remove a tendency to snooze, would be pressed.

A more valuable point would be the educational side of TATT. Informal lectures would be available on such subjects as when Sadler's Wells Opera toured such dates as Her Majesty's, Carlisle, the superiority of carbon arcs over CSIs in the matter of lighting a cigarette, how to refill a water dimmer in an emergency (do remember to shut off power before employing the kidney juice), and the correct place to thump a recalcitrant mercury bottle rectifier to get it to strike.

Possibly, though, the most useful side of meetings would be the dissemination of practical hints. A short check-list would include: directing focusing whilst that on one's back; what to do if the tallescope crashes over the floats; the best way to clamber up a raked stage on hands and knees (side-ways, to avoid the possibility of slipping back); the danger of lying spreadeagled centre stage during a get-out; and where to secrete bottles of Newcastle Brown in a CD.

"These are not practical hints" you snort?. But I assure you that all these are technical problems that I have seen met, and coped with very well, by people who would make excellent members of TATT. I cannot, naturally, give names and places in these pages since we must avoid an unseemly rush to certain meeting places by students anxious to further their education.

Naturally, as the Founder, I would expect some benefit from this Organisation. I respectfully suggest that the membership fee for TATT, carefully recorded in a little black book, should be the purchasing for me of a pint of draught bitter in whichever of the Association's meeting places I should care to visit—such a gesture being repeated by all members present. Hardly an excessive price to pay for such an idea and such an organisation.

Good Health to you all.



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