

TALAWA



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TEL 01328 9306

Parminder Vir,
R.E.U.,
G.L.C.,
London SE1

February 18, 1986

Dear Parminder,

re: THE BLACK JACOBINS at RIVERSIDE STUDIOS, February 21 - March 15

I hope you're feeling a lot better now that you're back at work! Here's the last progress report on THE BLACK JACOBINS before we open this Friday.

REHEARSALS have been going very smoothly although at the beginning of February Terri Quaye left the production as Musical Director due to irreconcilable differences in artistic interpretation. This gap was promptly filled by Lenny Edwards, who is also the first musician.

All technical matters are proceeding according to schedule with unanimous agreement that the 'set' is the best staging that Riverside has ever seen. Together with the period costumes we are about to produce a truly spectacular production.

FINANCE is causing worries. Although a great deal of publicity has already been done on the production (London Underground, BBC's Ebony, the Arts Page in the Guardian etc), the advance bookings for the performances have been extremely disappointing. We are now very worried indeed about the likely box office income on the production. The box office component of the original budget was calculated on the basis of 60% capacity on 23 performances which we have always felt was a very optimistic forecast. Although we may well average this % capacity for half the performances it is highly unlikely that we will achieve anywhere near this figure for the whole of the run: 4 performances are classed as previews (on February 21, 22, 23, and 25), the February 26 is the Gala/Press night and 2 of the performances on the March 8 and 15 are matinees. This totals 7 performances where we cannot seriously expect to make anywhere near 60% of total box-office capacity. Given this and the poor state of the advance bookings we are now highly concerned that the company is in danger of making a substantial loss: this would seriously handicap the company, effectively before its first production was over.

Although the audience figures are expected to be good after the first week or ten days of performances we cannot afford the losses that this will inevitably lead to.

I WOULD THEREFORE GREATLY APPRECIATE IT IF THE R.E.U. COULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SETTING ASIDE £3,000 AS A GUARANTEE AGAINST LOSS TO TALAWA THEATRE CO: PARTICULARLY IF THERE ARE PROJECTS INVOLVED IN THE BLACK EXPERIENCE WHICH HAVE NOT USED THEIR GRANT ALLOCATION.

We are not requesting a further grant; merely a safety net in the case of a box-office disaster. As you are well aware, a week of bad weather could virtually decimate our box office income despite the publicity work that has been done. (Unfortunately extra weeks of performances at Riverside Studios are out of the question as the Trust already has its use of its building programmed well into the future.

THE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
GLC
1981-1986
Working for London
archive.parmindervir.com

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TALAWA THEATRE CO. - PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BLACK JACOBINS (2)

PUBLICITY has also been going according to schedule despite continual problems with the posters and distribution. The last upset was being informed by London Regional Transport (literally hours before the deadline for their distribution deadlines) that the Black Experience logo that the G.L.C. supplied to us contained the words 'Working For London', was deemed political by L.R.T. and hence illegal! Fortunately we managed to overcome this problem at the expense of a few frayed nerves!

By now members of the R.E.U. should have received their invitations to the Gala performance; I would appreciate it if they could r.s.v.p. to me as soon as possible so that I know what to allocate to the G.L.C. on the 26 February

If you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact me at Riverside - 741 2251 - I would particularly appreciate a talk concerning the guarantee against loss, mentioned earlier in this report.

Best wishes,

Nick Owen,
ADMINISTRATOR, TALAWA THEATRE CO.