



## 1976 Gulbenkian Funding Application

This (successful) application to fund administrative support for The Monstrous Regiment was made in January 1976, just a few months after the company was established.

It sets out in some detail what the company was trying to achieve, the kind of work it wanted to do, and so on. Its informality and absence of professionalised 'grantspeak' arguably tell one quite a lot about theatre and arts funding in the 1970s.

A copy of the document is in the company's archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives.

The copy is faded, and hard to read, so we have added a reconstruction (with a certain amount of guessing) that preserves the layout of the original.

The first page is especially hard to read, but 'looks' as if mainly repeats what was said in another application (for a guarantee against losses) made at the same time, to the Arts Council of Great Britain. Relevant parts of the latter application are quoted in Gillian Hanna's Introduction to *Monstrous Regiment: A Collective Celebration* (London: Nick Hern Books 1991, pp xxiii-iv), which is also reproduced in the Archive section of this website.

Elaine Duncan  
?? to Gulbenkian Foundation  
?? Portland Place  
London/LONDON W.1.

21 Rona Road  
LONDON N.W.3  
  
01-4?05-3860

January 19<sup>th</sup> 1976

Dear Elaine Duncan,

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Monstrous Regiment to apply to the Foundation for help which no-one else can give us.

The Monstrous Regiment is a new touring theatre group. We began meeting informally last summer and we have been operating as a company since December 1975. The fact that we are new is the cause of most of our practical problems: With no capital invested in the project apart from our own talents and ?? to work, certain difficulties arise.....

We are a group of ten at the moment, both men and women, and our accomplishments cover a wide range of theatrical experience, (as you can see on the attached biography sheet) ranging from the Royal Shakespeare Company to the Black and White Minstrel Show, from Theatre-in-Education to the Liverpool Everyman. However in the last few years most of us have been inexorably drawn into the sphere of activities often covered by the expression "Community Theatre". I'm not sure that this is the correct one, but you will understand what I mean when I mention groups like The Combination, 7:84, The Belt and Braces Roadshow, The West London Theatre Workshop and so on.

What differentiates us from other groups or companies, and what has led us to form The Monstrous Regiment, is the urgent desire to redress the balance of male/female status and opportunity in the theatre. This desire comes out of our own experience and can be roughly divided into three parts.

At any one time, 91.5% of the Equity membership is unemployed. The latest survey shows that annual average earnings were £835. This average was based on male average earnings of £1,031, while for women they were £583. These statistics graphically demonstrate the acuteness of the problem. Despite International Women's Year and the Sex Discrimination Act, we don't see any ?sign that directors and producers are even aware of the problem's existence, let alone that they are attempting to do anything about it. So we ?feel that we are forced to.

However, the imbalance is not only in the scarcity of work available to women but also in the quality of the work offered. Where is the challenge, the satisfaction and above all the truth in the endless parade of stereotypes passing for women? We can understand the motive behind the commercial theatre's obsession with bare breasts and false eyelashes, but even in those areas where subsidy is supposed to foster a more intelligent approach we find too much of the same kind of thinking.

But our decision to form The Monstrous Regiment came not just from our own desires. Observation tells us that there is a real need for such a group. Over the last few years we have all encountered over and over again remarks like: "Why are there so few women in your group?" "Why are your plays always about men?" This from women AND men...

We feel strongly that we want to start as we mean to go on. This creates difficulties with the Arts Council of Great Britain, whose policy appears to be one of giving small amounts of money to all groups when they first begin, either for artistic reasons, or perhaps to see how determined they are. This is understandable when the people involved are inexperienced or have no clear idea of what they want to do. We are experienced and we have a very clear idea of what we want to do and why. What we don't want to do is to give our audience short measure by being forced to throw shows together on a shoestring budget.

The subject of the audience is of the essence. We will, perforce, have to begin by playing in many established touring venues. But we intend to pursue the policy that we have been advocating in our various groups (7:84 and Belt and Braces for example) of getting out of the theatre and into the less usual venues – clubs, community halls and so on. We want to find that audience which is to be found in launderettes or in front of television sets. As individuals we have experienced the difficulties that are inherent in trying to reach a new audience and we in no way underestimate them. It's our particular task to try and expand these efforts into new areas. Women in the past have tended to organise for social purposes and we intend to tap these organisations as well as those more familiar ones, structured round places of work or local issues. We are already booked to play in community centres around the Liverpool area and we will be working hard to expand our work in this direction.

We have already encountered the question “Why another women’s group?” (As if two or three groups were sufficient to counteract the Paul Raymonds of the world!) We think that we are different in four ways:

1. We don’t want to create shows which are related to specific (and specifically female) issues such as abortion or equal pay. We recognise that such kinds of work are vital and we support it unreservedly, but what interests us is the broader, larger sweep of human existence.
2. We want to travel more widely than is possible for some other groups who tend to be tied by family commitments to the London area. Those who don’t live in London shouldn’t be deprived!
3. We want to be ‘theatrical’ and spectacular – to use all the techniques and magic we can lay our hands on to bring people who don’t often see it live theatre that is entertaining; that gives them a good night out and at the same time questions, probes and informs.
4. Perhaps the most important of all: We want to take the emphasis off collective writing, not because we are opposed to it as such, but because there are painfully few women writers actively involved in theatre and we want to encourage them. We will set up writers’ workshops, discussion groups and meetings of all kinds. And not only writers, but women working in all areas of theatre: designers, performers, stage managers etc. Part of our function will be that of a forum for ideas.

Our first show SCUM: Death Destruction and Dirty Washing is a musical celebration of the women of the Paris Commune, written by Claire Luckham and C.G.Bond. It is set in a laundry.

“See Bismarck do the can-can; watch a man wind himself through a mangle; savour the aroma of a grilled elephant’s trunk; thrill to the sound of ‘Cherry Time’ and a dozen more show-stopping songs; and tremble before the final final [typo in original] spectacle of Paris burning amidst a sea of blood”

The music will be written by Helen Glavin and will be acoustic. This is a deliberate artistic decision. We feel that no one has yet solved the problem of incorporating amplified music into live theatrical performances; that microphones tend to act as barriers between the actor and the audience. There is also the perennial question of audibility in shows where the lyrics are a vital part of the action. So we want to start again as it were. To find some way of contacting the audience that has no restriction.

We have more shows in the pipeline. One on the subject of “Witchcraft - Subversion and Madness” – we have been researching this since September. Another with a modern industrial theme “Women at Work” – we are aiming to interest women in the organised labour movement in this one and we will be looking to bodies within that movement for substantial support. Another built around the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism and what this has meant for women. Why is it that although women of the Tudor era were highly regarded for their scholarship, learning and poetry, one of the results of the English revolution was to put women back in the home? We also want to deal with the whole question of prostitution at some point..I could go on and on.

I have dwelt at some length on our ideas and plans because as yet we have no evidence to support our claim to be worthy of consideration. As I pointed out earlier, this is the biggest stumbling block in the formation of a new company. Caution reigns at a time when one is most in need of support and encouragement. Our present most urgent need is in the field of administration. Because of A.C.G.B. policy, any assistance we get from them will come in the form of guarantees against loss for specific projects, such as the tour of SCUM: Death Destruction and Dirty Washing during May/June/July. Continuity in the organisation will be extremely difficult because of the long periods between tours when we will have no money but will be continuing with our work just the same! What we really need is the means to employ one person for a continuous length of time. Specifically the reasons for needing an administrative focus are:

1. While we would still collectively undertake as many administrative tasks as we could, it is physically impossible to rehearse and run an office efficiently simultaneously.
  2. There is a need for a phone number with someone at the end of it while we are on the road. (A possible thirty weeks out of fifty two). Experience has shown us that bookings and contacts are not best made in a mini-bus moving down the M6 at fifty miles an hour.
  3. Administration is rather a special skill. While we would never allow one person to bear the burden of all the mundane tasks that we could do ourselves, it would be wise to have someone in overall charge of that field who is better at it than we are.
- But most important of all:

4. In our function as focus for ideas and different kinds of work it's vital to have a constantly manned (womanned?!) central clearing house for information and communication.

5. Experience shows that keeping up contacts with local community groups is essential. If these contacts are allowed to lapse they tend to disappear altogether. At those times when we were able to look after the office ourselves, an administrator could be on the road expanding the 'social contacts' and collating information gathered while travelling.

So what are we asking for? Well, we dream of a floor in Centre Point with one administrator behind a big mahogany desk, two more on the road, a photocopying machine and a bank of telephones. What we need is rather more prosaic:

Basically the means to employ someone for an initial period of a year with something in addition to help towards the administrative costs involved.

We have laid out some alternatives:

£4000	Would pay wages for one person for twelve months (including the company's National Insurance contributions) @£45 per week	£2540.20
	Gestetner 420 duplicator (which we would undertake to offer use of to any group in need of it)	£371.00
	Towards rent, heating and lighting & miscellaneous administrative expenses	£400.00
	Towards other items of capital equipment (Filing cabinets, etc.)	?£200.00
	Towards travelling costs incurred by administrator in capacity as 'roving contact'.	£289.00
	TOTAL:	<u>£4000.20</u>
£3000	Would pay wages for one person for twelve months (including the company's National Insurance contributions) ?@£45 per week	£2540.20
	Towards items out of the comprehensive list above.	£460.00
		<u>£3000.00</u>

(6)

I hope this doesn't seem like an inordinately greedy request. Actually at this stage a packet of envelopes and a box of paper clips wouldn't be scorned!

Many thanks for all your help and advice. If there's anything you would like to know that isn't covered in this letter, please get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Hanna.  
pp. The Monstrous Regiment

THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT

Philip Duncan,  
Monstrous Regiment Foundation,  
22, Portland Place,  
London, W.1.

21, Rona Road,  
LONDON, N.W.2.  
01-485-3860

January 19th 1976

Dear Philip Duncan,

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Monstrous Regiment to apply to the Foundation for help which others else can give us.

The Monstrous Regiment is a new touring theatre group. We began meeting informally last summer and we have been operating as a company since December 1975. The fact that we are new is the cause of most of our practical problems: little capital invested in the project apart from our own talents and - given the work, certain difficulties arise.....

We are a group of ten at the moment, both men and women and our experience covers a wide range of theatrical experience, (as you can see on the attached biography sheet) ranging from the Royal Shakespeare Company to The Cuckoo and the Windmill Show, from Theatre-in-Education to the Liverpool Everyman. We have in the last few years most of us have been inexorably drawn into the sphere of activities often covered by the expression "Community Theatre". I'm not sure that this is the correct one, but you will understand what I mean when I mention groups like The Combination, 7:54, The Belt & Bussey Roadshow, The West London Theatre Workshop and so on.

What differentiates us from other groups or companies, and what has led us to form The Monstrous Regiment is an urgent desire to redress the balance of male/female status and opportunity in the theatre. This desire comes out of our own experience and can be roughly divided into three parts.

At any one time, 91.5% of the Equity membership is unemployed. The latest available survey shows that annual average earnings were £835. This average is based on male average earnings of £1031, while for women they were £583. These statistics graphically demonstrate the acuteness of the problem. Despite International Women's Year and the Sex Discrimination Act, we don't see any sign that directors and producers are even aware of the problem's existence, let alone that they are attempting to do anything about it. So we feel that we are forced to.



THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT

(2)

However, the imbalance is not only in the scarcity of work available to women but also in the quality of the work offered. Where is the challenge the satisfaction and above all the truth in the endless parade of stereotypes passing for women? We can understand the motive behind the commercial theatre's obsession with bare breasts and false eyelashes, but even in those areas where subsidy is supposed to foster a more intelligent approach we find too much of the same kind of thinking.

But our decision to form The Monstrous Regiment came not just from our own desires. Observation tells us that there is a real need for such a group. Over the last few years we have all encountered over and over again remarks like: "Why are there so few women in your group?" "Why are your plays always about men?" This from women AND men...

We feel strongly that we want to start as we mean to go on. This creates difficulties with the Arts Council of Great Britain, whose policy appears to be one of giving small amounts of money to all groups when they first begin, either for artistic reasons, or perhaps to see how determined they are. This is understandable when the people involved are inexperienced or have no clear idea of what they want to do. We are experienced and we have a very clear idea of what we want to do and why. What we don't want to do is to give our audience short measure by being forced to throw shows together on a shoestring budget.

The subject of the audience is of the essence. We will, perforce, have to begin by playing in many established touring venues. But we intend to pursue the policy that we have been advocating in our various groups (7:84 and Belt & Braces for example) of getting out of the theatres and into the less usual venues - clubs, community halls and so on. We want to find that audience which is to be found in launderettes or in front of television sets. As individuals we have experienced the difficulties that are inherent in trying to reach a new audience and we in no way underestimate them. It's our particular task to try and expend these efforts into new areas. Women in the past have tended to organise for social purposes and we intend to tap these organisations as well as those more familiar ones, structured round places of work or local issues. We are already booked to play in community centres around the Liverpool area and we will be working hard to expand our work in this direction.

THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT (3)

We have already encountered the question "Why another women's group?" (As if two or three groups were sufficient to counteract the Paul Raymonds of the world!) We think that we are different in four ways:

1. We don't want to create shows which are related to specific (and specifically female) issues such as abortion or equal pay. We recognise that such kinds of work are vital and we would support it unreservedly, but what interests us is the broader, larger sweep of human existence.
2. We want to travel more widely than is possible for some other groups who tend to be tied by family commitments to the London area. Those who don't live in London shouldn't be deprived!
3. We want to be 'theatrical' and spectacular - to use all the techniques and magic we can lay our hands on to bring people who don't often see it live theatre that is entertaining; that gives them a good night out and at the same time questions, probes and informs.
4. Perhaps the most important of all: We want to take the emphasis off collective writing, not because we are opposed to it as such, but because there are painfully few women writers actively involved in theatre and we want to encourage them. We will set up writers' workshops, discussion groups and meetings of all kinds. And not only writers, but women working in all areas of theatre: designers, performers, stage managers etc. Part of our function will be that of a forum for ideas.

Our first show CCWH: Death Destruction and Dirty Washing is a musical celebration of the women of the Paris Commune, written by Claire Luckham and C.J. Rand. It is set in a laundry.

"See Bismarck do the can-can; watch a man wind himself through a mangle; savour the aroma of grille elephant's trunk; thrill to the sound of 'Cherry Tree' and a dozen more show-stopping songs; and tremble before the final final spectacle of Paris burning amidst a sea of blood"

The music will be written by Helen Glavin and will be acoustic. This is a deliberate artistic decision. We feel that no one has yet solved the problem of incorporating amplified music into live theatrical performances; that microphones tend to act as barriers between the actor and the audience. There is also the perennial question of audibility in shows where the lyrics are a vital part of the action. So we want to start again as it were. To find some way of reaching the audience that has no restriction.

THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT

(4)

To have more shows in the pipeline. One of the subject of "Witchcraft - Subversion and Madness" - we have been researching this since September. Another with a modern industrial theme "Women at Work" - we are aiming to interest women in the organised labour movement in this one and we will be looking to bodies within that movement for substantial support. Another built around the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism and what this meant for women. Why is it that although women of the Tudor era were highly regarded for their scholarship, learning and poetry, one of the results of the English revolution was to put women back in the home? We also want to deal with the whole question of prostitution at some point..I could go on and on.

I have dwelt at some length on our ideas and plans because so far yet we have no evidence to support our claim to be worthy of consideration. As I pointed out earlier, this is the biggest stumbling block in the formation of a new company. Caution reigns at a time when one is most in need of support and encouragement. Our present most urgent need is in the field of administration. Because of A.C.T.B. policy, any assistance we get from them will come in the form of guarantees against loss for specific projects, such as the tour of 1977 Earth Destruction and Dirty War during May/ June/ July. Continuity in the organisation will be extremely difficult because of the long periods between tours when we will have no money but will be continuing with our work just the same! What we really need is the means to employ one person for a continuous length of time. Specifically the reasons for needing an administrative focus are:

1. While we would still collectively undertake as many administrative tasks as we could, it is physically impossible to rehearse and run an office efficiently simultaneously.
2. There is a need for a phone number with someone at the end of it while we are on the road. (A possible thirty weeks out of fifty two) Experience has shown us that bookings and contacts are not best made in a mini-bus moving down the M6 at fifty miles an hour.
3. Administration is rather a special skill. While we would never allow one person to bear the burden of all the mundane tasks that we could do ourselves, it would be wise to have someone in overall charge of that field who is better at it than we are.

But most important of all:

THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT (5)

4. In our function as focus for ideas and different kinds of work it's vital to have a constantly manned (womanned?!) central clearing house for information and communication.
5. Experience shows that keeping up contacts with local community groups is essential. If these contacts are allowed to lapse they tend to disappear altogether. At those times when we were able to look after the office ourselves, an administrator could be on the road expanding the 'social contacts' and collating information gathered while travelling.

So what are we asking for? Well, we dream of a floor in Centre Point with one administrator behind a big mahogany desk, two more on the road, a photocopying machine and a bank of telephones. What we need is rather more prosaic: Basically the means to employ someone for an initial period of a year with something in addition to help towards the administrative costs involved. We have laid out some alternatives:

£4000	Would pay wages for one person for twelve months (including the company's National Insurance contributions) £645.00 per week	£2540.20
	Gestetner 420 duplicator (which we would undertake to offer use of to any group in need of it)	£371.00
	Towards rent, heating & lighting & miscellaneous administrative expenses	£2400.00
	Towards other items of capital equipment (Filing cabinets, etc.)	£200.00
	Towards travelling costs incurred by administrator in capacity as 'roving contact'.	£282.00
	TOTAL:	£4000.20
£3000	Would pay wages for one person for twelve months (including the company's National Insurance contributions) £645.00 per week	£2540.20
	Towards items out of the comprehensive list above.	£460.00
		£3000.20

THE

# MONSTROUS REGIMENT

(6)

I hope this doesn't seem like an inordinately greedy request. Actually at this stage a packet of envelopes and a box of paper clips wouldn't be scorned!

Many thanks for all your help and advice. If there's anything you would like to know that isn't covered in this letter, please get in touch with me.  
Yours sincerely,

*Gillian Hanna.*

Gillian Hanna.

pp. The Monstrous Regiment.