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MEAA recovers \$100,000 for Avenue Q actors and musicians

Twelve performers on the satirical musical *Avenue Q* have finally been paid after their union took legal action to recover \$114,000 that was owed to them.

The performers turned to the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), the union for Australia's entertainment professionals, after the money was frozen during a legal dispute between the show's producer and his ex-employer.

The majority of cast and crew who worked on the production, which had a successful three week run at the Enmore Theatre in Sydney earlier this year, were not fully paid for their work.

Avenue Q's box office takings were frozen as a result of the producer's legal battle with an ex-employer for misappropriating more than \$300,000.

MEAA joined proceedings in the Supreme Court in August and MEAA's legal team successfully argued that the frozen funds should be used to cover unpaid wages. The matter was settled out of court this week.

For *Avenue Q* cast member Julia Dray, who was among those to receive unpaid wages, the experience was a learning curve about the nature of the entertainment industry and her rights as a performer.

"It was a difficult period, full of uncertainty, and it has opened my eyes to the tenuous nature of the career we have chosen. However, I will take from this experience a new appreciation for MEAA and all that the union stands for."

Avenue Q cast member Matthew Predny is also grateful for his union's involvement.

"I'm sure this resolution wouldn't have been possible without the MEAA. They gave our individual voices the power to be heard in a very tricky legal situation, which I certainly couldn't have afforded to do on my own. I owe so much to Victoria Houston and the whole MEAA team who turned this nightmare around."

MEAA CEO Paul Murphy said the union had been determined to see justice done for its members, who were part of the wider cast and crew on the production.

"These performers were caught in the crossfire of an unrelated legal action," he said.

"We are glad that the issue has been resolved and our members have finally been paid for their contribution to a successful show."

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The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain