THEATRE 2016

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THE STAGE

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Theatre 2016 Report

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INTRODUCTION FROM BON CULTURE AND THE STAGE

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INTRODUCTION BY
DAVID BROWNLEE & MARI O'NEILL

When we first started planning Theatre 2016 we couldn't believe that there hadn't been a major industry-wide conference for a decade and really thought there needed to be. After the event we're even more convinced that this complex industry needs to work more effectively together if it is going to sustain and build on its current success.

Working with 13 industry bodies to mount a two day conference across three West End venues was always an ambitious undertaking. It wouldn't have been possible without the enthusiastic support of seven sponsors and the generosity of the owners and managers of the venues. We learnt a lot from managing the event and the feedback of those who attended and there are certainly things we'd do differently in the future.

The key issues and high quality of contributions were brilliantly captured in the coverage of our media partner, The Stage. This conference report distils and enhances their coverage of two days of lively, passionate and informed debate. Theatre must adapt to thrive in a United Kingdom where demographics and levels of public funding are changing rapidly. Theatre has a massive potential role in helping society to explore key national and international issues, yet at the same time artistic censorship and self-censorship is a bigger issue than it has been for half a century.

With subsidised places thanks to funding from Creative Scotland and Arts Council England, over 600 delegates and contributors from all parts of the theatre industry considered these and other issues together, much of the time reaching consensus but also highlighting some of the tensions and disagreements in a complex ecology.

While Theatre 2016 reminded us just how popular the art form is in our nation of supposed football-lovers, it also reflected how the sector is failing to reflect the UK's growing diversity in either its workforce or audience. In his rousing speech

(published in full within this report), Samuel West stated: 'A theatre is not its artistic leadership, or even its building. A theatre is its audience, and the bigger and more diverse the audience, the healthier the theatre.' It's not that the industry hasn't tried to change, but as more than one speaker noted the diversity of the UK population was not reflected in the demographics of delegates, just as (with notable exceptions) the audiences in theatres around the UK fail to reflect the population. Why?

We know many delegates have been reflecting on Yinka Ayinde's simple but profound suggestion on how to reach a new audience: '...let's attract them through their interests and not just put on what we want to and then tell them to come and see it.' This was echoed by Topher Campbell's reflection that all too often theatre buildings '...keep out more people than they keep in in terms of class, race and gender – they stop voices from coming through.'

If we are having a similar debate in ten years time UK theatre will not still be a world leader. It will be a largely irrelevant minor interest of a small section of an ageing population.

We hope the fine words and strong arguments raised at Theatre 2016 that are highlighted in this report will encourage all those working in the sector to consider what action they should be taking individually and collectively to ensure we have a thriving, healthy and diverse theatre sector in 2026.

David Brownlee &
Mari O'Neill, BON Culture

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INTRODUCTION BY ALISTAIR SMITH, EDITOR OF THE STAGE

As one of the speakers at Theatre 2016, I was asked by the organisers to think of one thing that I thought was great about theatre in the UK and one thing I felt needed to change.

I cheated a little and chose two things that were actually the same one thing. That one thing was 'people'.

The single thing I love most about working for The Stage and in the theatre industry is the people in the theatre industry. For the vast majority of people working in theatre, they are doing the job they want to do. They are committed and passionate and often rather brilliant. This means that they are interesting to meet, talk to and write about – because they are interested in what they are doing – and they will often go above and beyond. There are very few jobsworths in theatre.

And every time I speak to friends who work in other professions, I am reminded of just how rare this is. Most people out there in the wider world are not doing the job they want to to do. Work is just work, it is not also their passion.

Whereas in theatre, there is often very little overlap between people's work and private lives. People work long hours without complaint, often for relatively little pay. They will put all of themselves into a project.

How often have you seen people in theatre achieve seemingly impossible feats because of their collective passion and determination.

It is probably something we as an industry take for granted, but it should be cherished. Theatre's people are the sector's single greatest resource and their commitment to the industry – for many of them a lifelong commitment – is overwhelmingly a good thing.

However, there are also negative sides to this.

I'll mention just three of them.

Because people tend to devote their entire careers to the theatre industry, that is considered the norm. So, we are not always good at looking outside the sector for expertise. When theatre organisations are hiring, they don't often look beyond our industry. Nor do people working in theatre often go off to other sectors and then come back to theatre with expertise they have picked up in other fields.

Because of this, some of the best practice that might be taken for granted in other industries can be lacking in theatre.

Because workers are so committed to the industry, they can be taken for granted. Low or no pay – especially at the beginning of careers – is rife and has a negative impact on the diversity and quality of the people who are able to work in the theatre industry. Obvious paths for career progression and training opportunities can be patchy. I am sure that theatre loses talent every year because people cannot afford to stay within the theatre sector, or feel they have reached a dead end.

And finally, because we are such a committed, passionate community, who have often spent most of our professional careers working in the same field, we often over-rate our own importance in the general scheme things. As an industry, we sometimes lack perspective. We need to get better seeing ourselves as the world sees us, even if that isn't always how we'd like to be seen.

The question for me is how we can tackle these problems without losing what makes our industry special in the first place.

After two days at Theatre 2016, watching session upon session of genuinely enlightening insight mixed with gloriously passionate, occasionally fractious debate (including a full-scale rebellion in one strand and a Twitter based lynch mob forming to protest against ticket prices) I've not changed my mind in the slightest.

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CONFERENCE ROUND-UP

DAY ONE ROUND UP

The morning session, at the Piccadilly Theatre, included a welcome speech from RSA chair Vikki Heywood, who asked: "If theatre can't lead the way in working together more effectively, who can?".

A panel debate about what needs to change in the sector saw the government criticised for undermining arts education and Dan Rebellato revealed new findings of a major report into the sector.

STRAND ONE PICCADILLY THEATRE

The afternoon session began with provocations from delegates, including arts consultant Jodi Myers and Richard Lee, chair at Stagetext, who called on all shows to be accessible to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people.

Sheena Wrigley, from HOME, Manchester, called on the sector to "dismantle" the current regional theatre model, and rebuild it, so that venues become "multiple occupancy" places.

Yinke Ayinde, the producer of Afrobeats musical Oliva Tweest, revealed how the show pulled in first-time theatregoers and a diverse audience, who then went on to see other shows. He urged the industry to work with the next generation of theatre producers.

Meanwhile, Ian Stickland from Charcoalblue, urged theatre companies to embed technology in the work they do, and to consider creating work that encourages the use of smartphones. If the sector does not do this, he said it would be fighting culture and that there would only be "one winner".

STRAND TWO LYRIC THEATRE

Three delegates addressed the audience in the Lyric with provocations, starting with Royal Central School of Speech and Drama principal Gavin Henderson, who said the theatre world needed to catch up with the music industry when it came to tackling diversity.

Dark Horse executive director Lynda Hornsby warned of the "scary" lack of work for actors with learning disabilities, before Parents in Performing Arts campaigner Cassie Raine highlighted the difficulty of returning to an acting career after taking time off to have children.

Casting director Jane Deitch hit out at the idea among casting directors that some drama schools have "supremacy" over others, and said the industry's obsession with recognisable faces and celebrities was limiting work opportunities for actors.

Later, Graeae artistic director Jenny Sealey criticised theatre companies who do not make their press performances captioned or signed. She

claimed it meant deaf and disabled theatre workers were missing out on a vital networking opportunity.

STRAND THREE THE ARTS THEATRE

The afternoon began with two provocations from delegates. Rebecca Manson Jones, artistic director of Just Jones, spoke about, what she termed as, "redesigning the suit."

"Artists cannot legislate so we must make new paradigms. Artists are essential to creating a new set of new values," she said.

Jill Heslop, of Open Clasp, suggested that currently theatre was often "reinforcing rather than challenging the status quo".

The first session consisted of a discussion of the role of the arts in national and international debate. Lizzie Crump spoke about the role of What Next?, a movement bringing together arts and cultural organisations in the UK, and how by working together and forging alliances, change can be created.

Paula McFetridge, of Belfast company Kabosh, discussed the social role of the work made by her company and "the need to empower people to become keepers of their own stories."

Graham McLaren of the National Theatre of Scotland talked about the organisation's beginnings, how it "gave voice to a people who had that voice stolen." He also discussed the NTS's 'without walls' model and the importance of making "work which is political in content, popular in form"

In the panel discussion on Meeting Ethical and Reputational Challenges, Julia Farrington of Index on Censorship discussed the pressures on artists to self-censor.

Louise Jeffreys, director of arts at the Barbican Centre, discussed the experience of censorship, programming and policing in light of the cancellation of Exhibit B.

Clare Slater, of the Gate Theatre, London, spoke about the importance for venues to implement an ethical policy.

DAY TWO ROUND UP

In the morning, delegates voted to scrap all of the previous day's motions, and not to continue with the ones listed for today, following complaints they had been drawn up without input from attendees.

The morning session was supposed to be chaired by Rosemary Squire, however she was unable to attend due to illness. Topher Campbell stood in, and used his opening speech to call for an end to artistic directors.

Delegates also heard from Clive Humby, from Starcount, about what the sector can learn from the passions of theatregoers outside of the arts, while Royal Court community producer Chris Sonnex talked about the Good Chance Theatre in Calais, and how that had made a difference to the lives of refugees in the camp.

The afternoon was split into three strands, as below:

STRAND FOUR PICCADILLY THEATRE

Jill Robinson, chief executive of TRG Arts, talked about how theatres can monetise relationships with theatregoers, and Ali FitzGibbon, a freelance arts consultant, also talked about different ways of operating.

The afternoon continued with Elen ap Robert, from Pontio, and Gareth Roberts, from Aberystwyth Arts Centre, who talked about the relationships they have with universities, and the benefits and challenges. Robert, speaking about Pontio, talked about the delays the venue had suffered during construction, resulting in its entire first season being cancelled.

Samuel West used his speech to address delegates about the challenges facing the sector in terms of funding and access. He criticised theatres for charging too much for drinks and programmes, claiming theatre "isn't Ryanair".

In a panel discussion West later expressed concern about funding from local authorities being reduced. He said the Arts Council could not be the only "funder in town". On the same panel, ITC's Charlotte Jones said she had a problem with too much public funding going to big organisations such as the Royal Opera House, saying the public was funding "corporate entertainment". She said more needed to be done to support theatre in deprived areas, and praised councils as "unsung heroes" who still give money to ITC's members.

STRAND FIVE LYRIC THEATRE

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland deputy principal Maggie Kinloch discussed whether audiences saw themselves on national stages – and concluded that they don't, yet. She highlighted the need to break the hold of white, middle-class and able-bodied men on the most powerful roles in theatre, and said there was nothing "inevitable" about a decline in theatre if organisations move to act on improving the representation of minorities and local communities.

Data presented by The Audience Agency's Anne Torreggiani showed that around 40% of UK households currently attend theatre, but only 15% go twice a year or more. She also revealed that theatre was doing much worse than other art forms at attracting non-white audiences. Predicting the theatre landscape in 10 years' time based on her data, she suggested the average age of

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theatregoers would be older and theatres would be struggling to attract attendees from Generation X and Y.

Steven Hadley, SH lecturer at Queen's University Belfast, argued a large amount of theatre and other artforms were currently failing to reach broad enough audiences, and therefore – as undemocratic organisations – they should not be receiving public funding.

Catherine Wheels director Gill Robertson criticised the bulk of theatre that is presented in schools, saying most of it is "not good" when it should be "thrilling" in order to encourage children to see more.

Derby Theatre director Sarah Brigham made a passionate interjection at the suggestion that regional theatres could join in with the West End's Kids Week promotion. Hitting out at the "patronising" and "London-centric" suggestion, she named a number of schemes that regional theatres are already involved in to encourage children and families to attend theatre.

STRAND SIX ARTS THEATRE

Chair Ruth Eastwood, CEO of the Blackpool Grand, responding to points made in the morning session, began by saying: "Refugees are people with real challenges. It's complicated. Tread with care."

Roland Smith of Theatre Delicatessen spoke about pop-up theatre models and using found spaces, and the importance of access before stressing that he hoped "we're the last people to use this model. Artists and communities deserve better."

David Lockwood of the Bike Shed Theatre, Exeter, spoke about the new venues that were opening in the city and the lessons that could be learnt from troubles faced by the Northcott Theatre, concluding that "sometimes you need to let things go."

This was followed by a panel discussion entitled How Do We Afford Relevant and Accessible Places and Spaces in Our Changing Communities?

Matt Fenton, artistic director of Contact, and Foluso Falade, a member of Contact's Young Company, spoke about the importance of thinking about who makes the decisions in a building. "If you're collectively diverse then your audience might be collectively diverse." Falade added that she did not understand what theatre was before encountering Contact. "It's a very open and happy place."

Lucy Oliver-Harrison, executive director of the Yard in Hackney Wick, London, discussed the challenges of setting up and maintaining a venue in an area experiencing "huge and rapid change," concluding "at some point the Yard will cease to exist in its current form. We think this is good."

Gavin Barlow, chief executive of the Albany, discussed the venue's redevelopment and expansion, particularly in regards to Deptford Lounge and Canada Water Culture Space.

Rebecca Atkinson-Lord, freelance director and theatre-maker and former co-director of theatre at Ovalhouse, reflecting on the panel, said "the most effective way to change a building is to change the people within it. Permeability is key."

Jonathan Meth, Project Dramaturg on Crossing The Line, said "public space is in crisis, globally. It's being diminished. Theatre has the possibility and responsibility to reconfigure what public space can be."

NEWS COVERAGE IN FULL BY MATTHEW HEMLEY, DAVID HUTCHISON AND NATASHA TRIPNEY FROM THE STAGE.

VIKKI HEYWOOD THEATRE INDUSTRY MUST PULL TOGETHER OR RISK DOWNTURN

Former Royal Shakespeare Company head Vikki Heywood has called on theatre companies to work together and share more resources or risk a stagnating industry.

Opening the Theatre 2016 conference, Heywood – now chair of the Royal Society of Arts – said the sector had made strides in finding extra sources of funding and not solely relying on subsidy or box office income.

She praised the use of income boosters such as grant-giving trust and foundations, corporate partnerships, and income from in-house restaurants and bars – but said that despite positive initiatives such as theatre tax relief government cuts were continuing to squeeze companies.

"True to the rule of unintended consequences, the fifth richest country in the world, the country that leads the world in the arts, is now cheese-paring away our cultural assets," she said.

"The curve that shows the effect of this on new work, on prices, on access, is very long. The full effects will be seen long after the term of this government and the next government. So maybe we do need to have a damn good shout at each other [at this conference]," she added.

Heywood went on to voice ire at companies not working more closely together to find solutions to industry-wide problems such as a lack of diversity.

"I have to admit to being frustrated at the lack of progress on more joined-up and systematic approaches to our top three challenges today: how to diversify audiences and our workforce, how to unlock new money to support our work, and how to ensure our continuing relevance in order to achieve national government support," she said.

She then went over a number of motions to be presented to the conference, including a national theatre apprenticeship programme and a coordinated industry effort to bring more theatre into schools.

"None of these things can happen without greater collective effort, and greater collective generosity," she added.

Conceding that theatre companies might feel reluctant to share important data with each other, the RSA chair nonetheless said collaboration should come naturally to theatre workers.

She said: "It's hard, I have to give up my ownership and my control over my programmes, my contacts, my relationships, and some of my identity in order to collectively benefit from yours.

"But let's face it, if theatre can't lead the way in working more effectively together, who can? Who else makes it their business to gather people into rooms both large and small, give up their free will, breathe the same air, and unlock their imagination in a collective act of creativity? I think it's worth a try."

KULLY THIARAI CRITICISES GOVERNMENT'S 'DEVASTATING' ARTS EDUCATION POLICIES

New National Theatre Wales artistic director Kully Thiarai has criticised the Conservative government for its treatment of arts in education.

Thiarai was speaking at Theatre 2016, on a panel about changes that need to take place in the industry, where she was joined by Graeae artistic director Jenny Sealey, The Stage editor Alistair Smith, producer Eleanor Lloyd and Vikki Heywood, chair of Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts.

The panel called for more to be done to provide better access to drama training, and to improve the way the arts is taught in schools.

Thiarai said the way education secretary Nicky Morgan and her predecessor, Michael Gove, had handled arts education had been devastating.

She added that there was a need to encourage creativity and curiosity, describing the lack of arts education in schools as a "real worry for us as a nation and the arts".

Thiarai also said strict regulations about taking children out of school were making it harder for teachers to plan trips to see live theatre.

Heywood said more needed to be done to help the government "see and understand why it's so important to involve culture and creativity in the curriculum" and to help teachers with extra curricular activities. She said they were equally important.

The comments come as the government plans to push ahead with its English Baccalaureate, which does not include a requirement for students to study an arts subject.

On the panel, Sealey also expressed concern that young people were not being introduced to theatre and that more needed to be done to take live performance into schools.

"I think we have a huge responsibility to get back to taking work into schools – taking it to kids who might not access it, so they know how extraordinary the creative industries can be," she said.

She also said more should be done to improve access to drama school training, claiming there was a risk the sector would become "white middle class".

Heywood agreed that it was important to encourage people from all sections of society to attend drama school, adding: "I don't believe we are demonstrating to the world outside of our industry that we want the widest group of people to train and join us. Until we get this message out there things won't change."

Heywood said more work was required to get young people interested in the arts from an early age.

On the panel, Smith also expressed concern that people's commitment to working in theatre meant there was a danger they were bring taken for granted. He said that low and no pay in the industry was a major issue.

SHEENA WRIGLEY 'DISMANTLE REGIONAL THEATRES TO FOCUS ON COLLABORATION'

The UK's regional producing houses should be dismantled and reassembled with a greater focus on collaboration and less emphasis on the current "hierarchical model", a leading theatre executive has claimed.

Sheena Wrigley, executive director of multi-arts venue HOME, Manchester, claimed that venues should be thinking about a "multiple occupancy model", where a number of companies and initiatives are based in one building.

She said this would increase the diversity of work on offer and attract new audiences.

"It is time we considered dismantling our regional theatres. I say that because I think they are a critical part of the ecology of our industry. Dismantling them creates the opportunity to reassemble them and that is what is really interesting – we can reassemble them with a more collaborative, diverse and less hierarchical model," she said.

Speaking at Theatre 2016, she said the regional producing houses were facing a "general air of dissatisfaction".

She claimed most were run by a single artistic company, which delivers the venue's programme, while other artists "try to get in, try to access facilities and resources".

An approach with a single artistic vision also meant there was a "tranche of unengaged audiences," she added.

Wrigley said there should be several companies in one building, such as a national touring company alongside an artists' collective, a new-writing company and a BAME-led company".

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"Imagine the variety and range of work that is possible," she said, adding it would allow venues to "become more distinct".

Wrigley claimed there was a need to "upend the current hierarchy" in these buildings and added that the industry could look to festivals as a model where a programme is realised "by bringing together a wide range of expertise and talent".

DEAF AND DISABLED 'SHUT OUT OF THEATRE PRESS NIGHTS'

Theatre director Jenny Sealey has claimed deaf and disabled theatre workers are shut out of press nights because they are not fully accessible.

Speaking at the Theatre 2016 conference, the Graeae artistic director revealed several delegates based in London had asked her to attend the opening night of their shows.

She said: "I've been invited to three different press nights and I'm not going to be able to go, because none of those press nights are signed or captioned

– because they're press nights and they don't want to 'ruin it for the press'."

Sealey hailed the current touring production of The Government Inspector – which stars a number of disabled actors – as an example of a show that is signed and captioned for deaf audiences.

"But how are deaf and disabled people supposed to network if we don't have that opportunity to go to those press nights and meet the great and the good?" she asked.

"You need to include us in every area of the sector, and when we're fully embedded within that – producers, stage managers, lighting, all of it – then we can be much more proactive and change the DNA of an organisation."

She also criticised one conference attendee who suggested that there were certain 'sorts' of plays that were better suited to deaf and disabled actors.

She explained: "Another thing that really fucking riled me is that someone said to me: 'Jenny, what's the right sort of play for deaf and disabled actors to be in?'"

"Any play, for God's sake," she scoffed. "Any play."

Sealey was discussing how fundamental changes could be made to the sector alongside a panel including Equity general secretary Christine Payne and Spotlight's head of client relations Pippa Harrison.

SMARTPHONES 'SHOULD BE PART OF THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE'

Leading theatre consultant Ian Stickland has claimed theatregoers should be using phones in the theatre as part of an interactive experience.

The Charcoalblue consultant, who specialises in theatre design and acoustics, said technology should be integrated into performances and warned that the industry was facing a losing battle if it did not respond.

"We are missing the opportunity to create meaningful, personal theatre. It's a controversial point but we need to think about this. Why don't we make more performances that are meant to be enjoyed with smartphones?" he told the Theatre 2016 conference.

He added: "Let's integrate technology into performance. Or, better still, why don't we find the right technology to allow digital interaction to be combined with the wonderful interaction that we all love about theatre? If we don't embrace this, theatre will be fighting culture and there will only be one winner."

Stickland was speaking ahead of a panel at Theatre 2016 that explored whether technology was an opportunity or threat.

On this panel, Mary Swan, from Proteus Theatre Company, warned that live-streaming of theatre was a threat to touring companies such as hers.

She said venues run by local authorities rather than artistic leaders were seeing screenings of theatre as a "replacement" to theatre itself.

"It's no good saying, 'It's not happening', as it is happening," she said.

On the panel, National Theatre Live head of broadcast Emma Keith said technology allowed theatre to increase access.

"It should not be seen as just a way to distribute content. It should be integrated into the art form itself," she said.

She said audiences wanted "experiences on their own terms".

"The opportunity is to respond to that in different and interesting ways," she added.

Theatre lawyer Neil Adleman agreed, and said live-streaming was already "old-fashioned".

"The vast majority of what we have at the moment is linear – delivering to audiences watching it on a screen designed to replicate what an audience get in the theatre. The real opportunities and next steps are about interactivity – an experience which is not just about trying to slavishly recreate what we get in the theatre, when that is a second-best experience to being in a theatre itself," he said.

LOUISE JEFFREYS LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EXHIBIT B PROTESTS

Barbican Centre director of arts Louise Jeffreys has admitted that the venue "failed audiences and artists" when, in 2014 following protests, it was forced to cancel a production on police advice.

She added that arts organisations needed to be speaking out in support of each other and working collaboratively to find ways to stage controversial work within an ethical context. The What Next? Ethics Advisory Group and its work on producing the Meeting Ethical and Reputational Challenges Guidance is an example of how this could happen. She admitted that the Barbican was now more careful about how it approaches staging potentially controversial work.

She was speaking as part of a panel on Meeting Ethical and Reputational Challenges at the Theatre 2016 conference at the Arts Theatre in London.

The Barbican cancelled performances of Exhibit B, the installation by South African artist Brett Bailey, after it came under attack for its alleged racism. It was subject to a campaign demanding its withdrawal from the Barbican programme and there were demonstrations at the Vaults, London, the venue in which it was to be performed. It was cancelled on police advice.

Exhibit B consisted of a living tableaux designed as a critique of racism and colonialism. The piece was

presented at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2014 without incident. There were further protests in Paris when it toured there later in the year, though it was not cancelled.

Jeffreys said: "The scale of the complaints took us by surprise. We were not trying to cause offence and we were always willing to engage in debate. But I accept that we did offend and we offended doubly. We offended those who thought the production was racist and those who thought we prevented freedom of speech when we made the decision on advice from the police to cancel the show."

She added: "We made mistakes. We could have taken more care over how the production images were used online." She also said she wished that "we had challenged the police decision more".

Jeffreys said the experience "has made us more careful in how we approach controversy, but I sincerely hope it has not made us more risk averse".

She also said she believed that a culture of support was necessary in dealing with these issues.

"Arts organisations could do more to help each other in these situations. I believe we're too quiet about speaking out about other organisations when they're presenting risk-taking work. If we're complacent individually, we put everyone at risk," she said.

Speaking about Brett Bailey, she said: "I still believe in that artist. That was the saddest thing. We failed audiences, but we also failed that artist."

She described the incident as "the most painful thing I've ever experienced in my career in the arts. It's given me a slightly thicker skin to cope".

Jeffreys said the venue could not stage the piece again.

"We would not do that piece again. I went to Paris and saw the riot vehicles and the glass being smashed. It wasn't the same piece anymore. The context had changed it," she said.

She added that the climate in regards to free speech had shifted to the extent that it would not be possible to stage it in London any longer.

"I don't think we could do that piece here, now, in this city at this time," she said.

YINKA AYINDE 'CONNECT TO POPULAR CULTURE' TO ATTRACT NEW THEATREGOERS

The producer of the first Afrobeat musical to be staged in the West End has warned that the industry needs to stay connected to popular culture or risk losing the next generation of theatregoers.

Yinka Ayinde produced Oliva Tweest at the Lyric Theatre in London in 2013, and later at the Hackney Empire.

He said he had spent years developing an audience for the show through other initiatives, and added: "We used culture to engage with the audience. We did not put on a show and just expect them to turn up."

He said the next generation of theatregoers would come to see shows but claimed they were not "encouraged" enough.

"Most of this generation stay connected to popular culture, and theatre needs to reflect this in order to stay relevant," he said. "You want a new generation of theatregoers, so let's attract them through their interests and not just put on what we want to and then tell them to come and see it."

INDEX ON CENSORSHIP CHIEF

SHOW CANCELLATIONS HAVE SET A 'DANGEROUS PRECEDENT'

Julia Farrington, head of arts at Index on Censorship, has raised concerns that the cancellation of recent shows because of their content has set a "dangerous precedent" in the sector.

Presenting a provocation ahead of a panel on Meeting Ethical and Reputational Challenges at the Theatre 2016 conference at the Arts Theatre in London, she discussed the cancellation of pieces such as Brett Bailey's Exhibit B installation, which was met with protests in London and cancelled on police advice despite being presented without incident elsewhere.

The cancellation of controversial work, she said, denied "the right of the artist to express it, the organisation's right to present it, the audience's right to view it, and those who protest against it the right to say how much they hate it".

"This new chapter in the policing of controversial arts sets alarm bells ringing and sets a dangerous precedent for foreclosing any work that the police don't approve of," she said.

She highlighted how going against police advice could be problematic for all involved and discussed the implications for artists and organisations if they continued to present work which had been contested by the police.

"An organisation also has duties to its employees and members of the public. It may be liable for unlawful acts by third parties and failure to follow police advice could lead to arrest," she said.

She said that "both self-censorship and direct censorship are the undesirable outcomes," of this current climate, and claimed that "the ideal scenario to come out of a dialogue with police would be a space open to challenging art and to protest".

"Both are about freedom of expression," she said.

She stressed that often the work subject to such scrutiny is about race and religion and she went on to cite the different responses to the National Youth Theatre's production of Homegrown and the National Theatre's production of Another World: Losing Our Children to Islamic State by Nicholas Kent and Gillian Slovo.

"The majority of work that has been foreclosed are by BAME artists," she said.

RCS DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CONDEMNS 'COMFORT ZONE' CASTING

Middle-class, able-bodied white men who have the majority of powerful theatre jobs feel "most comfortable" casting actors like themselves, according to a top drama school professor.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's deputy principal Maggie Kinloch said in turn that women, the working class, transgender people and the deaf or disabled are "outside the comfort zone" for many people in charge of getting actors on stages.

In a speech at the Theatre 2016 conference in London, Kinloch said it was a "well-researched fact" that people were more at ease around people similar to themselves.

She said the societal norm in the Western world was "white, male, middle-class, educated, non-disabled, heterosexual", and added: "We don't see enormous deviation from that norm in the powerful roles in our theatres – the playwrights, the casting directors, the artistic directors, the chief executives, and the producers."

Kinloch continued: "Let's follow that thinking to its logical conclusion. It follows that they feel most comfortable when they employ people like themselves.

"And so if you're of any ethnicity other than white British, if you're a woman, or transgender, if you're a working-class person, if you have poor education, if you're deaf or disabled or openly gay, you sit outside the comfort zone of many of the employers in our theatres."

"And it probably means that you're less likely to be cast by the majority of the people who can employ you," she added.

Kinloch, who has worked at Arts Educational Schools and Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, accepted there were many "brilliantly enlightened" directors and casting directors "who challenge that fact in every piece of work they make."

"But there are many who do not, because in the end, we all start from ourselves," she said.

LYNDA HORNSBY LACK OF WORK FOR ACTORS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IS 'SCARY'

Actors with learning disabilities are battling a "scary" lack of work in mainstream theatres, according to a leading company in the field.

Lynda Hornsby, executive director of Dark Horse, said the problem stretched further for actors with cognitive learning disabilities – such as Down's syndrome – claiming there was "nothing out there at all".

Speaking at the Theatre 2016 conference in London, she said it was "fantastic" that Dark Horse – which creates work with and for people with learning disabilities – had received public subsidy to produce work.

But she also highlighted that the company lost its regular Arts Council England funding in 2014, and that other companies were not providing acting opportunities for actors with learning difficulties.

She explained: "Much of the work featuring actors with learning disabilities is made in isolation within the companies like us that are learning disability-focused.

"In terms of touring work, there's so little out there it's scary. In terms of work featuring actors with cognitive learning disabilities, that's even less. There really is nothing out there at all."

Hornsby also suggested that drives for onstage diversity in the sector had skipped over people with learning disabilities.

"We want the same opportunities that seem to be happening for people from other diverse sectors or, at the very least, for our people to be a significant part of what is already happening," she said.

"What we'd like to see more of is the opportunity for the theatremaking process to be more inclusive, and for our actors and others to be cast in integrated casts in more general work, in producing theatres and other theatres companies."

Later in the conference, Hijinx Theatre executive director Clare Williams criticised the "great gulf" of training options for aspiring actors with learning disabilities.

"There's a fundamental problem in that if you have Down's syndrome or autism, you will rarely have the qualifications to be able to access colleges or to access apprenticeships. Therefore there's a great gulf," she said.

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SCRAP ARTISTIC DIRECTORS, URGES FORMER RED ROOM BOSS

Topher Campbell has called on the UK theatre industry to scrap artistic directors, claiming new and emerging talent is not progressing in the sector under this model.

Speaking at the opening of day two of Theatre 2016, the theatre director and filmmaker said his own work as artistic director of theatre company the Red Room had shown him that young people have a "great hunger for the death of institutions".

He added that having one person running a company or building artistically was "old-fashioned" and should be reconsidered.

Campbell said the people he had worked with felt theatre buildings and institutions "need to be revised, revamped or taken down".

"I see a future where this is a very strong possibility," he said, adding that young people instead wanted to create collectives that avoid a hierarchy.

"Even though I have been an artistic director myself, we should see the end of artistic directors. The idea that one person has the knowledge, vision and know-how to create all the necessary work that a building needs in terms of output is a bit old-fashioned," he said.

Campbell added: "The idea of a collective, of a more fluid decision-making, a non-hierarchical way

of working, is something theatre perhaps needs to see in the future. This notion that buildings themselves are the pinnacle of what we can achieve in the UK is something of a myth. Buildings keep out more people than they keep in in terms of class, race and gender – they stop voices from coming through."

He said one person's vision for a venue resulted in a "repetition of work based on an idea of what people think people should see" and resulted in fewer opportunities for new voices to emerge.

LET'S STOP TRYING TO SAVE THEATRES, SAYS FORMER OVALHOUSE DIRECTOR

Director Rebecca Atkinson-Lord has claimed "obsolescence" should be built into new theatres, so that future generations do not "have to save them".

She labelled some theatre stock as "impenetrable monoliths" that should not be saved.

The former co-director of theatre at Ovalhouse in London was speaking as part of the second day of Theatre 2016 in London.

Atkinson-Lord said: "We've all experienced buildings where things have ossified." She added that old structures needed to be rejected entirely "in how we think and how we work".

She added: "We need to rethink every aspect of how building-based companies function. New buildings are rarely the answer. Problems are often symptomatic of wider organisational failures.

"Sometimes things should end. Some of our theatre buildings are impenetrable monoliths – let's stop trying to save them. Let's build obsolescence into our new theatres to stop future generations from having to save them."

Atkinson-Lord was speaking as part of a session entitled How Do We Afford Relevant and Accessible Places and Spaces for Theatre in Our Changing Communities?.

She said "the most effective way to change a building is to change the people within it. Permeability is key".

She went to on to ask whether the sector needed "traditional theatre buildings at all".

"Rather than clinging to the past, we should embrace change. There has been a trend for the corporatising and sanitising of our artistic spaces," she said.

Asked how she envisioned a future away from the building-based model, she said there should be an emphasis on public squares.

"Some of the most exciting work being made at the moment is about people interacting with

space," she said. "Audiences need to want to come. At the moment they don't. Because Game of Thrones is on and there's a jar of Nutella within reach and they don't have to dress up. We need to democratise things."

Atkinson-Lord stressed that she was not against all building-based theatre or all theatre buildings. "It's about symbiosis. We need to look at the structures and hierarchies within a building – and if they're not working we need to burn them down," she said.

ACTOR AND CAMPAIGNER SAMUEL WEST HAS CALLED FOR CHEAPER DRINKS AND PROGRAMMES SO THAT AUDIENCES DO NOT FEEL OVERCHARGED, CLAIMING "THEATRE IS NOT RYANAIR".

Speaking as part Theatre 2016, he also urged more theatres to stage public dress rehearsals for £1 to make theatre more accessible.

In a speech at the event, he said that rising ticket prices was the "norm", which meant that people who have already paid for arts through taxes were "now sometimes unable to afford tickets in subsidised venues".

He added: "In older theatres, the hierarchy of ticket prices is built into design. Some in the West End make us go in side entrances to get to the balcony like a 'poor door'."

West said he approved of the idea of cheaper tickets the earlier someone books, claiming it rewards theatregoers for "taking a chance" on a production.

"And please stop charging so much for drinks and programmes, so people feel ripped off as soon as they come in. Theatre is not Ryanair," he said, adding: "Make the act of going to the theatre, having a drink and finding out who you're watching a bit more ordinary. It doesn't have to be someone's birthday to want to catch a show."

In his address, he said said that the industry had been "battered" in the recent spending review but had been "pathetically grateful".

He added that the "welfare state has been dismantled" and that "we have been sold the idea that public spending is bad and we should only pay for what we use".

"People ask me why should I support theatres if I never use them? And I say sometimes you have to pay for nice things you don't like," he said.

West also warned that changes to GCSE drama, which allow students to watch a recording of a theatre production rather than see a live performance, risked "future generations".

"The very essence of theatre, that it's live, is under threat. It's sold to us as an opportunity not to discriminate against students who can't get to a

live show for financial or geographical reasons. What better example do you need that education is now the responsibility of the individual and not the state," he said, adding that theatre could be "life-changing".

Later he urged delegates to hold public dress performances for £1, claiming they allowed people who may not otherwise be able to afford to go to the theatre an opportunity to see a show.

"We did them in Sheffield. They were a £1 and lots of people came who could not afford £10, which is the cheapest seat we had. They were joyous occasions. It means that a woman with three children, for whom £33 is off the scale, might bring her children," he said.

ITC CHIEF EXECUTIVE CLAIMS PUBLIC MONEY IS FUNDING 'CORPORATE ENTERTAINMENT'

Independent Theatre Council chief executive Charlotte Jones has criticised the amount of public money given to organisations such as the Royal Opera House, claiming it is funding "corporate entertainment".

Jones, speaking at Theatre 2016, said there needed to be a radical rethink of funding, and called for "an exploding of the status quo". She said more should be given to organisations that are trying to take theatre into poorer areas.

"Our taxes do pay for the arts quite a lot. But we pay an awful lot – the biggest amount by far – to the big institutions like the Royal Opera House and the National Theatre, who constantly struggle with the diversity of their audiences," she said.

She said taxes should support theatre for children in schools, and "get to the people who need it and can't pay for it".

"People who can pay for it need to pay more for it," she said, adding: "At the moment we are funding corporate entertainment and that seems extraordinary when there is austerity, except for the champagne-drinking opera watchers."

She continued: "I am not anti opera... but I do prefer to sit in a school and see children enraptured by art. That is the kind of art that changes the world."

Jones went on to say that the "vast majority of people in the world are not getting the arts they deserve and they bloody well should".

"It's about time we shifted the status quo and made a massive move to shift that wealth gap," she said, adding that initiatives such as the tax relief scheme for theatres were not enough.

"Most of that goes to the commercial sector and there is no quality control with tax relief in terms of whether they are putting on good work – we are not monitoring things that need monitoring," she said.

Speaking on a panel alongside Samuel West called Who Will Pay?, Jones praised local authorities as "unsung heroes" who do support the work of ITC's members.

However, West said that local authority funding had been cut by a fifth since 2010.

"Local authority funding for the arts is less than 0.5% of total spend, less than half a penny in every pound. There is not even a coin small enough for the graphic," he said, adding that cutting local authority funding "puts the Arts Council in a very difficult position".

"It can't be the last funder in town," he said.

On the panel, councillor Ian Stephens, from the Local Government Association, said councils had done "a heck of a lot on diminishing budgets".

DON'T PATRONISE REGIONS, DERBY THEATRE CHIEF TELLS LONDON CONFERENCE

Derby Theatre artistic director Sarah Brigham has hit out at "patronising" suggestions that venues outside London could join in with a West End scheme to promote theatre to children.

The Society of London Theatre runs a Kids Week promotion throughout August, in which children get free theatre tickets to certain West End shows.

During the Theatre 2016 conference at the West End's Lyric Theatre, one London-based delegate suggested regional theatres should be getting involved with Kids Week as a way to promote their own theatres.

The attendee proposed it could be "one week for the whole country" that was nationally promoted as a "Theatre Week", in which theatres might "open their doors" for open days.

But Brigham interjected: "In the regions it's all year round. Sorry, that's really patronising. I'm sorry, but that is such a London-centric thing to say. The regions are doing stuff, and we're doing a lot more [than London]."

Speaking from the venue's dress circle, she went on to say that one week of promotional activity was "not going to cut it" as a way to attract audiences to regional theatres.

She continued: "Look at the work York Theatre Royal is doing; Derby Theatre and lots of [other theatres] are doing stuff. So please do not preach from the West End stalls to the 'regions': 'Perhaps you could get involved with something we do once a year?'."

After the conference, Brigham told The Stage that regional venues including Derby Theatre already take part in promotions such as the national Family Arts Festival, World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People and Fun Palaces.

The director also confirmed she would be happy to take part in a new national "Theatre Week" promotion, but not to jump on the back of the pre-existing West End scheme.

She added: "There is often the idea that the regions can 'learn' from London – which is ironic when I was sat miles away from everyone because my colleague happens to be disabled and the venue [the Lyric Theatre] has no disabled access to the stalls."

Brigham was contributing as part of a discussion of how theatres can engage with a new generation of audiences.

CASTING DIRECTOR JANE DEITCH: WRITERS 'DON'T GET' NEED FOR DIVERSITY

Playwrights and screenwriters "just don't get" the need for better diversity of talent in theatre and TV, according to claims made by a leading casting director.

Jane Deitch, who was head of casting for BBC Drama between 1999 and 2006, also voiced concerns that the representation of ethnic minorities on stage and screen was "going backwards".

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Giving a talk at the Theatre 2016 conference on May 12, Deitch quoted the former controller of BBC Drama, Ben Stephenson, who said in 2015 that he "didn't believe in quotas, and forcing people to write things that don't come from within".

Slamming his approach to diversity, Deitch said: "The problem with leaving it up to the writers is that they just don't get it, and they don't do enough."

She also said the casting of non-white actors should not be restricted to roles written as non-white.

"I firmly believe that just reflecting what a writer has created is not enough; they often only create non-white characters with an agenda or because of a cultural storyline," she explained, adding those in charge should "approach every piece of casting with an open mind as to where it might go".

Later, Deitch recalled "battling with a producer" to allow her to cast a black actress in a police drama, where the role had been written as white and male.

She continued: "Her argument against this was that no black female police officer had achieved this rank in real life. Well... so what? That's aspirational, and that is what it takes to get young people to choose a career in acting, when they see themselves reflected on screen."

During her time at the BBC, Deitch introduced casting quotas for minority representation in continuing drama series: a quarter of all regular characters had to be black, Asian or an ethnic minority, as well as 10% of guest stars.

Conceding that she would raise the guest star casting target if she was implementing the quotas now, Deitch said that this nevertheless had a "definite" effect on the make-up of the industry "for a number of years".

She also claimed that perceptions of the BBC "were much more positive within the BAME acting community".

But she added: "I don't think things have moved on particularly positively, and I worry that it's actually going backwards."

Deitch was speaking about how the theatre industry can achieve a workforce as diverse at the UK population. The afternoon also saw Tonic Theatre's Lucy Kerbel talking about the representation of women, and a speech by Birds of Paradise's Robert Softley Gale on disability.

DAVID LOCKWOOD "FUTURE OF THEATRE NEEDS 'RENEWAL AND REBIRTH'"

Bike Shed Theatre artistic director David Lockwood has called for the industry to encourage "renewal and rebirth" to protect its future.

He said this could potentially be done "rather than constantly having to find ways to paper over the

cracks" and claimed it was sometimes best to "let a few things go".

The artistic director of the Exeter venue was speaking on the second day of the Theatre 2016 conference at the Arts Theatre in London, ahead of a panel discussion entitled How Do We Afford Relevant and Accessible Places and Spaces in Our Changing Communities?.

Speaking of his own venue, the 60-seat Bike Shed Theatre, as well as the city's planned new cultural hub for the city, the Boat Shed, he said there was a sense of "empowerment that comes from watching other people do things".

"It breeds a sense of: well, I can do that," he said.

He also spoke about the problems faced by Exeter Northcott five years ago, and how that was an opportunity for other venues.

"Before there was a spirit of asking permission from the big theatres. Then the balance of power shifted subtly but significantly, opportunity presented itself and a bunch of empowered creatives took it," he said, adding: "When a tree falls, other trees get a chance to grow. If you do need to water the tree there's probably something wrong with it."

He went on to say that post-Second World War, the Arts Council established many new organisations across the country.

"These were almost exclusively buildings. Seventy years on most of these organisations still exist. These conversations always revolve around how we can change existing buildings to be more entrepreneurial, how they can bring in more revenue. We need to look at how resources can be redistributed more efficiently," he said.

He added: "In nature, many ecosystems have evolved with fire as a contributor to habitat vitality and renewal. In the old days, theatres burnt down. Is there a safer way of renewing spaces for theatre? Of encouraging innovation and rebirth in new spaces rather than constantly finding ways to paper over the cracks?"

CHILDREN'S THEATREMAKER'S VERDICT ON THEATRE IN SCHOOLS: 'NOT INSPIRATIONAL'

Most theatre performed in schools is "not good" and is failing to inspire children to see more, according to a leading children's director.

Gill Robertson, whose company Catherine Wheels makes theatre for children and young people, made the comments at the Theatre 2016 conference during a discussion on whether the art form was a minority interest.

Stressing that children have to be "thrilled" by the performances they see, Robertson said: "Most

work that goes into schools is not good. It is not inspirational. It is not innovative."

She continued: "We need to make sure that the work we put in front of children is exceptional, [and that] it's not a teaching tool, it's not message-driven."

Robertson then said work produced for children "has to have the same rigour and passion and invention and care as the best work that is offered to adults".

The director also suggested that theatre companies needed to work harder to take theatre out to young people, instead of attempting to attract them into venues and buildings.

She said: "Young people do not need theatre. They are not out on the streets demanding equal theatre for all.

"School children do not go on strike refusing to go to school unless they get a chance to experience a high-quality arts event annually. It is our job as makers to go out and reach the next generation."

AUDIENCE AGENCY DATA SHOWS AGEING DEMOGRAPHIC OF THEATREGOERS

Theatre risks failing to replenish its ageing audiences with a new generation because young people are looking to other art forms, research has claimed.

This is the claim of new research from the Audience Agency, which includes data from more than 500 venues and 10.6 million households. It suggested that the average age of theatre audiences will increase over the next decade.

An estimated 40% of English households attend the theatre, but just 15% see two or more shows a year, the Audience Agency said. The data added that theatre came lowest on the list of cultural activities people would recommend to their friends.

The data found that the largest age group for theatre audiences was people between the ages of 65 and 74, with the average age of an audience member being 52.

It suggested that the average age is set to increase "considerably" over the next 10 years if the profile of theatregoers remains the same and organisations do not reach out to different audiences.

Audience Agency chief executive Anne Torreggiani said that while the average age of theatregoers was increasing, audiences were not being replenished with young people, who over the next decade could instead look to other art forms.

"Our data suggests that younger audiences tend to prefer other art forms, so they are perhaps engaging more with other performing art forms, more contemporary art possibly, and museums are doing well with those groups," she told The Stage.

Through the Audience Agency's Audience Finder tool, which splits the population into groups linked to their household and postcode, it has been identified that the three groups engaging most highly with the arts represent 60% of theatre audiences, but just 22% of the population.

The Audience Agency claimed that these top three theatregoing groups were set to age at a faster rate than the population over the next 10 years.

Torreggiani went on to say: "By 2026, if we're not careful, we could be feeling really confident because we'll see an increase with the frequency in which people are coming to the theatre, we'll probably see an increase in how much some people are willing to pay for it, but it also looks as though our audience will be getting older and not necessarily being replenished.

"There's a danger that theatre audiences could look very healthy in 2026 without us noticing that we are increasingly failing to engage that younger audience, who are engaging with culture in a different way at the moment."

The data was presented at industry conference Theatre 2016.

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SAMUEL WEST WHO WILL PAY FOR THE VALUE THAT THEATRE BRINGS TO SOCIETY?

Think back ten years. 2006; still a while till financial meltdown. Arsenal move to the Emirates. England go out of the World Cup to Portugal, on penalties. The God Delusion is published. Alexander Litvinenko is poisoned by Polonium. Tony Blair is still, just, Prime Minister.

Ten years ago it would have been unthinkable that in a decade the arts sector would greet with delight a settlement that means a 5% real term cut for national funding of the arts. But in 2016 we're battered and pathetically grateful. The Arts Council has lost more than a third of its central government funding in that decade. At the same time Local Authorities cut arts funding disproportionately, increasing numbers of them abandon arts funding completely and some even sell off their collections. What has our reasonable and understanding approach to the cuts actually meant for future generations of audiences and artists?

Last year, in one of the most frankly terrifying evenings of my life (at least until it began, at which point I enjoyed every second), I was Tim Crouch's other actor in An Oak Tree. We made a story together, having only just met; I saw no script and there was no rehearsal. Dan Rebellato, in his beautiful introduction to the published play, puts his finger on why it works, and why all plays work:

"It allows us to glimpse that out mutual responsibilities, our overlapping imaginative landscapes, our care for one another are precious things that don't just happen... that our humanity only exists if we believe in it."

Our humanity only exists because we believe in it.

When campaigners, shouting loud to get arts into the EBacc, lose our voices and sometimes our hair, over the din we hear a new voice: "Art is not the business of the state". Sometimes, it concedes, "the

business of art is the business of the state". But then a bigger voice comes in louder still: "Almost nothing is the business of the state."

Behind the smoke-screen of austerity, our welfare state has been dismantled. In place of it, since 2008 we have been sold the idea that public spending is bad and that we should only pay for what we use. People ask me "Why should I support theatres if I never use them?". Well, that's how it works in a civilised country. Sometimes you have to pay for nice things you don't like. More often you have to pay for horrible things you don't like. I'd love to divert into something more constructive the proportion of my taxes that buys the missiles that bomb Syria, but that's not how it works. What next, withhold that bit of your council tax that pays for swings in the park because you don't have children?

Austerity, the nicking of stuff from the public purse, is, at heart, an ideological decision. Private/public, individual/communal, market/human – these are fundamental disagreements. There's no point in pretending otherwise. The Panama Papers reveal a ruling class which protects those who avoid tax while demonising those who need the support of our taxes. The limping idea of universality is being hunted down.

As James Meek points out, the great lie of the post-Thatcher era is that tax has fallen. In fact it's just been shifted from progressive taxation on income, to flat fees for private universal services like water, energy and transport, where the poorer pay more... The original principle of universal networks has been turned on its head.

That shift is bad news for theatre. Politics has moved so far to the right in the last 30 years that decent, sensible ideas like plentiful low-cost housing, free education, free use of the justice system and affordable access to art are derided as impossibly left-wing. WE PAY FOR THIS STUFF.

We constantly hear the mantra "The Government faces tough funding decisions", but the key word there is not "tough", it's "decisions". Measured by wealth, Britain is the fifth richest country in the world. Sweden just squeezes into the top twenty. Sweden has increased its arts funding in seven out of the last eight years. Decisions.

For me, as a Trade Unionist, universality, won through centuries of strikes and demonstrations, is a matter of social justice. As Meek says, for enlightened Conservatives or old-style Liberals, it's a matter of efficiency and productivity – healthier workers that can read and have electric light to read by make for better business. It doesn't matter which view of universality you subscribe to. It's still a great idea.

I, unsurprisingly, would like to include access to art in that universality. I don't need to convince anyone here that the arts spread joy, empathy, mental and physical health, that they reduce loneliness and alienation, and battle extremism. Our increasingly nasty identity-based politics have a common

thread: monstering of the "other". Some of these otherings break the known laws of physics. People like Schrodinger's Immigrant, who lazes around on benefits while simultaneously stealing your job. Art is the natural enemy of othering. If it tells us anything, it's that there's no us and them. It's us and us. It's all us. Every play that has me in the audience makes me feel that everyone else out there is a "me" as well.

But I would say that, wouldn't I? I'm white, middle class, public school and Oxbridge educated. I'm also the fourth generation of actors in my family. I get it; I was born into it. However…

I was also born in 1966, at the beginning of the most sustained support of the arts this country has ever seen. Throughout my young life, artists who didn't have any of my advantages of birth managed to go to art school, to train as actors, to study at university without taking out loans, to try and fail and learn and become great creators, and incidentally huge money-makers for UK plc. This year we've lost too many of them; Alan Rickman, David Bowie, Tony Warren, Victoria Wood. A working-class hero is something to be. Instead of "spongers off the state", we remember them as people who thanks to available benefits were able to move to the city, attend higher education and graduate from university. For the good of all of us, they were able to become themselves.

(Also in 1966, CEOs of America's largest corporations were paid on average twenty times as much as average workers. Among FTSE 100 chief executives it's now 183 times as much. These are stratospheric levels of pay.)

Rebecca Atkinson-Lord says "When we try to make the case for continued state funding of the arts, we parrot back the values of the political classes – tangible, rational, moderate and easily quantifiable benefits to society." We measure, we mark, we reduce things to a single number. We talk about skill transfer, about social mobility, about urban regeneration. These are all really important. But they're icing, they're not cake. The cake is art; what Brian Eno calls "all the things you don't have to do". The cake is the stuff we do to deal with the tricky condition called human. If we only talk in terms of the effects, our opponents will start to think "well, those effects could be got some other way" – and try to find one that is smaller, less effective, less fun.

Art isn't "nice"; it isn't "good if you can afford it"; it's fundamental to democracy. Thinking about ideas, growing imagination, are essential to self-expression; the more self-expression, the more democracy. As David Lan points out, dissent is necessary to democracy, and democratic governments should have an interest in preserving sites in which that dissent can be expressed (they don't, of course).

Growing up and watching my father work with Prospect Theatre Company, taking classic plays all over the world in an impressive display of what

is now called “soft power” and was then called “touring”, it was possible for me to believe, by looking around at actors of colour like Gyearbuor Asante, actors from working class backgrounds like Derek Jacobi, whose mum was a secretary and whose dad ran a sweet shop, that the immersion in art I had as an accident of birth was truly available to everyone if they wanted to look.

When this country set up the Arts Council in 1946, our post-war nation was broke. But the money was found. Early on, the Arts Council suggested subsidising travel to theatres and exhibitions, to make it easier for people who wouldn’t otherwise go to them. Nowadays that seems impossibly utopian. I’d like to put on record that I think it’s an excellent idea.

How much of this post-war consensus is still in place? We’re told now we can’t afford it; there’s no money left. Will the idea of subsidized art be relegated to two naive post-war generations, when the horror of what we could do to each other as atomized individuals made us pull together and devote ourselves to the mutual, building affordable homes, the NHS, the Arts Council, a united Europe…?

Well, we are losing future generations. We’ve seen a drastic fall in arts GCSEs since Michael Gove downgraded them. A 50% drop in design and technology, 25% fewer taking craft subjects, drama down 23%. Only 8% of students combine arts and science at AS level, as I did. We are cementing the “two cultures” divide. If you prefer the life scientific,

don't think art is not for you: Nobel Laureates are 25 times more likely to sing, dance, act and paint than other Royal Society members, and twelve times more likely to write poetry and novels.

The very essence of theatre, the live, is under threat. It is proposed that students of GSCE Drama should be able to pass the course without seeing a live performance. This is being sold to us as an opportunity "not to discriminate against" students who can't get to live performances for "financial, geographical or health reasons". What better example do we need that education is now the responsibility of the individual, not the state? I would have thought that pupils not being able to attend live performances for "financial, geographical or health reasons" was the state's problem, not the pupil's, but still... These live events can be life-changing. How do you measure the value of a changed life?

So. In the absence of universality, in the midst of threats to mutual organisations like the NHS and the BBC, should we be surprised that Government and local authorities are abandoning responsibility for the arts? We like to think of our cultural provision as universal, but every survey tells us that it mostly plays to the same third of the population. If the Government say "It's not our job to maintain the state broadcaster" why should we be surprised when the cash-strapped council say it's not theirs to support the theatre?

Well, the Ticketmaster's State of Play survey found that nearly two thirds of the population had been to the theatre in the past year. One third of them came from households earning between £20 000 and £39 000. To stand the Warwick Commission on its head, 72% of theatre attendance came from outside that top 8%. Theatre may still come to be seen as just shouting in the evenings for posh people. I recently read this about European funding:

While the capital remains a global magnet of culture, it increasingly risks becoming a playground for the world's elite, detached from its midsize cities, villages and countryside, where rising hardships stoke resentments and widen the opening for far-right parties.

That was written about Paris. It could be about London.

What of the next ten years? Tech will become more mainstream. We'll use more devices, more processes that bring the creativity of a wider range of people into the making of art and allow artists to move into spaces they might not have explored before: 3D printing; digital music production; films like Tangerine, which got nineteen awards and a cinema release, and was shot on three iPhone 5s. Might this leave theatre, actual live theatre in playhouses, bless its analogue socks, looking a bit old-fashioned?

Of course not. Theatre can contain all other art-forms – the work of the filmmaker, the digital composer, the 3D printed set designer is welcome there, and lots more besides. At some point, however much we stream it, live theatre has to take

place at a particular time and in a particular place. We will always need playhouses, to tell beautiful, narrative-rich stories.

There have been huge, necessary explosions in the idea of what theatre is in the last twenty years. Immersive, site-specific work in venues out of the ordinary has blown our tiny minds. Most theatre companies now have outreach programs designed to involve young people both as participants and audience members. That's good news; most social benefit is felt not by people watching plays and concerts but by those who participate in them.

We must be careful not to let the experimental tail wag the entertaining dog. As theatre becomes more expensive, it also becomes more insular, more focussed on formal experiment. As only an occasional director I don't very often find myself at the cutting edge, but I can see it from here. It's very sharp; it's properly dangerous, and that's good. Nevertheless, in the current climate I don't envy young, full-time directors. They must be their own producers; their every new production must be noticed. Less work in the regions and the growth of co-production mean the opportunities are fewer and further between; the pressure to make a splash is greater. And that doesn't always make for good art, and it certainly doesn't make for accessible art. It can be quite a way from my favourite evening at the theatre: in John McGrath's famous phrase, "a good night out" Let's not forget that that's what most people are looking for. As David Eldridge said recently, "post-dramatic" theatre, auteur theatre, isn't going to attract the 91%. We are, first and foremost, entertainers.

Last week I made my Wolverhampton debut in the 1000-year-old Collegiate Church of St Peter. But my dressing room was across the road, in the excellent Arena Theatre, owned and run by Wolverhampton University; 200 public performances a year and a growing reputation as a leading venue for the support of Deaf and disabled artists.

Peter Bazalgette and Darren Henley have been speaking a lot recently about Universities as one of the four legs of the support table (the others are ACE, Local Authorities and the arts organisations themselves; more about how wobbly one of those legs is looking in a moment). As university vice-chancellors define their roles, in that vile phrase, as place-makers, their support of theatres in their campuses can be seen as not just scholastic but social and artistic. That is very welcome.

Because Local Authority support is down nearly a fifth since 2010. £56 million of arts funding has been cut by local councils in England since then. Fourteen Local Authorities have now cut their arts funding to zero. The latest figures are catastrophic. Some Councils (yay Bournemouth!) are really investing. They get it. Others see the arts as an easy target, and even if they don't cut funding completely, cut it disproportionately. I understand that they are in a very difficult position; some are making extraordinary efforts. But we must remind ourselves that Local Authority funding

for the arts is less than 0.5% of their total spend. Less than 1/2p in every pound. There isn't a coin small enough for the graphic. Given the will, given the quality of leadership, we can afford this. If we don't, cutting LA funding completely puts the Arts Council in a very difficult position. They can't be the last funder in town. Investing in an organisation all of whose other sources of funding have been cut is not always wise. In a speech to Local Authorities, Bazalgette said "If you are in, we are in", an admirably simple message of support. Seven monosyllables; Shakespeare would be proud.

Who should pay for all this? We should, through our taxes. No other model works as well. The heart of our social contract is tax revenue. If tax continues to be seen as theft, then theatre is only one of hundreds of things that will collapse. Society itself will collapse, and soon.

While we're waiting for a properly-taxed social democracy with funding on Swedish or German levels (a man can dream), what do we do? Because I'm writing some of this this morning, I can react to what happened here yesterday. I thought Sheena Wrigley's suggestion that we should dismantle regional theatres and put them back together to increase diversity was very interesting.

If you're lucky enough to work on a film for six weeks and you eat on set every day, something odd happens. However good the catering, your palette eventually gets a bit jaded. It's inevitable, because your meals are being chosen for you by one person, every day for six weeks. It can be like that running a theatre. However collaborative and wide-ranging your tastes are, eventually the audience will tire of the same artistic food. They'll tire of your taste. At this point, usually you leave. Wouldn't it be wonderful instead to bring in guest chefs who can shake the menu up a little?

Think back to the film Alien, and how deeply shocking it is when the crew arrive on the alien world from the spaceship Nostromo. That's because Ron Cobb and Chris Foss designed the Nostromo and the Swiss surrealist H R Giger designed the alien and its surroundings. When we land on the planet, we enter another imagination. Not just the menu changes – the restaurant is completely reinvented.

There's no reason why a limited version of this couldn't kick some theatres up the arse in a really useful way. I don't think full dismantling and putting back together would always be practical (indeed it would mostly be chaos), but more sharing is certainly welcome. A theatre is not its artistic leadership, or even its building. A theatre is its audience, and the bigger and more diverse the audience, the healthier the theatre.

Let everything be focussed on the work. Remember you administrate in order to put on shows, you don't put on shows in order to pay administrators.

Alan Lane, in a powerful blog for Slung Low, says that he hears a lot at events like this about skills

development, mixed income streams and a national spread of live entertainment, but "it's been a while since I heard anyone talk spiritedly about the changes in society that a relevant theatre can support… there is an opportunity to redefine what our theatres are for"

He wants "A theatre network that offers inspiring, provoking live entertainment to all members of society regardless of their financial situation… I want our theatres to offer small places of sanctuary to our communities that are being beaten back by the forces of both national austerity and global economics… I want our theatres to be seen as belonging to all the parts of society, passionately held as resources of the common weal."
Amen, brother.

The "rising norm" of ticket prices means that people who have already paid for the arts through their taxes and council tax are now sometimes unable to afford tickets in subsidised venues. How the hell are we meant to explain that to the people of a city? Can we be surprised that, as Alan puts it "our relationship with wider society is hardly ideal". I speak now to an audience, one thing, a collective noun; you're an audience, so you're listening. You're not customers. I'm not interested in how much you paid for your seat. A play addresses everyone equally, under the same roof or the same sky, regardless of how much their ticket cost. A theatre – sometimes – doesn't.

Alan Lane proposes that tickets "across the board for every show on every public stage, become Pay What You Decide". It's a bold call. It would transform the public's relationship with theatre. How many theatres will dare to try it? If you can't stretch to that, can you do public dress rehearsals? We had them at Sheffield; they cost a pound. Lots of people come who can't afford full prices. They queue round the block. It's joyous.

The trouble is that in older theatres the hierarchy of ticket prices is built into the design. Some in the West End, supposedly the pinnacle of our industry, make us go in a side entrance to get to the Balcony, like a poor door. How very different from the home life of our own dear Crucible, where around a thrust stage all tickets are the same price and you can't get a better seat if you earn more money. You can get a more central seat if you book early; it's a big difference. I'm also a fan of tickets earlier in a run being cheaper, so you're rewarded for taking a chance and supporting a new production. That feels democratic.

And please stop charging so much for drinks and programmes, so people feel ripped off as soon as they come in. Theatre is not Ryanair. Make the act of going to the theatre, having a drink and finding out who you're watching a bit more ordinary. It doesn't have to be someone's birthday to want to catch a show.

There's a twitter account that retweets stories about refugees replacing the word migrant with "human". It described Gulwali Passarlay, an Afghan I interviewed last month who came here when he was twelve, as "former child human". It's a really

effective trick. It changes the way you think. Try it in your theatres by replacing every use of the word "customer" with "human". Is your theatre as open and available to people who haven't necessarily given you money yet?

Stella Duffy tells the story of her nephew who was working as an electrician on a highly-respected theatre's rebuild. He showed her pictures of the gorgeous interior and took great pride in his work, but didn't know what that theatre had on now, or what they had coming; no one from the venue had told him, or any of his colleagues. Stella says "I find this deeply saddening, because someone working on the very fabric of an arts space has a real sense of ownership about the building itself... They could be an astonishing audience, an audience we makers could really benefit from working with and for." This insularity is our fault.

Never forget that we are lucky to make our living in a great collaborative industry. The message for survival is the same one I tell my two-year-old daughter: we have to learn to share. As theatres, our buildings must become arks, where under a big welcoming roof we can shelter from the storm. Beneath that roof we need to share ideas, share inspiration, share across disciplines and backgrounds.

And not just us. Outside theatres, the CEOs being paid 183 times their workers' average wage have to learn to share. The people with money in Panama have to learn to share. Only then, if we believe in it, can our humanity exist. Clap your hands if you believe in humanity. Thank you.

Samuel West
Chair, National Campaign for the Arts

VIKKI HEYWOOD

Opening Remarks to Conference Theatre 2016.

It's a dangerous thing to summon an event like this. There are several possible outcomes:

A group of highly talented, but ultimately self satisfied folks, talk about themselves and how marvellous they are, agree that all their problems are the fault of others and go home happy .

As some newspapers might put it "People who think the world owes them a living – think it still does."

Or, a group of highly talented folks, who are not doing that badly at all, talk themselves in to a sate of deep depression about how everything is their fault and go home depressed.

As some newspapers might put it "Tough times lie ahead for theatre in the UK."

I am beginning to miss the days – well over 30 years ago now – when I started coming to theatre

conferences, when Brian Rix was chairman of the Arts Council, yes, those were the days.

- Phillip Hedley would stand up and shout at us all for not fighting back about over control from the government masquerading as the Arts Council;
- Peter Cheeseman would shout at us because we were letting the government get away with cutting arts spending year on year;
- Jude Kelly would shout at us because those in control of theatres and funders were misogynistic;
- Then Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal would shout at us all because our doors and minds were closed to creative influences from around the world;
- Then Peter Gill would shout at us all and say we had to open our stages to much wider cultural and social influences, and much wider social and ethnic communities than just one.

Headaches and hangovers were obligatory.

But we were clear – what we needed was more money – we were being bled dry – with more money we could solve all these problems – the problem was the money.

We would demonstrate – to demonstrate our value.

And our dream came true – we got more money and we have spent it very well.

It's all a great deal quieter now..... and the money is draining away again. Don't get me wrong here. Real and significant government support has come in, some in cash, some in kind and we are all now talking as one about cultural value, cultural inclusion – it's hard won on both sides and it's fantastic.

We have also unlocked significant amounts of support, with mutually beneficial corporate partnerships and found exceptional individuals and trusts and foundations who love our work.

It's all far more than I, than we, could have hoped for in 1984.

But true to the rule of unintended consequences, the fifth richest country in the world, the country that leads the world in the arts, is now cheeseparing away our cultural assets.

The curve that shows the effect of this on new work, on prices, on access, is long, very, long. Long after the term of this government and the next government, will the full effects be seen.

Maybe we need to have a damn good shout at each other. I will leave that resolution for the conference to decide.

"Theatre conference ends in riot and a resolution to call a day of national demonstrations..."

But a march on what? And to where? Demonstrating about what? And to whom?

It's all got a great deal more complicated than in the days when it was all so clear.

As a sector, made up of talented and extraordinary artists and creatives, cultural leaders and boards, technicians and administrators, we have moved mountains and created an environment where our work is valued and its value demonstrable.

I have to say that I am extremely proud of the theatre industry that I joined 39 years ago. I think we have changed immeasurably.

- We have grasped modern technology – we have not feared to move our art form into a totally new world – live broadcast and streamed video;
- We have designed and built – or redesigned and re built – theatres up and down the country that are now incredible assets for their local communities – spaces for everyone to touch the theatre arts in its widest interpretation;
- We have reinterpreted what theatre is, what it means to see a play, how, where, when – in car parks, and tube stations, and sheds, and fields. Theatres and theatre performances are now everywhere and anywhere we want them to be;
- We are connected to the world through the breadth and extent of our theatrical art form, sustained across a country made up of regions and nations with wide cultural identities;
- We have reduced the age of our audiences, subsidised our ticket prices, widened participation and enjoyment of theatre in young people;
- We have demonstrated that subsidy not only supports R&D but also underpins the success of the commercial theatre – that it is a connected "ecosystem" – one fails, we all fail;

I am not saying we've done this alone, but right here, right now, we should recognise and reward ourselves for the crucial part theatre has played. Our voice enabled the case to be won – the case for supporting the arts.

When I look at the challenges we face now it is the word "together" that I would like us to celebrate and explore. Are there ways that together we could provide better support to schools and teachers across the UK? Are there ways that together we could raise more money to support our work and deliver national programmes? Are there ways that together we could broaden audiences, our workforce, our influences?

There is much good work being done here

What's Next;

- Culture at Kings;
- The Warwick Commission on Culture Creativity and Growth;

The White Paper;

- Supporting and advising the Creative Industries Federation and the Creative Industries Council (and if you don't yet know what I'm talking about here – find out);
- This conference has been put on by 13 industry bodies coming together because they understand the complex ecology of the sector and – they want to make a difference. (and thank you to Bon Culture – who has worked so hard to bring us together today)
- All of these initiatives are joined by a host of small and large alliances up and down the country.

But we need to do far more together if we are going to meet the challenges ahead.

We must live our lives as the ecosystem we have proved ourselves to be.

I have to admit to being frustrated at the lack of progress on a more joined up and systematic approach to our self identified top three challenges today.

- How to diversify our audiences and our workforce
- How to unlock new money to support our work
- How to ensure our continuing relevance in order to achieve continued National Government support

Here's my starter for 10.

- A national Apprenticeship programme to deliver wider access to theatre for individuals of talent;
- A co-ordinated approach to delivering theatre and related programmes in schools across the country;
- A national promotional campaign and training employment targets to deliver an appropriately diverse workforce by 2020;
- A large scale national investment scheme to maximise the return on our most successful work;

None of these things can happen without greater collective effort and greater collective generosity.

And it's hard. I have to "give up" my ownership and control of my programmes, my contacts, my relationships, and some of my identity in order to collectively "benefit" from yours.

Let's face it if theatre can't lead the way in working more effectively together who can? Who else makes it their business to gather people into rooms, both large and small, give up their free will, breathe the same air, and unlock their imaginations in a collective act of creativity?

I think it's worth a try.

SHEENA WRIGLEY IS IT TIME TO DISMANTLE THE REGIONAL PRODUCING HOUSE?

I'm going to speak about the regional producing house. As I looked at the breadth of the agenda over the next two days I was contemplating an apology for focusing on this narrow area of our industry. But having listened to this morning's presentation and seen some of the statistics that we shared this morning, I'm struck by the fact that I don't need to apologise at all because I genuinely believe that the health, the energy of our sector is linked to the health of our subsidised regional producing houses. They are a major part of the ecology Vikki referenced this morning and at their best can provide the gateways and the pathways for many of the artists, the managers, the producers and the technicians that may be tomorrow's talent. Kully talked about talent that was being squandered and wasted. I think it does make it particularly important that we look critically and with curiosity at what we are doing within the regional producing sector.

I love regional theatres. I love the buildings and the possibilities of theatres that draw from and are inspired by their communities. I love their potential as places of creative origination and I enjoy the opportunity to contribute to policies and initiatives that shape our cities and towns.

I've spent the last 25 years working in regional theatres, the last 16 years leading those buildings and trying to change them. I've also worked outside buildings – for a touring company, producing site specific projects and outdoor festivals and events. And now I work for an interesting hybrid – new animal HOME, Manchester – but more of that later.

So why, with all this love, am I going to argue that it might be time to dismantle our regional producing houses?

Dismantle comes from Latin via old French 'desmanteler' translated as 'to destroy the defensive capability of a fortification'

Seems to me that for the most part we are still fortifying, shoring up a model we can directly trace to the British regional rep of 30s, 40's and 50s.

Yes we have all evolved – education and community programmes, studio theatres for experimental work, more recently new writing programmes morphed into talent development programmes, we have resident companies, community companies, performances outside our walls, inside our walls but not on our stages, with community members, with stars names. Everybody

is touring now, co-producing, some of us are streaming and even if we aren't streaming, we are photographing, filming and blogging and vlogging about our work, engaging with our audiences.

It's rich and mixed and much of it is good. Some of it is fuelled by genuine desire to connect with more people or extend our artistic practise but much of it is fuelled by lack of investment, reduction in real resources. Also some of this activity is driven by the call to 'open up', to connect, engage with communities and nurture talent by our major public stakeholders – insinuated into funding agreements during a period of economic recession

If much of this is good, why are we still being attacked? There is a pervading air of dissatisfaction hanging round the regional producing houses. I'm thinking of a blog that Lyn Gardener did back in 2014 which talked about the sense that the producing offices were moribund and the really exciting work was happening elsewhere. The Arts Council, as many people know, are looking at a review of the entire theatre sector. At the heart of this sits the conundrum of the regional producing house, so why are the forces so reined against us? Why are we not champions? There is perceived to be a lot of money tied up in regional producing houses. Within the new economic realities, other parts of our sector, commercial companies and especially the smaller independent sector have had to make greater changes.

The regional houses have evolved but retain at the heart a simple principle – a single big artistic company runs the building and control the artistic output. This company delivers the programme, the education work, runs the building, talks to the audiences and until recently controlled all the data.

Outside of this fortification sit a whole tranche of other artists, who spend a lot of time trying to get in, to get access to the facilities and resources. There is also a tranche of unengaged audiences, diverse groups who don't find the offer from the regional producing houses make them the sort of 'must go' place that makes it worth skipping their box sets.

There is mounting and justifiable pressure from investors – not only public funders but trusts and foundations, even individual donors demanding a greater range and diversity of work is made, a broader range of people engaged with, social agendas genuinely contributed to, distinctive and differentiated theatre experiences are brought to market. Everyone wants to chart a course that delivers the audiences and creative talent of tomorrow not just today.

So how might we make theatres that can really do this in our towns and cities? What if …

We separated out the company who ran the building and provided the backup service and freed up the programme creators?

Let's take as a given there is a company providing the crack finance team, intelligent and creative marketing team, great IT infrastructure, professional

facilities management with motivated cleaners, maintenance team. That allows a renewed focus on how we make programmes, creative activities/ outputs more diverse and distinctive.

What if there were several companies living in the building responsible jointly for creating and delivering the creative programme?

If the building could be occupied by companies of distinctive, contrasting and complimentary focus. Perhaps the building is simultaneously the home for a national touring company, a collective who work primarily outside the walls with an appetite to produce disruptive challenging performance, a new writing company, a BAME-led company, a company led by participative artists. Imagine the variety and range of work.

The central vision is then provided by the drive to engage with audiences, in other words the different communities the building serves or engages with. It could allow us to be more locally distinctive, less carbon copies of each other. Here also are opportunities for a genuine community of artists who can collaborate on talent development, challenging their practice, programming to complement dialogue, and contrast with each other's work.

When I was at West Yorkshire Playhouse we used to say: If we were a company without a building, who would we be? It's a good provocation but one that is really hard to answer if you are committed to being all things, or even a little bit of everything, to everybody.

If you are all things to all people – you need to have all the specialisms in your company – what a massive ask – really.

And where are the best practitioners now? There are fine and talented practitioners making work for stages in regional houses (witness the welcome blurring of talent between commercial and subsided sectors) but where are the most exciting producers of new writing, or black-led work, or interactive interdisciplinary work? By and large they are not working for regional houses but clustered around the outer walls ..... waiting for a crumb .... a scratch night, a couple of studio dates and maybe some free rehearsal space. They are largely still outside the fort.

Don't we already have this model – we have resident companies and associate artists? In preparing for this session I spoke to the artistic directors of three prominent smaller companies who have all been long-term resident companies of major regional producing houses. Interestingly, all three of them are specialist companies – working in territory and reaching out to audiences who are distinctly not the core audience of their host venue. For all three resident companies it had been a less than satisfying experience.

What characterises these relationships?

They all started with great intentions, proposals for collaboration, artistically – in programming, in contributing to community, education programmes, to developing together a broader audience base, specifically a younger more diverse (social economic and cultural) audiences. Uniformly, these directors saw none of this happen.

The reality: their work is slotted into the main programme late, in inauspicious spaces or times in the season, there is little dialogue about shared vision for either the creative life of the venue or the audiences and artists to be jointly developed. In the worst cases no-one from the host company sees their work, they aren't communicated with about even basic practical issues.

So why are these experiences so often not fulfilling the promise of early conversations?

Constantly mentioned was the economic pressure the host company felt under – their need to keep their main spaces filled with work of 'broader appeal', their marketing team focused on filling those seats. But what also comes out is that our regional houses have quite an imperialist structure and culture. I asked this question to each artistic director. 'What would it take to create a really meaningful resident company model'.

Their answers:

'Buildings cannot do this. They are hierarchical'. 'It won't happen while the building is 'one artistic directors plaything'. 'The current model is about gatekeepers. At its worst it's box ticking'.

The word 'hierarchy' came up a lot. The truth is that to really collaborate you need to give something up. The route to the most dynamic, diverse, vibrant models means acceding power, upending the current hierarchies, giving away territory .... with generosity. That's a big ask.

The whole premise of this multiple occupancy model is that it is a coalition of equals and that immediately challenges our current leadership and funding models. The main company is the main company because its artistic director carries the single vision for the organisation. Sometimes this works spectacularly well and sometimes it doesn't. It works where the leadership operates with principles of 1) generosity and 2) real respect for the contribution of others, fed through the whole organisation from top to bottom.

So if we had multiple occupancy how does that work? There are some places we could look.

Festivals

Festivalisation – it's slightly derogatory term. I understand why – the intense experiential impact that can be achieved over a few days or weeks is different to the extended year round programme. But there are things we can learn.

Artistic curation – Most festivals curate the input of different and diverse artistic partners. There could be a thematic red thread, or coherence provided by location, genre or an artistic investigation. Festival producers are generally not the artistic creators, or where they are, they know the programme can

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only be realised through bringing a wide range of expertise and talent together.

Festivals do have ability to connect to audiences and often non-traditional audiences. They frame the artistic within a whole event experience, a sense of buying into something bigger than a show. There is something for us to take from this. Their audiences buy into trying different stuff because it's curated as part of an experience which is all about adventure and discovery. The currency of a festival is less about whether you like the show than the experience of being part of the whole – it seems to give audiences and artists permission to be braver.

Arriving back in a theatre building from a period of producing festivals, I was intensely interested in how the festival approach and experience can influence our approach to creating programming and engaging with audiences. Simple things like: viewing the whole building as a creative canvas, legitimising work outside the walls, in non-public spaces and in formats that don't conform to the 7.30 curtain up, 15-minute interval. And the importance within this of working with different others in different ways.

It was moving to HOME a year ago that started to unlock this in a practical sense though. I called HOME an 'entity' earlier. It is that to avoid calling it anything. Mostly though we are referred to as an arts centre because we have multiple art forms living in one building. If I explain the structure and the way it works, I think there are some interesting ideas we could take from this.

HOME is a cross art form venue built on the foundations of three 'pillar' art forms – theatre,

visual art, film. Each art form is led by an artistic director. The artistic directors both curate programmes and, in all art forms, we commission and produce original works. All art forms are equal – this is unique. All the service, supporting business teams work across all artistic programmes. We don't have separate marketing, finance, engagement, technical or operations customer facing teams.

The artistic teams report to the artistic director (a sort of uber artistic director) and the other teams report to me. We work as a double headed leadership team – so that is quite traditional. Except it isn't.

HOME is an experiment. Programming meetings are in turn exhausting and messy and exhilarating. So many ideas. Competing demands for space, resources, prioritisation from marketing, fundraising and technical teams. It's far from perfect but it is dynamic.

The real excitement comes from the necessity of collaboration and the belief that the sum of our programme is bigger then its individual parts. The added value, biggest impacts come from the crossing over, the ability of the organisation to embrace with ease artists who don't fit a category, the cross pollination of an idea or instigated by the film team, responded to by visual artists or theatre makers.

As a building, it buzzes. The artistic events happen every day and at different times of the day. We are gifted with great public areas and a fantastic partnership with our catering company, but people come because it has a vibe, an experience above and beyond the single event they came for.

And no one expects our uber artistic director, Dave Moutrey, to have all the answers or all the contacts with artists. Now imagine if the three art forms at HOME were replaced by three individual and distinctive theatre companies – a different kind of regional theatre. The circle of artistic influences and the range of artists and audiences we can connect with through three companies is richer.

The critical thing here is that all art forms (or all companies) are born equal at HOME and the most senior artistic leadership is a curatorial one.

The audiences are doing something interesting too, a lot of them are new, we are really in the early at this timely of analysing this, as we've only been open for 12 months and we are seeing considerable crossover between the different art forms or people who don't care what the art form defines itself as, but are interested in the event. It's embryonic but I remain convinced there is something in this 'collaborations of equals' that could move us towards revitalising of regional theatres.

It is time to dismantle these theatres precisely because producing theatre in the regions is critical to the theatre ecology. Only by dismantling do we create the opportunity to rebuild. We can reassemble in a more collaborative, more diverse, less hierarchical model. We shouldn't be talking

about 'letting other people in'. We need to accede power. We need to give ground we've been protecting .... with generosity. Put simply .... We need to be braver and we need to act with a bigger heart.

STEVEN HADLEY WHY SHOULD THE ARTS COUNCIL FUND BALLET AND NOT HIP HOP?

Why do we want more people to go the theatre? Why is audience development so important for arts and cultural organisations?

There are two broad answers – neither of which is mutually exclusive. We want more people to go to the theatre because it benefits either the arts organisation or the individual.

Organisations

One of the more obvious effects of developing a geographically diverse model for arts development and delivery, as happened in England after the Second World War, is that over time this physical framework and its attendant bureaucratic infrastructure become resource intensive.
Put simply, we've now got a lot of buildings and admin staff all over the place and they cost a lot of money. This results in two things: the organisations develop a desire for self-preservation, and the funder wants to protect its investment. Left unchecked, this can lead, at best, to stasis and, at worst, to ossification.

Individuals

I think most arts organisations would agree that the purpose of their existence is to extend and deepen the experience of the arts for individuals. That experience is about enabling individual expression, enrichment and, ultimately, social justice.

In the period since the Second World War, the English model of public arts subsidy has shown a desire to make available to all a culture that had previously been the preserve of an elite. Cultural policy academics refer to this as 'the democratisation of culture'.

State subsidy for art must be democratic in a democratic society. We want more people to go the theatre because it is part of the democratisation of a culture that doesn't necessarily achieve its own capacity, generate profit or attract a suitably diverse and representative audience.

But it is now 70 years since the formation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and the subsidised arts largely remain the preserve of the well-off and the well educated.

So, let's consider this from a different perspective: "The basic premise of audience development, or access, or community outreach, or whatever we want to call it, is patronising and corrupt. It is predicated on the assumption that the public has got it wrong; that if only we could throw enough Lottery money at enough orchestras to put enough players into enough inner-city primary schools

to play to enough black kids or, even worse, get enough black kids to copy classical composers and call it creativity – if only we could overcome the young people's stubborn refusal to go to concert halls – then we would save them from a life of cultural poverty and justify our salaries.

"Surely we must get more sophisticated in our thinking. Surely we have to realise that we, the white, university-educated, salaried autocrats, the cultural power brokers, the decision-makers, are the ones who need to change. We need to develop some respect for what young people want, some respect for their music. Then, if we are lucky, they will reach out to us, and do us the honour of enriching our lives and involving us in all that power and fun, and perhaps we would see the wonderful sight of teams of working-class youths being funded by the Lottery to run outreach programmes for middle-aged arts managers to encourage them to lighten up a bit and join the party."

This is taken from a speech by Dave O'Donnell, from Community Music, at the Reaching the Audience of the Future conference, organised by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in June 1999. I'm grateful to arts consultant Tim Baker for the quote, which appears in his work on developing audiences for classical music, Stop Re-Inventing the Wheel (2000).

I've no idea whether O'Donnell was being deliberately provocative or wearing his heart on his sleeve. I don't know him and so I've never had the opportunity to ask. Baker says that though "it is unlikely that many people reading this book will agree with him, the essence of what O'Donnell was saying is inescapable for anyone who is serious about developing more, new and different audiences... If we are to make music accessible and inviting to more people, we must start to think about the world from their perspective".

I don't disagree with that comment, but I'm not sure it goes far enough.

I wonder whether, 17 years on, we might consider the issue to be less about seeing "our culture" from "their perspective", but rather about what we mean by "our culture". Because "our culture", the culture that needs to be democratised, is not a common, shared or popular culture but the culture of an elite: a culture that needs to be democratised in order to justify the subsidy that has led to its creation.

In fact, if we consider the purpose of publicly subsidising culture to be to extend and deepen the experience of the arts for individuals (and more widely as a matter of social justice), then we may need to reconsider the very culture being subsidised.

The following is from the transcript of a recent research interview with a consultant working in the arts sector, and gives an interesting take on this position in a conversation around engaging young people:

"What sort of outcome do we want at the end? The outcome we want is that it enriches their

lives, or gives them a new perspective, gives them opportunities, gives them an outlet to express themselves, have their say.

Q: But by that definition do we need more Kendrick Lamar and less ballet?
A: Ballet would have to prove it can do it.

Q: But it hasn't, has it?
A: Fuck it then.

Q: Yes?
A: I'd be ruthless. Half the arts organisations that exist are not worth a penny to me. They're entirely pointless. They either exist to exist, or they exist to do something esoteric with no interest in engagement."

In asking why, and how, publicly subsidised arts and culture must be both democratic and democratised we must ask what the ultimate purpose is. After all, "the task of an official body is not to teach or to censor, but to give courage, confidence and opportunity" (Keynes, 1945 from The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes).

If we want to give people new perspectives and a culture which gives them "opportunities... an outlet to express themselves, have their say", then we might think that rap artist Kendrick Lamar, an artist of considerable social conscience, empathy and who is highly politically articulate, delivers this better than ballet and with a considerably greater scope.

On its first day of release, Lamar's third album, To Pimp a Butterfly, was streamed 9.6 million times on Spotify, setting the service's global first-day streaming record.

I'm not arguing for the market in favour of public subsidy, nor for 'popular culture' against 'high art'. I am simply raising the question of how a democratic culture based on social justice can best achieve its aims. In turn, this raises the question of the extent to which the current model of cultural democratisation can retain legitimacy in the face of artistically excellent, socially engaged and politically aware artists operating in the capitalist market.

If the purpose of cultural subsidy is personal transformation, do we need more Kendrick Lamar and, well, less ballet or theatre?

LONDON'S DOMINANCE OF UK THEATRE IS GROWING, SAYS REPORT

London is becoming an even more dominant force in the UK's theatre sector, according to a new report.

The research, which looked at productions staged in theatres across the UK in 2014, also revealed the average price of tickets has increased by 6% since 2013 – markedly above the rate of inflation.

First published in 2013, the second edition of the British Theatre Repertoire report found that London staged an even greater proportion of theatre shows in 2014 – 22% of all productions in England, up from 19% in 2013.

It also hosted a greater proportion of the total number of performances (up to 54% from 50%), attracted a greater proportion of the total theatre audience (up to 62% from 59% in 2013) and brought in a greater proportion of total box office than ever before (up to 73% from 70% in 2013).

The findings follow pledges by Arts Council England to address the funding imbalance between the capital and the regions, with Darren Henley promising funding of the regions would increase from 70% to 75% of its lottery funding by 2018.

According to the report's authors, the findings show "an increasingly startling concentration of activity in London".

"Anyone with a commitment to the continuing vitality of all England's regions should await next year's figures with concern," they added.

In total, theatres in the UK staged nearly 60,000 performances of more than 5,000 separate shows, which brought in more than 33 million theatre visits and £1.03 billion at the the box office. Attendances were up 1%, and box office was up 7%.

The average price paid for a ticket increased by 5.7% to £33.52, with people paying significantly more for musical tickets (£40.39) than for straight theatre (£25.99).

Opera was the most expensive ticket on average, with an average price paid of £56.61 (an increase of 9.1% on 2013).

The increase in both box office and ticket prices were both significantly above inflation, which averaged 2% over 2013 and 2014.

The report also claimed that government cuts to theatre funding have so far failed to dent the amount of new work being staged in the UK.

Between 2010 and 2015, the government has reduced its grant in aid funding of Arts Council from £438 million to £310 million – while funding of theatres by local governments has been cut by £31 million.

When it was first published last year, the British Theatre Repertoire report found new work had

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overtaken revivals in the theatre canon for the first time in 2013.

This year's report found the make-up of the UK repertoire remained broadly unchanged in 2014, but with a few exceptions, including a slight shift from text-based to devised productions.

It also found that new work (classed as original plays, adaptations, translations, and devised shows) made up 62% of all theatre productions, an increase from the 59% in 2013.

This was driven by a notable increase in the number of devised pieces staged. Conversely, new writing suffered a small slump. It reaped less of its potential box office income than it did in 2013 (down from 63% to 49%) and sold a lower percentage of seats (down from 59% to 55%).

The report is based on work programmed by the 274 member theatres of the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre during 2014.

Other key findings in the report included:

Seven out of 10 productions staged in 2014 were straight theatre, whereas musical theatre made up just 14%. Of straight theatre productions, 51% were new plays, 33% were revivals and 16% were devised shows.

The percentage of new plays written by women has remained static at 31%, but female-authored plays are playing in smaller theatres than those by male playwrights, in a "bleaker" picture for female playwrights than in 2013. On average, female-authored plays appeared in spaces 39% smaller than men (24% in 2013), while the average ticket price for a man's play was £8.80 more expensive than a woman's play (£27.59 compared to £18.79).

However, women wrote 57% of the new plays staged by both the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company – though only 33% of the Royal Court's new writing.

Musicals brought in a markedly higher share of the total UK theatre box office than straight plays – taking 61% compared to 27% – and 51% of the total theatregoing audience compared to straight theatre, at 35%.

While there were only 36 'long-running shows' (200 performances or more a year) in 2014, making up 2% of all productions, they brought in 56% of all box office income at UK theatres.

Wales is experiencing "a golden age of theatregoing". The region recorded the greatest box office income to potential income ratio at 73% – 4% above the national average.

DAVID BROWNLEE WHAT ARE THEATRE'S HOPES AND FEARS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

How are we feeling as a sector? Optimistic about the opportunities ahead for theatre? Worried about current pressures and long-term trends? Do the prospects for the future look similar if you are a theatre professional in London or Scotland? If you're starting a career or well-established? If you are a theatre manager or a performer?

The 13 partner organisations working together on the Theatre 2016 conference along with The Stage set out to take a snapshot of the hopes and fears of the industry in 2016. Almost 700 people took part in an online survey in March this year. They answered questions in three areas: how they would categorise the state of the UK theatre industry in 2016, how optimistic they felt about the potential for the next 10 years in 20 different areas and what they considered to be the biggest issues in future.

The survey was designed to provide a baseline. By repeating it in the future, we will be able to monitor how the optimism of the sector is shifting and highlight the issues of growing importance. All respondents were anonymous but we asked lots of questions around demography, geography, occupation and length of service to allow us to cut the data in myriad ways.

This was an online survey with a self-selecting sample, albeit quite a big one. The results should therefore be viewed as an interesting snapshot rather than a gold standard piece of research with a carefully selected representative sample. When you start to dice and slice the data, the sample size can start to get very small.

For example, just four respondents said they were 'funders'. This quartet is not necessarily representative of arts funders as a whole, and we should not expect its views to reflect, say, the director of theatre at Arts Council England or the chief executive of Creative Scotland. This is good news, as our four funder respondents were particularly gloomy about everything from disability arts and regional producing theatre to the future of the industry as a whole. They were also among the most optimistic about digital distribution,

international touring, immersive theatre and non-venue based work.

The full results of the survey will be shared at the opening session of Theatre 2016 on Thursday, May 12. For this special preview, I'm focusing just on the 20 questions about how optimistic respondents were about the next 10 years. For each one they were asked to score between 1 ('deeply pessimistic') and 6 ('extremely optimistic'), so midway between would be an average of 3.5. For 10 questions, the overall average response was more than 3.5 and the other 10 were below 3.5:

For the rest of this article I'll focus on the top five highs and the bottom five lows in more depth. Remember that the greater the average score is above 3.5, the more optimistic the sector is; the more it falls below 3.5, the more pessimism increases.

HOPES

1 The West End

Most (79%) respondents were more positive than negative about the prospects for the West End for the next 10 years; the average optimism/pessimism score was 4.41. The most optimistic respondents were based in Northern Ireland (4.89) and the West Midlands (4.86) with the least living in the North West (4.14) and overseas (4.00). London-based respondents were less optimistic than the average (4.26), as were Society of London Theatre members (4.33). Respondents from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (3.59) and the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (3.5) and Black and Black British respondents (3.5) didn't share the general optimism of the sector in the prospects for the West End.

2 Digital distribution of theatre

Three-quarters of respondents were more positive than negative about the prospects for the digital distribution of theatre over the next 10 years, and the average optimism/pessimism score was 4.22. Respondents based outside the UK were most optimistic (4.63) and those in Yorkshire (4.0) and the North East (3.73) least. This was one of the areas where there was a notable gender divide, with women (4.26) more optimistic than men (4.17). There was a big divide in our (very small) samples of black (5.67) and Asian (3.50) respondents. Performers (3.93) and stage managers (3.78) were the least optimistic professions. Retired respondents (3.75) were far less excited about digital distribution than those who were still studying (4.47).

3 London's funded theatres

Respondents were more positive (72%) than negative about the prospects for London's funded theatres over the next 10 years, and the average optimism/pessimism score was 4.08. The most optimistic regions were North East England (4.44) and Yorkshire (4.63), with those based in the East (3.75) and outside the UK (3.63) the least. SOLT members were more optimistic than average

(4.21), but Creu Cymru (4.48) and TheatreNI (4.50) members were even more so. This level of optimism was not shared by our small number of black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents: Asian or Asian British scored 3.67 and Black or Black British 2.0. Students (4.77) and suppliers/service organisations (4.43) see a far brighter future for London's funded theatres than performers (3.72) and other creatives (3.94).

4 Large-scale touring and venues

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents were more positive than negative about the prospects for large-scale touring and venues over the next 10 years. The average optimism/pessimism score was 3.95. Those working predominantly on the large scale concurred with the sample as a whole on their level of optimism (3.97). The most optimistic regions were the East Midlands (4.20) and the South East (4.33), with those based in Scotland (3.53) and outside the UK (3.56) the least. UK Theatre members were more optimistic than average (4.11), but Theatres Trust (4.18) and TheatreNI (4.75) members were even more so. Respondents who worked for a local authority (4.18) were substantially more optimistic than retired respondents, who on average veered towards a pessimistic opinion (3.25).

5 The future of UK theatre industry as a whole

More than half (57%) of respondents were more positive than negative about the prospects for the sector as a whole over the next 10 years. The average optimism/pessimism score was 3.68. Five percent of the sample stated they were 'extremely optimistic', while 4% were 'deeply pessimistic'. Male respondents (3.74) were on average more optimistic than female (3.63). Respondents based outside the UK (4.25) were the most optimistic for the UK industry as a whole, followed by Wales (4.02).

Respondents from five nations and regions were on average more pessimistic than optimistic: East Midlands (3.47), Northern Ireland (3.44), Yorkshire (3.38), North West (3.25) and, most pessimistic, Scotland (3.10). Members of the Federation of Scottish Theatre (3.24) were joined by members of Stage Directors UK (3.21) as the most pessimistic of all the membership bodies, while members of the Association of British Theatre Technicians (4.02) and SOLT (4.05) were the most optimistic.

Respondents who described themselves as of 'mixed' ethnic origin were the most optimistic (4.33), while 'Asian or Asian British' (3.25) were the most pessimistic. White respondents (93% of the sample) recorded an average optimism/pessimism score of 3.64.

Performers (3.31) and academics (3.33) veered on average towards the pessimistic, while students (4.54) and suppliers/service organisations (4.13) were the most optimistic occupations. Those working in the industry for between 26 and 35 years (3.39) were the most pessimistic.

Respondents working in commercial organisations (3.9) and on the large scale (3.95) were on average more optimistic than those working on the small scale (3.56).

FEARS

1 Disability arts

Two-thirds (67%) of respondents were more negative than positive about the prospects for disability arts over the next 10 years, and the average optimism/pessimism score was 2.96. Respondents who considered themselves to be disabled were on average slightly less pessimistic (3.03). There was particularly deep concern about the future of disability arts in the North West (2.59) and Yorkshire (2.41). Male respondents (2.88) were on average more pessimistic than female (3.02). The retired (2.38) and academics (also 2.38) were particularly pessimistic, and in fact disability arts scored on average lowest out of all 20 questions for academics.

2 Diversity in theatre audiences

Seventy percent of respondents were more negative than positive about the prospects for diversity in theatre audiences over the next 10 years and the average optimism/pessimism score was 2.85. Respondents who stated they were disabled (3.10) and those that described themselves as 'Mixed' (3.47) were less pessimistic, while Asian or Asian British (2.75) and Black or Black British (1.75) respondents were more pessimistic. Operations/building management (3.25) and technicians (3.24) were less pessimistic than performers (2.71) and other creatives (2.59). Retired respondents (2.0) were more pessimistic about this question than any other.

3 Development of new creative talent

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents were more negative than positive about the prospects for the development of new creative talent over the next 10 years, and the average optimism/pessimism score was 2.79. There was much deeper pessimism in the North West (2.38) and Northern Ireland (2.00) than in Wales (3.32) and outside the UK (3.44).

Female respondents (2.75) were on average more concerned than male respondents (2.84). Members of Stage Directors UK (2.29) and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (2.05) were more pessimistic than members of Creu Cymru (3.28) and the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (3.50). Asian or Asian British (2.00) and Black or Black British (2.25) respondents were more pessimistic than average.

Students (3.23) and management or administration professionals (3.00) were less pessimistic than performers (2.42) and other creatives (2.46). Those working in the profession for less than five years (2.67) were the most pessimistic, while retired respondents were the least (3.38).

4 Small-scale touring and venues

Three-quarters of respondents were more negative than positive about the prospects for small-scale touring and venues over the next 10 years. The average optimism/pessimism score was 2.7, and 15% of respondents said they were deeply pessimistic. Those working predominantly on the small scale (2.68) concurred with the level of pessimism expressed by the sample as a whole. Those who had worked in the sector for between 26 to 35 years (2.39) were most concerned about the future of small-scale touring and venues. Although less pessimistic than the average for the UK, respondents in Wales (2.88) were more concerned about the future of small-scale touring and venues than any other area.

5 Arts opportunities in schools

Most respondents (84%) were more negative than positive about the prospects for arts opportunities in schools over the next 10 years, and the average optimism/pessimism score was 2.24. A third of respondents said they were 'deeply pessimistic'. There was much deeper pessimism in Yorkshire (1.95) and Northern Ireland (1.67) than in Wales (2.95) and outside the UK (2.89).

Members of the Independent Theatre Council (2.0) and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (1.85) were the most pessimistic, with Creu Cymru (2.93) and the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (2.75) the least. Asian or Asian British

Top Brands	Fashion	Retail	Restaurants	Automotive
1	@libertylondon	@etsy	@menchocfactory	@astonmartin
2	@harveynichols	@foyles	@pret	@rollsroycecars
3	@followwestwood	@ohh_deer	@meatliquor	@teslamotors
4	@worldmcqueen	@netaporter	@tasteoflondon	@bentleymotors
5	@burberry	@harrods	@hawksmoorlondon	@jaguar
6	@ysl	@selfridges	@leafteashop	@maserati_hq
7	@mulberry_editor	@waterstones	@thebookclubec2	@jaguaruk
8	@paulsmithdesign	@johnlewisretail	@sjrestaurant	@porsche
9	@chanel	@burberry	@boldstcoffee	@ukvolkswagen
10	@dior	@marksandspencer	@thequarterlivpl	@mercedesbenzuk
11	@tattydevine	@waitrose	@60hopest	@mercedesbenz
12	@acnestudios	@mrporterlive	@opentableuk	@audi
13	@marcjacobs	@anthropologie	@bobbobricard	@lexus
14	@matchesfashion	@notonthehighst	@carluccios	@bmwgroup
15	@marykatrantzou	@theoutnet	@starbucks	@jeep

(2.00) and Black or Black British (2.00) respondents were more pessimistic than average.

CLIVE HUMBY WHAT DOES SOCIAL MEDIA TELL US ABOUT THEATRE AUDIENCES?

The theatre industry has always known that its audience is passionate about the arts and is made up of keen supporters of live entertainment. A recent study by Purple Seven has shown that this audience may have the potential to deliver new income streams to the sector and engage with it in entirely new ways.

While many in theatre have long suspected that audiences are affluent, few have been able to convert this into income for venues – either through sponsorship or individual giving. Our latest research has demonstrated that there is indeed a very high crossover between the wealthiest members of society and those who attend theatre up and down the UK.

We discovered that Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce and Bentley are the car brands that UK theatregoers engage with the most, and the likes of Liberty, Harvey Nichols and Vivienne Westwood the most popular fashion brands. It is our belief that by creating new partnerships between these

Table showing UK theatregoers' social media engagement

Beauty	Consumer brands	Travel	Other
@jomalonelondon	@innocent	@thesavoylondon	@tedtalks
@lushltd	@hummingbbakery	@claridgeshotel	@equityuk
@thebodyshopuk	@yorkshiretea	@airbnb	@sohohouse
@sephora	@cadburyuk	@skyscanner	@christiesinc
@benefituk	@greenandblacks	@smithhotels	@aotulondon
@nyr_official	@daylesfordfarm	@thedorchester	@rambertdance
@space_nk	@vitacocouk	@theritzlondon	@warpfilms
@ctilburymakeup	@twiningsteauk	@londonmidland	@pantone
@bobbibrown	@alpro_uk	@statravel_uk	@focusfeatures
@lizearle	@marmite	@theconnaught	@farrowandball
@benefitbeauty	@divinechocolate	@secret_escapes	@moo
@maccosmetics	@holycowsauces	@theberkeley	@hermanmiller
@rimmellondonuk	@lolascupcakes	@airfarewatchdog	@ogilvyww
@kiehls	@benandjerrysuk	@langham_london	@wstonesoxfordst
@illamasqua	@yeovalley	@mo_london	@oxfordwords

major brands and regional theatre venues, we can breathe new life into independent theatre. By understanding the national brands that our local audiences are already engaging with, we can better create a case for sponsorship and drive new money into the arts.

Social media represents an untapped resource for the arts community. It has the potential to ensure audiences and visitors remain engaged, drive ticket sales and membership as well as act as a valuable real-time insight tool into the diverse tastes and interests of the audience, by spotting emerging trends and themes. Purple Seven works with 300 theatres worldwide and understands the nuances that make each organisation unique. Our ambition is to show, using data, how large companies can benefit from engaging with a theatregoing public that already enjoys their brand.

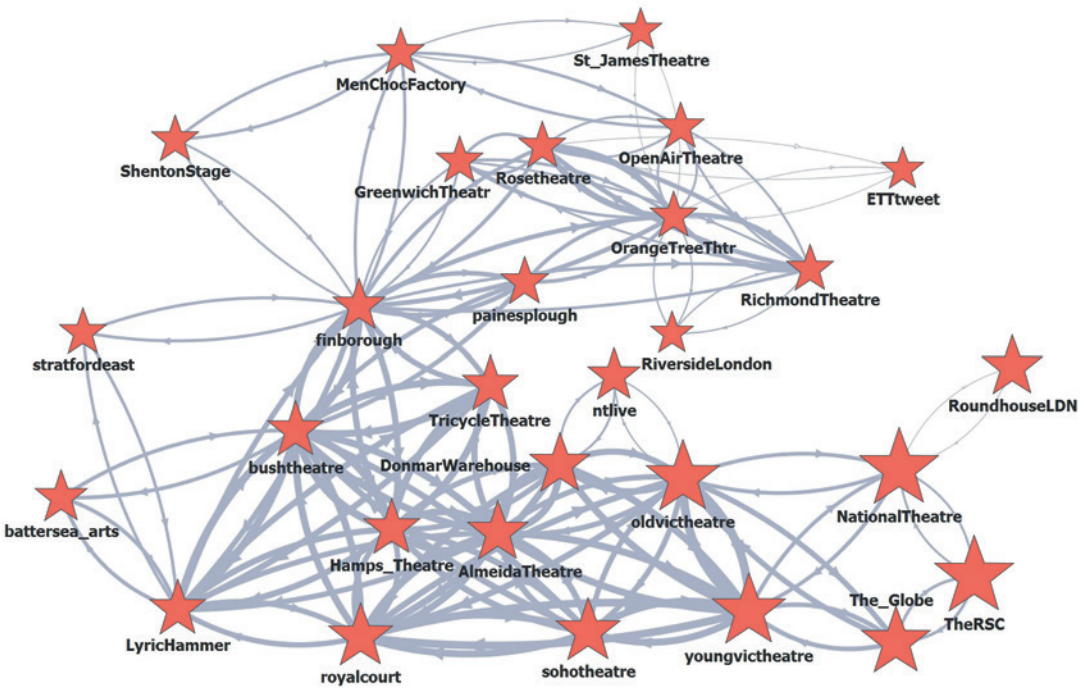
We are interested to see what theatregoers nationwide are interested in, rather than just those in London. So we found 1,200 UK arts institutions across social media, including venues, productions, community theatres and performers. The combined followers exceed 60 million fans, but because most people follow several theatres, we learned that there are only 18 million fans across all of these accounts. By finding theatregoers on social media, we are now in a position to understand how their other passions influence their arts attendance.

As anyone who has spent time on social media will know, a lot of theatre tweeters are actors, directors or otherwise working in the industry. We removed 10% of the fan base who were professionals, leaving us with a nationwide focus group of theatregoers. We then analysed which accounts our theatre audience has a greater engagement with than the general public. This helps us to identify partnerships that are mutually beneficial to both the venue and the brand.

The table on the previous page reveals that the interests of the UK theatregoing public are more affluent and prosperous than otherwise understood. This gives a compelling case for venues across the country to seek partnerships with these brands, confident in the knowledge that they have a very similar customer base.

For the second part of our study, we looked at the relationship between venues. Purple Seven's 2013 study revealed that most theatregoers visit several theatres, and our free Purple Seven Insights report helps venues to understand what else their customers are attending in theatre. By profiling customers' behaviour across social media, we can provide a clear picture of the relationships between different venues and how customers cross over between them. The diagram opposite shows the crossover between a handful of London venues – something we are able to do for any group of venues nationwide.

Thicker lines show that there is a greater proportion of individuals who are engaged with both accounts. Interestingly, The Stage's Mark Shenton has a high



number of followers who are also engaged with the Menier Chocolate Factory and Finborough Theatres, but not a significant number with Theatre Royal Stratford East or Battersea Arts Centre.

Because this analysis changes minute-by-minute on social media, we can see for the first time how customers perceive different venues. Richmond, Rose and Orange Tree theatres, for example, all have a similar follower base – something that might not be immediately apparent when visiting the separate venues. This insight can be advantageous when considering co-productions, tours or working together on a sponsorship proposal.

Theatre has earned an audience base who are affluent, passionate about the art form and highly engaged. There is now a great opportunity to build partnerships between venues and with major brands to attract new sponsorship and reach new audiences through social media.

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