

UK Theatre and Society of London's response to the Draft Culture Strategy for London

How could the Mayor help remove barriers to prevent all Londoners from securing creative jobs? What good examples of good practice are you aware of in this area?

Background

We are proud to be one of the Mayor of London's Creative Industry Partners; part of the £92bn Creative Industries; London's £26billion night time economy, and as the consultation states, part of an industry that generates one in eight jobs in the capital. Furthermore it is great that theatre and the performing arts are represented on the Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board.

But we know that collectively, there is still work to be done to meet the challenges around removing barriers to prevent all Londoners from securing creative jobs and; increasing participation and widening access. This is why in 2017 we were pleased to give evidence to both Labour's Acting Up enquiry (<https://www.tom-watson.com/actingup>) and the Lord's Communications Committee enquiry into Skills in the Theatre Industry (<https://www.parliament.uk/skills-theatre-industry>).

SOLT and UK Theatre's Workforce Review

Last year we published the results of our Workforce Review, (<https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/guidance-reports-and-resources/theatre-workforce-review/>). We discovered that while there are many positive aspects of the off stage workforce, it is currently unrepresentative of the general public. This is a fundamental issue (shared by the cultural sector as a whole) to address. In order to reflect the talents and tastes of all parts of society, and build a sustainable, resilient and globally competitive workforce for the future, theatre and performing arts must represent our diverse and changing population. We also identified, through the review, skills gaps in many areas as we look into the future over the next 10+ years.

We believe the case for improving the diversity of our sector is clear. For theatre and the performing arts continue to contribute to the UK's world-leading creative industries they must draw on the talent base, and build audiences, from all areas of society. We believe that diversity is key to ensuring resilience in the sector.

If the sector is to continue to thrive it is vital that its workforce becomes more representative of our society and includes more people from BAME backgrounds, who are disabled, and from low socio economic backgrounds.

We need to invest in our workforce now if we are to have the right skills and expertise in place for our industry to thrive in ten or twenty years. In recent years the theatre and performing arts sector has noted damage to the talent pipeline feeding our growing industry.

We know that the Mayor does not have control over national government education policy, but does have a number of initiatives (<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth>) such as the London Curriculum, and we understand the Mayor's office is involved in delivering national priorities such as careers through frameworks such as the Careers and Enterprise Company's Enterprise Advisors.

Working directly with theatres and bodies such as UK Theatre and SOLT is one way in which barriers can be removed – especially through **skills and careers initiatives**. With this, we felt it important to emphasise in this response a number of barriers that already exist, in order to ask how the Mayor's team could help prevent them.

Outside of government many organisations are working hard (alone and in partnership) to maintain and continuously open and widen access to both creative careers, a range of cultural experiences and opportunities to create and participate in the arts. But these activities should not replace an in school cultural and arts education. At the 2017 and 2018 Olivier Awards a string of winners took the chance to speak out against cuts in arts education.

Creative subjects are vital in order to introduce young people to the wide range of careers available in the creative industries. A combination of STEM and Arts subjects (**STEAM**) will prepare young people to become the next generation of theatre designers and technicians, theatre finance directors and chief executives. Roles such as these are essential to the health and growth of our industry. It is often overlooked that a mix of skills (including business / finance) is needed for a thriving theatre sector.

Cost of living is also related to opening up and diversifying our pipeline of talent. The theatre industry is heavily focused on central London. There are many good reasons for this – for example tourism, infrastructure and heritage – but for a workforce that is generally low paid, this presents specific challenges. House prices in central London are completely unaffordable to all but the most senior people working within the sector. As house prices increase, the workforce is being forced further out of central London, often in rented accommodation. While this is a problem for many people working in London, it is particularly acute for offstage theatre workers who often have to work unsociable hours before travelling out of central London late at night to where they live. While there is a London premium for those that work in the capital, this has not kept up with the increasing cost of living in London. As theatre staff are not classified as key workers, they do not have access to certain lower-cost housing options that would allow them to live more centrally and closer to their place of work.

As London is a hub for theatre and many people desire to work in the West End, we felt it important to raise issues surrounding the new **T Levels** and how they might affect broadening accessing to Londoner's securing creative jobs. We responded to the Government's consultation, raising a number of concerns for how the T Level **placements** would be run. These included the fact that theatre is largely a night time economy, so highlighting the potential challenges that might bring for students. We also raised the issue of pay within the placements, which is currently at the discretion of employers – however it should be standardised. This will avoid bringing inequality into the system, and may help overcome the impression that there is no money to be made by working in our sector. Work experience and placements cannot only be available to those who can afford to pay for themselves.

Again, as a sector we are aware of the challenges of providing **apprenticeships or placements** in our sector. However, we are talking about how we could deliver opportunities across our sector (and potentially sharing across other creative sectors), for instance, a person could work in a number of organisations as part of a placement, as in theatre, a show may only run for a short period of time, and not run long enough to meet a placement requirement.

We know that the most common first route of entry into the sector is from formal education in a related subject. However, our research also found that **routes to the sector** through unpaid internships or volunteering are rising. Individuals are required to build up extensive work experience – at their own cost – before being offered a paid job.

20 years ago 16% came into the sector through unpaid internships and volunteering, and today it is 34%. This is likely to be a significant barrier to entry for people without financial

resources and could be an explanation for why so few people working in theatre come from a working class background or from cultural communities not well-connected to the theatre and performing arts or the broader creative sector.

As a result of our Workforce Review, UK Theatre and SOLT are implementing a **workforce development strategy** that will ensure that the appropriate skills and expertise are in place for theatre and the performing arts to thrive twenty years from now. It will improve the diversity of the theatre and performing arts workforce, and address long-term culture change in the professional development of the theatre and the performing arts industry through the implementation of short to mid-term initiatives that are supported by the sector.

Our first two programmes of this work are our ***Inspiring the Future of Theatre*** campaign (<https://uktheatre.org/inspiring-future-theatre/>) and our support for the increasing number of self-employed people in our sector. The aims of both of these programmes of work feed into promoting and improving inclusivity in the workforce and improving the potential to build a career outside London and/or sustain a career within London.

In addition to these programmes, for many years we have run initiatives such as **Theatrecraft** (<http://www.theatrecraft.org>); **Kids Week** (<https://officiallondontheatre.com/kids-week/>); and **Get into London Theatre** (<https://officiallondontheatre.com/new-year-sale/>).

We would be interested to learn more about the London Curriculum, and welcome the idea to ‘champion and advocate business practices that create more diversity.’

Stage One

We have a sister charity Stage One (www.stageone.uk.com/). They support new UK theatre producers and productions, and are working to provide opportunities for people that are under-represented through their development programmes. One of these programmes **Bridge the Gap** is a programme that will launch later this year. Stage One have been working with a number of networks to identify the issues that affect people’s access to developing a career in the commercial theatre industry. Through finding out the specific needs of those they have spoken to, they were able to develop the thing that they felt was needed to ‘bridge the gap’ between many different groups of people. As a result, they have been able to engage a number of people in the programme before they have officially started to market it.

Our members

In addition to the work we do on behalf of and with our members, as you’ll know many of our members work to remove barriers that might prevent Londoners from securing jobs in the theatre and performing arts sector and through their education and outreach / community programmes. A few examples are below:

- The ROH has an established apprenticeship scheme: (<http://www.roh.org.uk/learning/young-people/apprenticeships>). They also offer a formal work experience programme.
- The Old Vic’s *Front Line* that provides paid placement opportunities that equip young people with valuable employability skills <https://www.oldvictheatre.com/join-in/for-young-people/front-line>
- The National Theatre has a number of apprenticeships and a trainee programme <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-the-national-theatre/careers/apprenticeships>
- The Barbican’s apprentice scheme and placements <https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/our-people/careers>

- Sadler's Well's offer apprenticeships <http://blog.sadlerswells.com/technical-theatre-sound-light-stage-apprentices/> and also schemes such as Get into Dance <https://www.sadlerswells.com/learning/get-into-dance/>

In addition, although not all members of the London Theatre Consortium (<http://www.londontheatreconsortium.com/apprenticeships/>) are our members, they offer an Apprenticeship Scheme which supports year-long paid placements across a number of organisations

We asked a few other people and organisations that work in theatre for their thoughts on this question, they said:

- Detaching the word 'culture' from the idea that arts & culture is an elitist world that is for the middle/upper class.
- Having a wider variation of the images being seen in galleries across the London & UK.
- Investing more money into creative youth facilities (e.g. music studios, rehearsal rooms, film-making & coding courses, full-time youth workers in spaces, more trips to theatres, mentorships, two way conversations etc.), allowing young people a safe space to be artistic whilst developing the skills and experience to build a DIY mentality, to hopefully engage them in the creative industries for the future.
- Taking into account the socio-economic status of people applying for jobs, and providing financial security wherever needed.
- Long term relationship building with groups that are usually excluded from engaging with arts. The people leading these programmes/projects should be people that specifically understand the lived experiences of the groups of people that they will be engaging with.
- As arts education drops in schools then children aren't exposed to the arts as relevant to their life and or careers
- Gaining experience can be hard as many theatres don't have funds to run paid interns – so, could the GLA fund an intern scheme? We (*one of our members told us they*) have a scheme funded by a single philanthropist and is working with their local borough
- Provide and support clear pathways between arts organisations and individuals/educational institutions for accessing existing opportunities to gain professional creative experience. A central hub, careers fair or consortium that collates and promotes all opportunities.
- To recognise the importance of supporting and funding arts organisations to establish schemes that not only benefit the participant but also the organisation. Identify models of best practice and provide support for those organisations to roll these programmes out across the city.
- Ongoing support of cultural education – exploring models similar to the London Borough of Culture that are specifically for schools/cultural organisations to work together.
- Lobbying the Arts Council to place more emphasis on employability programmes within arts organisation as a solution to diversity issues within the industry, and dedicating a streaming fund to support NPOs and non-NPOs

How can the Mayor increase participation in the arts and cultural life of the capital, particularly for people who don't currently have access to it? Who should he be partnering with?

As a membership body we are well connected and partner with numerous organisations both within our sector and outside. For instance: we partner with our members, other theatre organisations such as the Independent Theatre Council or The London Theatre Consortium' we have relationships with the support organisations such as the Arts Council and CC Skills;

and then further afield with organisations such as The Creative Industries Federation or TFL and of course, as we said earlier, we are pleased to be one of the Mayor's Strategic Partners.

It's not just about who the Mayor should be partnering with, but how the Mayor's office can help theatres broker and foster partnerships between themselves and other organisations in London. Partnerships across London are vital for theatres, both commercial and subsidised to continue to grow and remain resilient, and therefore, offer the greatest chance of participation within their immediate communities, across London, the rest of the UK, and internationally – London is still the centre for theatre in the world.

We are very supportive of theatres being part of LEPs, Business Improvement Districts and Creative enterprise zones. We would welcome working with you to see how more theatres can work with and have their voices heard in these structures.

Partnerships are even more important as both local and national government funding declines. Recent reductions in public funding, particularly from local authorities, has placed an increased focus on the need for a more entrepreneurial approach to funding by many organisations in the sector. And this does not just affect subsidised theatres, as the theatre ecology is complex.

There is interdependency between theatre and performing arts across the country, and between the funded and commercial sector. SOLT and UK Theatre's combined support for theatre and the performing arts is for one UK-wide industry, encompassing London and the regions. Given the funding pressures on our industry we believe there is a need for better collaboration and exchange between the 'commercial' and 'funded' areas of the sector. This in turn will contribute to widening the access to people who don't currently have access to theatre and the performing arts, both in terms of participating and watching.

The theatre and performing arts sector is currently financed through a mix of public funding, private sector investment, earned income and charitable or philanthropic donations. Some theatre and performing arts organisations receive public funding – which ensures that the industry is able to innovate and take risks. Many theatres and performing arts organisations are charities, or operate as independent trusts. SOLT and UK Theatre's members also work hard to generate earned income – through ticket sales and other sources.

Once again, partnerships and collaborations between theatres, private companies, self-employed and entities outside of London and the UK will need to continue to develop as we move towards exiting the EU, as some of the traditional funding and collaboration structures, companies abroad may be removed.

The Mayor's *Love London* aspiration for Londoners to access culture on their doorstep is a good one. Most London Boroughs have theatres, many of which have their roots in the community or strong community engagement programmes. But some Boroughs have lost their theatres and more are still at risk of losing them. We know the Night Tsar has worked with the Theatres Trust on the issue of planning and Agent for Change, and we support this work. We would also be interested to know more about the proposal for 'Nighttime Borough champions'.

We are pleased to be a partner for the London Borough of Culture Awards, and it was great to see Hearts for the Arts (which UK Theatre administers <http://forthearts.org.uk/campaigns/hearts-for-the-arts/>) winner Lorna Lee's work recognised. It's also great to hear, that although Waltham don't have a theatre, they are working with theatres in London to ensure this element is part of their Borough of Culture and is accessible. This shows another model of how when there isn't something on your doorstep,

good partnerships can make theatre accessible. Pop up venues and spaces are also another way in which theatre can be accessed when there is no traditional or fixed venue. These venues can also help with breaking down barriers of what people think theatre might traditionally be.

There are numerous examples of the work that theatres do alone or in partnership with other theatres, commercial enterprises, government bodies or quangos for instance to widen participation and access, many of which you will be aware of. We couldn't name them all, but a few that illustrate the breadth of engagement are:

- SOLT's ***Kid's Week*** is a great example of opening up participation and cultural experiences to young people. Kids Week was established over 20 years ago and is one of the longest-running and widest-reaching audience development initiatives in the world; since it began in 1998, it has engaged over 1.4 million children and families. Alongside the performances, children are given the chance to get involved in a wide range of free events, workshops and activities, with participating shows offering everything from storytelling and backstage tours to cast meet-and-greets and choreography.

A child aged 16 or under can go free to any participating show when accompanied by an adult paying full price, and people can buy up to two extra children's tickets at half price. (<https://officiallondontheatre.com/kids-week>)

- The National Theatre's ***Public Acts*** is their new sustained theatre and community programme. It takes the shape of eight 2-year partnerships with inspirational community organisations working in Greater London (<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/blog/2018-and-beyond>).
- The Albany's ***A Theatre Trip for Every Child, Lewisham*** 'is a new giving scheme to provide a free theatre ticket for every 5-year-old in the Borough of Lewisham. 'Every Child' enables businesses and individuals to give a local child the chance to experience the magic of theatre. The campaign will be launched on 23 June 2017 thanks to funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England, and the support of founding sponsors, L&Q and patron, Jude Law (<https://www.thealbany.org.uk/news/Albany-Launch-Campaign-to-Provide-a-Free-Theatre-Ticket-to-Every-Child-in-Lewisham>).
- ***Creative Barking and Dagenham*** is a great example of a number of organisations coming together to achieve a number of goals through culture – 'Creative Barking and Dagenham (CBD) creates new ways for local people to experience outstanding arts and creative activities. It also aims to put the area firmly on the map as a place to make and enjoy exciting art in all its many forms. The project consists of artist commissions, a locally-led outdoor programme, audience development activity both in the local area and further afield, funds and ongoing support for creative events and building capacity within the local arts sector' (<http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/project/creative-barking-dagenham>).
- The ***Gulbenkian Enquiry*** into the civic role of arts organisations has some great case studies that illustrate increasing participation, including theatre examples in London such as that by the ***Roundhouse*** (<http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/roundhouse>)
- ***Fun Palaces*** is a fantastic example of very broad partnership working between the arts, culture and other disciplines, on people's doorsteps in places they may not expect it (<http://funpalaces.co.uk/>)

We asked a few other people and organisations that work in theatre for their thoughts on this question, they said:

- Provide more formal opportunities for sector-wide meetings involving all art forms (inc tourism organisations) for a more cohesive approach to embracing this issue and resolving this collectively. The above point is something every organisation works to address every day making them the right people to collaborate with.
- Very practically – create a ‘London Card’ which offers London residents discounts/loyalty points at all participating cultural attractions and institutions. Certainly, the figures for London residents visiting theatres and attractions in the Southbank and Waterloo area are down. The introduction of a discount/loyalty scheme could very practically increase awareness and subsequently attendance and engagement. Discounts are afforded to tourists so why not residents?
- Provide support for organisations who wish to improve their disability access. This is especially important for older buildings that will need significant work in order to open them up to people who may have been physically excluded in the past.
- Support and promote organisations who programme disability-led work, and who enable people from disadvantaged background to access theatre/cultural venues. Access All Areas is an example of the former, while Mousetrap Theatre Projects works to achieve the latter.
- Showcase and boost profile of reduced price ticket schemes at key cultural organisations in order to dispel the myth that price is a barrier to attendance (for example, The Old Vic’s PwC £10 Previews scheme, the NT Travelex, the Donmar Young and Free)

Is there anything else that could be considered in relation to the draft Culture Strategy?

It’s important that this strategy doesn’t just sit alongside the seven statutory strategies, but is integrated, so that the ambitions of the draft strategy can be met – for instance, integration with health and social care, health, planning and education will be key.

Integration with transport too - structures that support accessing the theatre are very important. **Accessible** transport is paramount, so when the Mayor’s office is thinking about pedestrianisation schemes, accessibility must be at the core of discussions.

The **growth agenda** is important for theatres, especially in order to connect all the good work and economic output theatres make with the Government’s Industrial Strategy. **Access to finance** is an issue for many smaller organisations and start-ups, and having the physical space for these theatre organisations to put down their roots is very important. Those working in the industry should not be priced out of working and living in London.

We would be interested to hear more on plans about how cultural organisations are integrated into **new developments**, as we know one of our members has used Planning 106 very successfully as part of their refurbishment.

We asked a few other people and organisations that work in theatre for their thoughts on this question, they said:

- Maintaining infrastructure: ensuring vibrant, open, animated spaces for years to come, despite the current challenges to national and local funding
- Recognition of the plethora of the cross-generational skills and experience across this city. Consider creating a skills sharing network where, for example, younger people in search of employment opportunities could ‘trade’ their digital skills (again as an example)

in return for practical employment experience or advice. This 'trade' could be with a well-established business owner who does not have digital expertise. As the industries diversify and experiences move from being live to being digital, how do we assist with that transition so that businesses can survive.

- Investment and support of the restoration or expansion of existing spaces, particularly those with heritage listing that are harder to open up affordably, that would allow cultural institutions to further their offer and therefore increase their ability to engage more people through bigger spaces, new or expanded projects or modernised technologies and access to spaces.
- A subsidised commercial rent programme to assist organisations who have disused spaces in offering start-ups and emerging businesses residency in return for a peppercorn rent.
- More rehearsal spaces
- The Mayor's office should be making sure that boroughs are reinvesting in basic infrastructure in areas like the South Bank which generate a lot of revenue for the council and experience very heavy footfall