



UK General Election 2017: The case for a thriving theatre industry in the UK

The theatre and performing arts sector can contribute much to Britain's future prosperity. Arts and culture, including theatre and the performing arts, make a powerful contribution to our society and to our national identity. They make areas richer culturally and financially, and they make places more attractive to live and work.

Society of London Theatre (SOLT) and UK Theatre believe that the success of the theatre and performing arts industry to date provides us with a creative competitive advantage that must be protected and enhanced for the future.

We ask you commit to the following asks

1. Improving diversity and protecting entry routes

We ask that it becomes a government priority to protect the talent pipeline to theatre and the performing arts, and for every child and young person to have the opportunity of strong cultural education. If we are to build on our strengths and extend excellence into the future we must improve the diversity of the theatre and performing arts workforce.

- **A commitment to a strong cultural education.** A good cultural education fosters creative and divergent thinking, which encourages young people to innovate and create in any field of expertise.

Since the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) take up of arts subjects has declined in schools, which will have a serious impact on both the quality and diversity of applicants the sector is able to attract in the future.

- **A commitment to authoritative pre-career performing arts training and advice,** supported by an awareness campaign.
- **A commitment to improve apprenticeships.** Apprenticeships are a growing area of technical theatre training, but there is widespread confusion around their implementation and little consistency in their application.

2. Supporting new financial models and a bedrock of public funding

The theatre and performing arts sector is financed through a complex mix of public funding, private sector investment, earned income and charitable or philanthropic donations.

Theatres and performing arts business across the UK are in an extremely uncertain financial planning environment – many are already operating on extremely tight financial margins.

- **A commitment to continued public funding of our sector.** Revenue support through the arts council bodies across the UK is a vital underpinning of success in our sector.
- **A commitment to review the full impact of local authority funding for theatre and the performing arts.** The removal of local government funding is by far the greatest threat to prosperity and growth in our sector. Local authorities are finding it increasingly hard to maintain support for their arts and cultural provision and as they continue to manage the transition to the self-funding model cuts are likely to deepen.

Also, as local councils look to retain 100% of business rates to meet the costs of services, many have begun withdrawing the 20% discretionary relief available to those of our members who are charities.

- **A commitment to continue Theatre Production Tax Relief.** This relief has enabled theatre to extend tours and preserve high production values at a time when pressures on funding could have led to compromise. The relief is being invested directly into producing exciting, innovative theatre across the UK to the delight of audiences, employment and sustainable growth of the sector.
- **A commitment to place the arts and culture at the heart of regeneration strategies,** including within LEPs, local businesses and within Higher Education partnerships. Theatres and performing arts organisations contribute to the renewal of urban areas and would like to see support initiatives to develop local growth through the ‘hub’ or ‘cluster’ approach.
- **New models of enterprise and investment.** As an innovative and entrepreneurial sector, theatre and the performing arts would welcome clear advice and support on new models of funding.

3. Strong international connections

The UK’s theatre and the performing arts are world leading. It is vital to their long-term prosperity that we stay open to exporting and importing high-quality theatre talent, ideas, products and relationship, from the EU and further afield.

- **A commitment to work towards a sector deal on free movement of talent and skills.** These both play an important role in the make-up of the theatre sector, and in making our sector resilient, thought-provoking, relevant, highly skilled and entrepreneurial. Our sector hosts or produces international work and brings European artists to the UK. It is essential to secure the right deal on movement of talent and skills. The existing arrangements with the USA work well, and it is also essential that these continue to enable talent and productions to move between countries.
- **A commitment to addressing sector specific visas.** It is vital that the low cost of touring within the EU is protected. An increase in transaction costs, regulatory frameworks and administration could see people, innovation and investment drain away.
- **A commitment to protect access to international cultural funding streams and markets.** We must not lose the collaborative relationships and funding opportunities which we now have access to, and that the sector has worked hard for many years to build.
- **A commitment to advancing new imports and export deals for theatre/the arts** both within and outside of Europe
- **A commitment to include cultural businesses and relationships within any commercial relationships and frameworks,** whilst building stronger relationships between cultural organisations and the Department for International Trade.

About Us

SOLT and UK Theatre are the trade associations and members’ organisations representing the interests of those engaged in the production and presentation of medium to large-scale dramatic and lyric theatre in the UK. Their memberships are drawn from both subsidised and commercial theatre.

The combined box office income of SOLT and UK Theatre’s membership was more than £1 billion across London and the rest of the UK, with 34 million tickets sold in 2015.

SOLT represents approximately 200 London-based producers, theatre owners and managers, including all the major subsidised theatrical organisations in London.

UK Theatre represents approximately 220 theatres, concert halls, dance companies, producers and arts centres throughout the UK. UK Theatre also operates as a professional association, supporting over 1,000 individuals working professionally in theatre and the performing arts in the UK.