

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Theatre

Minutes of the APPG Evidence Session held on 4 March 2020. Room G, House of Lords

In Attendance

Giles Watling, MP (Chair)
Julian Bird, SOLT & UK Theatre
Hannah Gagen, SOLT & UK Theatre
Helen Rynne, SOLT & UK Theatre
Natalie Wood, SOLT & UK Theatre
Stella Kanu, LIFT
Robert Noble, Cameron Mackintosh
Eleanor Lloyd, Eleanor Lloyd Productions
Nick Salmon, Playful Productions
Stephanie Surr, Nottingham Playhouse
Joanna Crowley, Independent Theatre Producer
Charlotte Jones, ITC
Corey Reynolds
Jon Morgan, Theatres Trust
Ellen Burgin
Kenny Wax

Introduction to SOLT & UKT and the importance of the Theatre Industry

- Julian Bird gave an overview of the theatre landscape and the importance and impact of theatre in the UK.
- More than 35 mil people going to theatre in a year across the UK. For context this is more than all league games in football.
- Theatres ability to regenerate towns by putting theatre and the arts at the heart of their future.

International Theatre

- Stella Kanu discussed the importance of International Theatre and the impact Brexit will have on touring.
- Freedom of movement is changing; Brexit is challenging international work. This is due to problems such as the challenges of visas and the inability to conduct deals in sterling.
- The UK is seen as not being engaged internationally, which will have a negative impact on tourism and the economy.
- Robert Noble describes the different International markets.
- The USA is a prime area for touring UK Theatre. Regenerated city centres and new theatres have been created in America because of the demand of touring shows.
- Touring in Europe is more challenging. Korea is a growing International market.
- Despite Brexit, we want touring to continue, without problems related to obtaining visas.

EGM

- Two new officers were elected, Baroness Whitaker and Baroness Hamwee.

Commercial Theatre

- Eleanor Lloyd discussed commercial producing and private investments.
- When looking at the performance of a show, there can be up to 60 people on a payroll when including all staff needed. It is a people-led industry.
- Theatre owners take majority of ticket income.
- The relationship between producers and theatre owners can be complicated. Producers are like tenants, and theatre owners are like landlords. There are more shows than available theatres to stage them in.
- Nick Salmon spoke about the relationship between the subsidised and commercial sector, and the importance of arts council and local authority subsidiary.
- Interrelations between sectors within the theatre industry is very important. Subsidised theatres have buildings and regular programmes, which provides employment and therefore also benefiting the commercial sector.
- Young people learning about theatre is important. Drama is being removed from syllabuses which would usually be a first experience of theatre, it then becomes difficult to get younger people interested. It is vital we do what we can to get the schools to come to see shows, the Government should also encourage this.

Subsidised Theatre

- Stephanie Sirr discussed how a producing theatre differs from touring venues and presenting houses.
- Subsidiary can be used to access the people who do not usually go to the theatre or take part in the arts.
- Producing theatres can make work that is relevant and tells a story of the region it serves.
- Can be used to work within the community, from babies to senior citizens, feeding the creative soul and providing a sense of wellbeing as well as an experience of theatre.

Independent Theatre

- Joanna Crowley discussed the need to work collectively to find a way forward for the independent sector.
- The independent theatre sector is big and important. It covers independent venues, artists, companies. Self-employed freelancers.
- Artists and companies exist in traditional forms however, there is also devised theatre, mime, physical theatre, puppetry and site-specific theatre which falls under the independent bracket.
- It is a misunderstanding that this sector is only about emerging artists. The sector is feeding a broader theatre ecology.
- The independent sector is also heavily affected by issues with touring and international work.

Questions

- The floor was opened for questions and discussions on the above topics.



- Topics covered included breaking into the Asian market, touring theatre becoming increasingly difficult, the importance of theatre in education and working with other creative industries to overcome issues.