

The Director's Voice

A study of theatre director training and career development in the UK

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and
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June 2016 – June 2018

Commissioned by

**National
Theatre**

RADA

**THE
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VIC**



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Thomas is a director and a writer working in theatre and television. He trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, on the National Theatre Studio's Directors Course, and on the BBC's emerging directors mentoring scheme. In 2017 he was named on the BBC's New Talent Hotlist.

He has directed nationally and internationally. He was previously resident director at the Chichester Festival Theatre, and staff director at the National Theatre. As an assistant director, Thomas worked with numerous leading directors including Robert Wilson, Nicholas Hytner and Marianne Elliot.

In 2014 he helped form Stage Directors UK as a founding board member, and in 2017 he was invited to take over as their Executive Director.

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Corinne Furness is a doctoral researcher with the University of Birmingham and the Royal Shakespeare Company, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Her research explores professional-amateur collaboration and the RSC's 2016 production *A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Play for the Nation*. Corinne is more widely interested in the intersection of research and practice, and in 2016 was selected as a Birmingham Hero, highlighting research which seeks to address 21st century issues.

Introduction

In 2014 Stage Directors UK launched, using a campaign for fair fees as its rallying call. As the organisation started up there were, unsurprisingly, numerous enquiries about fees and contracts for directors. More surprising were the regular enquiries and concerns that were raised about director training and career development.

Over the past two decades there had been a growth in the amount of training offered, particularly to emerging directors. There had been a rise in MA's for directors, most significantly with the creation of the Birkbeck course. The Young Vic had developed what has become the Genesis Directors Network, and, along with that, a range of schemes for directors, primarily (but not exclusively) targeted at emerging directors, and both the JMK and RTYDS schemes had grown in recent years.

Among the concerns raised with SDUK were questions about the growth in MA's, how they were becoming unaffordable to many emerging directors (a common theme with much of higher education), and how they have changed the landscape for emerging directors by offering placements in theatres, which has resulted in less opportunity for directors not taking an MA. There were constant complaints that the rise of emerging director schemes has created far too many emerging directors, with little opportunity after the emerging schemes end to progress into what is generally being called 'mid-career'. The term 'mid-career' rarely seems to literally mean mid-career, and is something that will be explored within the report.

It wasn't immediately clear which concerns were valid, which were the result of poor communication, and which concerns were simply unfounded, but what was particularly striking, was that in amongst the questions from directors, were questions from theatres and training-providers who felt the training opportunities they were offering were not as effective as they could be. Other training providers (notably RTYDS) had been very active at doing their own research and improving their programmes as a result of that research, but there hadn't been anyone looking at the training and career development of a director holistically.

The possible exception to this was the Young Vic Theatre, where the growth of their directors' programme, and their work partnering organisations such as the RTYDS, meant they had a very clear knowledge of the current landscape for directors.

It became clear that there was a need to study the journey of a director, from school, through higher education (or equivalent), through apprenticeship and career. This report does not simply cover formal training, but is also interested in career development. The purpose of the report is to better understand where our directors come from, what their education and training experience is, and where they might plateau. The report will explore what training and support is already available, and where there may be gaps in support.

Each of the partner organisations that commissioned the report has offered training opportunities for directors in the past, and continues to do so. Each organisation had questions about how training could be improved. The Old Vic had questions about how young people from disadvantaged backgrounds might access information about becoming a director; about how, as an

industry, we can plant the idea that the role of 'director' exists. RADA had questions about what the role of a drama school might be when training directors, and whether there was a different model to the formal MA. The National Theatre were aware that the group of directors trusted with large scale spaces (such as the Olivier) was very small and wanted to understand how directors could better be trained and supported onto those stages. These questions have formed the backbone to the research, and a starting point for the report.

In the 1980's the Gulbenkian Foundation commissioned a report into directors' training (including film, television and radio directors). A Better Direction, as the report is known, was researched and written by Kenneth Rae and continues to be the most extensive research carried out into directors' training in the UK. This report does not try and supersede A Better Direction, which is still a thorough and useful examination of the role of a director, but it is also clear that the landscape has changed drastically for directors in the decades since the Gulbenkian report was written. The economics and politics surrounding higher education are a world away from the 1980's, arguments around diversity are very different, and our very understanding of what a director is have all changed since the Gulbenkian Report. As the report gives some of the clearest facts on who directors were in the 1980's, the report is used throughout this study to compare how the makeup of the workforce has changed in recent years.

The decision was taken not to explore TV, Film and radio director training. Whilst there is certainly large crossover, the training provided for these disciplines is so far removed from theatre directors' training that there were no

clear benefits in encompassing them all within one report. Whilst they are not included, some recent successful training schemes for screen directors is examined as 'best practice' models that could be adapted for theatre directors.

Opera has also not been covered in this report. Research carried out separately by SDUK suggested there was very little in the way of formal training for opera directors, and as opera houses operate very differently to most theatres, it didn't make sense to include. There is, however, huge crossover between theatre and opera directors, and many opera directors have come off courses and schemes explored within this report. There is scope and need for specialist opera training to be explored separately, but it did not fit within the specific aims of this report.

The first part of the research consisted of a survey, which went out to directors across the UK. There were 344 responses to the survey, which attempts to map the path of a director from education, through training, into and through a career as a director. The second part of the research consisted of interviews and written submissions from artistic and associate directors to understand if there are skills gaps with the directors they meet, and to understand what they are looking for when commissioning directors. A number of round table discussions with directors also makes up the research in part two. In total around 500 arts professionals have participated in the research. The majority of these were directors, as well as those responsible for facilitating director-training schemes.

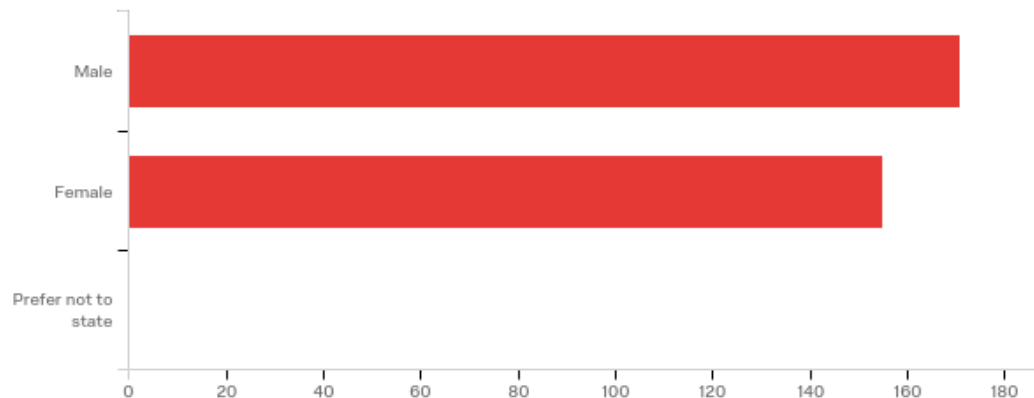
Part 1

Who are our directors?

Directors diversity

Gender

The gender divide of directors



	%
Male	52.45%
Female	47.55%
Prefer not to state	0.00%

In 2017 UK Theatre commissioned an off-stage workforce review. The Gender split in that report:

Male: 43%

Female: 56%

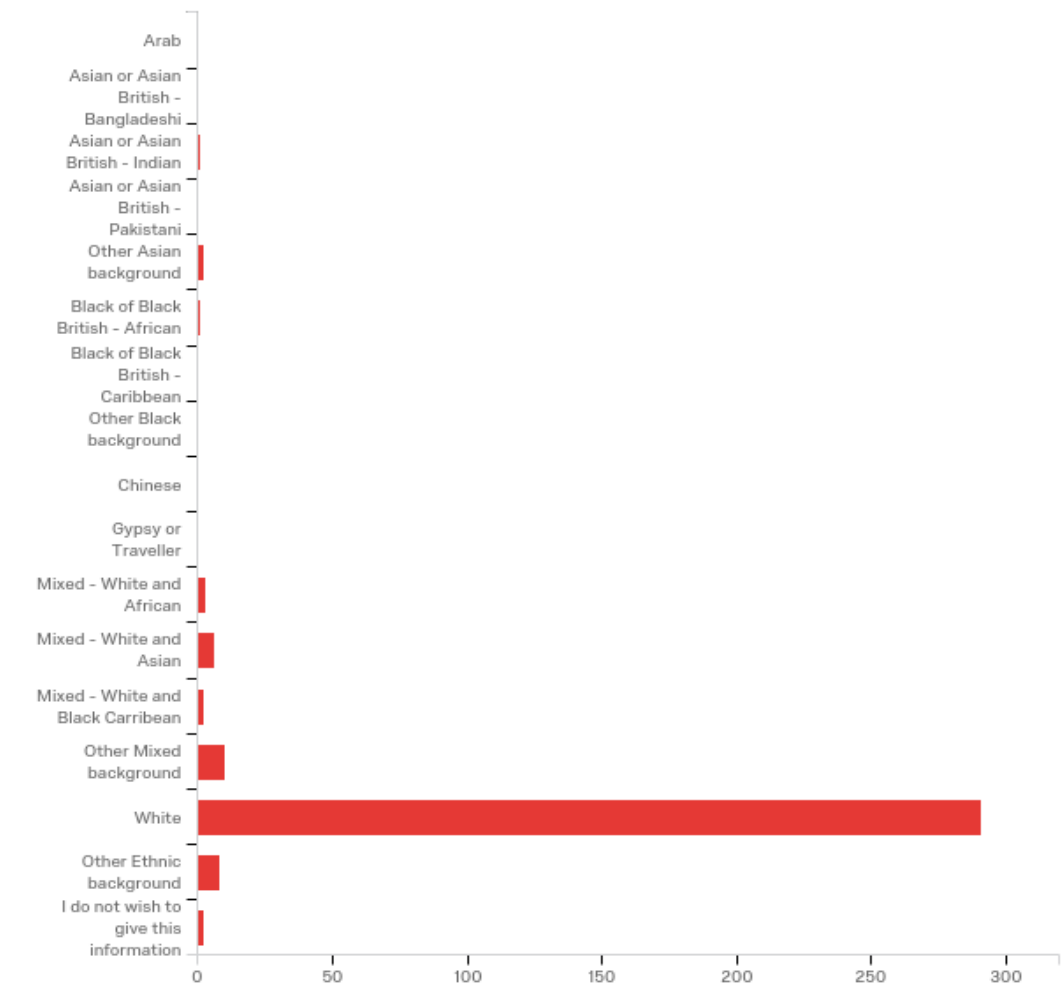
Prefer not to say: 1%

Whilst the gender split does not yet match the gender split of the UK population according to estimates given by the office of national statistics, there are reasons to be optimistic. The figures are close, and have come a

long way from the Gulbenkian report which recorded that 29% of theatre directors were women.

This figure becomes less optimistic when looking at the statistics for female directors being employed by theatres. Separate research carried out by SDUK at the end of 2017 saw that there was not a 50/50% gender split for directors in the majority of National Portfolio Organisations, and that a number of theatres had employed no female directors in the twelve months being monitored.

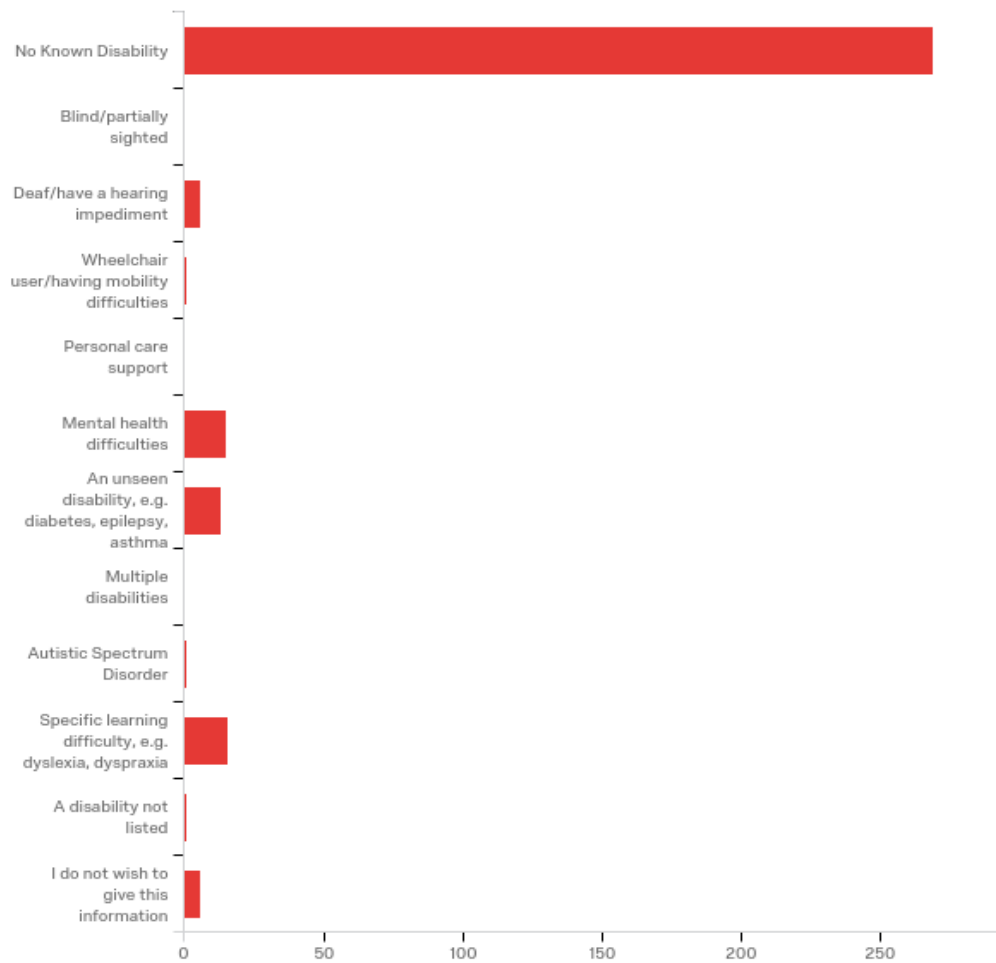
ETHNICITY



Arab	0.00%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.00%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0.31%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0.00%
Other Asian background	0.61%
Black or Black British - African	0.31%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0.00%
Other Black background	0.00%
Chinese	0.00%
Gypsy or Traveller	0.00%
Mixed - White and African	0.92%
Mixed - White and Asian	1.84%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0.61%
Other Mixed background	3.07%
White	89.26%
Other Ethnic background	2.45%
I do not wish to give this information	0.61%

Theatre directors in the UK are predominantly white – 89.26% of the directing population. This compares to 86.0% of the total theatre offstage workforce – from a study of the offstage workforce conducted by UK Theatre. According to the Institute of Race Relations, 80% of the population identify as White British (and those figures have probably shifted since they were last recorded). In London that percentage drops to 45%.

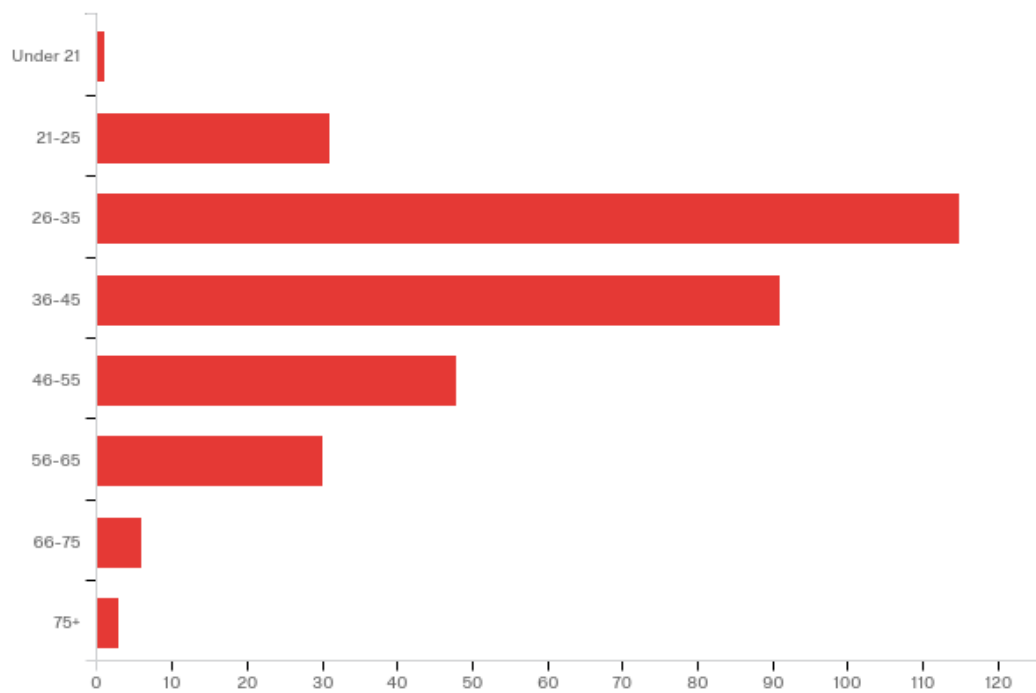
Disability



No Known Disability	84.06%
Blind/partially sighted	0.00%
Deaf/have a hearing impediment	1.88%
Wheelchair user/having mobility difficulties	0.31%
Personal care support	0.00%
Mental health difficulties	4.69%
An unseen disability, e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma	4.06%
Multiple disabilities	0.00%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	0.31%
Specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia	5.00%
A disability not listed	0.31%
I do not wish to give this information	1.88%

84.06% of directors reported having no known disability. There are less clear facts around the percentage of the overall population declaring a disability, but according to the Office of Disability the figure is 10.8% of the population.

Age



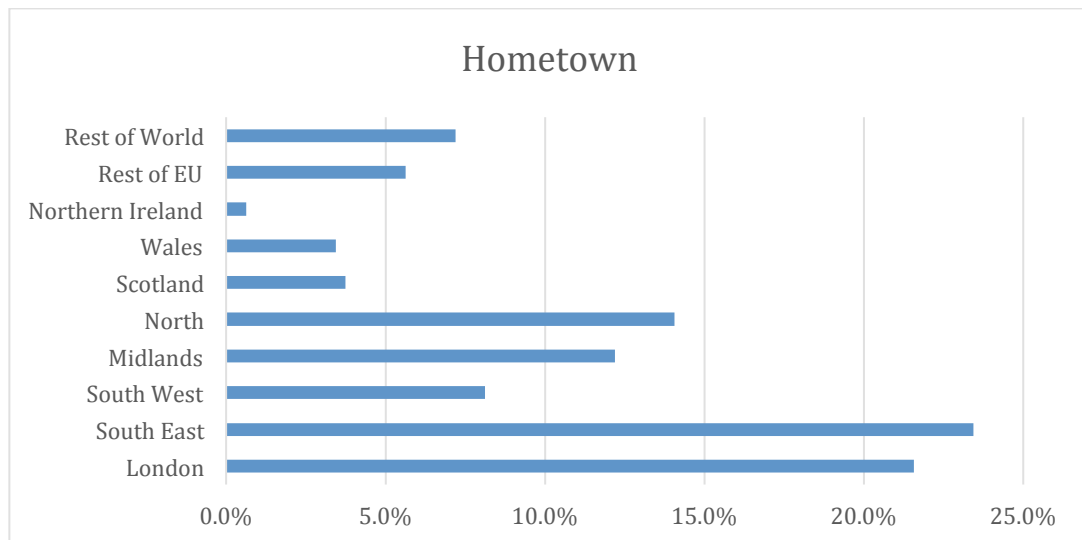
Answer	%
Under 21	0.31%
21-25	9.54%
26-35	35.38%
36-45	28.00%
46-55	14.77%
56-65	9.23%
66-75	1.85%
75+	0.92%
Total	100%

Where do directors come from?

One of the most common concerns when discussing director training at a grassroots level is a concern about the perceived lack of opportunity and lack of information for young people about the role of a director, and how to forge a career as a theatre director. Concerns that are often raised include the lack of information for those outside of London, the lack of information provided in schools, and the lack of opportunities available to engage with non-acting roles.

Directors were asked to provide details of their hometown. Where directors stipulated more than one location, the location they were born in, or the place they confirmed they spent most time has been used. The regions that have been used correspond with the regional divide Arts Council England uses.

London	21.6%
South East	23.4%
South West	8.1%
Midlands	12.2%
North	14.1%
Scotland	3.8%
Wales	3.4%
Northern Ireland	0.6%
Rest of EU	5.6%
Rest of World	7.2%

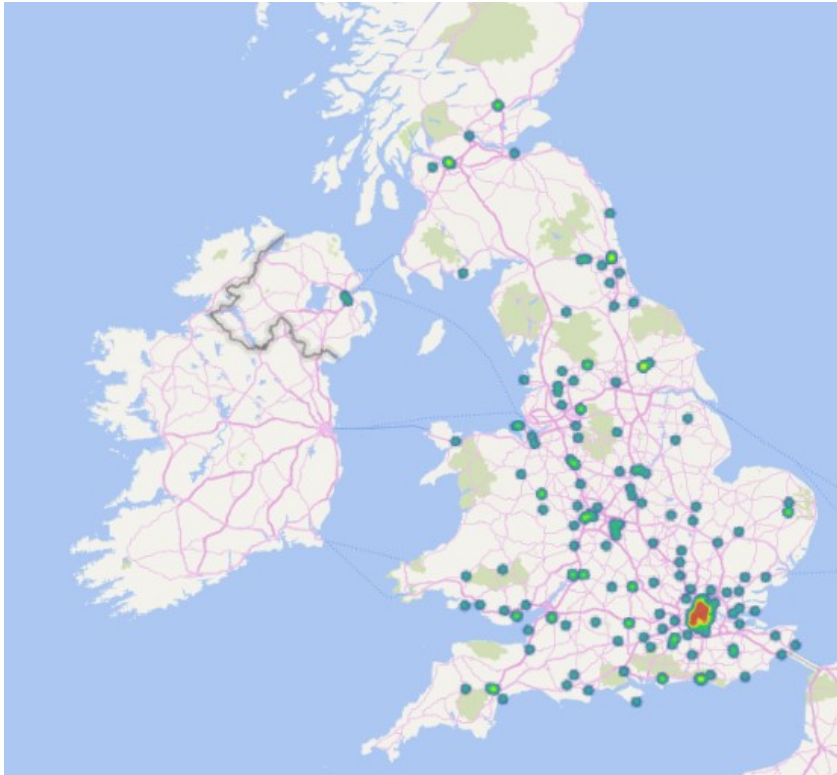


On the face of it, the concern that the majority of directors have come from London doesn't entirely hold true, with 78.4% of the directing population having come from outside of the capital. However directors who are from London account for 21.6% of the directing population of the UK, whereas London accounts for 12.5% of the population of the UK. There is still a weighting favouring London.

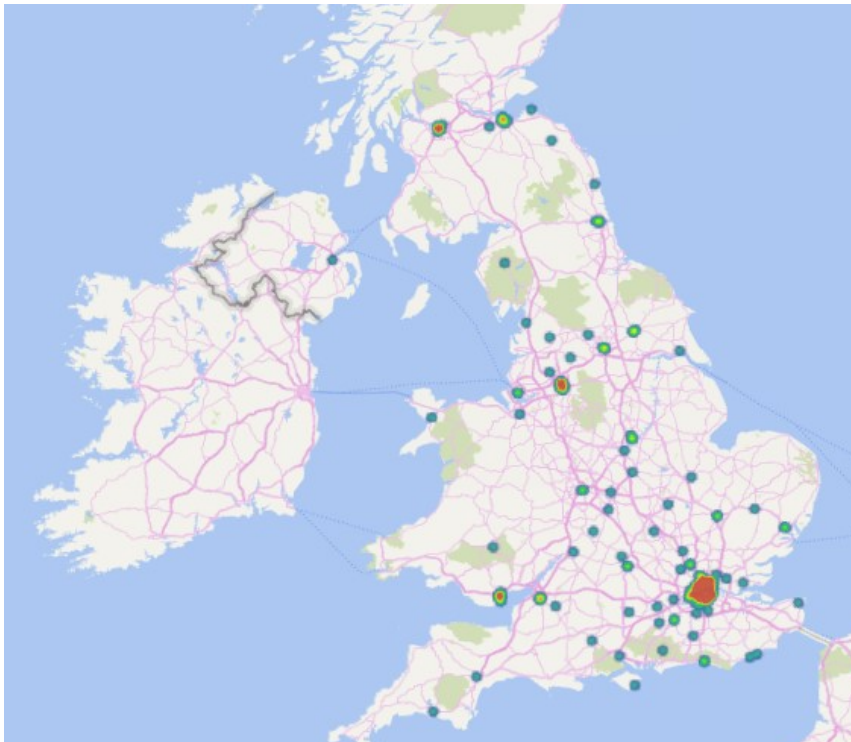
It is also the case that the majority of directors have come from major towns and cities. The weighting of directors emerging from urban populations correlates with the weighting of arts funding to urban areas. The Arts Council England, Rural Evidence and Data Review states that 4.6% of NPOs funded to deliver work in 2015 – 2018 reside in rural areas; their funding accounts for 2.5% of overall investment in NPOs over the three year period.

Where do directors end up?

Map of hometown locations:

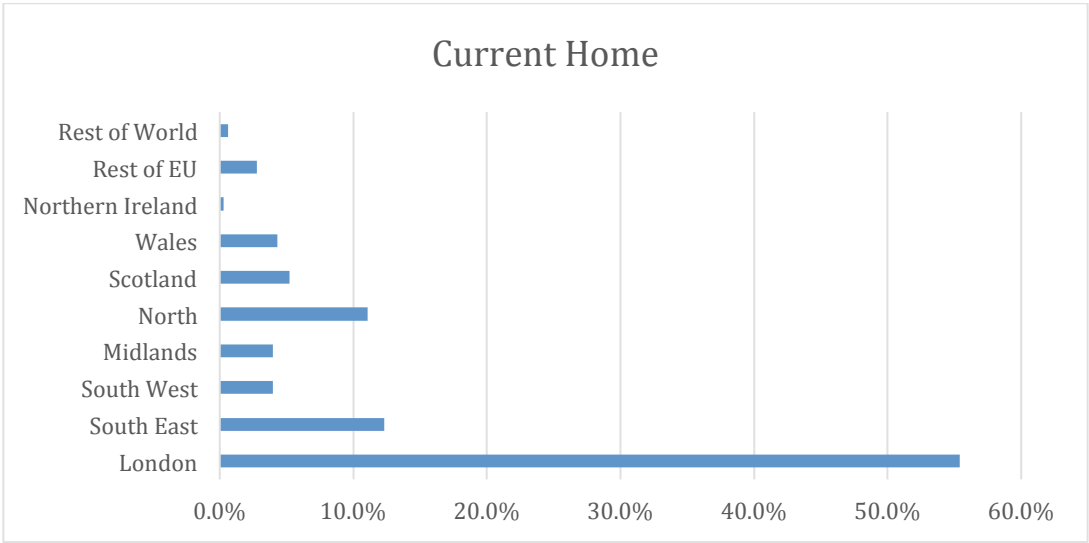


Map of current locations:



There is a considerable shift in where the population of directors decide to settle, compared to where they are from.

London	55.4%
South East	12.3%
South West	4.0%
Midlands	4.0%
North	11.1%
Scotland	5.2%
Wales	4.3%
Northern Ireland	0.3%
Rest of EU	2.8%
Rest of World	0.6%



Whereas London accounts for 21.6% of directors' hometowns, it is the location 55.4% of directors end up living in. This percentage seems significant as it corresponds closely with the balance of National Portfolio funding. In 2008 this was 51% to London and 49% outside the capital. In 2015 / 2016 the balance was 57% in London and 43% outside.

There appears to be a clear correlation between the distribution of arts funding, and young people's engagement in theatre making. It is reasonable to assume that well funded regions are more likely to have opportunities for young people to experience a range of roles within theatre and to have access to information about forging a career within theatre.

It is not just funding that is an issue for young people interested in the arts in rural areas. At the recent Labour Party enquiry into working class representation in the arts and media, there was testimony from teachers about the practicalities of getting children from rural parts of the UK to a 'local' theatre or arts centre. The divide in arts provision doesn't just seem to fall neatly down economic lines, but also between urban and rural locations. This divide appears to have affected the population of theatre directors.

The socio-economic background of directors

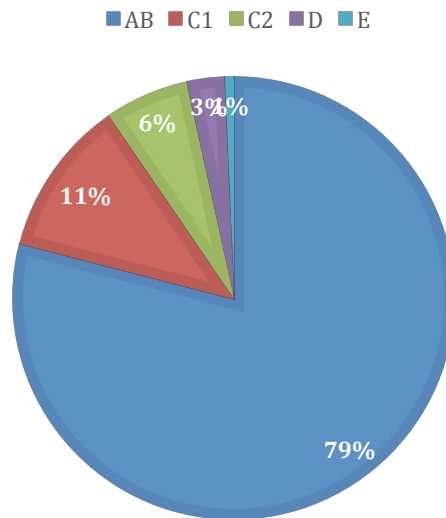
When trying to ascertain the socio-economic background of the directing workforce, it was decided not to ask about family income. A large proportion of adults would be guessing, or assuming, their childhood family income, and given that the age range of those surveyed varied between 21 – 75+, it would be impossible to analyse family income with any accuracy. The final reason for not concentrating on family income was that it didn't reveal privilege of information and contacts. The majority of those that work in the arts are low paid workers. However someone brought up around those working in the arts has access to an enormous wealth of information and contacts that someone from a wealthier non-arts background might not be able to access.

For example - the child of two actors living in Islington may well report a very small family income, but owing to their location and their parents' profession, they may well be able to access information and opportunities that the child of two lawyers based in the West Midlands could not readily access.

The answers directors gave us about their parents' / carers' working life were categorised using the NRS Social Grades.

A	Upper Middle Class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle Class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower Middle Class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled Working Class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working class	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
E	Non working	Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners, and others who depend on the welfare state for their income

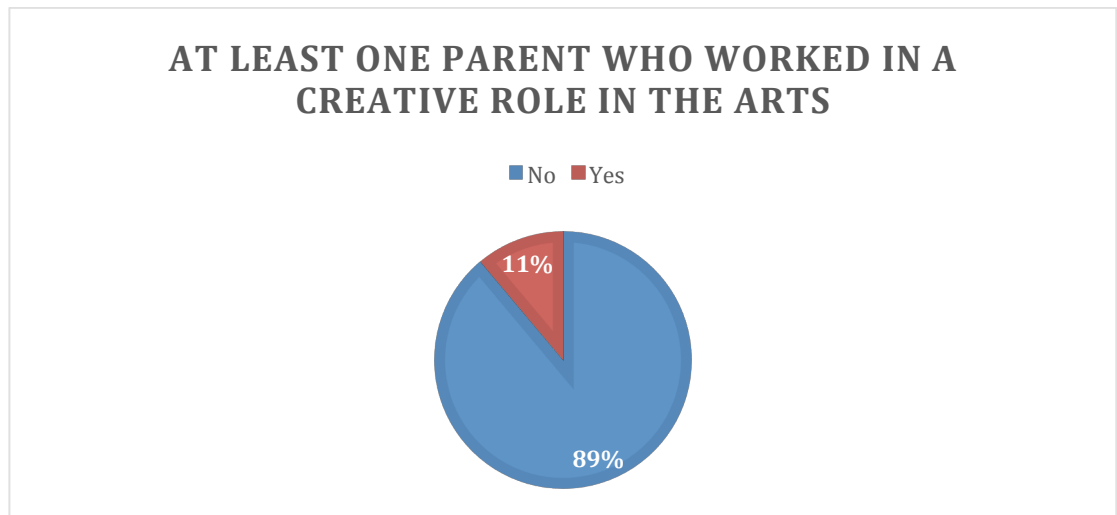
SOCIAL GRADE BREAKDOWN



Response	Percentage		Guide to wider population
AB	79.0%		27%
C1	11.4%		29%
C2	6.2%		21%
D	2.8%		15%
E	0.6%		8%

79% of the workforce is made up of directors who come from what is categorised as either an upper-middle class or middle class background. In contrast this category makes up only 27% of the population as a whole.

The results were then categorised as jobs within the arts and non – arts jobs:



Here, only 11% of directors state that at least one parent / carer worked within the arts.

It is worth noting that the most common job for a parent of a director appears to be in the education sector.

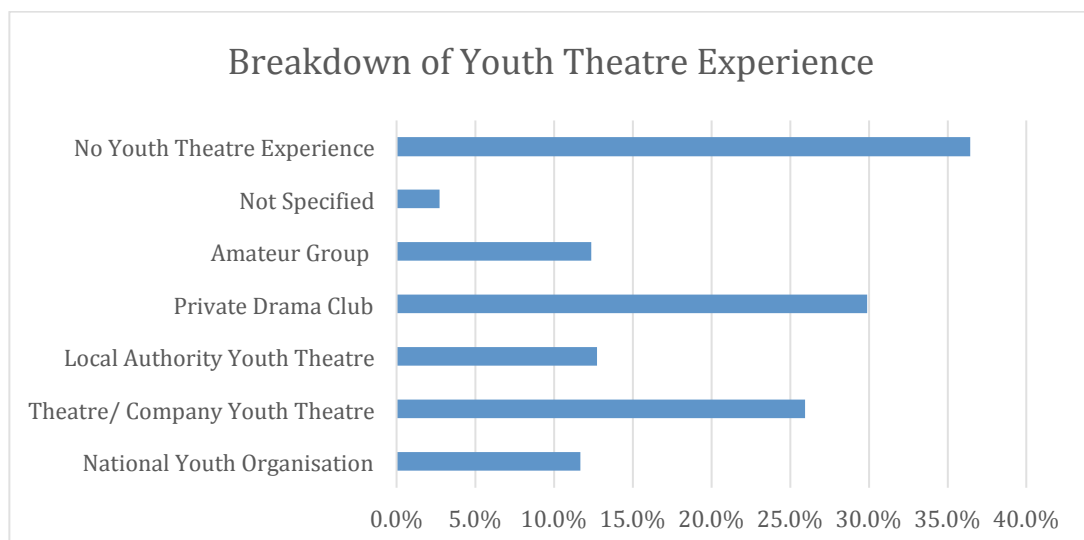
The number of directors who come from a family background classed as 'AB' is far higher than the national average. However, having parents who work in the arts does not appear to be a significant factor in choosing a career as a theatre director.

Directors' experience of extra-curricular drama growing up:

Directors were asked whether they had participated in a drama group or youth theatre when growing up. 63.6% of directors stated they had taken part in a youth theatre or drama group.

The results were categorised as:

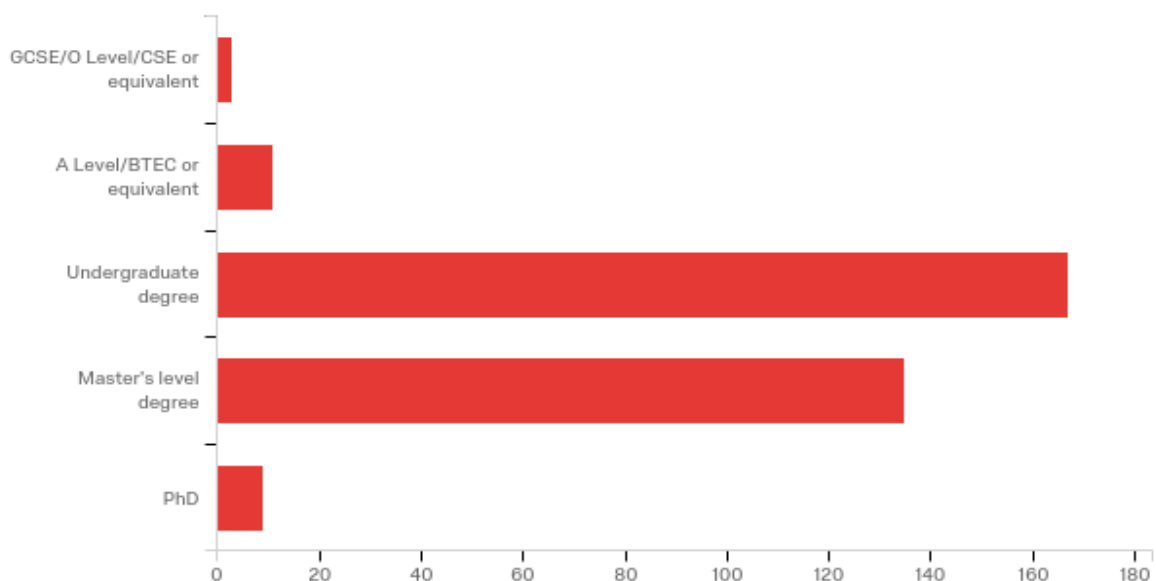
- national youth organisation (such as the National Youth Theatre)
- theatre / company youth theatre (a youth theatre attached to a theatre company)
- local authority youth theatre (run / funded by the local authority)
- private drama group (not one attached to a theatre or run by the local authority)
- Amateur dramatics group



How qualified are our directors?

Theatre jobs, including directors, are amongst the few careers where educational qualifications are, theoretically, of no particular value to potential employers. Anecdotally however, emerging directors often feel disadvantaged by a lack of qualifications – especially the lack of an MA - and there is a worrying trend amongst emerging and prospective directors to believe that it is essential for a director to be educated to MA level. This assumption may be misguided, but it highlights the lack of clear, transparent and relevant advice available about routes into directing. The concern does have some validity as some MA's offer placements which give those students a foothold in the industry which other potential directors cannot access. This is discussed on page 33.

What is the highest level of education for directors surveyed?

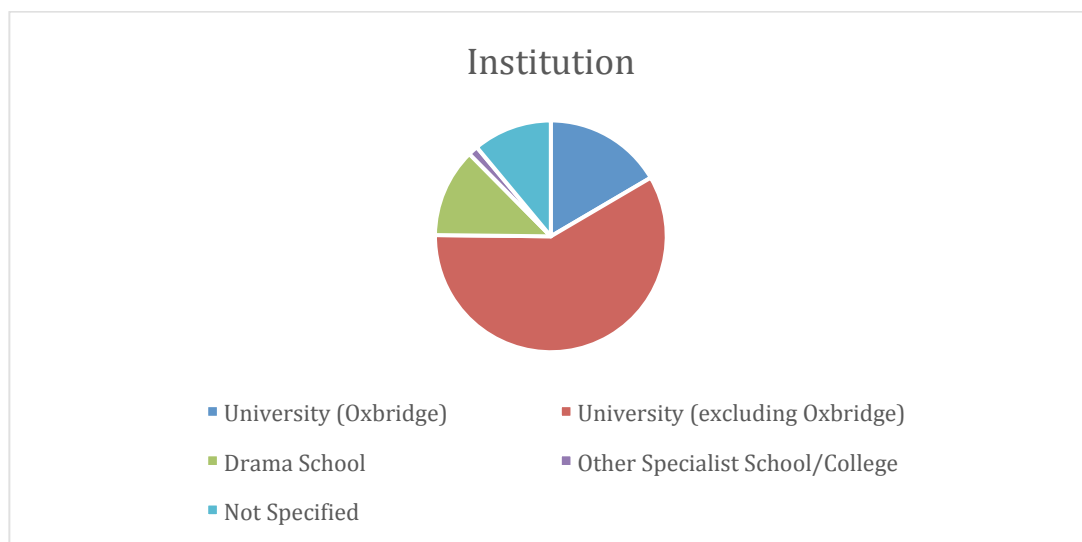


Answer	%
GCSE/O Level/CSE or equivalent	0.92%
A Level/BTEC or equivalent	3.38%
Undergraduate degree	51.38%
Master's level degree	41.54%
PhD	2.77%
Total	100%

92.92% of directors surveyed were educated to degree level or higher.

Breaking down which institutions directors obtained their degree or MA from shows that universities (excluding Oxbridge) account for 59.4% of directors.

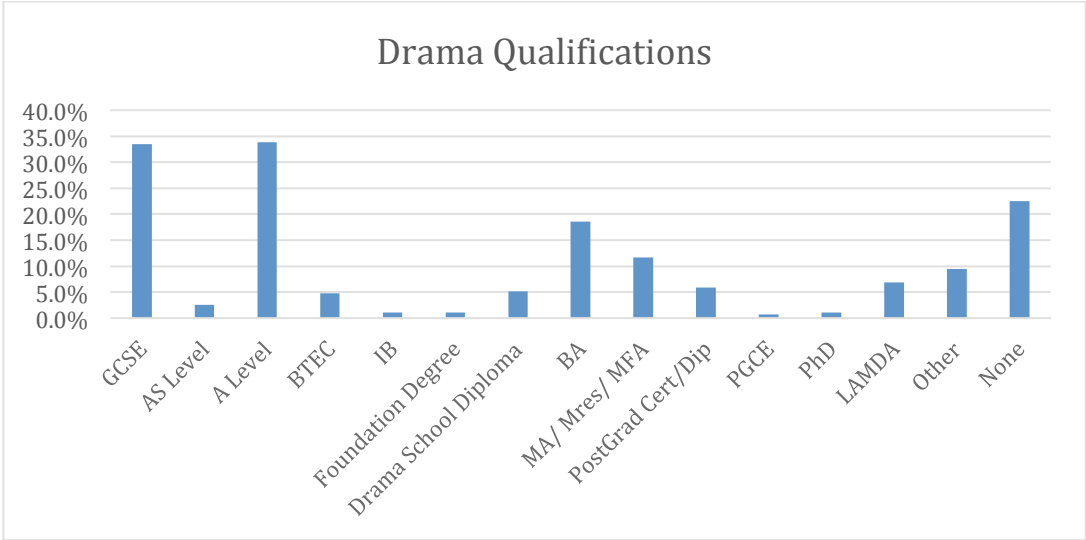
Oxbridge educated directors account for 16.6% of those surveyed.



Whilst the Gulbenkian report does not give a clear percentage of directors who were Oxbridge educated in the late 1980's, it does highlight that 'a very high proportion of middle-aged directors working in British Theatre studied at Oxford or Cambridge'. Whilst the Gulbenkian report does not give a specific

number of senior directors who were Oxbridge educated, it suggests that the opportunity of running a student theatre company (one reviewed by national press) had helped many senior theatre directors when starting out. This correlates with the current questions about MAs, discussed later in the report. The Gulbenkian report goes on to list prominent theatre directors under the age of 45, the majority of whom were not educated at Oxford or Cambridge, taking this as an indication that ‘there seems to be a move away from the Oxbridge network’. It would appear that this trend has continued over the years.

When asking whether a director had any drama qualifications (at any level) 77.5% said they had. This broke down into the following categories:



(LAMDA in this case denotes the exams many young people take in speech and drama rather than the full time courses the drama school offers. It is also reasonable to expect some people have mis-labelled their exams as LAMDA

when they were in fact Trinity Guildhall or similar, as LAMDA seems to have become the shorthand title for all speech and drama exams).

33.5% of directors took a drama related GCSE, and 33.8% of directors took a drama related A Level. This compares to only 18.5% of directors taking a drama degree and only 11.6% of directors taking an MA in a drama related subject.

With GCSE and A Level subjects the outliers, it reminds us how vital formal secondary education is in introducing a new generation to the ideas of directing. Both the GCSE and A Level syllabus introduce ideas around directing and directors, and this is often the first time a young person will have considered these 'invisible' roles.

92.92% informed us that they were educated to undergraduate or MA level, but only 18.5% reported taking a drama related subject at undergraduate level and 11.6% reported taking a drama related subject at MA level.

With the majority of those surveyed having been educated to undergraduate or MA level, but with so few directors having taken drama related subjects at university, it would appear that university plays a very small role in the formal training of directors, and that the benefit of a university education potentially lies more in the societies and drama companies of a university rather than in a formal course in directing.

In work training schemes

The directors surveyed were asked whether they had undertaken any kind of 'in work' training. 73% said they had no in work training, with 27% saying they had. Of those that said they had received a place on a training scheme, this broke down as follows:

Response	Percentage (from respondents who said 'yes')
RTYDS	37.8%
JMK	5.6%
Arts Council/ Creative Scotland	7.8%
Jerwood	4.4%
BBC Performing Arts Fellowship	2.2%
National Theatre	8.9%
Genesis Award/ Young Vic	4.4%
Other In-House Scheme	27.8%

In this instance 'other in house schemes' includes schemes run by individual theatres such as the Donmar, the Royal Court, and the former Orange Tree scheme (and many others).

Given how selective and highly competitive these schemes are, it is not surprising that only a small proportion of the workforce have obtained a place on one of these schemes. Given RTYDS is the longest standing scheme (dating back to the 1960s), it is not surprising that it accounts for a significant amount of in-work training. Over 50% of the directors surveyed were over the age of 35, which means many of the newer schemes would not have been operational when they were emerging directors. It is likely that the recent expansion of some of these schemes will make more of an impact on directors in the future than it appears they do at the present.

As most directors surveyed recorded their assistant director credits in a separate section of the survey, assistant director bursaries (for single productions) which both JMK and the Young Vic offer are recorded elsewhere.

The very selective nature of these schemes has a significant impact on those who receive the opportunities. As Sue Emmas (Artistic Director RTYDS and Associate Artistic Director at the Young Vic) observed – many of the directors who are accepted on to one of these schemes, then get further and are more successful with subsequent schemes, as their application stands out, and there is an inevitable seal of approval. Whilst they do not account for a considerable proportion of the workforce, those that are successful on these schemes are that much more likely to build a solid portfolio of work.

The problem with the schemes and how they are evolving

One of the issues many emerging directors would report was that when applying for a scheme, especially the assistant director schemes, they would be given feedback to ‘gain more experience’ or to ‘take an unpaid assistant’s job and apply next year’. This evidence is entirely anecdotal, but it certainly used to be the case that the majority of those who found a place on an apprentice scheme came with other assistant credits and often work created on the fringe. Much of the assisting would have been unpaid, and the fringe work self produced.

When looking at whom to give a valuable opportunity to, especially when the opportunity is going to an emerging director, then commitment is often one of the few things that appear measurable. It is also reasonable to assume that a career as a theatre director will take some tenacity, and that self-starters are no bad thing. Tenacity may be an important characteristic of a theatre director (and to pretend otherwise is to sell a lie about the competitive nature of the industry a director is about to enter) but when tenacity turns into privilege, and when important opportunities become available only to those who can afford to take unpaid placements, or to self fund work, then there is a threat to the diversity of the workforce.

Spotting that there was a need to offer training and guidance at an earlier level than these schemes were catering for, both the RTYDS and the JMK reformed their models.

The RTYDS used to be confined to an 18-month residency (traditionally three placements each year). The RTYDS now operates a four tiered programme, starting with an introduction to directing programme which is specifically designed 'for people from backgrounds currently under-represented in UK theatre as a result of barriers arising from social, gender, financial, ethnic, cultural, geographic or educational disadvantage or disability',

The second tier of the programme is a three-month placement. This effectively takes the place of the unpaid assisting directors were once

encouraged to pursue. These three-month placements are also aimed at directors traditionally under-represented in theatre.

The third tier is the eighteen-month placement the RTYDS has traditionally been known for.

The final tier is an associate directors residency, which is currently being piloted by Northern Stage.

In the last four years, RTYDS provided training opportunities for over 500 directors and partnered with 45 theatres or companies.

Meanwhile the JMK have been developing a regional network for emerging directors, helping to combat the lack of opportunity for emerging directors outside of London. The JMK regional network engages with a large pool of directors through workshops and master classes. It has also offered 24 assistant director bursaries over the last four years, a step that starts to tackle the long held assumption that an emerging director must take an unpaid placement before getting on to a scheme.

The Birkbeck Factor

In conversations with directors at every level, including emerging directors and artistic directors, there was a genuine concern that the industry was favouring those with MAs over those without.

One of the biggest topics for conversation was often 'The Birkbeck Effect'.

The Birkbeck MA was developed in response to the Gulbenkian report, and much of the syllabus has been developed from the recommendations of the report. The MA is often considered one of the most successful training grounds for emerging directors and in the space of a short amount of time has trained over 90 directors, with over 80% of those graduates working regularly as theatre directors. In 2017, former Birkbeck students directed work at the National Theatre, the RSC, and the Royal Court, as well as some of the most significant theatres across the country.

The success of Birkbeck seems partly down to its roots in the Gulbenkian report, partly down to the selective nature of the MA (many other MA courses seem to recruit more directors than they can reasonably engage with in any meaningful way), but most significantly, the success of the course is, in large part, down to the year-long placement a student receives within a theatre.

The placement has become one of the most contentious and talked about issues. When the course started, the Birkbeck student placement sat alongside any other assistant director schemes and placements the theatre provided. As funding got tighter, so theatres appeared to cut down on funded placements, but keep the Birkbeck scheme, which is an income generator for theatres (Birkbeck naturally pays theatres for the contact time they provide for

a student). There appears to be no statistical evidence that theatres stopped providing funded placements in favour of Birkbeck students, and in some cases it is probable that the Birkbeck placement filled a gap that had always existed. However there is a powerful perception that Birkbeck has taken away paid opportunities for emerging directors.

The ideal solution is that a Birkbeck student is not, and should not be taking the place of a paid assistant director; they are rather there on a student placement. A number of theatres have Birkbeck students on placement alongside directors on bursary attachments and directors who are paid assistants (especially on larger commercial co productions and musicals). This would appear to be already happening, and something artistic directors are alert to.

What remains is a powerful myth that the only way to succeed as a director is through an expensive MA programme. This misconception highlights the need for far more transparency about theatre careers and much better careers guidance to be made available.

There is also, arguably, a responsibility from Birkbeck to ensure that their partner theatres are not using the placement as a replacement for a paid opportunity, and that their own students are not being exploited by taking on something that amounts to an unpaid job. The student placement must remain a learning placement, and not become an assistant director job.

We don't train directors

Almost thirty years after the Gulbenkian report, which examined the very notion of, and need for, training theatre directors in the UK, it is surprising to discover that we do not actually train directors in any significant way.

Whilst 92.92% of directors surveyed were educated to degree level or higher, only 18.5% of directors reported taking a drama degree and only 11.6% of directors reported taking an MA in a drama related subject.

When directors were asked whether they had undertaken an in-work scheme / apprenticeship, only 27% said they had.

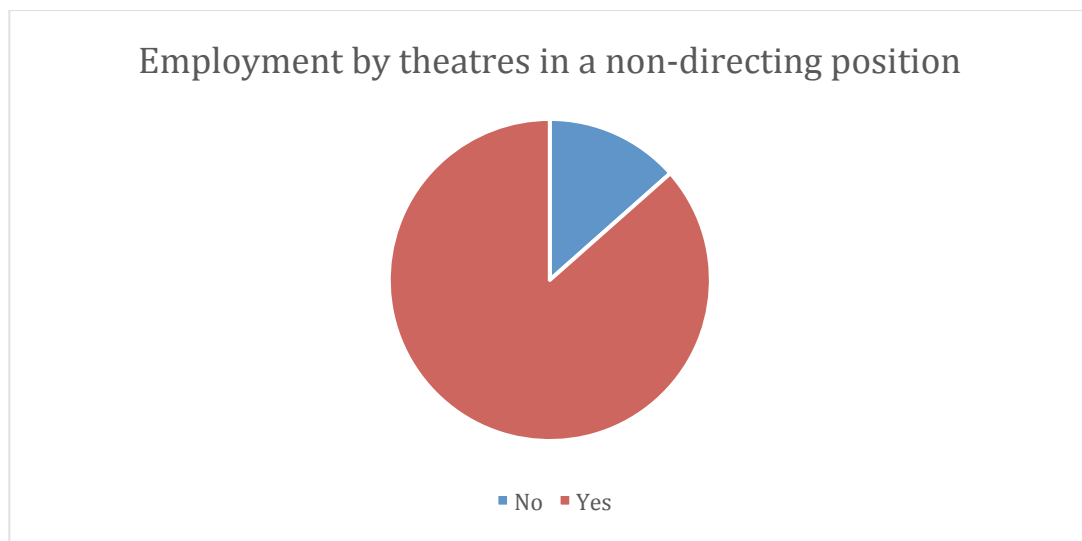
This would suggest that the role higher education plays in formally training directors is minimal, as is the role of in-work schemes. This isn't to dismiss these pathways – as previously acknowledged, an MA from Birkbeck or a placement with RTYDS will be incredibly significant in forging the subsequent career of that particular director. For those who take these opportunities they are very valuable. The surprising factor is how few directors seem to have any formal training, especially given the rise in university drama courses.

Thirty years on from the Gulbenkian report and directors are still self taught, and learning on the job.

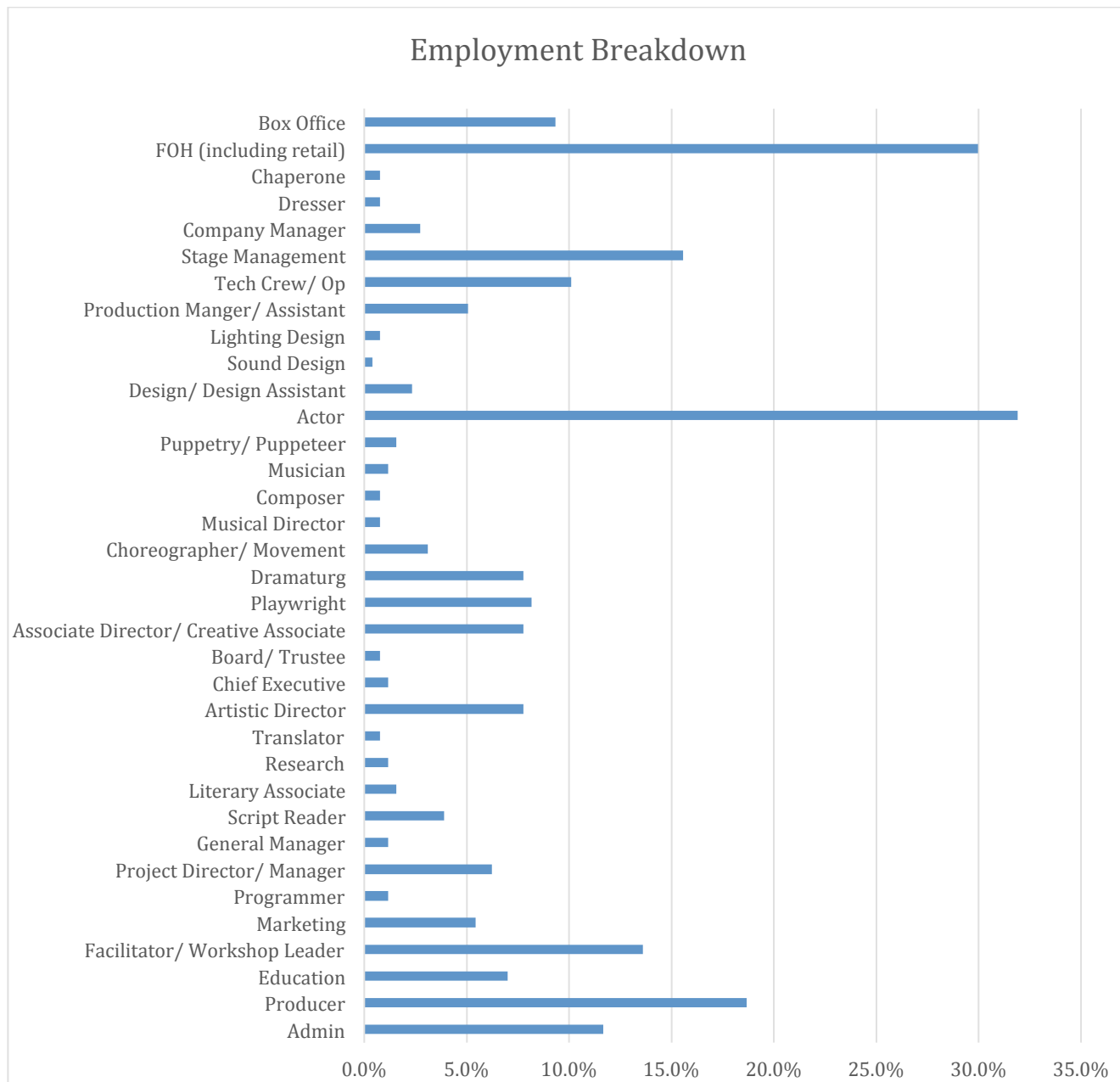
Higher education seems to play an important part in the life of a director, but what a director learns at university would appear to be less important.

The working life of directors

The directors surveyed were asked whether they had worked in other roles within a theatre, either before becoming directors, or alongside directing. Of those surveyed, 86.5% stated they had taken employment in a non-directing position.



31.9% of directors reported that they had at some point worked as an actor. 30% of directors had worked front of house. Stage management, producing and workshop facilitation were all significant roles for directors to have taken.



With 86.5% of directors reporting that they have worked in other roles within a theatre, it might help to explain the lack of training directors find within higher education. Directing appears to be something people arrive at having worked in other roles. Someone may start out an usher, create a career for themselves as an actor, and then start to take on the role of a director. There are also a number of DSM's who have sat alongside a director within rehearsals and have learnt the role of the director from observing rehearsals.

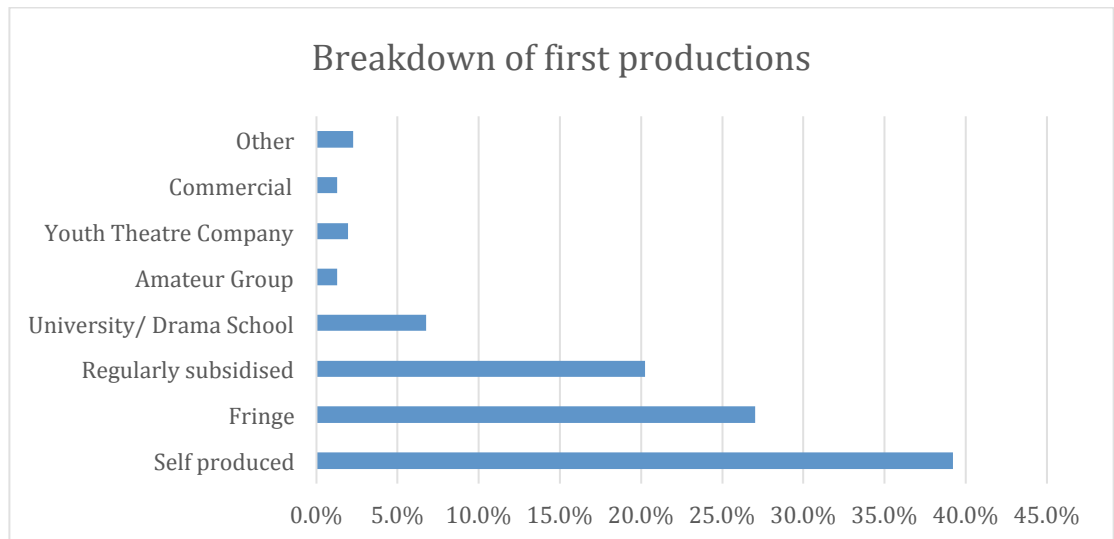
Of course the role of an actor or a stage manager should not be considered junior positions to be taken en route to becoming a director, and for the vast majority of actors and stage management a career as a director is not the end goal. It is the case however that actors and stage managers are ideally placed to understand the director's role, having witnessed directors first hand during a rehearsal period.

A large number of directors included roles such as Artistic Director, Associate Director, and producer as separate to the role of director. Roles such as dramaturge, script reader and workshop leader were also listed, suggesting that the current workforce of directors have portfolio careers, and use the skills of directing in a range of capacities within the arts. This is strongly backed up by the majority of directors interviewed, most of whom were working in a range of roles, mostly linked to that of director, whilst not being strictly the role of director.

What were directors' first productions?

Directors were asked who produced the first production they directed.

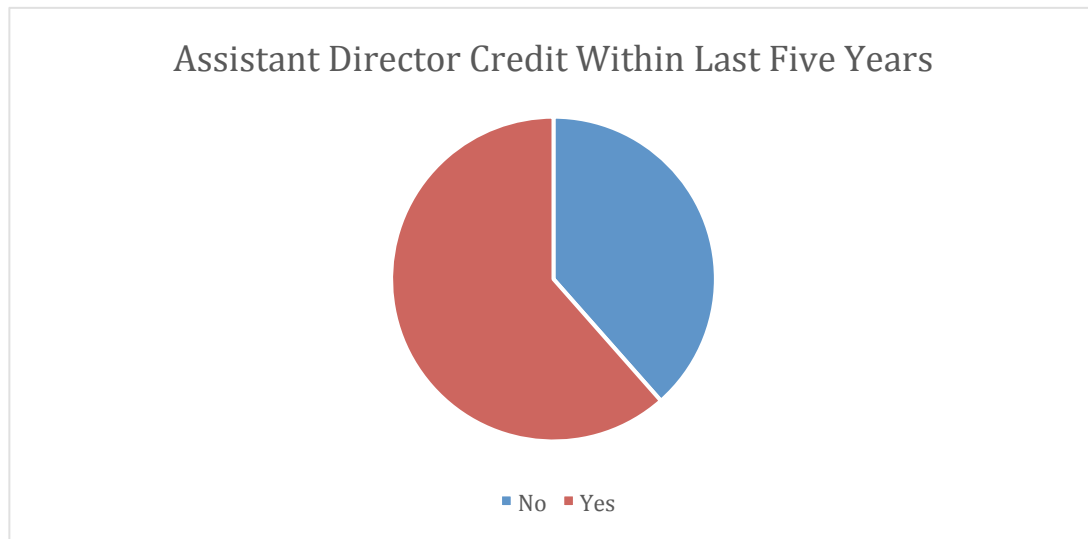
The answers given broke down into the following categories:



39.2% of directors stated their first production was self-produced. 18.7% of directors also stated that they had taken employment as a producer (in the previous question). There has always been a crossover between producer and director, and that crossover continues to be significant, especially for an emerging director. It isn't surprising that a first production will often be self-produced – as an 'unknown quantity' often the only person to take a risk on a director will be that director. But the way theatres have started to engage emerging artists, and the changing nature of employment (as discussed in part 2) also suggests that understanding the skills most associated with creative producing are increasingly necessary for emerging directors.

Work as an Assistant Director

Directors were asked whether they had worked as an assistant director within the last five years.

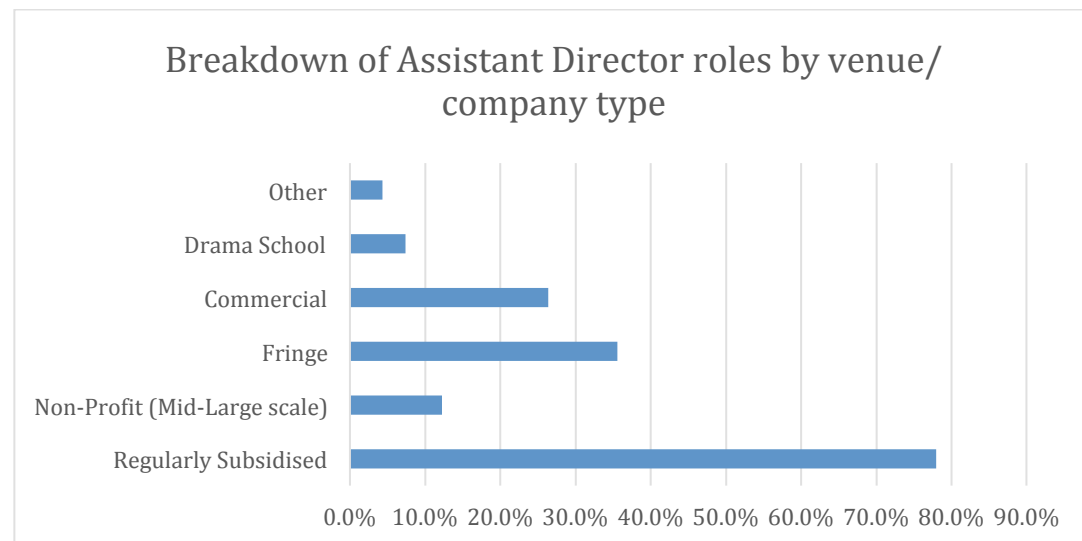


61.5% of directors stated that they had worked as an assistant director within the last five years. This is a very high proportion of directors, especially when taking in to consideration that the survey was answered by directors at every level of the industry. This does suggest that taking on an assistant role is one of the most popular routes directors take, and suggests that the culture of director training has not changed a great deal since the 1980's, despite the growth of director courses and schemes:

'Most people favored attachments and the assistant director experience, because that was the way they entered the profession. "Probably the best training is not by 'course' but by working as an assistant, however humble, in a practicing company" said Lindsay Anderson, who had been rejected by both

the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and the BBC Television training scheme’
(Gulbenkian Pg. 93)

Breaking down where directors assisted, the regularly subsidised theatres and companies had employed the most assistants by a considerable margin.



In this context, non-profit (mid-large scale) consists of venues and companies who are not regularly funded but are still working off a not-for-profit model. These theatres include Shakespeare’s Globe, The Old Vic and the Orange Tree.

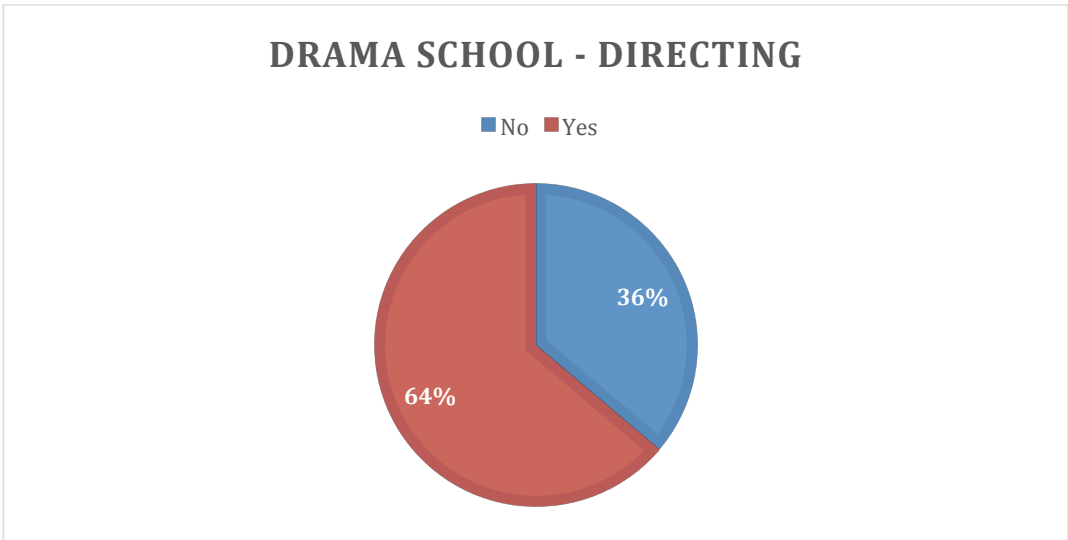
It is not surprising that the subsidised sector takes on the majority of assistant directors. It can be argued that regularly funded companies have a duty to nurture a new generation of theatre makers, as much as they have a duty to nurture a new generation of audience.

The relatively small number of assistant directors in non-profit companies is partly due to the very small number of companies that fit into this bracket.

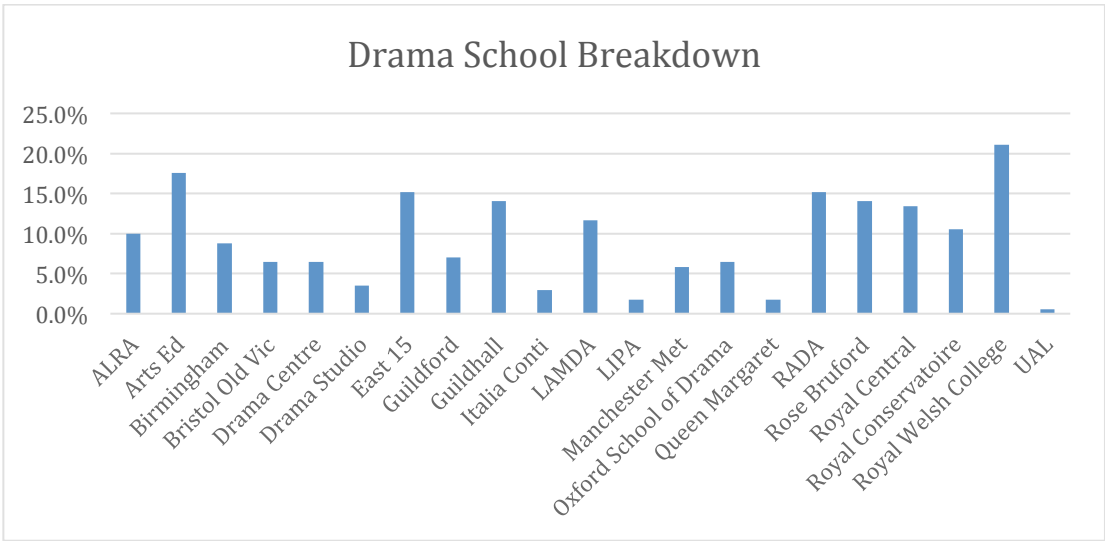
The role of an assistant director in the commercial sector is often a job with an enormous amount of responsibility, maintaining large productions both on tour and in the West End. There is a section of directors who specifically earn a living maintaining commercial productions, and whilst this can be a training ground in the same way assistants work in the subsidised sector, it is not the primary function of most assistant roles in the commercial sector.

Work in drama schools

Directors were asked whether they had directed productions within a drama school. The question specified drama schools rather than universities, although it should be noted that there is an increasing amount of employment for directors within the university sector, particularly as a number of universities start to replicate a vocational drama school structure.



64% of directors had directed work in drama schools over the past five years. The drama schools they worked in broke down as:

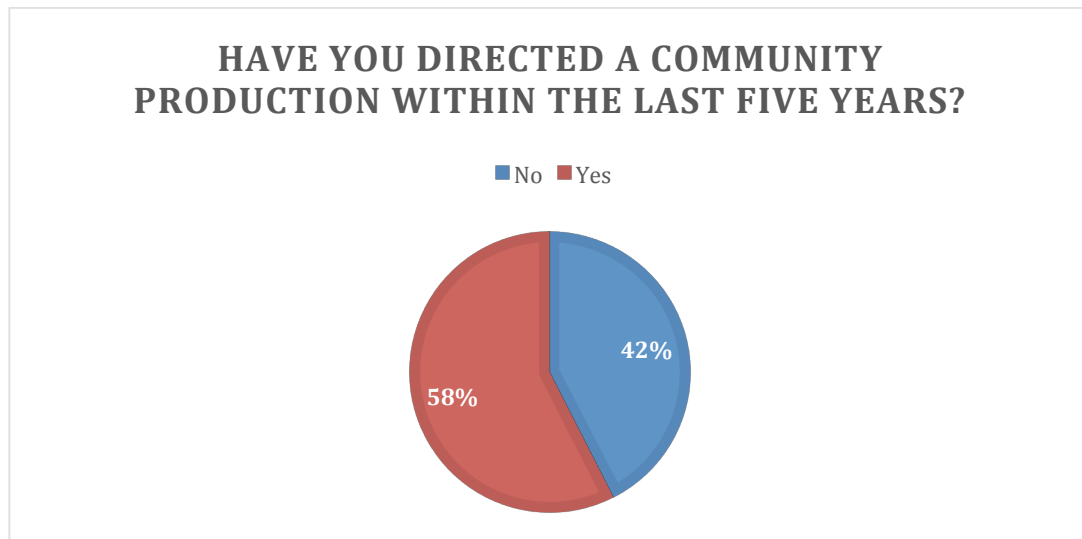


Drama schools play an important role in the training of directors, offering opportunities for large scale, main-house productions with big casts, and often of plays that a director would otherwise struggle to find a platform for. Equally, the director is working with students, and there is a responsibility to ensure that any director working with students is established enough to offer a valuable experience to the student actors, both in terms of process and the quality of the final production. Final productions in drama schools offer a very pressurised environment for a director, with students becoming uncomfortably conscious of the competitive nature of the industry they are about to enter.

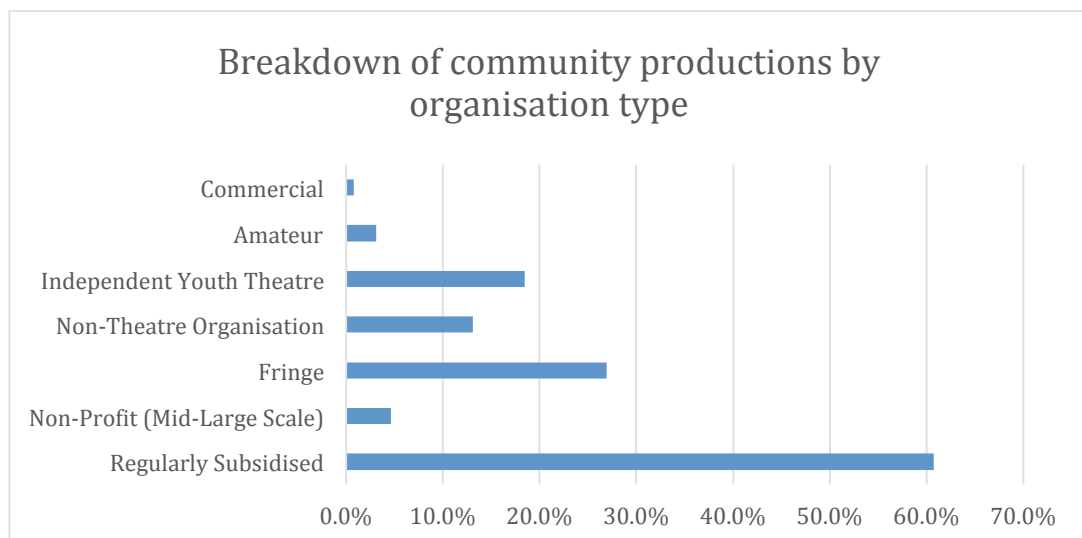
At best, a director working with graduating actors at a drama school has the opportunity to direct work on a larger scale than they might otherwise be able to create, whilst the students get to work with visiting directors, connected to current industry practice, who are also often in a position to work with these actors again after graduation. These opportunities are primarily about the student actor, stage manager and sometimes designer's learning. The training it provides for directors is secondary to the training it is providing the students.

Work in a community setting

Directors were asked whether they had directed a community production within the last five years. 58% of directors reported that they had:



Those results broke down into the following:



In recent years, there has arguably been a rise in the involvement of community within the main season of many theatre companies' work.

Productions such as the National Theatre of Wales' *The Passion*, the RSC's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Play for the Nation*, and the National Theatre's

We're Here Because We're Here are all examples of some of the most innovative work of our regularly subsidised flagship companies, and they are all examples of how community is becoming embedded into the fabric of theatre making.

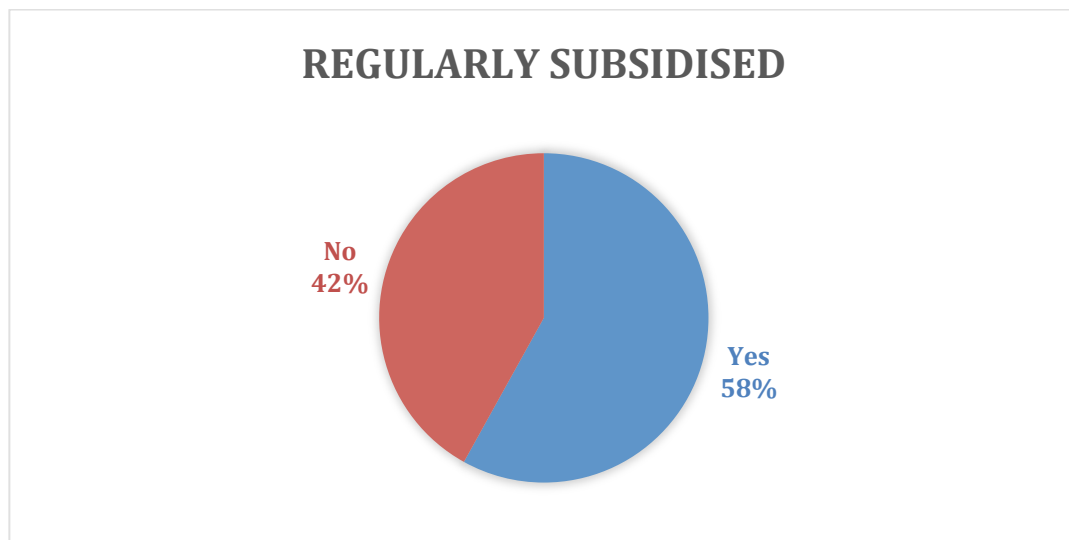
The work recorded within this report will include youth theatre and amateur productions, as well as less traditional work. 60% of the community work created happened within regularly funded companies, and a further 13.1% was created with a non-theatre organization.

With almost 60% of directors reporting that they are creating work within a community setting, it seems clear that the specific challenges of directing non-professional actors, and often working within non-theatrical spaces are fast becoming part of the work of a director. In comparison the Gulbenkian report makes almost no reference to work within the community.

Directing work in a professional setting

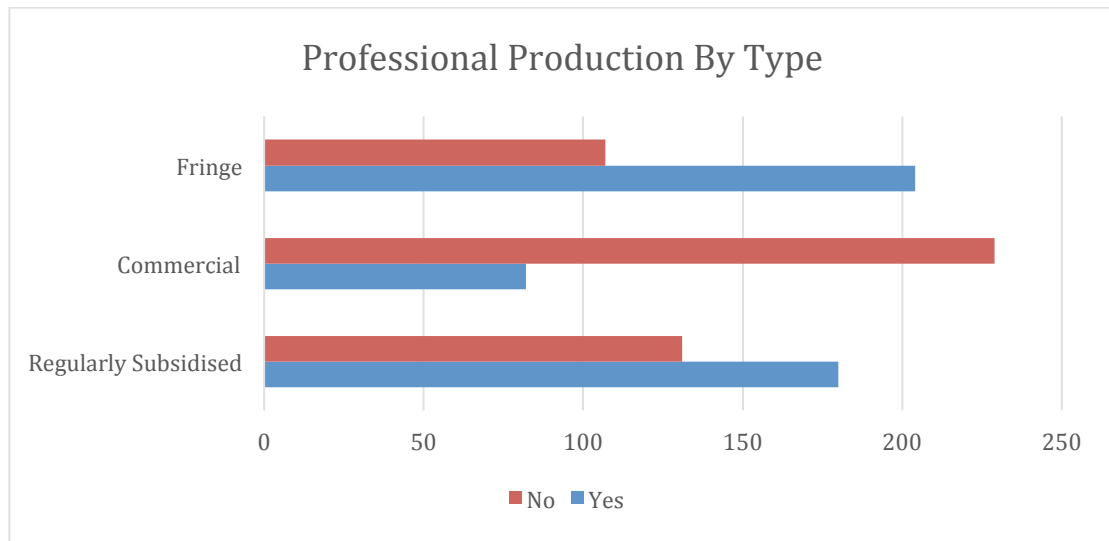
Directors were asked where they had directed professional work within the last five years. In this context 'professional' relates to work that is not within a community setting, or work within a drama school. This report did not examine whether the company was paid or not (which is sometimes considered an indication of whether a work was professional or not), rather whether the actors were professional (rather than community, amateur, or in-training).

58% of directors reported they had directed work with regularly subsidised companies within the last five years.



Directors were also asked if they had directed work on the fringe, and within the commercial sector. In the last five years, the majority of directors' work was produced for fringe / independent production companies and theatres.

This was followed by regularly subsidised companies, and with the commercial sector in third place.



The increasing importance of work created within the fringe and independent sector is in evidence both within these statistics and when talking to emerging directors across the country. There are of course directors who have chosen to work entirely independently, but those who are looking to build a career within the subsidised sector are increasingly aware they will have to build a body of work away from these venues.

One director based in the southwest described it as 'climbing through the window when you discover the door is locked'. She went on to describe having created a play for young people in a small fringe space. She subsequently toured this production before it was booked into the season of a flagship-subsidised theatre. She surmised that had she gone, CV in hand, and knocked on that theatre's door, she would have been unlikely to have even had a meeting. Creating work and touring it allowed her a way of 'climbing in the window'.

The changing way theatres are engaging with directors is discussed at greater length in part 2.

Conclusion to part one

- The directing workforce is made up of an (approximate) 50/50 gender split, although that weighting is not yet reflected in the directors employed.
- Over 89% of directors identify as white.
- Over 84 % of directors identify as having no known disability.
- Over 50% of the directors surveyed were over the age of 36.
- 78.4% of directors come from outside of London, however 55.4% of directors currently live in London.
- 79% of directors come from an upper middle class / middle class background.
- 63.6 % of directors reported having some involvement with a youth theatre.
- 92.92% of directors are educated to degree level or higher, however only 18.5% of directors reported studying a drama related subject at undergraduate level, and 11.6% of directors studied a drama related subject at MA level.

- 73% of directors reported having taken no in-work placement or training, although 61.5% had reported taking an assistant director role within the last five years.
- 85.5% of directors reported having taken non-directing employment within the theatre. The most popular non-directing job is as an actor.
- 39.2% of directors reported their first production was self-produced, with a further 18.7% stating their first production was produced on the fringe.
- 64% of directors reported directing work in drama schools in the last five years.
- 58% of directors reported directing community productions in the last five years.
- 58% of directors reported directing professional work within the last five years.

Part 2

Finding a Voice

Introduction to part 2

Part one specifically examined the data provided by directors completing a survey. The second part of the study is based on interviews and group discussions with a range of directors, artistic directors, and training providers. The nature of the interviews means that some of the evidence is more anecdotal than part one, although the data from part one should usually back up the views given in part two, and where it does not, this is highlighted, with possible reasons for the discrepancy of appearance vs. reality.

The title to part two (and to the study as a whole) is based on an interview David Lan gave to Michael Coveney many years ago, in which he described the Young Vic Directors programme as there to help emerging directors 'find their voice'. At the time, as an emerging director myself, this notion was very appealing. I had assisted a considerable number of directors (more than I should have done) and had realised that the benefits of assisting were limited, especially as I was starting to examine my own voice as a director. In writing this, I have tried to find the original quote from David Lan but the interview seems to have disappeared, so I quote it here in the hope he has not been misquoted.

During the many interviews I held, one director objected to the idea of directors finding their voice, feeling that it had become trendy for directors to have a point of view, but that what was actually needed was for directors to learn their craft. The views of this director were so articulate that the title was almost changed, but then on closer examination I decided that, much like an actor learning vocal technique – finding a voice required a director to learn their craft in order to communicate their point of view, not simply gain a point

of view. The director's voice refers to their vision as well as the craft needed to communicate that vision.

Reaching cold spots

According to the directors surveyed, those who find a career as a director come from urban areas, often the places best funded by the Arts Council and local authorities. The majority of directors have taken part in youth theatre or community theatre activities.

With clear cold spots in arts funding (and therefore within arts training) it would seem necessary, on the surface, to have some form of public engagement that exposes young people in areas of poor arts provision to the possibilities of a career in theatre. There has been a certain amount of discussion about whether such a scheme would be digital or involve visits from arts leaders. The Directors Charitable Foundation is already trialing a scheme to send directors (both stage and screen) into schools to talk about the role of a director. There are also numerous online projects that explore arts jobs including the role of a director.

This type of engagement is controversial. A great many directors expressed concern (and a certain amount of anger) at what they considered to be selling a 'false dream'. Until we can ensure the right support structures are in place to allow directors to thrive, whatever their background, many directors, when asked, saw such in-school engagement as potentially detrimental.

David Loumgair runs COMMON, an arts organisation which exists to support the UK theatre industry in achieving greater socio-economic diversity, and help working-class artists build sustainable careers in theatre. When asked about engaging with young people in schools, he didn't think it "right or moral to be going into schools and to be advertising or inspiring young people to

pursue a specific career as a director, a role that is potentially the most limited job in terms of opportunities across the entirety of the theatre industry. The career progression for being theatre directors is not mapped out quite as clearly as it is for being an actor, or producer or playwright, and there is certainly less ability to achieve sustainability in this role.”

Loumgair went on to agree that “directing is probably a job you should arrive at via other experiences and jobs in theatre and specifically within school campaigning, those kind of workshops should be about the broader diversity of roles and careers that exists in the theatre industry, not just directing.”

The second caution about in-school training / engagement is around specializing in directing too early. Directing does not appear to be the graduate job many courses lead young people to believe. With over 80% of directors reporting having worked in other roles within theatres, and with many employers admitting, when asked, that the gap between an emerging scheme, and the opportunity to direct within their organisation is often a decade or more, it starts to appear as if theatre makers have portfolio careers, with directors coming through from other roles, or juggling directing, acting, writing, teaching etc. For any in-school engagement to be of use, it requires more joined up thinking that gives a much broader overview of the roles and career paths people take (not simply limiting the conversation to directing). In the past few years there have been reports of skills shortages in certain areas of theatre (usually craft subjects such as costume construction). Any in-school engagement project would do well to highlight the areas of the industry that

are undersubscribed, rather than (or at least alongside) those areas oversubscribed.

The Graduate Director Myth

Many of the emerging directors who were interviewed spoke of their concern over not having an MA. There was a myth growing that you need to be educated to MA level to be taken seriously as a director. When this was interrogated, there was a belief that it wasn't so much the qualification that was needed, but the experience (and contacts) an MA provided.

The results of those directors surveyed suggested that the MA plays a less important role in training directors than the anecdotal evidence would indicate.

There were also several directors with MA's who were starting to feel that their MA qualification was actually hindering them (although once again there seems to be little evidence to support the fear that the MA specifically disadvantages you).

The problem seems to stem from the fact that most of the 'gatekeepers' interviewed (be they artistic directors, or those running emerging director programmes) acknowledge there is a gap (which many measure as a decade) between emerging programmes and large-scale work. The cohorts of an MA are usually recent graduates, or those in their early twenties with some directing experience, but the MA is preparing them for a job they cannot, in any significant way, engage with for many years after graduation.

There is a disconnect in our outlook on the role of a director, which encourages people to apply for MA's, to take part in emerging director

schemes, and to see themselves as fully fledged directors at the age of 25, and an industry which is frequently not ready to engage with them for another five or ten years. We need to start to talk about the role of director as something more senior. This doesn't mean there won't ever be 21 year olds with an astonishing grasp of their voice and their craft, who will find their place quicker than most – there will always be outliers. We need to stop seeing the outliers as the norm. A vast number of directors who were interviewed discussed taking work as dramaturges, youth theatre directors, or project managers of community engagement programmes. A look at the data on page 37 also suggests that directors engage with a vast array of other jobs alongside directing, and before becoming directors.

Directors interviewed often felt they needed to keep this other work secret. They saw directing a community project as something that would prevent them progressing as a director, rather than something to be proud of, something that could progress their career as a director, or even something that was, already, work as a director.

This seems surprising, since there would appear to have been a growth in large scale community projects within the subsidised sector, as highlighted in part one. Gatekeepers, who were interviewed, spoke at length about the desire to have directors who were first and foremost 'citizens' (a term Sarah Frankcom at the Royal Exchange, Manchester used). For many gatekeepers, the experience of working as a project manager, a producer, a dramaturge, actor or facilitator was a distinct advantage.

There is a real need for more honesty and clarity about the typical career path of a director. This is compounded by many senior directors, very generously

offering up their journeys, which often involve signing on. Whilst these stories are inspiring, many emerging directors complain they are of little relevance in a work climate where that simply isn't possible, and where housing is more of an issue than ever. There needs to be more of an effort to chart the current journey of a director, not how it was in the past.

Along with this, there needs to be much more support to mentor, and train those practitioners engaging with other aspects of a theatre's work. There was generally agreement between artistic directors that a practitioner who had already been engaged with other activities within the building would be more likely to understand and engage with the work of the company, and the audience the company works with.

Lorne Campbell at Northern Stage gave very specific examples of how this had worked for them, and there were other instances highlighted by other companies where such mentoring had happened on an informal basis.

None of this is to say that the role of (for example) a facilitator is more junior to that of a director, or that all facilitators long to be directors, or even that all directors can automatically work as a facilitator. It is clear however that very few people arrive in a theatre out of higher education as a director and remain a director for the next forty years. The gap in training is between emerging and 'established'. It is sometimes called 'mid career' (though it is not the actual 'mid' point of a career).

What does Mid-Career mean?

There has been a great deal of talk about 'mid-career' in conversations with directors, with many directors concerned that there had been a growth in emerging director opportunities, leaving mid-career directors unsupported.

One theme of these conversations was what we mean when we talk about 'mid – career' as it very rarely relates to the mid-point of a career. Mid career generally refers to a period after assisting or emerging schemes have ceased to be relevant but before a director has created a sustainable career as a director. In terms of age, most directors who appear to see themselves as mid-career are between 30 – 40. This age range isn't totally accurate, as it doesn't take into account those who come to directing later on.

When directors talk about mid-career they tend to be talking about a period when they no longer see themselves as emerging, but where they don't yet see themselves as established. It's the time a director feels least supported, and is least supported. They do not qualify for emerging schemes (nor are these schemes relevant for them) but they still need support to find a voice of their own. As they are not yet proven as a director, they are often considered high risk, or at the very least an unknown quantity by artistic directors. It is usually up to the director to self generate work.

Previously this part of a director's working life might have been covered by an associate or trainee associate's job within a theatre. For a period this role, in this form, almost disappeared from the landscape. There now seems to be a resurgence of associates, with a number of theatres offering a trainee

associate role. RTYDS have also developed a scheme in collaboration with Northern Stage. These roles help a director develop from an emerging director to established. They often help a director learn about governance and leadership and can also move a director from small scale projects to large scale work in a supported environment.

The period covered by 'mid- career' often affects directors who are still in a system that promotes the 'graduate job' lie previously discussed. A move that focuses on directing being something people arrive at later, and a focus on directors coming from other jobs in theatre, would bridge this gap – would-be directors would be encouraged to apply for dramaturgical, community engagement, or similar jobs. Directors often report being dissuaded from applying for these jobs as they are told it would damage their 'image' as a director. The people telling them not to apply are sometimes artistic directors. A lack of opportunity and support, and a lack of transparency, is leaving directors stranded for a decade. This creates a culture where only the most entrepreneurial, the loudest, and those most able to stay afloat with limited income survive. There is a big push at a grassroots level to diversify the directing workforce but if there isn't support later in a director's career, then the grassroots effort will be for nothing. Directing will likely always be a highly competitive job, and schemes will be selective – there is no suggestion that this can, should and will be changed. What does need to change to support 'mid – career' directors is honesty about how to create work, and structures put in place in order to support directors creating work.

Director as Citizen

Sarah Frankcom talked about a desire for directors to be connected to the community they are creating work with, and about how her role programming work was changing. She was increasingly developing projects over longer periods of time that engaged with communities rather than simply being about those communities. At the same time, she was finding that directors who were meeting her were pitching their big projects – a system she felt was unhelpful for both her, and for that director.

At Northern Stage, Lorne Campbell talked about an Associate, who had been working for a long period of time developing work in community engagement projects. The Associate's career grew as the projects grew. Lorne was now pushing the director to create more main house work, supporting the director's development. At the heart of the work was the community engagement, so even as the director moved away from 'pure' community projects and onto main house productions that are traditionally programmed and developed separately, he was taking a sense of the community the theatre serves with him.

There is a question theatres need to address, not only about how they develop relationships with directors but how directors develop as citizens, how they connect with the community that theatre is serving.

With the Royal Exchange and with Northern Stage, the conversation developed around both the idea of how those working within the building were developing a relationship with a theatre and its audience, as well as how work was being developed with the communities the theatre served. In separate

conversations with emerging directors, there was a sense that they were removed from this development. By embracing the fact that directors can develop through other roles within a theatre, and by stopping the pretense that directors are recent graduates, there is a greater opportunity to develop more voices in the way Northern Stage is.

The Gig Economy – learning from the theatre makers

It has been noted by numerous directors that the old employment models no longer exist, and yet a great deal of higher education is still set up with the old employment models in mind.

Twenty years ago there was a fairly robust set of studio spaces in regional theatres across the UK. Venues such as the Leicester Haymarket, the Derby Playhouse, and the Birmingham Rep would all commission and produce around six – nine new plays in a year. Each of these new plays would employ an (often) emerging director, along with designers, actors etc.

Each of the venues listed (in the case of the Haymarket, now the Curve Theatre) now runs an emerging artist scheme, which has replaced this old model of director employment. Most emerging artist schemes run off a version of the gig, or shared economy. Some of these models are respectable and respected, whilst others can be (usually inadvertently) abusive. None of the models is employment.

To take part on an emerging artist scheme or festival, it is usually the case that a venue will give the individual or company in-kind support, which amounts to approximately £15,000. This is usually a combination of space, technical resources, and marketing support. The emerging company is then expected to raise the additional budget needed from other sources, most commonly a £15,000 funding application to ACE. This model is slightly different in Scotland, and in Wales where the arts councils have slightly different funding requirements, although the principle remains the same.

When run well, this model of supporting emerging artists works. It acknowledges that the majority of artists are probably going to self-produce

initially (as this research has proven happens for the majority of directors), and it allows artists to lead on the work they want to create, rather than being a hired hand to create someone else's vision.

There is however a disconnect between this and much existing training in higher education, which still expects the old employment model of assistant, associate, studio production, main house production to hold true, and so isn't equipping emerging artists with the skills needed to successfully budget and fund work, or the opportunity to put them in touch with producers and arts administrators who can.

This way of working also favours theatre makers, devised work, and some new writing rather than directors wanting to rediscover classics, or create work on a large scale. The applications tend to favour the new, and the budgets limit the work to very small scale. Even the JMK Award, which has tended to be for directors to work on classics, has seen the productions grow smaller, and more weighted towards modern classics as the budgets become tighter and the rightful need to pay actors and production teams limits how far the resources can stretch.

This model of producing work has become the inevitable method by which most emerging directors mount work. This is especially true outside of London, when directors have local associations to a regional venue operating on this kind of model.

As many of these schemes are supporting emerging companies, what tends to happen is that a collective of recent graduates forms a company. UK Theatre has had a long tradition of such graduate / emerging companies going on to have long, internationally recognised lives. For an emerging

director however it means they are only getting to work with their peers. They are not being challenged, and getting to challenge senior writers, designers, actors or stage management. A number of artistic directors spoke of the wish to place these emerging visionaries with great actors and watch the sparks fly. There was an appetite to see this, but seemingly no impulse from artistic directors to make it happen.

This model is favouring directors who understand the funding process, and who are creating work that neatly fits into funding brackets. It has left a gap for those who are less focused on devised, and new writing led projects, and the structure makes it very hard for directors to imagine working on bigger canvasses.

Mentoring

Mid career directors (as defined in the previous section) often complained of a lack of support and a lack of a mentoring (either formal or informal). Those directors who had been through assistant director schemes were used to having established directors to observe and to reflect with, but as they moved on from those schemes they would find themselves isolated.

Anecdotally it is at this point that people reported being closest to stepping away, and dropping out of the industry. Having only interviewed and surveyed working directors, there is no numeric figure to verify this complaint, however the challenges directors reported tally with the Theatre Workforce review published in 2017. This reported a talent drain across the sector for those in their late thirties and early forties.

This time is particularly hard for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as there is likely to be less family support in place to sustain directors in this fallow period of a career. Many directors were quick to point out this isn't simply a financial problem, but also a cultural one. If your family (often your immediate support network) does not understand or appreciate the world you are trying to work in, it makes it that much harder to continue and to not find a more sustainable career.

Mentoring is not simply about the mental health of a director, and creating support networks for them, although this is all valuable. This point in a director's life is also a point at which most directors are looking to enlarge the canvas they are working on – in basic terms to move from studio spaces to larger stages. A number of directors talked about their first experiences directing for large, 'difficult' spaces such as the Olivier for the first time. They

often joked about the things no one tells you about the spaces (often seemingly trivial things on the surface – such as the size of the Olivier and the length of time it therefore takes for an actor to cross it – put an entrance centre stage!) They reflected that these craft based questions were obvious once you'd experienced it, but aren't always clear first time around. They are also the elements of craft that can kill a main house production.

Most artistic directors admitted that there was a necessary risk aversion, and they asked, 'how do we ensure that a director who is creating great work in a studio space can upscale that to a bigger space?' They were also clear that the risk aversion wasn't simply about protecting their theatre or company (although that was of course necessary) but also about protecting the director, not wanting to crush them by over-exposing them before they were ready.

It has often been said that we teach theatre directors in the UK through apprenticeships, and this tends to refer to the concept of learning the craft of directing as an assistant director. The ability to extend that apprenticeship beyond the assistant director role into a meaningful and practical mentoring programme was considered a positive idea.

Conclusion to part two

- The cold spots in arts funding, and therefore in arts training, has led to many young people not knowing about the careers open to them.
There are a number of schemes and initiatives being run to address this. There needs to be more joined up thinking.
- There is a myth that directing is something you arrive at relatively young. It appears to come from an outdated understanding of the industry.
- The point in a director's career that was generally considered most lacking in support was 'mid-career'. This does not literally mean the mid point of a career, but that time between emerging and established.
- Artistic directors spoke of the desire for directors to be citizens, and connected to the community they are creating work for. At the same time directors reported a fear of engaging too much with community work in case they damaged their image as a director.
- The arts have led the way in the gig economy, and much work is now being created within this model of work, especially with emerging artist festivals. There has been little support given to directors about how to engage with this process of making work. There has also been little support given to allow these companies and directors to up-scale to bigger work.
- A lack of bespoke mentoring was reported. This mentoring would help directors feel less isolated and would offer practical ways of learning the craft needed to expand their vision.

Part 3

Recommendations

The Diversity of Directors

The directors surveyed suggest that the industry continues to be made up of white middle class directors. These directors tend to come from urban areas, and tend to gravitate towards London (although this is likely to change in the coming years, as theatres start to engage with a local workforce).

An in-schools programme (either digital or physical) needs to be implemented to expose young people to the jobs in theatre. This programme must be more holistic than an in-schools directors programme – it must expose young people to the diversity of roles in theatre.

There are already a number of schemes to inspire young people. These include the Directors Charitable Foundation, Michael Grandage Futures, and Digital Theatre (to name three of many). For any programme to be effective, it would seem sensible for companies to come together to pool resources, and schemes need to be more strategic to ensure they are reaching the desired audience.

Examples such as the Get Into Teaching Campaign, or the I Heart New York campaign of the 1970s provide a good template, but they were, of course, marketing something that was undersubscribed. Any campaign to open young people to a career in theatre must first be honest and clear about what that career would look like.

Should such a campaign be desired, it would seem most appropriate for it to be led by UK Theatre (not least because it was UK Theatre who commissioned the comprehensive Workforce review). As it is clear that any

campaign needs to encompass far more than the role of a director, the exact scope and structure of the campaign is beyond the remit of this study.

Over 60% of directors reported having experience with a youth theatre or amateur company. Traditionally these experiences are as actors. Looking at ways of expanding current youth programmes to encompass other roles in theatre would be valuable. National Theatre Connections already extends to technical masterclasses. The National Youth Theatre runs a technical theatre programme, and recently expanded its training with Epic Stages, which explores non-acting and theatre making roles as part of the course. There is room for all programmes to explore how they can better explore non-acting roles in theatre, including the role of the director.

The role of Drama Schools

64% of directors reported having directed a drama school production within the last five years, whilst only 18.5% reported taking a drama related subject at undergraduate level and 11.6% reported taking a drama related subject at MA level. The role a drama school currently plays in the development of directors is through their employment working with students, rather than their enrolment onto courses as students themselves.

Drama schools offer directors of differing experience opportunities to direct their students, although all schools are theoretically employing directors of a professional level that meets the expectations of a degree or MA level course. In some cases these freelance positions go to senior directors who have reached semi retirement, but in the majority of cases these opportunities go to directors who might be considered 'mid-career' (directors who have had some success, have a good reputation, have possibly assisted in a prestigious venue, and created work either regionally or on the independent circuit that has been received favorably).

The opportunity to direct at a drama school offers these directors a number of opportunities; drama school productions are often large cast - this is often the first time a director has had the opportunity to work with a cast of more than half a dozen actors, other than as an assistant director. Many drama schools have mid-scale sized theatres (such as the Vanburgh at RADA or the Embassy Theatre at RCSSD), which are larger spaces than the directors might have worked on before. These two factors combine to allow a director to work on bigger and more ambitious productions than they might otherwise

be offered. A drama school will have a range of support staff – such as voice and movement coaches, which a director may not usually have access to at this level - and most drama schools come equipped with well resourced academic libraries that many directors don't automatically have access to. A freelance director working within a drama school will usually be employed for anywhere between 5 – 10 weeks on either full time or a part time basis depending on the project. Most drama schools employ freelance directors every term for 2nd and 3rd year projects at BA level, and at least once, sometimes twice, on postgrad and MA courses.

The freelance director within a drama school usually sits between the students and the full- time staff – there to support the full time teachers - but they also bring a knowledge of current working practice, and of the freelance landscape students are about to enter.

There is a clear need expressed by both directors and employers of directors to spend time after completing emerging programmes, and after any assisting, finding their own voice. Drama schools already play a role in helping those directors find their voice by offering bigger casts, bigger spaces, and more support. The director, whilst fulfilling a teaching role within the school, is also being mentored informally into bigger spaces and on to bigger projects.

At the moment, this mentoring is a happy by-product of the director's time at a drama school, and understandably secondary to the training of the students, but a planned expansion of a freelance director's role into a year-long paid 'fellowship' would allow the current unofficial mentoring, and the accidental access to resources, to become a deliberate and necessary part of the engagement. As the majority of drama schools employ several visiting

directors throughout the academic year, the students would still have the opportunity to work with a range of directors. The directors chosen to take a fellowship with a drama school would usually be the same directors being asked to direct one-off productions, so there would not be a fall in standards, and the further integration of those directors into a drama school environment would potentially produce a higher standard of work for students.

What a fellowship might look like:

- A director would apply for a fellowship with a particular question or topic they would want to explore (much like a PHD student). Given the range of drama school courses currently on offer, directors would apply to the schools most likely to facilitate their research. This research would be entirely practical with no academic bearing.
- The head of the course taking on the director would agree a set of projects over the course of the year that would fit the needs of the students, and help facilitate the area a director wants to investigate. These projects may start with a second year production, move on to a third year studio production and end with a third year main-house production.
- The course leader would also set up an on-going relationship between the director and the teaching staff, so that a director can access information on voice, movement, scenography, technical theatre or any other subject that might be relevant. Depending on the area a director is looking to investigate, they might agree to the director observing certain lessons (if appropriate), agree a set of mentoring sessions with

a specific tutor over the year, or simply explore how they can better collaborate on the projects the director is leading.

- Throughout the year, a director will be encouraged to engage fully with the life of the drama school – they may work with community groups, or evening classes, or direct readings or song cycles (all of which already happen at a number of drama schools).

The Purpose of a Fellowship:

Few directors are building a career with any formal training or formal qualifications in a drama related subject. Very few directors are therefore getting the opportunity to interrogate the process of writers, actors, designers, stage management, and technicians. You could say that most directors are blagging it.

Whilst there are already a number of very strong MA courses available for directors, there has been little desire from either emerging directors, or artistic directors to see the formation of any more courses, partly because of the problems all higher education is facing surrounding student fees, and partly because (as previously stated) directing is not a graduate job.

Having assisted some great directors, having started to create their own work, or finding some success on an emerging directors scheme – directors are then required to go off and find their voice and learn their craft. There is an expectation that this is done elsewhere – and is the responsibility of other people. At this point support for a director often dries up.

The majority of directors interviewed at this point in their career expressed a desire to find space to investigate their own ideas, craft and process, and were often exhausted jumping from project to project (usually including many drama school productions) with little time for reflection. By giving the director time for reflection, and a focus on their own craft, the drama school is arguably going to see a rise in the quality of work from their freelance pool of directors.

A scheme such as this could be offered on either a part time or full time basis (depending on the school's timetable, and the scope of a director's research).

An equivalent scheme would be the RTYDS / Northern Stage Associate Directors Bursary. This is a part time, flexible contract paying a fee of £18,000. It offers the flexibility for the director to take freelance work around the scheme, but also enough time on the scheme for them to gain insight and skills in theatre leadership. £18,000 is not far from the combined fee a school will have budgeted for three freelance directors within the course of a year. At a basic level a fellowship does not particularly alter the budgets or term plans for a year, but it expands and formalises the relationship a director and a school have. There is of course the opportunity to expand the ambition of the scheme and the contact hours provided depending on the scale and ambition of the school.

This scheme also has the ability to offer training and career development to established writers, actors and other professionals looking to move into directing – something discussed throughout the report.

Mentoring Directors onto bigger projects

In 2015 the BBC launched a new directors scheme. Half of this scheme was aimed at bringing new directors in, and giving them their first broadcast credits, but they had also noticed that directors had been getting stuck on entry-level shows. Spotting this bottleneck, they introduced a second part of the scheme to mentor established directors on shows such as Doctors, onto hour-long dramas. Producers acknowledged that they needed new directors coming through, but were also having to be risk averse, and therefore unable to promote directors without such a scheme.

The scheme allows the emerging director to be mentored by an established director. The mentoring provides the emerging director with the skills and advice needed to scale up their work, and it also allows the producer to know that there is an established pair of hands standing by should something go wrong. Since 2015 the BBC have seen around 12 directors come through the 'mid career' part of the scheme. Inevitably there has never been a time (to date) where the experienced director has had to take over the block. The director being mentored has always been able to complete the task.

The BBC is not the only company to run mentoring schemes for directors. Creative Skillset and Directors UK have a high-end mentoring scheme that exposes established directors to high-end TV dramas, which they would usually not be able to get on to. Whilst this scheme does not offer the director a block of a high end drama, the ability to be with that production company has led to some directors subsequently being offered directing work.

The role of a television director is of course very different from that of a theatre director. It is considerably easier to replace a director on a long running TV show, as the show is less engrained with their own personal vision. A one –off theatre production is a much more personal statement, and for another director to step in and take over is much less practical.

Nevertheless, a number of directors spoke about times they were mentored within theatre. Lyndsey Turner had a particularly positive experience of mentoring, allowing her to expand her practice from studio work to a main house production. Although this experience was led by an artistic director in order to fulfil a particular strategic objective, and was therefore bespoke to her, the principle of guiding a director onto bigger, trickier spaces stands, and has been proven to work.

Such mentorship might include the following areas of enquiry:

- what are the skills you are going to need to direct on the main stage?
- how can you acquire those skills before rehearsals begin?
- how can the choice, layout and practice of the rehearsal room help you ‘scale up’?
- what steps can you take to learn more about managing large companies and composing bodies on large stages?

An extended pre- production period, which possibly includes a workshop (should it be useful) allows the director and the mentor to interrogate a set of questions not dissimilar to those listed above.

What would a mentoring scheme look like?

A mentoring scheme is, by its nature, bespoke to the director and the challenge being set for them. But using a question asked during the writing of the report;

‘How can we move an exciting director out of the Temporary Space at the NT, and into the Olivier?’

The director in question already has a relationship with the NT, and with the Artistic Director. They are invited to be mentored onto an Olivier production. It is highly unlikely that a theatre would mentor any more than one director within a season, and it is very likely their work is already well known to the Artistic Director. It is unlikely that this is a scheme with an open application process, but is rather a mechanism understood by the production team in order to offer training and opportunity to those already involved with the theatre.

As part of the discussion around plays, a discussion of who the mentor might be takes place. Matching director, mentor and text is key. The director has to be comfortable with the mentor, and the mentor needs not only to have a knowledge of the space, but also a sympathy for the play proposed.

The mentor / director relationship is not an informal one, and it is not simply someone on the end of the phone. An extended pre -production period, which possibly includes a workshop (should it be useful) allows the director and the

mentor to interrogate a set of questions not dissimilar to those Lyndsey Turner lists above. The mentor is able to observe design meetings, if appropriate, and to be on hand to guide the director through pre-production.

During rehearsals it is unlikely that the mentor will be visible, but rather someone available to the director. Should the mentor be present in the room (to watch a run for example) their role needs to be clearly defined and understood by the company. At previews they have the opportunity to note should that be desired.

Such a scheme would be highly bespoke, and it hinges on finding the right director – someone who has the ability to mentor (not every director can), and who has the trust and ear of the Artistic Director, as well as absolute trust from the director being mentored.

The roles need to be set out with absolute clarity, and time and space put aside in order to give the project a chance. Directors who can direct on the Olivier stage tend to be busy directors, but this scheme cannot work if it's phoned in. It isn't a costly scheme, but it does need time, and it needs to be bespoke to the director being mentored. In this respect, it is a scheme that runs only when appropriate – it can't become a training scheme conveyor belt.

The example given answers a specific question asked during the course of the research, but the process is transferable to different spaces.

Conclusion to part three

- Any scheme set up to engage young people in a career in theatre must be more holistic than simply tackling questions around directing.
- The role drama schools can play in the training of directors comes from extending the role directors already play within the school's faculty.

There has not been an appetite for more directing courses, but there has been a desire for more support for directors, a support drama schools are well placed to offer.
- Taking the mentoring structure, already being applied in different industries and adapting it to work for theatres, will offer directors a chance to find their own voice, and expand the canvas they work on.

Such schemes also fit with the traditional 'apprenticeship' structure theatre directors supposedly learn from.

Study Conclusion

The ecology of the theatre industry is ever changing. Within the two years of studying and writing this report, new schemes have come along, other schemes have rethought their structures, but usually the same challenges persist.

Theatre isn't a bubble. The challenges theatre faces - a divide between urban and rural areas, a higher education system that has been monetized to the point of excluding students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, a gig economy - these are all challenges that can be seen across the UK, and not just in theatres.

This report has focused on 'mid career' because overwhelmingly this was the point in a director's career that people discussed. Many questions about regional opportunity were already being addressed by theatres and training providers (although much more engagement was needed to convey that message). Concerns about MA's did not seem to tally with the figures in part one of the study, and again there needs to be much more communication of this reality.

It is probably not surprising that after two decades of promoting emerging director schemes, the bottleneck has moved along to mid-career directors. It is also fair to say that there is probably always going to be a drop off after emerging schemes. No one interviewed asked for more 'schemes', rather they wanted more support, and this is what the report has tried to focus on. The recommendations made, could be adapted and applied to any theatre or

training provider. They are also designed to work within the practical and economic structure of any company.

Whether or not a drama school, or theatre, decides that a mid-career theatre director support system is appropriate for them, it does seem time for anyone coming in contact with directors and potential directors to examine more thoroughly the reality of directing and to offer advice and support based on the current industry, not one that ceased to exist twenty years ago.

These recommendations do not, on their own, tackle inequality and the lack of diversity in theatre (and nor was that the report's specific aim), but offering more support and better guidance to those directors who do not have family support (either culturally or financially) means they are more likely to find their place within the industry, and not fall through the net. Most of all we need to get away from the concept of 'survival of the fittest' for mid-career directors, and acknowledge this increasingly means 'survival of the most privileged'.