



Select Committee on Communications

Corrected oral evidence: Skills for the Theatre Industry

Tuesday 21 March 2017

3.35 pm

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Members present: Lord Best (The Chairman); Lord Allen of Kensington; Earl of Caithness; Bishop of Chelmsford; Lord Gilbert of Panteg; Baroness Kidron; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Quin; Lord Sheikh, Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 21 - 27

Witnesses

I: Alice King-Farlow, Director of Learning, National Theatre; Tony Peers, Human Resources Director, National Theatre.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Alice King-Farlow and Tony Peers.

Q21 **The Chairman:** Thank you both very much for joining us from the National Theatre. A number of us cross the river occasionally to partake of wonderful things across there. Thank you for being with us. You will gather that our inquiry is about the theatre, using it as a case study for other creative industries. We are interested in the skills that the industry needs, and how we can nurture those skills and keep the UK at the absolute peak of the world of theatre.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: I want to start by asking you about schools, the various qualifications that students can get in schools and the various courses and subjects. I want to explore whether you feel that schools, at present, are able to provide students with subjects that help and encourage them to go into theatre and give them the skills, at least at that stage, that the world of theatre is looking for.

Alice King-Farlow: It is very variable and, looking across the education landscape as a whole, problematic. I would like to run through the different stages of the education system, because there are different issues at each stage. If we think about what is needed for a healthy theatre sector, we need skilled people; we need diverse people; we need people from a lot of different backgrounds coming into the industry. For that to happen, you need wide exposure at school, from the earliest stages, in order to make the choices about how you specialise and about careers that you might go into.

The problem starts right back at primary school level. At primary, in the English curriculum, there is quite a clear mandate or requirement for drama as an art form in the purpose of study. However, it is being squeezed out in a lot of schools by a narrow focus on attainment and the understandable anxiety about league tables. There are very few specialist drama teachers in primary schools. Primary teachers are not trained in drama and many do not have the confidence to teach drama. If you add into that the fact that local authority spending has been cut back so there are fewer extra-curricular activities, you have a lot of children at that early stage in education not getting their first encounter with theatre and drama. As part of a really good education, they should be getting the chance to make, to explore and to see theatre.

Then you get on to secondary. We have to talk about the EBacc, because it may be an unintended consequence of that reform, but it has had a number of impacts. It has set out a hierarchy of subjects, which suggests that the study of arts subjects is of less value. There are figures showing a sharp drop in the overall number of arts GCSEs being taken. There are figures showing a drop in the number of specialist drama teachers at school. There are figures showing a drop in the number of hours of drama taught. The difficulty is that this leads into schools being less likely to have specialist drama teachers. At secondary level, you need a specialist in the school to introduce students to the breadth of career opportunities

in theatre. For the National's 50th birthday, we sent a poster out to every secondary school in the country that said, "Theatre is not just about acting". I have brought one, in case you would like it afterwards. It illustrated many of the different careers there are in theatre. This is another important message for this Committee. As I am sure you are aware, in theatre, we need engineers, technicians and people trained in STEM subjects, as well as performers. In order to know that you can be a stage manager, or that you can be an engineer and work on the amazing stage automation systems in our theatre, you need that access to the specialist drama teacher or to the theatre that can show you a route in. Careers guidance is an issue.

At the next stage, you get into the 16-plus options. There are good BTEC courses in production arts, but we know of at least one college that has shut its course in production arts—this is in technical theatre—because there has been a fall-off in the number of students wanting to apply to it. That goes back to this situation in secondary schools. The courses are there, but the education policy framework and the accountability on schools do not necessarily support and encourage students or give them the knowledge to take them up.

Tony Peers: To add to one of the points that Alice made, it is not just that accountants and engineers are interested in theatre; it is that they are prepared to take a job in theatre in a competitive market, which is important to us as an employer. I would argue, as an employer, that those skills that are built up in young people in the creative subjects, namely collaboration, creativity and the ability to see the world through another person's eyes, are absolutely vital to our economy, full stop.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: Are there things that you would like to see changed in the following two areas? The first is what is taught in schools, which may be in the curriculum or alongside the curriculum. Secondly, what could theatre do to be more effective in its outreach programmes? What would you like to change to improve the situation in each of those areas?

Alice King-Farlow: To take the second of those first, I am in touch with a very wide network of education departments and producing theatres across the country. They all do fantastic work in different parts of the country, across different ages and across formal and informal education. However, we can only work effectively with schools if schools make space for the arts. Many of the projects we run at the National Theatre involve us working with a specialist drama teacher who then works with students, because that is a way for us to work at scale. It would be very helpful if the EBacc was not made compulsory. In an ideal world, we would be having another look at the way that it has created a hierarchy of subjects and risks forcing a divide, post 16, between arts and sciences, or between technical and vocational education and academic education. There are two versions of the two cultures, both of which are unhelpful.

It is difficult to pick on one thing, because the impacts of education policy, funding policy and changes in local authority arts are coming

together to create what you can think of, at the moment, as a perfect storm.

Tony Peers: On the provision of careers advice, some of the concerns our sector has are well documented. We realise that we also have a responsibility to make our industry interpretable. We are struggling for airtime in busy teachers' daily lives, so we are making great strides in terms of setting out what it takes to join our industry and talking about career paths. Alice comes armed with a fantastic book, which seeks to explain theatre to the uninitiated.

Alice King-Farlow: It is a book for young people about all the skills in the theatre, which I will leave with you.

The Chairman: You are responsible for NT Learning, Alice. What is it?

Alice King-Farlow: It is a department of around 26 staff with a very wide brief. We work with primary and secondary schools, with teachers and directly with students and in further education. We also work with young people outside formal learning, with community groups, with families and we run an adult learning programme. Other things such as exhibitions and the National Theatre Archive are part of the programme. The Archive is a surprisingly valuable educational resource. We have an education centre at the National, the Clore Learning Centre, which opened in 2014, where some of our activity happens. We had a student conference today with 300 young people exploring the way that we have staged "Twelfth Night", with some of the actors and the staff director from the production.

We also work a lot across London. We have two productions on tour at the moment in schools: a "Romeo and Juliet" for primary schools and a "Macbeth" for secondary schools. We work across England and beyond into the other home nations with programmes like Connections, which is a youth theatre festival where we commission plays for young people and schools to perform. I could carry on.

Baroness Kidron: You have just mentioned some of the plays. I am supposed to declare that my husband has a play opening at the National later in the year. We heard from Vicky Featherstone at the Royal Court about the squeeze in the curriculum and teachers feeling that they could only take young people to plays that are in the curriculum. I am interested to know whether that is a problem from your perspective.

Alice King-Farlow: There has been a big change. We started planning for the Clore Learning Centre when I joined the National in 2009. When we opened it in 2014, we had to rethink, quite substantially, the sort of activity we were planning to do there, in that it needed to be much more curriculum-focused. The "Twelfth Night" conference today is absolutely hitting the curriculum square on. It is also, incidentally, showing all the young people there what a stage manager does and what the technical staff do in the theatre, because it is on the stage and those people are involved in it. We are starting to do by stealth some of the work, which is

quite central to our objectives, of giving young people access to the breadth of skills, opportunities and disciplines in theatre.

Baroness Kidron: But not necessarily to the breadth of work, ironically.

Alice King-Farlow: Yes.

Baroness Quin: You have highlighted some shortcomings in terms of both the curriculum and areas such as careers guidance. I wonder if you specifically, or the industry generally, have been able to make these reservations and concerns known to Government.

Alice King-Farlow: Yes, I have been involved in consultations on the revised GCSE drama. I am part of the Cultural Learning Alliance steering group and we make representations. It is tricky, though, because the message coming back is that there is not a problem. What has been accepted in the past month or so is the fact of the fall in hours in arts teaching at secondary level. A positive thing that has happened recently was Matt Hancock and Nick Gibb talking very publicly about the fact that the EBacc was not intended to hit the arts in the way that it has. There is more to be done. I just realised I completely failed to mention a really important aspect of the work the National does, which is that we also have a big digital programme and a streaming service, which sends recordings of productions directly into schools. It is in 2,700 schools across the country.

The Chairman: That is really important.

Q22 **Lord Gilbert of Panteg:** Can we move on to higher and further education and how the sector serves your industry? Last year, Arts Council England said that, while the evidence was limited, to the extent that there was any, there was evidence of a widening gap between the skills demanded by your sector and those provided by education and training providers. Do you see that gap, in terms of graduates coming through in the right skill areas for your sector? What would you like to see different in the training provided by further and higher education? Do you have any requirements that you feel they could be addressing? Most importantly for this inquiry, are there recommendations we could make to Government in this area?

Tony Peers: The answer to the fundamental question is yes and no. In terms of the conservatoires, in terms of the theatre schools, for the majority of our positions, they meet exactly the skills demand that we have. While there are certain key and sometimes emerging technologies where we may be struggling to recruit—stage automation, digital content and production work seem to be the main ones—by and large, the model works. We face a significant challenge in, for want of a better term, the type of person who comes through the education system. Alice and I have worked together for a number of years on our apprenticeship agenda. That primarily comes from a sense of the lack of diversity coming through the further education system, to the degree that we felt we had to build our own model for creating skills within our sector,

because we did not see any sign of them coming downstream in terms of education at the time. I am afraid to say we are still seeing little coming through in terms of the people attending the courses that will get them into our sector. That is a fundamental point for us.

Alice King-Farlow: The question of diversity goes back to the issues we were talking about earlier concerning schools and who is going through into further education. We might come on to talk about apprenticeships in a bit more detail. We have run a very successful apprenticeship programme, but there are issues with some of the changes in the way apprenticeships are run, which, at the moment, seem to risk some of the apprenticeships we have been running. It does not look like there is going to be an appropriate pathway for some of the areas that we want to include. That is one really important issue.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: You suggest that part of the problem is the pathway into your industry. Lots of people do not see a place in your industry for the skills that they have. I am quite surprised by that. Yours is an exciting and high-profile industry. There must be some fundamental reason why people are not attracted to your industry. It is astonishing to me that they are not.

Alice King-Farlow: At the National Theatre, because we draw from people who have come through all the other routes, we do not have an issue with recruitment; we have an issue with diversity. There was a point in the questions you sent that asked, "Should theatre be like law?" I was thinking about that. The thing about law is that lawyers are visible on the telly; there are lawyers on every high street, and it is a clear career for young people. If you do not go to the theatre and are not introduced to the breadth of opportunities, you might think, like our poster said, that theatre is just about acting; you understand only that bit. There are a lot of young people who want to go into acting. The job is not about persuading them. The job is about us, and the reason we made this book, and the reason we do some of the things we do, is about widening awareness.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: The examples we were given last week were accountants and carpenters. Are you saying that there are education and publicity programmes to make people aware that it could be a very exciting place for a carpenter?

Alice King-Farlow: We are also countering a message that says, "These are not helpful subjects to study. If you do the arts, rather than STEM subjects, you are not going to get a job." We are working within the school system. I should say that the schools picture is diverse. Some schools are doing fantastic work in the arts and introducing students to all the different areas. Other schools do not have access to the equipment; they do not have the facilities to teach or explore technical theatre. It is about awareness and careers guidance, and there are more things we can do as an industry, but we can only do them if we have schools that are willing to work with us and will pick up the phone or open the letter that you send with your information.

Tony Peers: I am from a small town in the north-west and attended a comprehensive school. My family had not heard of the National Theatre when I was appointed there. Some parts of the industry still struggle, for want of a better term, with cultural cut-through. That comes back to the messages people get in schools about the type of industries that they can work in and that the creative sector is a serious industry. The Creative Industries Federation is helpful in that respect. We are starting to get momentum. The Olympic opening ceremony helped. Having a show of the impact of "War Horse" helps, because that somehow cuts through, as whilst the creative sector can often seem incredibly important to people who read the broadsheet press, it can seem less so to people who do not.

Q23 **Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** I declare my interest as a former executive director of the National Theatre. I wanted to pick up on something you said, Alice, about the way that the apprenticeship schemes are configured and that they might now not work to your advantage in being able to take apprentices. Perhaps this is for you, Tony. In what areas of skill do you currently have apprentices working, how many of them are there and what potential impediments, to do with the way that apprenticeship schemes now work, do you foresee?

Alice King-Farlow: We have run apprenticeships in technical theatre, health and safety—

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Sorry, Alice, could I stop you for a moment? As you go through, could you tell us how long each of those apprenticeships lasts?

Alice King-Farlow: They are all an absolute minimum of a year, if not 18 months or two years. When we started our apprenticeship programme, we set a number of principles, which I think Tony has brought with him. One of those was that it is not an apprenticeship if you are not ready to move straight into employment at the end of it. Another principle, when we started, was that the employment should not be at the National Theatre, because it is a very particular sort of organisation. What we needed was to give young people their training and then for them to go on and work elsewhere.

We have run apprenticeships across the technical areas, such as sound and lighting, and in the making departments backstage, such as props and costume. We have run them in aspects of the administration and development of events. We have run one in digital design and drawing. We even ran a couple in concrete conservation when we were restoring the National Theatre. We have had 27 apprenticeships in total over three or four years. We are in touch with the majority of them, and most have stayed in the industry and gone on to successful careers.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Are you anticipating that those numbers will fall or that you will not be able to offer the same range? What problem are you anticipating?

Tony Peers: When we first started this process, there was a degree of resistance to the notion that apprentices could work at the same level as people who had come through the drama colleges or had experience in regional theatre. We had to work very hard to challenge that and had to treat every single apprenticeship as a bespoke experiment. The National Theatre is like our entire sector. It may look like a large employer; it is actually a collection of cottage industries stuck in the same building. Our industry is effectively cottage industry-led, which means you never, ever get anywhere in terms of scale, so every single time you are starting from scratch. That is without all the added complications of taking a young, black London graffiti artist and turning him into a prop-maker.

We set ourselves some key objectives in terms of doing this. That has meant that every single apprenticeship has been a journey of trial and error: finding the right college partner to work with, finding the right course to work with, finding where we had to use our own resources to supplement that course. As Alice said, we invented a concrete conservation apprenticeship, which did not exist. That was all possible in a framework that was not too constrained, where we could go out and find what felt like the right course, with a tweak and a nudge here and there, and call it an apprenticeship. The entire system has become much more constrained and "apprenticeship" is a protected legal term now. It is not one we can use loosely.

I would not pretend to be an expert here, but my understanding is that Government, as the Department for Education, quite understandably do not want 400 or 500 different apprenticeships scattered across the industry, because they lose all credibility. The difficulty is, in seeking to constrain, we find that, where an apprenticeship pathway that we once would have taken is too close to something else that, in our eyes, bears no relevance to our industry, we cannot go down that pathway. Stage carpentry would be a good example. It would be very difficult for us to run a trailblazer or a standard in stage carpentry, because there are carpenters and construction carpenters building houses. One can understand that some of the skills are absolutely transferable, but an awful lot of them are not. Nobody on a construction building site is going to learn how to be on a stage.

This is where we are struggling. As much as anything else, it is sheer lack of weight of numbers. We are not going to get priority for wigmakers over other skills that are lacking in our economy. There just are not enough. Downstream, we will hopefully get there.

Lord Allen of Kensington: You told us there are 27 types of apprenticeship. How many people have come through that? Secondly, what does that cost you, on average, per person? I am interested in the scale of people and investment.

Alice King-Farlow: It was 27 apprentices, rather than 27 different types of apprentice.

Lord Allen of Kensington: That is what I thought you said. Is that over

four years?

Alice King-Farlow: It is over four years. For some of those where we have successfully run an apprenticeship, we have repeated it. In others, we have created a new apprenticeship for a new department that wants to run one.

Tony Peers: It is more like 15 to 16 different types of apprenticeship. In terms of our spend across the year, we tend to think of it as an annual budget. We spend around £100,000 a year on our apprenticeship programme. That includes the cost of paying wages, of course. We pay minimum wage plus 5%, and we pay any ancillary training costs that are not covered by a standard college course. We started from the basis that we were not going to limit our apprenticeships to those people who fitted into the age categories that existed at the time. In some cases, we paid full college costs.

Baroness Kidron: If there were such a thing as a creative industries apprenticeship, which could have some sort of standard and number for government, but with more malleability for you, would that be worth pursuing? We heard this problem earlier as well.

Alice King-Farlow: You need to subdivide the creative industries a little, but that mix of framework and malleability is important.

Baroness Kidron: If it was 70% that you had to do and 30% that was specific to your different grades, would that be a better place to start than where you are starting now, bumping into industries that have tens of thousands of apprenticeships?

Tony Peers: It would be, and it is becoming clearer—given that we still feel like we are in the early stages of this journey—that pulling together lots of different technical theatre crafts in exactly the way you describe is something that is starting to happen. It is becoming less worrying to our industry as we realise that, exactly as you describe, that kind of framework, with the ability to deviate from it, is what is intended. We feel heard by our Government, and we are starting to understand how it is going to work going forward. The difficulty for us is that it came at a time when our industry was getting momentum, when the National College was just in its early stage of setting up. We think the long-term results are probably going to be a good thing, but it is just the wrong time for us.

Lord Sheikh: I am a Conservative Peer and we are very proud of the fact that we have created a number of apprenticeships. This is something that David Cameron was very, very keen to promote. In my industry, which is financial services, I have been actively involved in training. I am very keen that we train more of our people in every field, not necessarily construction, trade or whatever, because we need people to be involved in cultural work. It is very, very important to make us a comprehensive society. Is there anything politically, for example, we can do to help you create more apprenticeships? How do we create more apprenticeships? Is

it is question of resources; is it a question of money? What are the obstacles and how can we expand this scheme further?

Alice King-Farlow: One of the obstacles for us is cost. In an absolutely ideal world, we would have an apprentice in every one of the technical and making departments of the National Theatre, of which there are a great many. We have only so much funding that we are able to spend on this. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy contributes to the cost of the training, but not to the cost of employing the apprentice. At the moment, that is taking more money out than it is bringing in. That is one issue.

We are working with our colleagues across the sector and lobbying to make sure we get the kind of trailblazers and apprenticeship pathways that mean we can keep running this programme. We are also extraordinarily proud of our apprenticeships programme. We did their graduating ceremony last week, and it is one of the nicest moments of the year, where lots of the previous apprentices come back. It is something we want to do more of.

It comes down to an understanding of the creative industries. It is not a homogeneous sector with a small number of employment pathways. It is made up of a great many different, as Tony said, cottage industries: small, skilled industries. There are differences, for example, in the way you do wigs, hair and make-up in theatre to the way you do wigs, hair and make-up on television. We need a system that will work for us and allow us to do the best possible sorts of apprenticeships, which are those that take a diverse group of young people and get them into a really exciting career and long-term paid employment.

Q24 **Baroness Quin:** I was going to ask about apprenticeships, but there is a wider part of the question that I was going to ask, which is still worth asking. It is about particular areas where you feel government policy would be helpful. The examples might be tax breaks to support workers' training, to support companies at risk, to reach out to otherwise excluded audiences. Are there some policy areas that you would like to highlight to us?

Tony Peers: All three of those are good opportunities to make some difference. We can argue only from the perspective of what has worked for us, as an employer. We are some way into a diversity strategy, knowing that we had to change our industry anyway. This was not necessarily about supply and demand; it was entirely about how we change the market to have people come through who are different. We know that bursaries have been incredibly important in supporting people through what is quite often a low-paid period in their life. Those are primarily coming from the private sector and from sponsorship, but any help there would be valuable.

I would support tax breaks in terms of learning, especially for those people who are self-employed. To go back to an earlier question about why people do not join our industry, it is quite a difficult transition to

make if you have not taken that pathway earlier in life. It often involves some personal financial sacrifice. It involves learning an entirely different culture, in many ways. Anything to support that transition, or something about career change, would be helpful.

Finally, one of the programmes that the Government supported up until quite recently was a programme called Creative Access, which took British black, Asian and minority ethnic graduates and paid for internships across the creative sector. That has been incredibly transformational in terms of the recruitment to what you might call artistic administrative posts. For various reasons, Creative Access lost its funding and is now set up as a social enterprise rather than a charity. It was incredibly important to us, not just in supporting positions—because the National, by and large, is big enough to do that, although the rest of our sector is less so—but in concentrating expertise, creating a brand and attracting a whole bunch of young people towards our industry who otherwise would not have come.

Initiatives like that make a huge difference to our industry, because they give people an opportunity to work and give organisations an opportunity to experiment with different types of people.

Alice King-Farlow: We made a proposal that the apprenticeship levy that we pay—because we are unable to use it all to fund apprenticeships, due to the costs on top of the training—could be in some way ring-fenced for our sector to help support apprenticeships. An organisation smaller than the National Theatre might have less flexibility or less ability to raise funding. It could also be used to support different sorts of entry-level training and jobs.

Baroness Quin: When you were talking about the apprentices, I also wondered whether the ones you have tend to be geographically from London and the south-east. Given that you are a national theatre, is it difficult to get people from the regions in particular, due to things such as accommodation costs in London?

Tony Peers: We feel a sense of responsibility, in one sense, not to bring people in from the regions to what might feel like a good salary if you are in Cumbria, where I come from, but certainly is not when you get to London. For our apprenticeships, we are still reliant on that network of family, of home, in some cases, helping them with things such as travel costs to sustain an apprenticeship.

Alice King-Farlow: We have had apprentices coming from outside London. I think we had one come from the West Midlands, and it was quite hard for them to maintain it, but other theatres up and down the country are running apprenticeships.

Tony Peers: We have successful graduates from our apprenticeship scheme who are now in regional theatre in Leeds and in Liverpool.

Alice King-Farlow: Yes, and other aspects of our work with young people are nationwide.

Q25 **Bishop of Chelmsford:** I wanted to ask about routes into the industry. You have started to touch on this, because I particularly wanted to ask about pay. This affects interns and apprentices in all aspects, but perhaps particularly in the acting profession. By any estimate, the creative economy in this country is a great success story. It produces a lot of income, but there are figures from Equity, which are rather alarming to read, about nearly 10% of people sometimes working for nothing as interns; people being told they are expected to work for free to begin with; and people saying they have had to turn down work because the pay is so low. The danger is therefore that certain aspects of the industry are open only to people who have money or have families that can support them. How do you account for this disparity between what seems to be great financial success and the low pay and no pay work culture that seems to be around? What can be done about this and what could the Government do about this?

Tony Peers: This is not an issue that directly impacts on the National Theatre. We pay for everything we should pay for. It is not unusual for our industry to complain about legislation, but the national minimum wage legislation has been hugely helpful in reinforcing some good practices. That should be said straightaway. It is a difficult one to answer from our place. We are a subsidised theatre; we are a successful theatre; we have the ability to fundraise in the way that regional theatre does not.

Bishop of Chelmsford: You are aware of this, though.

Tony Peers: We are certainly aware of it and, while we do not necessarily have concrete figures, the majority of people who come into our industry have, at some point in time, worked on fringe or in low-paid theatre. There may be a lot of income in our industry, but there is not necessarily a lot of profit. That is one of the first things to say. Taking a show to Edinburgh and covering one's costs looks like activity, but it does not necessarily generate much in terms of return. It is a difficult one. One might take the point of view that, if an industry cannot exist, if it cannot actually balance its books, perhaps it should not, but that could cover an enormous amount of activity that otherwise simply would not happen.

The arts is difficult, because it is vocational. It straddles the boundary between being a hobby and being a profession and, for some people, it never truly lands one side or the other. There are a huge number of people working for the National Theatre who subsidise their creative career by doing other things.

The only other analogy I could come up with is that working for free is common in lots of other industries. It is common in digital start-ups. The difference is that there is probably an expectation that profit will be returned at some point and, therefore, people get points or shares, which is not really a culture that I understand to be prevalent in our industry, but that is speculative.

Lord Sheikh: I am concerned about people working for free or for low wages. I have employed a lot of people and have never taken on anybody on that basis. Even my interns get paid. It is wrong to take somebody on and not pay him or her anything. As a matter of interest, what motivates these people who come to you on no pay or little pay, which we accept is not satisfactory? Is it eventual success or satisfaction? What are they looking for? What is in their minds?

Alice King-Farlow: We do not take people for no pay.

Tony Peers: No, we do not.

Lord Sheikh: That is good. I am pleased to hear that.

Alice King-Farlow: Where we encounter this is that we have a fantastic team of people who work across lots of different areas of the National Theatre's operation, for instance in our bookshop. They work front of house; they work in the bars. Once you start talking and getting to know these individuals, you will quite often discover they are also a director and they are crowdfunding for a show they are planning to take up to Edinburgh. There is an ecology of people working in different ways in theatre. In my own department, we employ a lot of artists who are young directors, young actors and young designers at an early stage in their career, who come to work directly with us and with young people.

I do not think there is any single answer to this. Bursaries and training schemes are being run by theatres, including ours. We have a design bursary for young designers; we have a Jenny Harris award either for young artists or for people who are starting out working for young people. There needs to be a whole mix of things, such as grants that people can apply for. Crowdfunding is useful. We are looking at what more we can do to support those young members of staff who are working in our bookshops and our bars, and who are brilliant but who want to take a show to Edinburgh. We probably cannot support them financially, but we can maybe support them with expertise.

Lord Sheikh: What is the motivation there? What drives these people?

Alice King-Farlow: They want to make art; they want to make theatre; they want to put on shows. They want to develop as a writer, as a director or as a designer.

Bishop of Chelmsford: I can see that there is an important difference between the very entrepreneurial creative self-starter who is taking a show to Edinburgh and is working as a barista, or whatever, to pay their way, and people who are working at entry level in the theatre where the wages are very low. They cannot do something else, because effectively it is full-time work, but it is full-time work on very low pay, particularly if it is based in London. Are you aware that this is inhibiting diversity simply in terms of the wealth or background of the people who are coming in, because it is only people from families where there can be additional support, as you mentioned yourself in one of your earlier answers?

Tony Peers: It has the potential to do that. In terms of our apprentices, the family support will be resident in London, and London is such a multicultural city that, if anything, there is a danger that, if you live in a social housing estate, you might come into the National Theatre as an apprentice in central London; otherwise you have to be incredibly well off. It is the tier above that of people, those in the middle who might disappear from our industry in London.

In terms of low pay and diversity of entry, yes, we are absolutely alive to that. It is where Alice and I started our conversation together on apprenticeships, because we absolutely recognise that, unless you find properly funded pathways for people, they will be inclined not to join the industry. That is even while there is good and solid employment with decent amounts of earnings to be made. Technicians, by and large, are not poor people. They probably feel their income has slipped back in comparison to how London has changed in terms of its expense as a city, but, by any reasonable standard, they have good jobs. Our industry has not been fantastic at advertising that.

Alice King-Farlow: We had a conversation with teachers on the subject of technical theatre and young people coming into technical theatre. One of the issues is that the sector as a whole is seen as somewhere that is low pay, no pay and very risky, whereas there are well paid jobs and entry-level jobs, which are more likely to be on the technical than on the performing side of things. There are lots and lots of different factors. There is perception. There is the need for different pathways. There is the need for apprenticeships alongside bursary programmes. There is also a need to have a really strong and thriving theatre sector right across the country, because one of the ways of dealing with the price of housing and transport in London is to have great theatre training opportunities in Darlington, Doncaster or other parts of the country. It comes back to the point I was making earlier: there are so many different aspects to the pressures on our industry.

The Chairman: I am afraid I am not going to take any supplementaries, as we are into our last few minutes and we have seven questions to go. Let us get your views on the record, but perhaps with rather briefer responses, to get us through the list.

Q26 **Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** You know the questions we are going to ask you. Let us go straight to the question of continuing professional development. An awful lot of people who work in the theatre are freelance. That is how most people in the performing areas, directors, designers and all the rest of it construct their careers. Do you see ways in which that, on the one hand, inhibits people from extending the reach of their skills and developing their particular professional skill? On the other hand, are you able to see ways in which you can harness their freelance natures and build in ways of adding value while they are working for you, so they can continue to develop professionally?

Tony Peers: That is a really good question. Yes, it is a problem, not least because when freelancers are working they work incredibly hard and

make hay while the sun shines. Who can blame them for that? Our industry has not been fantastic at thinking, as it should have done, about the type of skills that are needed. It almost coasts along on the fact that there are invariably more people looking for work than there are jobs, and that there is a lot of tradition in there. The industry is not always fantastic at spotting emerging technology trends and starting to explain routes through that.

As has been said previously, some kind of tax support in terms of self-learning would be good, but we are starting to think about what our obligations are. In terms of directors, designers and how they make a career, we have started to look for opportunities to support people in lots of different ways. Again, some of this comes back to our intentions around diversity and building a cohort of people who are not just diverse actors or technicians but also writers, directors and designers. One of the ways, for example, in which you can support a career is by looking at who translates or adapts work, as much as who writes it from scratch.

Lord Sheikh: I go to the theatre quite often. One point I have noticed is a lack of diversity among the actors, among the technicians, among audiences. Unfortunately, the BME community seems to be stereotyped. There are brown-skinned people like me who are businessmen, politicians, professionals, solicitors and accountants, but very rarely would I see on the stage as a solicitor an actor who is not of white colour. There is this tendency to say, "He is this colour; he will have this job".

The theatre also appears to be dominated by white students at drama school. As I said earlier, there is a lack of diversity on the stage. I am connected to a small extent with a production company called Tara, which is down in Tooting. The actors and producers are all Asians. The Asians have their own TV studios. They have their own radio stations, but I would like more people from the BME community to come into the mainstream, whether we see them more in the West End or on the TV.

I am sure you would agree that there is a need for greater diversity in the theatre industry—as we are talking about your industry, which is the theatre industry—so how can individuals of different backgrounds and locations be encouraged and supported not only to enter the theatre industry but to persist with it? How can we have a more diverse audience in the theatre?

Alice King-Farlow: To take the second point first, about audiences, it comes down to the stories we are telling on our stages, which then comes down to who is writing, directing and performing those stories. The National has a big drive, at the moment, to tell a broader range of stories, to commission a broader range of writers, and we have a lot of different initiatives in train to develop that.

In terms of on stage, in the company that is touring "Macbeth"—it is the same company doing "Macbeth" and "Romeo and Juliet"—the actors are all BAME. On stage is less of an issue. It is backstage where we need to direct our energies. That comes back to the point I was making earlier

about access in schools and making sure that drama and theatre is something that all young people have access to early in their careers, so they understand it and can see the pathways. It is an area where we know we have lots of work to do.

We have found that the younger our audiences are, the more diverse they are. There is a virtuous circle: if we increase the number of under-35s coming to see our work, they are also more diverse. Finding the stories, the productions and the titles that will attract a younger audience as well as a diverse audience has changed things.

Lord Sheikh: Are you optimistic about it?

Tony Peers: Yes, absolutely. Coming back to some of the statistics for our organisation, we set ourselves some targets that we need to achieve by 2021. One of them was that a minimum of 25% of performers on stage will be from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background. We set that knowing that it was one of the few targets that was not overly ambitious. We regularly get somewhere in the region of 30%. That was because we adopted the concept of colour-blind casting, which might be a slightly redundant term nowadays, quite early. In fact, to some degree, we adopted that under Trevor Nunn and Nick Hytner. We are looking at gender-blind casting now.

With new writing, there is less of an issue. We are talking about contemporary society. With more established writing, we do not get ourselves hung up on historical accuracy in relation to ethnicity. People know it is pretend. Therefore, the best actor should be performing the role and race is irrelevant. We know that, in order to be a successful actor, you need to string together a series of jobs and, therefore, you always need the opportunity to get work, regardless of whether we are doing Shakespeare or something set in the modern day.

As a theatre, we are addressing that in quite a full-on way. The level of investment going into developing new work for our stages through our new work department is significant. We are in this exciting place of opportunity where we do not know how many writers we need to support at a development level to get a female black writer on to our Olivier stage, but we will make sure we do it.

Q27 **The Chairman:** We have run out of time, but funding is so important. Can you just comment on it? We all know Arts Council money is harder to get and local authorities have been cutting back substantially. How are you coping with the funding situation and how does that compare with other people in the same boat?

Alice King-Farlow: We are asking a lot more of our fundraising department, which is very effective and very successful. That is one of the issues: it is easier to be a fundraising department for a big national organisation based in London than it is to fundraise if you are a small organisation outside London. We have seen a big cut to our funding from Arts Council. In real terms it has fallen 37% over the last twelve years

and 18% over the past seven. We have mitigated that, because we have had productions that have toured commercially and have been in the West End, such as "War Horse" and "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time". They have provided income streams to the organisation, which we cannot depend on in the very long term because they depend on the success on a particular production, but they have been extremely helpful to us over the last five years. We try to be as entrepreneurial as we can, through the fundraising department, the commercial department and the way we run our own restaurants and bars.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: I really need to get something on the record about this commercial exploitation stuff. Sorry to answer your questions for you. Both the productions that you have mentioned—

Alice King-Farlow: I know what you are going to say, and you are quite right.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: It is a really important point. Can you please make it?

Alice King-Farlow: They are both productions that began in the subsidised sector. We were able to take the risks to invest in the research and development needed to make "War Horse" and "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time", because of our subsidy, which allows us to invest in the work of the NT Studio, which is our R&D department. Yes, you cannot just cook up a commercial production without having the subsidy to take the risks to develop it.

Baroness Kidron: Can I ask you to put something on the record too? With the local council cuts in regions, lots of those theatres are becoming receiving houses, not production houses. How does that affect the talent, the writers, the people you are going to receive in five or 10 years' time?

Alice King-Farlow: It is something we are worried about because, yes, we are at the top of the food chain and we depend on a thriving sector right across the country.

Baroness Kidron: Their funding is your problem.

Alice King-Farlow: We do not receive local authority funding directly, but it affects the organisations we work with and we partner across the country. It affects the youth groups that my department works with; it affects the schools that we work with.

Tony Peers: This has been a fantastic four or five years in terms of achieving things on diversity, and my concern is that real progress and the beginnings of significant progress beyond that will be stalled, particularly in relation to some of the changes in the school system.

The Chairman: That is a gloomy note on which to close, but very many thanks to both of you. You can see how interested everybody was in your comments. We obviously could have done the second hour with you as well. Many thanks for doing that.