



## Select Committee on Communications

### Corrected oral evidence: Skills for the Theatre Industry

Tuesday 28 March 2017

3.35 pm

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Members present: Lord Best (The Chairman); Baroness Benjamin; Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury; Earl of Caithness; Bishop of Chelmsford; Baroness Kidron; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Quin; Lord Sheikh; Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury.

Evidence Session No. 5

Heard in Public

Questions 38 - 45

#### Witness

**I:** Indhu Rubasingham MBE, Artistic Director, Tricycle Theatre; Sue Emmas, Associate Artistic Director, Young Vic.

#### USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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## Examination of witnesses

Indhu Rubasingham MBE and Sue Emmas.

**Q38 The Chairman:** We will be terribly disciplined in time today because we have a Minister in the second session, and for some reason we have to be particularly nice to Ministers, which we will be. If we may, we will kick off by asking each of you to tell us a bit about your background to lead us in. Sue Emmas, would you please lead off?

**Sue Emmas:** I am the associate artistic director of the Young Vic and I am responsible for leading the directors programme, which has a network of 900 directors and 400 designers. I am also the artistic director of the Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme, which creates opportunities for directors in the regions and focuses on diversity, talent and leadership.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much. Indhu Rubasingham.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** My name is Indhu. I am currently the artistic director of the Tricycle Theatre. I have been in post for five years. I am from the Midlands and my parents are from Sri Lanka. I studied drama and was a freelance director for most of my career until I became an artistic director.

**The Chairman:** Excellent. Baroness McIntosh will ask the first question.

**Q39 Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** I will not declare my interests because it would take too long. I have declared them at an earlier stage in this inquiry. We want to talk to you about schools, the routes in, and how the curriculum in schools supports or does not support people who may be thinking about careers in theatre and the cultural industries more broadly. Can you give us your impression of what it takes to equip somebody at school level to get into these areas of work, how that can be supported—and the extent to which it is—by extra-curricular opportunities, whether there are enough of those and whether there is enough opportunity to practise some of these skills in schools?

The final part of the question is about the way in which work in this industry and in the other industries that are part of the same group is viewed in schools, as you perceive it. What sort of status does it have? Is it high enough, and can we do anything to try to enhance the status of career opportunities in the theatre?

**Sue Emmas:** That is a very long question. What is needed in education is for young people to get exposure to theatre and drama as early as possible, so in primary school and leading through into secondary school, and for it to be seen as a core subject. Sometimes in primary schools it is not given enough time and scope to be explored due to numeracy and literacy. Emotional literacy is not recognised as also being an important part of a child's development. We definitely need to see at GCSE level students going to see drama and theatre. It is a bit like understanding football but never touching a ball. You need to get a sense of the liveness

of performative art. It is an essential aspect of a young person's development to see theatre as a living thing—not as literature or something to explore, such as the Romans, but as a subject in its own right, and to develop a sense that it can be a career at an early stage. We have a long way to go on that, which I may touch on in a minute.

I know that the EBacc is an area of discussion that may be creating a hierarchy of core subjects, with theatre and drama perhaps being seen as a soft option and not necessarily being encouraged by the governors in schools and therefore by the senior management team and the teachers who feed it into the parents who feed it down to the children. It is important that we see the value in young people encountering drama right from the early stages through to A-level. Also, some of the skills that one gets through drama in theatre at a very early age are the skills that employers need further on and that we need for a healthy society. It is almost as if the NHS looks after us physically but theatre looks after us spiritually. It is about our souls and our emotional literacy, as I said, which is very important for young people. I think I have slightly gone off the subject of some of your questions.

**Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** Perhaps Indhu can pick them up.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Creativity is a right of every child, and without it we will suffer, we will see the creative industries suffer, and it will probably have an impact on other aspects of society. There is a dichotomy going on. I think the Government absolutely recognises the economic benefit of our creative industry and what it brings to this country, but it is not recognised in the education system. It has been devalued and deprioritised. There was a pressure on the education system to deliver and it was an unfortunate consequence that the arts subjects got deprioritised. The real danger and what I am sort of witnessing is that there will be a bigger divide between state and public education because public education is providing more arts education.

**Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall:** When you say "public", you mean public schools?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Sorry, private education. I just went to an opening of a theatre for a private school. Friends of mine who went through state education are often invited to public schools to speak but never by the state schools, because with the pressure on performance and because of the EBacc they would rather deliver that. It will always be a competitive industry and there will always be people who want to work in the arts because it is an attractive industry. It is a passion and it attracts us all, but if we do not give those opportunities to every young person, regardless of background, we will kill the industry in the future, because without that diversity and those voices we will become an elitist and much more reduced industry. The power of what we do in this country is led by the fact that our greatest writer is William Shakespeare. Not to ingrain that in theatre and what it can mean—the empathy and working together; that collective way of being together—means that we are in a dangerous place we are in at the moment.

**Sue Emmas:** You mentioned activity out of school, which is really important in the holistic sense of schools engendering that interest and doing after-school activities so that they can take part and further that. Theatres and organisations supplementing what schools do is really important, although the extra-curricular should not take away from the fact that it should be core in school time. It is about keeping a balance.

As Indhu said, an activity in schools means that people can choose whether it is for them outside school, which means that it is completely across the board and diverse. Do some young people know whether the theatre is of interest to them if their families do not take them, and how are they meant to know? If you bring the activity into the school, they can suddenly find that it is for them. It allows them to make informed decisions as opposed to having the expectation that, "Theatre is not for me", when it is, it can be and it should be for everybody. The more we do in schools as theatre organisations the more we can supplement that and emphasise that it is a career, something that you can do and that you can make a living out of, as against much of what the press tells us.

**Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** I have a quick supplementary. You have not talked at all so far about theatre schools—not drama schools but the Italia Conti and places like that. Are they a dying breed, and do they suffer from the same thing: you have to pay, so it is only for a certain sector of society?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** I am not that knowledgeable about the drama schools and theatre schools in that league. From what I understand, it is about parental engagement—parents taking their kids and paying. I am so passionate about because I only got into theatre through an experience in school, not through my family background, and I really appreciate that my school gave me that. Without that, I would not have even considered, or engaged in, a career in theatre. Depending on parents to bring you to that and to enjoy arts is a dangerous place to be in.

**The Chairman:** Another question on education, from Lord Sherbourne.

Q40 **Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** My question is about the people being produced by the higher and further education institutions who are coming into the theatre industry. From your experience at the Tricycle and the Young Vic, can you recruit the right people with the right skills, or not?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** A smaller organisation like the Tricycle, which is a small theatre in Kilburn, gets a lot of people at entry level just out of higher education. Smaller organisations do a lot of training, so if you get someone who is hard working and who has passion and dedication you will often find ways. Also, what is good about smaller organisations is that they get to see the whole breadth of how different areas work, and they often specialise after that, so often we provide the training that is needed just through doing.

To answer your question in a slightly different way, I have noticed, and I wish there was a lot more of this in higher and further education, much more interaction with the industry, whether through placements or apprenticeships. I asked some of my team about some of these questions, and one of them told me that what really helped was having placements in a couple of theatres where they got jobs afterwards.

The other thing is that we in the industry do not work enough in that sector. In America, for playwrights and directors, working in that sector goes hand in hand with working in the university sector, so the students are always given what is very current. August Wilson taught Tarell McCraney, and both are high-profile American playwrights. They all work and teach in American universities, so that legacy and those skills are being passed on. We do not do that in this country. Even when I was at university, some of the stuff that I was taught was very old school and was not current practice at that time. If there was much more cohesion in higher education, a lot of us would want to give back and would want to work there.

**Sue Emmas:** There is a proliferation of performing arts degrees, which is great, but sometimes they do not necessarily look at the skills that some of the industry might need. At the moment, there is a great need for producers, but not that much is taught in higher education about what it is to be a producer and the importance that they bring. I have 900 directors who are all desperate for a producer but who have about 50 to share between them. Nor is it demonstrated that fundraising is an excellent career. You can be a writer and a fundraiser at the same time. Going to people and convincing them of the real import of theatre and the reason for funding can be incredibly creative. There are some areas that we may need to focus on more, such as the different career opportunities that higher education can provide the industry.

**Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** Do I take it that you are saying that you would like to see these institutions provide a wider range of skill sets beyond performing?

**Sue Emmas:** Yes.

**Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** Theatre involves so much. Do you have a sense of frustration that you cannot get the people who you want? I have heard other people say that the experience is just as important. The learning is part of what you have to do as well as the education beforehand, but do you have a sense of frustration at us not producing the kind of talent that you need?

**Sue Emmas:** We are not getting the diversity of talent that we need through higher education and the drama schools, which is a blockage in the talent pipeline.

**Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** What do you mean by diversity?

**Sue Emmas:** Diversity in terms of ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status and geography, all of which are important, because a lot of people in theatre—and I am suddenly going all northern—come from London and the south-east and we need to broaden where people come from. Yes, diversity is a real blockage in relation to the people we are getting into the industry who are training.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** One of the issues is that when you are at school you are not necessarily open to being told, or are aware of, the number of ways to work in the industry; that it is not just about acting or potentially directing, and that there are different skill sets, whether technical, back-stage or administrative. Finance is a big area of recruitment that we could do with in the industry, because often they get paid better in other sectors. I wish that there was more awareness of the potential careers rather than just performance.

**Baroness Kidron:** Have you seen any noticeable difference since the introduction of tuition fees at university in who you get and whether you get any at all?

**Sue Emmas:** The short answer is yes. It puts a lot of people off, because you come into an industry that is freelance and with very little immediate likelihood of being paid well. They have a student loan and a sense of debt. Also, some courses are creating a lack of interest among the particular people they are trying to attract, because they are not delivering what the industry wants and therefore those young people are going in other directions to apprenticeships. That will affect very strongly the diversity of those coming in both as actors and on the technical side.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** It really worries me. Again, it is that divide that I am seeing. Just as a personal anecdote, I had to convince my parents to let me do a drama degree. I do not know the cost, and I question today whether I would even ask, or whether I would be able to convince them. The other aspect is that people will be very confident that they can do it rather than that they may be able to do it. For that group of people who want to try for whatever reason but who are unsure, it will turn them off.

**Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** One of the problems that the Lord Chairman mentioned when we were at the Royal Court last week—and I know that what you are talking about is a reality—is that on the one hand the creative industries are this enormous success and we see these incredibly successful organisations, individuals and so on, and the contribution to the economy. On the other hand, there seems to be a real problem about very low pay and, indeed, no pay. It is very easy in these situations to say, “What are the Government doing?”, but what is the industry doing?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Yes, that is a huge issue. I can speak personally as an artistic director and say that we are insistent that everyone is at least on the minimum wage in whatever area. It is how we keep increasing the pay, because all our salaries are way under when compared to any other sector. There are union bodies such as Directors

UK, which is trying to help directors, and Equity. When thinking about this it is the fringe that I am most concerned about, because to get access, to get your work seen and to get exposure, you need to be on the fringe, which means that you often have to work for no money and encourage a lot of other people to work for no money. For the younger generation, I see them either doing two or three other jobs to facilitate that or having personal or family income to support them. It is the fringe area that needs to be addressed, invested in and looked at the most. I could go on.

**Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** The Tricycle is a theatre I love and go to often, and congratulations on it. How can the larger organisations help to support a theatre of that size and, indeed, those in the regions? I was very interested in what you said about fundraising, because that again seems to me to be something that the bigger theatres understand, so perhaps that could be shared.

**Sue Emmas:** I completely agree. We have done exactly that at the Young Vic through the directors programme. We run sessions on fundraising to which directors come along and we pass on all the skills that we have. To slightly answer your point in a different way, as an industry we also need to look at different models. Equity's no pay/low pay agreement is brilliant, but it does not recognise that all these people pouring out of university and drama school are essentially start-up companies, because most people will come together and create a company with a bunch of friends. They are essentially creating a new business, and the universities may not be teaching directors how to create a new business. The Young Vic does a lot on self-producing—we are teaching directors how to contact theatres, about income tax, how to write an invoice. We need to accept that a lot of graduates will come out and set up a new company, and in some ways we need to celebrate that and as the bigger organisations to support it.

There are other things that can happen more widely. We need to recognise incubator start-ups and see them as entrepreneurs as opposed to an actor and a director coming together to make a piece of theatre. A lot of the theatre companies that we now know and love came from exactly that: Theatre de Complicité, Frantic Assembly and Punchdrunk. They were basically people with brilliant ideas and a lot of entrepreneurial spirit, and they need to be supported to do that. They will not get paid very much to begin with, but equally if you set up a PR company you will probably not get much pay to begin with, and you will call in favours from friends and work for free yourself. We need to accept that in the industry that is something to celebrate, not to necessarily push back on.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** There is a lot of collegiate help and support. The National Theatre, for example, gives a lot of support to the Tricycle, and we all share as much as we can as organisations. Within that sector, we take responsibility for the give and take and the sense that we are in it together.

**Earl of Caithness:** I want to pick up on one thing. You said that the

fringe needs to be looked at. What do you mean by that? Who should do it and what are they aiming at?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** I do not have all the answers. It is interesting that I come from a generation that could still sign on and work for no money. That was the way for a lot of bands in music and in a lot of the culture; you could work at the Gate Theatre and still sign on. With all that taken away, I do not know what is filling that economic gap now, which is what worries me. One idea is that perhaps the bigger TV companies and the film companies, which are feeding off the theatre industry through content, artists or technicians—because it is a training ground for those industries—could make a contribution on the fringe that helps the growth of it.

**Baroness Kidron:** Can I ask a tiny question about money as well? I get the fringe thing and the friends thing, but it would be useful for us to hear the sorts of wages that actors are getting on a regular basis or the sorts of wages they are getting behind the stage. I do not know whether you are willing to say that on the record here, but people have no idea that you can be a very successful actor in your 50s and getting—

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Very little money.

**Baroness Kidron:** Would you care to tell us roughly what you might be getting?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** We have been closed because we are undergoing capital development, so we will look at it, but it was just over £500 a week for an actor.

**Sue Emmas:** We are at slightly more at £540.

**Baroness Kidron:** Behind stage, is it roughly the same?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** It is similar.

**Sue Emmas:** For stage management.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Stage management is about that.

**Baroness Kidron:** But to be really clear that is people doing very well in their careers. We are not talking about the 99% who might be unemployed on any given day.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** No, that is Adrian Lester doing “Red Velvet” at the Tricycle.

**Baroness Kidron:** It is important for us to understand that.

**Sue Emmas:** In most companies you get a company wage, so everybody is on exactly the same.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Most of us try to pay above the Equity rates.

**Baroness Kidron:** Do you know whether it is similar outside London or whether that rate of £550 is actually a London rate?

**Sue Emmas:** I would hazard a guess that it is lower outside London.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** I know that there are Equity minimums that every theatre that is part of UK Theatre has to pay, and those minimums will be available.

**Baroness Kidron:** As a successful career wage?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** Some people have another job as well. There are all kinds of other things that people do.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Not if you are a successful actor working all the time.

**The Chairman:** You will get only £25,000 a year?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Working in theatre.

**Lord Sheikh:** Money is very important. You referred to the Equity wage scale. What is the scale? Is it above the minimum wage?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** They will all be above the minimum wage, definitely, at all Equity levels. Yes, money is important, but people accept such low pay because there are other areas and we love what we do, so in a way we become easy scapegoats for being paid less. Yes, it is all above the minimum wage.

**Lord Sheikh:** People can live on it, in other words?

**Sue Emmas:** People manage on it.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** If you do not have a life, yes.

**Baroness Benjamin:** As an actor myself, I know that you have to make it very clear that if you get £550 a week that does not mean every week of the year because your contract is probably limited to three months and that is it, and you might not work for the other nine months of the year. That point needs to be made very clearly.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Yes.

**Lord Sheikh:** So it is not throughout the year and it is seasonal, is it?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** No, it is freelance, so it depends on whether you get the job. It is why a lot of actors cannot survive on doing just theatre.

**Baroness Quin:** Do the Equity rates cover all the different jobs in the theatre or do they relate specifically to acting?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Acting and stage management.

**Sue Emmas:** BECTU covers technical. At the moment, directors are not really covered, which is why Stage Directors UK is trying to address the issue of director pay.

The other thing to say about directors is that you get a fee for rehearsals and invariably for the technical period up to the press night and maybe a little for the sustaining of the run. During the preparation, which can take six months, you get no money, so you can get a fee of £7,000 and it can take you eight months to put that show together. It is easier for designers, because you might do two or three projects at once, but again you get less pay because you are not necessarily seen in the same context as the director, so it is really tricky.

The other thing in the industry is that we are very good at spinning plates. The younger generation is just coming in. They start off by being a director but they are also doing web design and maybe childcare or tutoring. It is an amazing, resilient group of people who are just trying to pay the rent. Obviously, with London getting more expensive, that gets more troublesome, so it is difficult for young artists coming into the industry. They have to be their own agent, cheerleader and counsellor, and they have to put everything together, which is very hard, very tough.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** There is a figure in the report by SOLT—the Society of London Theatre—that a director who is considered successful and established and who is, say, directing four productions in venues such as the Royal Court, the Donmar or the Young Vic, earns a top salary of about £22,000.

**The Chairman:** It is really important to have that on the record. On the other hand, very serious money is being made in the commercial theatre. Very substantial profits are being made, which is very good for the economy—we can all accept that. But is there a problem in the money filtering from a relatively small number of people, who are doing extremely well, to the rest?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** I would not say so. Again, I find the ecology of our industry quite interesting, because the commercial sector on the whole is dependent on the subsidised sector and supports it. Often, you will get commercial investment in many of the subsidised theatres, whether or not it is in a production, so we tend to work symbiotically in trying to make shows work and to earn money off shows. You are talking about the high-earning productions—I cannot give an accurate figure—such as “Harry Potter” or “Mamma Mia!” When “Mamma Mia!” opened, we were all saying, “When are we going to get our ‘Mamma Mia!’?” That is the phrase—the golden whatever.

**Baroness Kidron:** Is it the same in the commercial theatre, that the writer and the director are rights-holders, so they earn a bit of money and then subsidise theatre?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** They do not. I think writers do, but not directors.

**Sue Emmas:** SDUK is trying to address that as well.

**The Chairman:** Let us move on to apprenticeships.

- Q41 **Lord Sheikh:** I am a Conservative Peer, and our party, including our previous leader, has been very keen on apprenticeships. My business is financial services. I am very much involved in training and I used to be the president of my professional body. We have been talking about education and training. One way to train more people is perhaps to enhance our apprenticeship schemes. What evaluation have you made of apprenticeship arrangements, how valuable they are and what is their contribution to your industry? Are there any areas where we, the Government, can do a bit more, bearing in mind that the key thing is to increase our apprenticeships? When we think of apprenticeships, perhaps we think about plumbers, mechanics and whatever, but apprenticeships apply now to every sector. We need to train people in the creative arts, because I honestly believe that in any composite society the entertainment industry is very important. What can we do? Can we give tax breaks, for example? Can we support workers in training? Can we also support companies at risk, although not every company is commercially viable? Perhaps you can talk about apprenticeships and the other points I have raised.

**Sue Emmas:** Apprenticeships have been pretty successful from a theatre perspective. At the Young Vic, we have been part of the London Theatre Consortium apprenticeships, and it is the same with the Tricycle. As a consequence, we have had more diverse young people taking access opportunities at entry level into theatre. It has also inspired certain theatres to create their own not strictly apprenticeship programmes but opportunities to support young people in their first entrance into theatre. At the Young Vic, we have four Young Associates: one in front of house, one in finance, one in production, one in the directors programme and Taking Part department. That really is equipping them to go and get their next job, which has been fantastic. There was a creative skills conference, which spoke highly of it, and the young adults said that in some ways it was great for them because they went straight into work and it bypassed university, it put skills and experience on their CV and it made them work-ready. It has been very successful in that way. There is no kind of formal evaluation, but from my perspective with the young associates we have had—they have gone on to work at the Donmar and the Roundhouse—it feels that we are equipping the industry with young adults coming in.

One thing that has been slightly more problematic is that it works for the larger organisations but less so for the smaller, because to take on an apprentice means quite a bit of responsibility. Something could be done with that. We could also perhaps look a little wider than just apprenticeships in theatre and at what is often called mid career, in that you are at an associate level and there is a bit of a glass ceiling regarding your training. It would be good for the HMRC to see those training opportunities as associateships and to make them new bursaries and therefore tax-free, because your professional development never ends.

To widen that sense of professional development not just through apprenticeships but through the industry and through people's careers would make a huge difference in retention in the industry as well.

**Lord Sheikh:** Can you give us some numbers for how many apprentices you have taken on?

**Sue Emmas:** In the Young Vic?

**Lord Sheikh:** Have you found them to be successful, and have they ventured further?

**Sue Emmas:** Definitely at the Young Vic. We have had a number in production and we have had four per year as Young Associates, which has happened over a two-year period. We have had people in wardrobe who have been really successful and gone on into the industry and who continue to work freelance at the Young Vic as well, so there have been definite instances. Also, the producer of "The Mountaintop"—the winner of the JMK Trust Award last year who did fantastically well—came through the London Theatre Consortium apprenticeship scheme. She was based at the Bush for her apprenticeship.

**Lord Sheikh:** So there are some success stories? That is the impression that I am getting from you.

**Sue Emmas:** There are definitely success stories.

**The Chairman:** Indhu, if you agree with all that, please just say that you agree with it, because we are running out of time. Otherwise, please feel free to add anything.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Yes, I agree, but I think apprenticeships work in a wider definition in that they need to be tailor-made for the organisation. When that has been done as opposed to having something imposed on organisations, they are far more successful.

On the question of growing the organisation, my advice is to make sure that there is flexibility so that the organisation can be empowered to decide how it should go. Often, if there are too many regulations, it is easier for us to do our own traineeships.

**The Chairman:** Absolutely.

Q42 **Baroness Kidron:** You have already answered some of my question, which is about professional development, so you might want to add a bit, or not. I am interested to know whether you think there are further things that either the industry or the Government could do to support what is basically a gig economy, the freelance world, and in what areas you would like to see people who are already trained being trained further. I particularly wanted to ask you about women who have children, because I am very aware that even at a very high level they take such a knock.

**Sue Emmas:** Continuing professional development is quite complex in an industry that is very freelance orientated, because if you do training you are taking a day out of your work. There have been fewer and fewer associate directorships, which is a really important aspect of continuing professional development, and the more we can offer those opportunities the more we break through the glass ceiling. For women and others who are parents or have caring responsibilities, there is a need to look at different models in the industry whereby we can put structures in place that are better for part-time work or reduced rehearsing.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** When we say reduced rehearsing hours we mean rehearsals from 11 am until 4 pm.

**Sue Emmas:** And no evenings, and to schedule the whole time so that you know pretty much what the rehearsal schedule is and you do not make calls less than 24 hours in advance.

**Baroness Kidron:** For the benefit of the record, can I ask you what an associate director is, why that is a key thing and whether the funding and the money, which you have already described as being rather too tight to mention, could support family-style rehearsal schedules?

**Sue Emmas:** An associate director is someone who is probably moving from studio work into bigger spaces. They might be 10 years in and beginning to be called upon to make their own work and are teaching others, so they are feeding down their skills.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** At the step before that they are related to an organisation, so they are the associate director of an organisation and they work very closely with the senior management team. It is sort of training and development to become an artistic director or get more responsibility, so it is a step, and they are part of the artistic and creative force of that organisation, sometimes part-time, sometimes full-time, depending on the position.

**Baroness Kidron:** So they are paid by the organisation?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** They are paid by the organisation.

**Sue Emmas:** As Indhu has said, that is why leadership is important, because if there are not many of those associateships you do not understand how buildings are run and you do not understand fundraising or know what it is to be an artistic director. That level of professional development is being missed, which is partly what the Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme is trying to address. We are piloting more associateships and trying to encourage more money to come to the organisation. Support organisations are also really important within theatre for providing theatres with opportunities to bring these associates in and to give them the training to make them the leaders of the future.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** On the question of children and rehearsals, it is possible. Like a lot of these things, there needs to be a willingness on the part of the management and the leadership, the top, to make it

accessible and easier for parents with children. What is very interesting about our industry is that we are very good with not knowing very much, which in a sense is funny, and we could learn a lot about management or business skills from other sectors. We sort of train ourselves. Compared with other sectors, considering that we are quite senior leaders in our organisations—I am an exec director—I have not done many management training courses.

- Q43 **Baroness Quin:** I want to go on to the concern that has been expressed to us about the reduction in local authority funding. How much have you been affected by this yourselves, how much have you observed the reductions having an impact in areas that you come across and, to counter the reductions, what kind of response can be given by the sector and by government?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** We have been deeply affected in the borough of Brent. We have had a reduction and we continue to have a reduction. The frustrating thing is that the Tricycle gets on very well with our local authority. We have a very close relationship with it, and it absolutely values the Tricycle, but it is under incredible pressure itself in relation to what it has to cut. There is also the question of PR; when you are supporting arts and culture, what does that mean when you are cutting other benefits? We are in constant conversation and they try to find other ways to help, so even though our funding is being cut we have a very strong, good relationship. You see what has happened in Birmingham and Nottingham. We are in a terrible situation. The Arts Council cannot cover that gap for local authorities.

Going back to the conversation at the beginning about young people, the work that gets first cut from those theatres is the outreach and education work into those areas for young people who are least likely to get access, so it compounds the whole issue that we have been talking about. When the Hampstead Theatre lost its local authority funding, its education programme went. At the Tricycle, our mission statement is the unheard voice being part of the mainstream, so it is very instrumental to us and we have gone into our core reserves to maintain and expand our creative learning programme, because it is an important principle of where we are and where we are located, but that is because it is a principle of the organisation.

Regarding government, I would say, "How do you support those local authorities to support the art sector?" It is not necessarily that they do not want to, but how you give them the ammunition or the backing that says it is okay to support our arts and culture? That is what I would say for my particular relationship.

**Baroness Quin:** This might be something that we can take up with the Minister, obviously, but do you want to add anything?

**Sue Emmas:** Indhu said it perfectly.

- Q44 **Baroness Benjamin:** There is a real concern about the lack of diversity

both of practitioners and audiences in the theatre industry when it comes to drama schools, finance and some of the points you have already raised. What are your organisations doing about this? Do you agree that there needs to be greater diversity in the theatre industry, given that BME actors not always being offered stereotypical roles? If so, how can individuals from different backgrounds and locations be encouraged and supported to enter the theatre world and to persist in it, and not to leave to go off to America? What are you doing and what do you think government should be doing to address these concerns?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** Unless you can see representation of yourself front and centre, from whatever community you come from or whatever background, if you do not see yourself publicly or presented through the arts, through television and film, I do not think you can underestimate how disenfranchising that is. It is imperative that we tell their stories and that we realise that there are different lenses through which the world is viewed—that it is not just the white male straight lens and that there are other perspectives to engage with. Lots of artists engage with that and it is the mission statement of the Tricycle. The problem with diversity is that it is seen as a good thing to do and that we should engage with it, and it is debated a lot, but actually it is beyond that for me; it is an imperative. We need those stories and we need to tell those stories. What I found at the Tricycle is that those stories attract audiences of all kinds, from traditional theatre-goers to new audiences, because people like the unknown story. A good story that is well told attracts audiences.

On the idea that we need schemes to bring those audiences in, I personally believe that if you build it, they will come. If you give them the work, present them on stage and make them the heroes of their own stories, they will come, listen and engage. It is when they do not feel that they are part of the fabric or the narrative that they disengage.

On the training that we talked about, we had a scheme that was about developing larger-scale plays from six BAME playwrights in NW6 to get those plays on stage. You invest in where you want those stories to come from, because they will not just come through the post. In my first season, all the leads were non-white. I never talked about it because I wanted to show that that work is beyond a tick-box exercise and is about good stories.

**Baroness Benjamin:** What do you think government could do about this?

**Sue Emmas:** One thing we have not touched on as yet is deaf and disabled artists. Lack of funding through Access to Work is preventing or creating barriers to people being employed both as freelancers and as members of companies. This is really problematic at the moment. It is important to address this so that there is the provision of people. It is not a case of need but of requirement for those deaf and disabled artists to have the necessary support, whether it is a BSL interpreter or a taxi that gets you to the rehearsal room. All those things need to be addressed to ensure that we have the most diverse artists and employees creating the

work, bringing the talent and creating a resilient and amazingly talented theatre sector.

**Baroness Benjamin:** You mentioned audiences. I do not know if you remember the musical "Big Life". It was a great show at Stratford East and very successful. When it came to the Apollo in London, it closed very quickly. The problem is trying to understand the types of audiences that go to these shows. How can we engage with the audience that would go to see "Big Life" at Stratford East but not at the Apollo, and what kinds of schemes need to be in place to get people to go not just to the fringe theatres such as the Tricycle but to the West End theatres?

**Indhu Rubasingham:** I think they go if the pricing is right. I was really shocked at how young and diverse the audience was for "Red Velvet", which is about Ira Aldridge, the first black actor in this country, and part of the Ken Branagh season. There was good ticket pricing and it was Adrian Lester. It is like any of those things: the ticket pricing has to be right. Theatre pricing is one of the most prohibitive areas in the West End. It is accessible ticket pricing and putting on the product that will attract those audiences. Then it is how you market it, and theatres can do more by learning from other sectors in marketing, whether it is through film or music, how to access different audiences and segments, to use a marketing term, and how to get the word out there. Ultimately, there is nothing stronger than the word of mouth in that work.

**The Chairman:** We are down to the last two or three minutes, so time is precious. Bishop, you have a question.

Q45 **Bishop of Chelmsford:** I will piggyback this question on to the question I was going to ask later, which we will not have time for, about another element of diversity, which is the bias towards London and whether you want to make some comments about theatre-making, something which I know you are very involved in, Sue. We have touched on it, but there has not been a chance to say it: looking at the whole nation and not just London is a very important part of our inquiry.

**Sue Emmas:** As someone who lives in Manchester and used to live in Newcastle, it is not about diminishing London in order to support the regions. It is the whole term "regions", as if the whole of England, other than London, is exactly the same. It is important for London to recognise itself as a capital. Not everyone from all over the country sees London as their capital, and we need to make the capital theirs. Certainly at the Young Vic we see that as a big responsibility. We are bringing artists down and paying for their travel and accommodation in order to embrace what the Young Vic can offer and take it back to their communities; we are encouraging everybody not to come and live in London, or to work in London, but to stay in their communities and find ways to make work because that will make for a much richer ecology across the country.

Regional theatres are finding it harder as a result of the loss of local authority money, and what they are expected to do is far greater than London theatres are expected to do. Someone once made the analogy

that the London theatre is like a local shop and your regional theatre is the supermarket, trying to be everything to everybody, if not now a hypermarket. With lots of local authority funding, sometimes they are also doing well-being in schools because there is no longer the youth provision. We really need to see it as a country and try not to be London-centric, and to separate it off and to ensure that the whole body is as full and rich as it can be.

**The Chairman:** The last word, Indhu.

**Indhu Rubasingham:** The danger in the debate is London or not or London and outside, which is very dangerous. We need London to be the capital and to be world class, and to take away from that is dangerous. We need to support theatres regionally. One problem is that some of these theatres are huge 1,000-seat theatres, and to programme those theatres with a product that will sell is very different from programming the Young Vic or the Tricycle when there is choice, because we can be more niche and more experimental. It is about looking at the buildings themselves and how to support the artistic, creative structure. Manchester has had investment in all areas from both government and local authority. The Manchester International Festival has been created, which is a real example of how it can work outside of London.

**Baroness Kidron:** Do you see the BBC relocating as part of the Manchester bubble, or is that not relevant?

**Sue Emmas:** No, I think it is. Also, one of the central things is that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is really supportive and is still putting a lot of funding in, and therefore perceives the Northern Powerhouse as an important asset of their city and the Greater Manchester area. That investment is really paying off, because it is dragging people from London to Manchester, which is really exciting.

**The Chairman:** Absolutely. Thank you both very much indeed. You have been very good and we have managed to finish on time, despite the fact that we could have gone on for at least another hour. That was terrific, Sue and Indhu. Thank you both very much for joining us.