

Written evidence submitted by Missing Pieces Theatre Show Ltd

We are finding Government response frustrating in the pandemic.

Please forgive us for attaching some statistics below – but it is hard to believe that Government would treat any other major business in such a cavalier fashion.

It is even more of a slap in the face to see Oliver Dowden MP only consulting the larger players. The Theatre Business has many grass roots parts to it that currently have to scabble around for project funding with the odds stacked against them.

There is NOT a level playing field with most funding directed to the larger conurbations and the larger players leaving a vast untapped well of creativity.

Germany respects its creative sector and funding is generous over there because they understand that for every £1 invested there is an average return to the exchequer in £5 not just from the company but also in terms of visitors spending in other places in the area.

The only time we appear to be noticed is when our National Prestige is enhanced by the many awards that we receive worldwide.

But there are too many artists struggling to get anything done. They have too many hoops to jump through and are consistently the last to get aid.

All we want is a reasonably level playing field.

We are a small new writing company and both of us are very experienced and yet Arts Council seem to focus on narrow areas. At the moment we can completely understand the focus on Black Arts – but there are also Working Class artists and older creatives who are similarly sidelined.

All we want is a fair and transparent application system which should be colour and class blind and assessed completely on merit alone.

We offer new shows which explore hot topics for instance – our last show looked at the plight of young carers, disability and the plight of women when their husband dies suddenly leaving them with 2 children. In our story the Mother is also a disabled dance teacher and her two daughters are forced to become young carers. We also offered free workshops with this and did achieve arts council funding on our seventh re application – so losing venues and credence because of the uncertain and long process.

Our new show is about Errol Flynn and addiction. We have a leading addiction specialist working with us to offer allied workshops for young addicts. This is a bad problem in Ipswich and we have the support of Tom Hunt MP and are being considered for a grant by the SEEDS FOR CHANGE INITIATIVE. We were due to hear whether we had a grant from ACE just

before lockdown. There is a great interest in a major tour but we are left rudderless because of Covid -19 and, when it does return, the literal lottery of arts council application. Please read the stats below and tell us we should not all be supported – we are a drop in the ocean and there is not enough done.

Theatre is a major UK employer – much bigger than agriculture and sport

Approx **290,000** employed in the UK theatre industry. At present, over **70%** of these roles are identified as **at risk**.

Over **50%** of roles in our industry are currently being paid through the UK Furlough Scheme. Most of the rest, including us, are on Universal Credit. Our accounts have been deferred so we can get no relief under self employed.

1 in 6 jobs in London is in the **creative industry**.

The Creative industry is a major contributor to the British economy

In 2019, 18,364 performances took place across JUST London's theatres, bringing in **£799m** in box office revenue and generating **£133m** in VAT payments for the UK Treasury.

In 2018 audiences for theatres across the rest of the country topped **18.8 million** with a box office turnover of **£509 million**

Each £1 invested returns £5

A major UK attraction - giving us international prestige - but Germany treats their artists much better than the UK which seems almost contemptuous except when we win yet another award for excellence then Government crow about it.

Under normal circumstances, the **annual UK theatre audience** is over **34 million**

300,000 people visit West End theatres in a normal week and theatre is seen as a major reason as to why people visit London.

An economic driver

For every £1 spent at the theatre, £3 is also spent on food, drink, accommodation and travel in the local area. With significantly more being spent in the West End.

A vital part of UK cultural identity, national conversation, and a protector of national wellbeing.

Training ground for performers in TV and Film and other creatives.

A world class highly respected industry in spite of the philistine governments.

Arts cuts in schools should also be immediately reversed as it is an important part of moulding rounded individuals.

The UK's theatre industry plays a key economic, social and place-making role. Theatre and the performing arts make a powerful contribution to our society and to our national identity. They make areas richer culturally and financially, and they make places more attractive to live and work.

According to a survey from PEC, with people exploring more online cultural content in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, filmed performances of theatre, concerts and/or dance shows online has the biggest percentage share of respondents reporting to consume this content more frequently or for the first time.

SO WHY IS GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO LET 70% OF THE INDUSTRY RUN OUT OF MONEY THIS YEAR - THEATRE IN KESWICK, BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME, NUFFIELD SOUTHAMPTON - ALREADY VICTIMS

ROYAL ALBERT HALL ALSO LIKELY TO CLOSE

SCORES OF US OUT OF WORK AND WITH NO GUIDANCE AS TO WHEN WE MIGHT OPEN.

MONEY THAT **HAS** BEEN SPENT HAS GONE MAINLY TO MAJOR CONURBATIONS - **OLDER ARTISTS ARE LARGELY IGNORED** AND WRITTEN OFF AND FUNDING CONCENTRATES ON EXISTING WELL FUNDED ORGANISATIONS IN CITIES - COMPANIES OUTSIDE LONDON AND OTHER LARGE CITIES ARE LARGELY UNDERFUNDED.

What is Government doing about this?

I would like to see more egalitarianism and meritocratic principles as opposed to cronyism and favouritism.

In 40 years as a Theatre Practitioner it has never been fair and equal. An experienced practitioner is just as valuable as a young artist who is also struggling against inequity. We **all** need more of a fair crack. And the applies in all walks of life - we live in an inequitable society.

Try being an arts business in Suffolk - there are many “talking shops” that offer Government subsidised advice you have already heard but little real FINANCIAL help. Ask for finance or some link to a partner and they largely run away.

We are a community facing theatre company and our shows are about important topics like disability, sexist discrimination, and the frustrations of having to become a young carer and putting your life on hold as a young woman.

We were about to do play about Errol Flynn, written by my partner Karen, focussing on addiction and offering workshops using my hypnotherapy skills in treating addiction with one of the UKs leading addiction practitioners for the local people.

Drugs are a major problem here with Albanian gangs running drugs into here and getting young people involved. One young black man lost his life for upsetting the local drug lords. The council and the local MP Tom Hunt have been supportive but we can do nothing until Covid lifts - we will probably be the last sector to open - by which it is estimated that 70% of it will be gone ...