

## **Abstract**

This article responds to an important change in the demographic make-up of the artistic directors of London theaters in the period since 2010 – a significant increase in the representation of women and people of color. This is identified as an important and overdue advance in the capacity of British theater to represent and speak to British society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the article, the change is quantified with specific reference to the mainstream subsidized theaters where most new plays are staged, and the circumstances in which this overdue shift has taken place are identified. Two case studies are then presented, focusing on Emma Rice’s brief tenure at the Globe (2016-18) and Indhu Rubasingham’s re-branding of the Tricycle Theatre as the Kiln (2018), to indicate the challenges that artistic directors from previously under-represented groups can face. The article concludes with an assessment of the situation in 2021 and what might lie ahead, taking into account the shifts in the cultural narrative caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. The aim is to analyze a shift which is welcome if precarious, and to consider the ways in which progress has been resisted and continues to be threatened.

## **Biography**

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the 2000s, verbatim theatre and human rights, and the work of Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill, Debbie Tucker Green, Arnold Wesker and Roy Williams.

**‘Creating change where it matters the most’:**

**Artistic directorship and representation in the London theater**

Harry Derbyshire

Britain has changed drastically in the period since the Second World War, both in terms of the demographic make-up of its population and in terms of prevalent social attitudes, but British theater has sometimes struggled to keep up. Despite seismic shifts such as the rise of social realism in the 1950s or the surge of feminist playwriting three decades later, the danger has never been too far away that the theater will become – or, some would say, remain – a bastion of wealthy white male privilege, sealed off from the progress being made in wider culture. This has been an issue both in relation to the fictive realities being presented on stage and the professional power structures through which work is developed and programmed. This article responds to a significant development in this narrative of intermittent progress, a marked increase since 2010 in the number of women and people of color who hold the post of artistic director of a London theater. In this article I welcome this development as an important and overdue advance in the capacity of British theater to represent and speak to British society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, consider how it has come about, and assess the likelihood that it will come to be a permanent change in the composition of the UK theater industry – an essential outcome if theater is to serve London as well in the twenty-first century as it has in the past.

The article is divided into four parts. First, after an initial discussion of unequal representation in British theater and the particular significance of the artistic director, I quantify recent advance in representation at artistic director level with specific reference to the mainstream subsidized theaters (such as the National Theatre and Royal Court, which are in receipt of public funding via the government body Arts Council England) where the majority of new plays produced in London are staged. Second, I identify the circumstances in which this overdue shift has taken place, considering the role played by task-focused groups such as Tonic and Artistic Directors of the Future within the wider context of structural discrimination. Third, I present two case studies intended to shed light on the kinds of challenges that artistic directors from previously under-represented groups can face: the first considers Emma Rice's brief tenure as AD at the Globe (2016-18) and the second looks at Indhu Rubasingham's re-branding of the Tricycle Theatre as the Kiln (2018). Fourth, I conclude with a sustained discussion of the situation in 2021, taking into account the shifts in the cultural narrative caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. If it can show itself to be representative and inclusive, London's theater will continue to play a progressive role in the development of UK culture more widely; but if the gains of recent years are lost, it will slide backwards towards irrelevance.

### **Representation, artistic directorship and change**

Although this article focuses specifically on artistic directors, the discussion of their role must be considered in the context of wider issues of representation in British theater, culture and society. As Dave O'Brien, Chancellor's Fellow in Cultural and

Creative Industries at the University of Edinburgh, authoritatively puts it, “Theatre stakes a claim to be an artform that represents and reflects society. British society is currently marked by a range of social divisions that stretch far beyond the cultural sector. As a result, inequalities in the workforce and audience for theatre should not be a surprise. British theatre and the associated performing arts industries are characterised by exclusions by gender, by race, and by class.”<sup>1</sup> Such exclusions relate very clearly to the legacy of the past. While there has been clear movement away from the values of colonial Britain, when sexism and racism operated as organizing social principles, inherited social attitudes and institutional structures are the cause of widespread and continuing systemic discrimination through which inequalities that strongly resemble those of imperial Britain are perpetuated.

One instance of this is that, despite attracting a disproportionately female audience,<sup>2</sup> the British theater as an industry has continued to be male dominated. Writing in 1984, the feminist dramatist and critic Michelene Wandor pointed to the overwhelming predominance of male playwrights being produced. Citing a recent survey, she included one especially memorable statistic: “about 7% of all plays produced are by women, and of these [classic murder mystery author] Agatha Christie accounts for nearly half”.<sup>3</sup> In more recent years the preponderance of male directors has repeatedly been criticized, with it being reported that “in 2012, in the UK’s 10 most subsidised theatres, only 24% of directors were female”.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, figures presented at the Advance Symposium, attended by many of Britain’s most influential female theater workers in 2014, showed that “of the artistic directors working across the 179 theatre organisations in Arts Council England’s national portfolio, 63% are male and 37% are female. In organisations receiving more than

£500,000 Arts Council subsidy this financial year, the situation is worse with only 24% female representation at the top are female.”<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the imbalance relates not only to who is being allocated what role, but to how much they are being paid once they attain it. As Lyn Gardner noted in *The Stage* in 2019, “The volume of women working in all areas of theatre, often in more lowly paid admin roles, masks the inequalities of both power and pay that exist within arts organisations. Back in 2016, research [...] found that women leaders at top theatres were paid £29,000 less on average than men.”<sup>6</sup> With such figures in mind, it is easy to see why Elaine Aston, comparing the present situation to that highlighted by Wandor in 1984, concludes that “any statistically significant closing of the gender gap has yet to happen”.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of the representation of people of color within the theater industry, while there is similarly entrenched inequality there have also been significant historical changes since the Second World War. As Mary Brewer, Lynette Goddard and Dierdre Osborne write with specific relation to people of African and Caribbean heritage, “The sizeable presence of black artists within the British theatre complex is [...] a late twentieth-century occurrence following on from the seismic alterations to Britain’s demographic composition via migration after World War II. [...] Black playwrights in the new millennium reaped the benefits of New Writing initiatives that characterised the subsidised theatre sector [...] impelled by this sector’s attempt to attract a younger and more diverse audience [...] – the audience of the future.”<sup>8</sup> However, the move of Black playwrights from “margins to mainstream” (as the

subtitle of Goddard's 2015 book puts it) has not necessarily been accompanied by the elevation of people of color elsewhere in the industry.

A 2016 study carried out for Arts Council England found a complex but not altogether positive picture, concluding that "The proportion of BAME [Black and Minority Ethnic] theatre workers [...] (13.3%) is now slightly higher than the 12.2% of people from BAME communities within the overall workforce in England. However, the national figure is deceptive, as the theatre sector is concentrated in large urban areas, particularly London, where the overall BAME population is much higher."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, recalling Gardner's point about women in the theater industry, the study raised the question not only of numbers but of status, noting that, "[w]hile BAME staff are not all working in low level positions, overall BAME leadership of organisations remains rare and there is a continued need for a greater diversity of leadership in theatre".<sup>10</sup> Though, as Aston has noted in connection to gender, "the action of reporting does not in and of itself automatically lead to change"<sup>11</sup>, nonetheless the availability of factual data in studies such as that carried out by Arts Council England is evidence of an increasing focus on the under-representation not only of women but of people of color in leadership roles at UK theaters. In relation to representation, leadership roles in theater have a dual importance, since the individuals with the greatest influence over programming, which in turn determines who is writing, directing and performing, are the artistic directors of producing theaters.

The role of artistic director as it is usually understood and practiced in British theater involves a combination of practical management and administration and artistic leadership and vision. As Richard Eyre, former Artistic Director of the National

Theatre (1987-1997), has commented, “[t]o run a theatre you need to be part bureaucrat, diplomat, politician, manager, impresario, counsellor and dramaturg”.<sup>12</sup> Michael Grandage, former Artistic Director of the Sheffield Crucible (1999-2005) and the Donmar Warehouse (2002-2012), and currently Artistic Director of the Michael Grandage Company (2011-present), says of the role: “Whether it’s developing a house style under one roof for those who have buildings or integrating into the fabric of a community for those who don’t, it requires a very specific focus that has less to do with being a director and far more to do with being a creative producer.”<sup>13</sup>

Most artistic directors come into their roles as directors, though they may also be known in other capacities (for instance Daniel Evans, who ran the Sheffield Theatres and is now at the Chichester Festival Theatre, is more widely known as an actor than a director). Michelle Terry at the Globe, an actor with no professional directing credits, is a rare exception. The expectation is usually that the artistic director will do most if not all of their directing work at the theater they lead; as Grandage suggests, their productions may be seen as helping to define the signature style of the theater. More than this, artistic directors, as Eyre notes, perform some of the functions of the dramaturg, and are the people with ultimate responsibility for programming productions as well as assigning them directors. In this regard, the decisions they make are of crucial importance to the playwrights and directors they may select and the actors who may be cast in the resulting productions.

In managerial terms, the artistic director may work alongside a Chief Executive Officer, as at Theatre Royal Plymouth, or Executive Director, as at the

National Theatre, or Executive Producer, as at the Royal Court – or, in a smaller theater, they may be expected to carry out all functions. Artistic directors provide the public face of a theater, giving interviews to promote the work and making statements at times of crisis. They are expected to fulfil a theater’s stated aims, to live up to its history and perceived values, and to ensure its continuing financial viability. As current office holders they will be accountable to the theater’s permanent management structure - ultimately, its board of directors – and, in case of failure or controversy, it may well be the AD who must carry the can. However, alongside the weight of responsibility – Christopher Haydon recalls feeling “abject fear” upon accepting the role of artistic director of the Gate Theatre in London<sup>14</sup> – the role brings with it an opportunity not to be under-valued: to advance an artistic or social agenda and to create a legacy in an important, if to some degree marginal, sphere of cultural representation.

The fact that Eyre, Grandage and Haydon, the three artistic directors I have quoted, are all white men is no coincidence; historically almost all of the artistic directors of major British theaters have been white and male. To take three prominent examples, of the eleven Artistic Directors of the Royal Court Theatre, all except the most recent (a white woman) have been white men, and without exception the Artistic Directors of the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company have been and are white men. While this sort of demographic dominance was more to be expected back in the 1950s and 60s, when a prevalent colonial mindset was only beginning to be challenged and the assertions of second wave feminism were being heard for the first time, its survival into the twenty-first century is at sobering odds with the notion of Britain as a modern, equal, inclusive society.



What can be reported today, however, is that this demographic dominance is waning, perhaps decisively; in the last few years the balance has significantly altered.

My evidence for this assertion consists of two surveys, taken in 2010 and 2020, capturing the artistic directors of what I take to be London's major, that is to say most prominent, producing theaters, these being the Almeida, Arcola, Battersea Arts Centre, Bush, Donmar Warehouse, Globe, Hampstead, Lyric Hammersmith, Old Vic, National Theatre, Royal Court, Theatre Royal Stratford East and Young Vic. For the 2020 survey the Bridge Theatre, founded in 2017, has also been included. I readily acknowledge that this is a selective list that not only excludes most of London's many fringe theaters but also omits the commercial West End, which operates without Artistic Directors.<sup>15</sup> Rather than claiming to present a comprehensive snapshot of the London theater scene, then, my focus here (as in most of my other research) is on the mainstream subsidized producing sector.

The first of the two surveys, relating to the state of play as it was in 2010, shows that the artistic directors of London's main producing theaters were not, at that stage, a very diverse group. Only one theater, the Bush under Josie Rourke, was run by a woman, and only Mehmet Ergen, the Turkish-born Artistic Director of the Arcola, and Kerry Kyriacos Michael, the second-generation Cypriot in charge at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, brought ethnic diversity into the mix. The other ten theaters were run by white men. Given that the 2011 government census revealed that only 59.8% of Londoners were white, and only 45% 'white British', this seems especially incongruous.<sup>16</sup>

As the decade advanced, however, there was an incremental sea change, seeing a number of women and people of color assume positions of power across London's theatres. In 2012 Josie Rourke moved from running the Bush to the Donmar Warehouse, succeeding Michael Grandage, and was replaced by Madani Younis; in the same year Indhu Rubasingham took over from Jonathan Kent at the Tricycle Theatre, becoming the first woman of color to run a major London theater. In 2013 Vicky Featherstone became the first woman Artistic Director of the Royal Court when the post was vacated by Dominic Cooke, and in 2016 Emma Rice was appointed AD of Shakespeare's Globe, succeeding Dominic Dromgoole. As will be discussed below, Rice's tenure did not last long, but when she left in 2018 her successor was Michelle Terry. In 2017 Nadia Fall took over at Theatre Royal, Stratford East from Kerry Kyriacos Michael and Kwame Kwei-Armah succeeded David Lan at the Young Vic, becoming the first Black Artistic Director of a major British theater. Finally, in 2019, Rachel O'Riordan succeeded Sean Holmes at the Lyric Hammersmith, Roxana Silbert took over from Edward Hall at the Hampstead Theater, Tarek Iskander succeeded David Jubb at the Battersea Arts Centre and Lynette Linton became the latest Artistic Director of the Bush Theatre. Linton, who had been running the smaller Gate Theatre since 2016 and who is of dual heritage, may be considered the first Black woman Artistic Director of a major London theater.

If we quantify the change signified by this litany of names via some basic statistical analysis, comparing the artistic directors of the thirteen theaters surveyed in 2010 to the artistic directors of the same theaters plus the Bridge in 2020, we arrive at some figures which are worth considering. In 2010 the proportion of artistic

directors of major London theaters who were men was 93%, and in 2020 it was 53%. In 2010 the proportion of artistic directors of major London theaters who were white was 86%, and in 2020 it was 60%. Combining the categories produces an even more striking figure: in 2010 the proportion of artistic directors of major London theaters who were white men was 79%; in 2020 it was 33%. A group photo of the London theater's artistic directors taken at the time of writing would look very different to one taken ten years previously, showing a gathering noticeably more representative of the population London's theaters exist to serve.

### **New pathways into leadership: what made the difference**

If 2020 can be seen as a watershed moment for the representation of women and people of color at artistic director level in the London theater, it is worth identifying how it has been brought about. It would be nice to think that long-overdue change, when it finally arrives, comes without struggle, but in this instance this has not been the case. The resurgent Black Lives Matter movement of 2020 heightened awareness of the problems of unacknowledged privilege, unconscious bias and systemic discrimination that are endemic in many Western societies, and consideration of the British theater over the past decade demonstrates that it is not immune, offering – as it has – limited opportunities both for people of color and women. As a result, the persistent efforts of determined individuals and groups have been needed to overcome significant obstacles to change in the period 2010-2020, as I'll consider here with reference first to the representation of women, and second to the representation of people of color.

In her 2020 book *Restaging Feminisms*, Elaine Aston considers the on-going struggles of women to achieve equal representation and status within British theater in relation to the continuing resonance of the liberal, radical and socialist strands of feminist thinking and activity which were inaugurated in the heyday of the Second Wave. As mentioned previously, she offers a scathing account of “at best [...] incredibly slow equality progress” and warns that “the *act* of reporting on equality matters” sometimes has a tendency to “substitut[e] for the *doing* of equality actions” (emphasis as in original).<sup>17</sup> At the same time, she points to on-going work at grass-roots level to drive change, for instance the annual theatre review posted by blogger Victoria Sadler highlighting the small number of plays by women being staged each year in London’s major theaters.

As Sadler explained in a 2018 interview, :“I actually worked in investment banking for 15 years prior to this – possibly the most sexist industry on earth – and so my viewpoint was always that the Arts were more inclusive. [...] When I found that not to be the case, I was genuinely shocked so I started these blogs talking about the dearth of female playwrights, and commenting routinely on it on social media, and focusing on female representation in some of my reviews. When I started to collect and streamline these thoughts into summary articles, the findings surprised me further [...] Male bias and specifically White male bias continues to drench our stages.”<sup>18</sup> Sadler specifically maintains that more female artistic directors will not necessarily solve the problem, citing the Donmar Warehouse which, under Josie Rourke, staged only one play by a woman in 2017; however, her findings also highlight the exemplary record of Vicky Featherstone at the Royal Court where women-authored work was in the majority.

Aston further highlights the work of activists lobbying for change in other areas of the theatre industry, for instance actors Lizzie Berrington and Polly Kemp who set up the ERA 50:50 (Equal Representation for Actresses) campaign in 2015;<sup>19</sup> and Stephanie Street, who led the 'Women of a Certain Age' campaign for Act for Change in the same year, highlighting the on-going lack of rewarding parts for older women actors.<sup>20</sup> In relation to the broader structures of theatres and arts organizations, a particularly influential organization referred to by Aston is Tonic.<sup>21</sup> It was founded by theater director Lucy Kerbel in 2011 with the aim of "creating a sea change in how theatre and the performing arts thought about and acted in regards to equality, diversity and inclusion"; over the last decade its "programmes, methodologies and tools [...] have enabled individuals and organisations to achieve deep and sustained change".<sup>22</sup> While Tonic defines inclusion broadly, Kerbel is especially conscious of building on "the tireless campaigning conducted by individual women and women's theatre groups over the last few decades".<sup>23</sup>

In her 2017 book *All Change: A Practical Guide to Achieving Gender Inequality*, Kerbel specifically addresses the issue of increasing the representation of women at artistic director level: "Getting more women, and the broadest range of women, into artistic-director roles may feel like something few of us have control over. [...] Yet I would argue that there are a whole range of things that many of can do to create shifts so that, cumulatively, we maximise promising individuals' potential to move into artistic-director roles, regardless of their gender."<sup>24</sup> Focusing attention on the unstructured processes and often precarious conditions in which theatre workers must manage their careers, Kerbel offers concrete suggestions as to how theatre

companies can create an environment more conducive to women's success.<sup>25</sup> Tonic has advised an impressive number of theaters and theater companies nationally on how to speed their progress toward gender equality. These include London theaters the Almeida, the Kiln and the National Theatre, the latter of which is working to improve its record under current artistic director Rufus Norris.<sup>26</sup>

One further development that Aston notes in relation to movement for change is that Arts Council England has stipulated that – for the first time – bids to its 2018-22 grant cycle had to include an equality action plan. Its website states that “we want the work we support to reflect the diversity of our nation” and that “we want this to be true of the art, the audiences, and the workforce and leadership”.<sup>27</sup> This, because it links progress towards equality to on-going financial viability, may prove the most decisive step forward of all.

The growing number of women artistic directors in 2020 can be seen as the result, if not quite the culmination, of a struggle which has been more or less consistently in progress since the 1960s. As Aston stresses it is salutary to consider how gradual and how partial corrections to inequality have been, but at the same time it does appear that from the perspective of 2021 there is something to celebrate. There are, perhaps, more complex issues to be considered in relation to the significant increase in the number of artistic directors of color over the last ten years, because the problem of structural racism is still in the process of being widely understood in a way that the problem of gender inequality is not. While change may have been overdue, it was – given the societal biases in play – in no way inevitable. Indeed, the indications earlier in the 2010s had not been encouraging, as Vicky

Featherstone has suggested when recalling returning to London in 2013: “When I came back to London after ten years in Scotland, which is essentially quite a white country, I was really thrilled to have the opportunity to work in a more diverse way. So I was quite shocked to discover that it felt like less was happening here than when I had left. And I rang up Kwame Kwei-Armah to talk to him about this and he said: ‘Well it’s because everyone got bored of it.’”<sup>28</sup>

Diversity had indeed been the theatrical fashion in the early 2000s, at least as far as playwriting was concerned, with the surge in new plays by Black writers including Kwei-Armah himself, Bola Agbaje, Debbie Tucker Green and Roy Williams that Lynette Goddard considers in *Contemporary Black British Playwrights: Margins to Mainstream*. As mentioned above, this phenomenon was in part the result of Arts Council England funding incentives such as those made available by its New Audiences program (1998-2003).<sup>29</sup> Talented writers were nurtured, sometimes through schemes specifically targeted at particular demographic groups such as the Royal Court’s “Critical Mass” and “Unheard Voices” initiatives,<sup>30</sup> and many significant plays were produced; towards the end of the decade, however, concerns emerged about the way in which the Black community was being represented on the British stage.

These concerns were most memorably articulated by Lindsay Johns in his *Evening Standard* piece “Black theatre is blighted by its ghetto mentality”, prompted by the imminent premiere of Agbaje’s 2010 play *Off the Endz*. Johns wrote: “The overwhelming majority of black British theatre over the past decade — say, 92.3 FM (2006) or *Random* (2008) — can be categorised as being about guns, drugs and

council estates. [...] More nuanced, more deserving plays now need to be seen, depicting other, equally valid realities and facets of the black British experience.”<sup>31</sup> In the piece Johns ascribes the apparent ease with which the plays he discusses had reached the stage to a combination of “acute white guilt and a commitment to diversity”.

This view, to a degree, is confirmed by Featherstone, though she adds helpful nuance: “We haven’t enabled or encouraged a diverse middle-class voice. What we’ve encouraged is a more – and I hate this word, but the Royal Court used to use it a lot – ‘authentic voice’. And so sadly that work is often peripheral because our inability to be judgmental of it means we are often not that rigorous with what the structure is. So consequently we’re not necessarily helping those artists move into the centre.”<sup>32</sup> The pursuit of diversity, then, had become entwined with a desire to tap into a perceived authenticity, and this had led to a backlash, as indicated by Johns’s piece. The Royal Court, and Agbaje, felt obliged to defend *Off the Endz* from criticism even prior to its first preview, in a mail-out quoting her insistence that it was “not another ‘hood’ story”.<sup>33</sup> This change in the fortunes of a particular mode of Black playwriting was what, most likely, prompted the change in fashion that Kwei-Armah identified in his conversation with Featherstone.

It was in 2011, a year after his conversation with Featherstone, that Kwei-Armah surprised many by leaving the UK to take on the role of Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage, in Maryland, USA, an event which threw the issue of limited diversity at AD level into sharp focus. He remembers his feelings on being invited to apply for the post: “Initially, I was unsure, but then I realized I had been complaining



a lot in Britain. I was moaning about what was being programmed, I was moaning about what was being written, I was moaning about the gatekeepers – the people who ran the institutions. So then I thought, why not?”<sup>34</sup> The connection Kwei-Armah makes between what was being programmed, what was being written and who was in charge is highly pertinent here. Even with well-intentioned funding inducements in place, it was doubtful whether British theater’s embrace of diversity could have been anything other than superficial and transitory while the “gatekeepers”, those with ultimate responsibility for what reached the stage, were themselves anything but diverse.

At the time, Kwei-Armah’s departure seemed an example of a by-then familiar talent drain which had seen black British actors (for instance Idris Elba) go to work in the US where there were more opportunities.<sup>35</sup> Commenting on this in 2014 from his new home country, Kwei-Armah put the point light-heartedly, saying, “It’s hilarious really: we still cannot get through glass ceilings to save our lives back at home. But here we are natural Oscar contenders.” His interviewer confirmed, however, that his departure was prompted by the earnest belief that “what he calls a cultural ‘gatekeeper’ role, in charge of a major programme and theatre, would be hard to come by at home.”<sup>36</sup> This seems a credible assessment to have made at the time, though thankfully things were soon to change.

If Kwei-Armah was driven to leave the UK due to the lack of opportunities for theater artists from diverse backgrounds, others had been managing their career trajectories in different ways. Reflecting on her journey to the artistic directorship of the Tricycle Theatre (now the Kiln), Indhu Rubasingham wonders why she waited

until she did to apply for an executive position: “I look back on it now, and I see the problem was that I didn’t believe that I could be an artistic director because I never saw anyone like me doing it when I started out. They were predominantly white men, and the majority were from Oxbridge. I think subconsciously I held an inner belief that ‘that world is not for me’. But I was never going to articulate that to myself.”<sup>37</sup> Demonstrating the pertinence of the popular phrase “you can’t be what you can’t see”<sup>38</sup>, Rubasingham’s retrospective realization draws attention to the way in which cultural and institutional inequalities are perpetuated in often intangible ways. A lack of receptivity on the part of an industry will naturally lead to a lack of confidence, ambition and indeed enthusiasm on the part of the excluded group.

The early years of the 2010s, then, were not especially encouraging in terms of the diversity of the British theater. However, as Featherstone says (speaking in 2019), “in the last four years, that has changed dramatically”.<sup>39</sup> The reasons for this are many, with key factors being a change in the cultural climate – diversity being belatedly recognized as an important goal by senior theater managers – and a consequent greater recognition of an ever-growing pool of talent. As with the campaign for gender equality, the conscious actions of individuals also play an important role, including Kwei-Armah’s decision to make public comments which drew attention to the issue, and Rusabingham’s resolution to be bold and apply to run the Tricycle. Perhaps the most visible of these conscious actions was the founding by Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway of Artistic Directors of the Future (ADF), an organization dedicated to “creating change where it matters the most, at leadership level”.<sup>40</sup>

Over the course of the 2010s Hodge-Dallaway, among other things a former manager of the Black Play Archive at the National Theatre, became determined to address the issue of under-representation of people of color at a senior level. Her experience working in the theater industry in a variety of temporary roles convinced her that there was a systemic issue, and discussion with Ola Animashawun, formerly of the Royal Court and now an Associate at the National Theatre, helped her define her focus, which is on the succession plans of prominent building-based theater companies such as the Old Vic and the National Theatre of which she has said, “their talent pools are so white”.<sup>41</sup> This led to her founding of ADF in 2016.

As Hodge-Dallaway has told Wambui Hardcastle of *Exeunt Magazine*: “I knew my community, and I knew there were so many lies being told about us not wanting those positions – which is not true – and about us not having the right qualifications – which is again not true. I really wanted to completely eradicate those myths. I wanted to leave the industry with no option but to see us. And to see the people who are doing amazing work and the people who should be getting those positions. And to create new pathways into leadership, and that is what I have created through Artistic Directors of the Future.”<sup>42</sup> ADF works both with theater workers of color, who can join as members, and theaters looking to diversify their senior staff and executive boards. Members of ADF are provided with resources and information to demystify senior roles and are supported through the application processes for top leadership jobs. ADF, which is credited with helping Tarek Iskander gain the necessary profile to take the helm at BAC,<sup>43</sup> received the 2020 Innovation prize at The Stage Awards for its Board Shadowing Programme<sup>44</sup> and is supported by (among others) Arts Council England.

The successes of Artistic Directors of the Future are attributable both to the skill and energy of those involved and to a wider recognition of the timeliness of the enterprise; in the second half of the 2010s theaters have increasingly recognized the value of diversity on their boards and in their senior leadership roles. As mentioned above, this has coincided with the existence of an ever-larger pool of prominent and experienced theater makers of color from which they can choose. As Kully Thiarai, an artistic director of a series of regional UK theater companies since 1994, observes: “Years ago people would say: ‘Well, there’s no talent out there’. I’ve sat in rooms where senior artistic directors have said to me: ‘I don’t know any black directors who can direct on our main stage’, and I just think: ‘I can’t believe you just said that to me’. You can’t even argue that one anymore because there’s a wealth and breadth of extraordinary talent.”<sup>45</sup>

The examples of ADF, Tonic and other campaigning groups and individuals show the importance of determined and focused effort to achieving change in the context of historical inequalities and structural discrimination. Moreover, they show that the change in the demographic make-up of the artistic directors of London theaters identified in this article is not simply a matter of talented individuals rising to the top (though that is doubtless a part of it) but also the result of pressure for change exerted by and on behalf of disadvantaged groups – not only change of in terms of personnel but changes to the priorities and structures of theater organizations which will hopefully endure. However, the two case studies that follow will each demonstrate that, once in post, artistic directors from under-represented

groups can find themselves coming up against the kind of resistance that suggests the status quo that has long prevailed will not be transformed without a fight.

### **Case studies: Emma Rice and Indhu Rubasingham**

The announcement of Emma Rice's appointment as Artistic Director of the Globe Theater in May 2015 was hailed by some as a bold and progressive move.<sup>46</sup> To some degree it was an unlikely pairing. The Globe, opened in 1997, is a reconstruction of Shakespeare's playhouse founded with the ideal of recreating Shakespearean performance conditions – intimate contact between actors and audience, many of whom stand like the groundlings of yore. Its two previous Artistic Directors had been Mark Rylance and Dominic Dromgoole, both (like Shakespeare) white men. Rice was known for her innovative work with the company Kneehigh of which she was a former Artistic Director; her hallmark was a playful, fantastical style, big on spectacle and multi-media effects.

Rice's productions at the Globe, and those of the other directors she brought in, offended purists such as Richard Morrison, who wrote in *The Times* that: "This wonderful theatre – built with such scholarly attention to shape, materials and decor – has been clobbered with swathes of industrial plastic sheeting, giant loudspeakers and a lighting rig more befitting a rock arena. And most of the actors are miked up."<sup>47</sup> He also noted with disapproval, as had many others, Rice's public admission that reading Shakespeare tended to make her "very sleepy".<sup>48</sup> Morrison's belief that "the enterprise seems undermined by an artistic director who doesn't seem to trust Shakespeare to deliver a good script" would appear to have been shared by members of the theater's Board because, in August 2016, just four months after

Rice's tenure had begun, it was announced that she was to "step down" in 2018.<sup>49</sup> The specific issue cited was her use of "designed sounds and light rigging": henceforth the theater would be returning to a strict policy of "shared light".<sup>50</sup> That Rice's replacement, Michelle Terry, was also a woman, dampened, without entirely dispelling, suspicions of sexism.

Rice believed that the Board's intention was not to force her resignation but to rein her in artistically; if so, they miscalculated. "They thought I'd accept new guidelines, that I'd want the job more than my practice", she has said, but for her "my artistic process is all I have".<sup>51</sup> Asked on BBC Radio 4 if she thought the Board would not have moved against her had she been a man, she said it would be hard to "quantify that" but added, "I think it's possibly to do with my education. It's possibly more down to class than gender."<sup>52</sup> Speaking to Kate Kellaway of the *Guardian*, Rice added, "There are gatekeepers of theatre in this country. I have never fitted in, so I see them clearly. Most of the gatekeepers went to Oxbridge and read classics and have similar taste in theatre."<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting that in her use of the term "gatekeepers", Rice echoes the language of Kwame Kwei-Armah quoted above, and that in her reference to "Oxbridge" she identifies the same dominant group as Rubasingham did when describing the typical profile of a UK artistic director: this would seem to suggest a wide, shared disgruntlement with structural inequalities in the theater industry. It is also interesting that Rice highlighted differences of class rather than gender, reminding us that there are many kinds of privilege that may be in play, and that she foregrounds the issue of the shared tastes that a socially homogenous group may

bring to bear. In *Distinction* (2010), in which he considers taste as a marker of cultural capital, Pierre Bourdieu describes the “conspicuous formality” of high culture as “a sort of censorship of [...] the expressiveness of popular language”,<sup>54</sup> and seen from a certain angle Rice’s expulsion from the Globe looks very like a practical example of this notion.

Following Bourdieu, Paul Geary considers homogeneity of taste as a significant obstacle to the inclusivity of UK theater in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, highlighting the importance of diverse “taste-makers” within a cultural ecology: “In seeking to diversify the arts ecology [...] it is imperative that cultural intermediaries, arts producers and funders engage in processes of the diversification of taste. There are two clear strategies for this: the diversification of the tastes of “taste-makers” (funders, programmers, developers, producers) and, through diversification of programming and arts education, widening cultural tastes.”<sup>55</sup> Such work, Geary argues, amounts to an “ethical duty of enfranchisement and empowerment”,<sup>56</sup> a duty which the Globe arguably turned its back on when it divested Rice of her influential position.

Emma Rice’s experience reminded me of the struggles of working-class Jewish playwright Arnold Wesker: elevated at an unusually egalitarian moment, the ‘kitchen sink drama’ boom that followed *Look Back in Anger* (1956), he subsequently found himself ever more at odds with a theatrical establishment whose tastes, opinions and manners he did not share, and one by one Britain’s major theaters closed their doors to his work. In contrast, however, it’s perhaps a sign of how far we have come that Rice’s appointment to and ejection from the Globe have been widely

seen as a self-evident debacle; unlike Wesker, Rice has not been consigned to oblivion. She has formed a new company, Wise Children, which is the recipient of generous Arts Council funding<sup>57</sup> and which was made “Company in Residence” at the Old Vic in 2017, perhaps as a means of offsetting the toxic memory of its former Artistic Director, Kevin Spacey, by now disgraced amid accusations of sexual predation.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, back at the Globe, Michelle Terry is abiding by the rules in relation to contemporary lighting and amplified sound, but has struck a bold note of her own through a (problematically-worded) policy of casting roles “gender blind, race blind, disability blind”<sup>59</sup>, which has already seen her play the role of Hamlet.<sup>60</sup> The forces of theatrical conservatism may have won a battle when Rice was unseated but at the time of writing they seem to be losing the war.

A comparable if milder controversy took place north of the river in 2018 when, following a major refurbishment, it was announced that the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn would re-open with a new name: the Kiln. The name reflects the theater’s aspiration to be a “creative furnace”, a spokesman explained: “a name that [...] inspires a sense of warmth and echoes the name of the place where we live”.<sup>61</sup> The decision, however, prompted what one local resident described as “a heck of a hoo-ha”.<sup>62</sup> A petition to retain the Tricycle name was signed by 1,500 people and an open letter, calling for a re-think, was published in the *Guardian*, signed by its two former Artistic Directors (both white men), three former Chairs of the Board and twelve former members of the Board: “We are writing to express our dismay about the change of the theatre’s name. The name change has provoked anger in the local community, a widely signed petition and demonstrations. The Tricycle was a



landmark in London, and a brand locally, nationally and internationally. In our view this change of name throws away a valuable legacy and history.”<sup>63</sup>

In a *Guardian* comment piece published the same day as the letter, veteran theater critic Michael Billington asked why Rubasingham would “raise merry hell by giving the building a brand new moniker”.<sup>64</sup> Though Billington has impeccably liberal credentials, his assertion that in changing the theater’s name Rubasingham was “cancelling out its past” is oddly reminiscent of arguments mounted against the removal of statues commemorating figures associated with slavery.<sup>65</sup> In the Kiln’s refurbished café bar an extensive display of photographs and memorabilia from the Tricycle’s illustrious history seems designed to make clear that “cancelling out [the] past” was not the intention, and nor does it seem likely to be the effect.

In this instance the resistance has not prevailed and the Kiln is now firmly and permanently the Kiln, but the episode prompted questions. In a feature in *The Stage* asking how much theater had changed in the year since #MeToo, lighting designer Paule Constable is quoted as saying, “I fear that we are still humiliating and bullying women, overtly” and, referring to the treatment received by Rubasingham over the change of her theater’s name, said, “I don’t believe she would be treated that way if she were a man, I really don’t.”<sup>66</sup> Again, as with Rice, such things are hard to quantify, as is the question of whether a white AD would be given greater license or trust in rebranding a theater for a new generation, but if we consider the pervasive effect of sexism and racism as they operate in culture we may well feel that even if these are not the most decisive elements of the situation they are unlikely to be entirely irrelevant. When they are made by a woman or a person of color, decisions

are more likely to be questioned; indeed, that person's right to make decisions is more likely to be questioned. Sexism or racism, where they are a factor, are unlikely to be overt or even conscious, but the effect is more or less the same: a noticeably more hostile environment for those brave enough to step up to positions which were previously the preserve of white men.

### **A fragile moment**

Despite the resistance faced by Rice and Rubasingham, the demographic shift identified in this article is a significant change, and one clearly to be welcomed. If theater is to remain a vibrant and sustainable force in British culture, it must maintain its relevance to the British population, and it is vital that it is not, and does not appear to be, a bastion of white male privilege. This is especially the case in London, a city with a highly mixed population; as Kerbel, Hodge-Dallaway and others have argued, diversity at leadership level is and will continue to be a crucial means of making theater as a whole more representative. Vicky Featherstone, who has informally taken on the role of spokesperson for progressive forces in the British theater industry, argues: "Theatre changes most quickly when the change is with the people who have power. If the boards and leadership team are certain kinds of people with certain kinds of education who behave in certain ways, it's only ever hand-me-downs to give people opportunity. Now it's become people being in control of the decisions they make to change whole organizations. That's really exciting."<sup>67</sup> The determined efforts of artists and campaigners over many years have led us in 2021 to a place where senior leadership positions in the London theater have been made available

to a broadly representative selection of individuals, with women and people of color no longer hugely outnumbered by Caucasian males.

To illustrate the benefits of the shift, it is worth considering the practical difference that has already been detectable in terms of the variety and vibrancy of theatrical work available to London audiences. One example is the way the Royal Court has been opened up to an expanded range of theater makers and audiences under Vicky Featherstone, who started with the premise that “the Royal Court has always felt too closed off and too elite so I’m just going to be really different”.<sup>68</sup> Her fulfilment of this aim has involved not only programming work by more and more diverse playwrights (though she has, as Victoria Sadler’s findings have confirmed) but giving the Royal Court stage to performers from a range of other performance traditions such as Kae Tempest, Speech DeBelle, Shôn Dale-Jones and Wende. Perhaps Featherstone’s ultimate break with the perceived elitism of the Royal Court, though, was opening it up to pre-teens for the “Kids Court” week of events in 2013 and making it a family venue by programming Enda Walsh’s adaptation of Roald Dahl’s children’s favorite *The Twits* (1980) in 2015.

Another example of the way in which diversity of personnel can result in diversity of programming is the strong Afro-Caribbean and African American focus that the Young Vic has acquired under Kwame Kwei-Armah, exemplified by high profile productions such as *The Brothers Size* (2018), *The Convert* (2018), *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* (2019), *Death of a Salesman* starring Wendell Pierce (2019) and *Fairview* (2019). Elsewhere, Josie Rourke renewed the Donmar Warehouse brand by presenting Phyllida Lloyd’s trio of all-female Shakespeare shows and the

Bush Theatre under Madani Younis made the youth and diversity of its creatives a USP, with online marketing and old-fashioned fly-posters drawing Londoners' attention to "the new face of theatre".<sup>69</sup>

Writing this article, I have attempted to present two distinct struggles – for gender equality and for the representation of people of color – as analogous without suggesting they can be straightforwardly equated with each other. The campaign for greater ethnic diversity at artistic director level seems, in 2021, more urgent and more visible than the campaign for gender equality, largely because it is further from achieving its goals. Featherstone considers this: "I think we're at different stages with the different groups that we are trying to be representative of. For instance, I never think about gender in relation to diversity. I haven't had to for years because I've never not had a gender-balanced programme."<sup>70</sup> It is to be hoped that it won't be so many years before the representation of people of color at all levels of the British theater can be spoken about in such a relaxed way.

However, while these two struggles may be at different stages, there is much that connects them, since both are seeking to force change upon a cultural industry which has historically been dominated by white men and, as I think my two case studies demonstrate, both face resistance from representatives of the established status quo that takes similar forms. All that said, it has become clear over the course of my writing that my initial conviction that it was appropriate to discuss the two struggles in conjunction rather than separately derives at least in part from my own subject position as white male. Happily, mine is unlikely to be the last word on either subject, and hopefully on-going scholarly discussion of the question of

representation at senior management level will be enlivened by contributions from a wide range of perspectives.

One consistent message being conveyed by women and people of color in their comments on this topic is that any degree of complacency is to be guarded against, given the very real possibility that what progress has been made could be reversed. As Lyn Gardner writes, “Green shoots can be crushed and need defending”<sup>71</sup>, and as veteran Black British playwright Winsome Pinnock has commented, “individual success does not necessarily represent structural change.”<sup>72</sup> There is more to achieve, as the all-white roll call of Artistic Directors at the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and Royal Court attests. There is also, in some quarters at least, the will to achieve it, by building on the bold strides already made. This is indicated in a 2018 interview with Featherstone by David Jays, in which she hinted that one of the more radical moments of her tenure will come when her successor is announced: “Featherstone considers the need for continuing, radical change rather than polite gradual progress. Including her own role? She winces. ‘While I’m still challenging the power structures I think I still have a place, but we talk about succession programmes all the time. Slotting people in doesn’t work. I’ve got to a place where we do need to burn everything down.’”<sup>73</sup> If the appointment of more women in senior positions should lead, in turn, to a greater openness to appointing people of color going forwards, that will be a very positive way in which the twin struggles I’ve been considering can come together.

The events of 2020 brought the issues I have been discussing into sharp focus in ways that few would have predicted. The Covid-19 pandemic has proved,

among a great many other things, a crisis for British theater, with very few performances possible so that companies and venues have been starved of both their reason for existing and, in financial terms, their means of existing; support from the UK's Conservative government was needed to allow the survival of great swathes of the UK theater industry through the dark months of successive lockdowns. Meanwhile, the murder of George Floyd by a US police officer on May 25<sup>th</sup> prompted an international resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement which shone a searching light on entrenched and unexamined structural racism as it operates in institutions, including cultural ones such as the theater. The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on people of color provided a grim link between the ravages of the pandemic and the endurance of structural racism in British society.<sup>74</sup> Taken together, these circumstances meant that there was renewed recognition of the value of the gains in representation that had been made in the preceding years, and simultaneously new reason for anxiety that those gains were under threat.

May 28<sup>th</sup> 2020 saw the publication of "An open letter to the Culture Secretary from Black, Asian & ethnically diverse theatre artistic directors and cultural leaders on the importance of protecting representation in the sector". An impressive list of 71 signatories, at the initial instigation of Kwame Kwei-Armah, urged the Right Honorable Oliver Dowden CBE to consider representation as of crucial importance in the theater sector when planning support, so that "the progress we have collectively made does not fall by the way-side". The letter continues: "We insist that ethnic diversity is protected and celebrated in policy going forwards and propose that any task force or group gathering to speak about the future of our industry seeks out

consultation from Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse leaders to ensure this commitment.”<sup>75</sup>

This particular demand was prompted by the fact that, eight days previously, Dowden had announced a “Cultural Renewal Taskforce” charged with helping the arts, culture and sporting sectors recover from the damage done by the pandemic.<sup>76</sup> The task force (which would additionally be assisted by specialist working groups) consisted of a team of eight, of whom one was a person of color, the footballer and broadcaster Alex Scott. Lynette Linton, one of the open letter’s signatories, subsequently commented: “The fact that the task force is overwhelmingly white shows you the fragility of this moment. How can we still be in a time where black, Asian, and ethnically diverse arts leaders are not consulted? We should not be reminding the government or anybody that our voices should be in that conversation. We are the British theatre industry, and it is infuriating that we even had to write this letter.”<sup>77</sup> Agreeing that the task force “does not feel representative at all”, Indhu Rubasingham commented that, more broadly, “I’ve felt a growing unease since lockdown started, watching who has access to government and where the power structures lie.”<sup>78</sup> It is certainly possible that the theater industry that emerges from the Covid pandemic is reduced not only by unavoidable disaster and economic trauma, but by the conservative, and potentially reactionary, leanings of the political players responsible for its recuperation.

So far, happily, this does not seem to be proving the case. In June 2020 there was news of a new campaign led by social enterprise Creative Access called #MoreThanWords, specifically lobbying creative businesses to commit to diversity

and inclusion during recovery from the pandemic, joining with the open letter to Dowden in maintaining the profile of the issue.<sup>79</sup> In July 2020 the UK government announced a £1.57 billion bailout for the arts which surprised many with its generosity.<sup>80</sup> In October it was announced that £257,000,000 of this had been allocated to arts organizations and venues including the Young Vic and the Hackney Empire, and initial reaction didn't suggest a bias against diversity, though individual arts professionals working on a freelance basis had not benefited from the state's largesse and some had already noted that self-employed creatives of color were likely to be struggling in significant numbers.<sup>81</sup> At the time of writing the impact of the pandemic on diversity within the UK theater industry is not yet known, but at any rate it doesn't seem time to despair. The fact that the National Theater's first production since the start of the pandemic was Clint Dyer and Roy Williams's *Death of England: Delroy*, written by, directed by and starring black British artists, not to mention Dyer's appointment in January 2021 as the National's Deputy Artistic Director, suggests that the message of Black Lives Matter campaigners has not gone unheard in the highest echelons of the industry.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dave O'Brien, 'Class and the problem of inequality in theatre', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40:3 (2020), p. 242. The full article is available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2020.1807212> (accessed 23 June 2021). Though I have not explicitly focused on social class, it remains a very significant factor in terms of unequal access to the arts and to artistic careers in the UK.

<sup>2</sup> A 2008 survey of West End audiences (*The West End Theatre Audience: A Research Study for the Society of London Theatre* by Ipsos MORI) revealed that: 68% of respondents were female. See <https://www.londontheatre1.com/theatre-news/summary-text-london-theatre-report-2014/> (accessed 6 November 2020)

<sup>3</sup> Michelene Wandor, "The Impact of Feminism on the Theatre", *Feminist Review*, 18 (winter 1984), p. 85. The survey she refers to was conducted by the Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators and is available in full at <https://sphinxtheatre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/the-status-of-women-in-the-british-theatre-conference-of-women-theatre-directors-and-administrators-report-1983.pdf> (accessed 6 November 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Ellis-Peterson, "Theatre's leading female figures gather to shine a spotlight on gender gap", *Guardian*, 22 September 2014, at



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<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/22/theatre-female-figures-gender-gap> (accessed 6 November 2020). See also, more recently, Julia Pascal, “Women are being excluded from the stage. It’s time for quotas”, *Guardian*, 24 April 2018, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/24/women-theatre-quotas-stage-gender> (accessed 6 November 2020) and Lanre Bakare, “Sexism and gender divide ingrained in UK theatre, study claims”, *Guardian*, 27 January 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/jan/27/sexism-gender-divide-ingrained-uk-theatre-study-claims> (accessed 6 November 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ellis-Peterson, “Theatre’s leading female figures gather to shine a spotlight on gender gap”. Many of the statistics presented at the event by Tonic Theatre are available at <http://www.tonictheatre-advance.co.uk/advance-2014/learning/#stats> (accessed 13 May 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Lyn Gardner, “Edinburgh Fringe pay study shows how theatre’s gender divide is embedded early”, *The Stage*, 29 July 2019, available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/lyn-gardner-edinburgh-fringe-pay-study-shows-how-theatres-gender-divide-is-embedded-early> (accessed 14 May 2021). The research Gardner is drawing on was carried out by Tonic Theatre (the volume of women masking inequalities) and *The Stage* (women leaders at top theatres).

<sup>7</sup> Elaine Aston, *Restaging Feminisms*, Palgrave Pivot, London: Palgrave, 2020, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Brewer, Lynette Goddard and Dierdre Osborne, “Framing Black British Drama: Past to Present”, in Brewer, Goddard and Osborne, eds, *Modern and Contemporary Black British Drama*, London: Palgrave, 2015, pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup> BOP Consulting and Graham Devlin Associates, *Arts Council England Analysis of Theatre in England*, 2016, available at <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Analysis%20of%20Theatre%20in%20England%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf> (accessed 6 November 2020), p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> BOP Consulting and Graham Devlin Associates, p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Aston, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Eyre, endorsement on the back cover of Christopher Haydon, *The Art of the Artistic Director: Conversations with Leading Practitioners*, London: Methuen, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Grandage, “Foreword”, in Haydon, p. ix.

<sup>14</sup> Haydon, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> The exceptions to this are the Globe and the Bridge which, while not usually being considered part of the West End, are nonetheless commercial theaters.

<sup>16</sup> This compared to 86% of people being white across the UK as a whole. See Paul Owen, “2011 census data – key points”, *Guardian*, 11 December 2012, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/dec/11/2011-census-data-key-points>, accessed 27 May 2021.)

<sup>17</sup> Aston, pp. 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Amy Stutz, “INSIDE: Victoria Sadler Highlights the Lack of Female Playwrights & Gender Equality in the Arts Industry”, which is available at <https://amystutz.com/2018/02/09/inside-victoria-sadler-highlights-lack-female-playwrights-gender-equality-arts-industry/> (accessed 9 June 2021).

<sup>19</sup> The campaign, which extends to cinema and TV as well as theater, was set up in 2015 and gained significant visibility by persuading famous actors to be photographed wearing its badge, a particular coup being 2017 TV BAFTA Awards at which Phoebe Waller-Bridge accepted her award while sporting the 50:50 badge as a ring. See Hannah Ellis-Peterson, “50:50 female actors’ campaign reveals it asked Bafta nominees for backing”, *Guardian*, 15 May 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/may/15/50-50-female-actors-campaign-approached-bafta-nominees-equal-representation-actresses> (accessed 9 June 2021). See also the campaign website at <https://www.era5050.co.uk/> (accessed 9 June 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Act for Change was launched in 2014 by actor Danny Lee Wynter to lobby for the promotion of equality and diversity in the arts – see <https://www.act-for-change.com/> (accessed 9 June 2021). For more information on the “Women of a Certain Age” campaign, see Terri Paddock, “As Good a Time as Any for... ‘Women of a Certain Age’ as people not Product”, available at <https://www.terripaddock.com/as-good-a-time-as-any-for-women-of-a-certain-age-as-people-not-product/> (accessed 9 June 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Originally known as Tonic Theatre.

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.tonictheatre.co.uk/lucy-kerbel/> (accessed 9 June 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Aston, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Lucy Kerbel, *All Change Please: A Practical Guide to Achieving Gender Equality in Theatre*, London: Nick Hern, 2017, p. 88.

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<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Kerbel suggests the creation of associate roles specifically targeted at directors returning to work after a period focusing on caring responsibilities, and a more flexible conception of the leadership roles of artistic directors and executive directors, the latter of whom are statistically more likely to be women. See Kerbel, pp. 89-100.

<sup>26</sup> The National drew particular criticism in 2019 when it announced six new shows, all written by men and all but one directed by a man, despite its having previously committed to achieving 50:50 gender representation of directors and living writers by March 2021. See Tom Gerken, "National Theatre faces backlash over new season", BBC News, 29 March 2019, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-47747855> (accessed 10 June 2021).

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance-library/equality-action-plan-guidance#section-1> (accessed 10 June 2021).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> The report on this programme is available at <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/New-Audiences-Final-Report.pdf> (accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>30</sup> "Critical Mass" was inaugurated in 2004 and supported writers of color; "Unheard Voices" worked with Muslim writers from 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Lindsay Johns, "Black theatre is blighted by its ghetto mentality", *London Evening Standard*, 9 February 2010, available at <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/black-theatre-is-blighted-by-its-ghetto-mentality-6709941.html> (accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> "Writer Bola Agbaje talks about her new play", Royal Court Theatre mail-out, February 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Tom Seymour, "Why black British directors and actors leave the UK for Hollywood", *Guardian*, 29 August 2013, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/aug/29/black-british-actors-directors-hollywood> (accessed 10 June 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Tim Adams, "Kwame Kwei-Armah: 'I was constantly moaning in London'", *Observer*, 2 February 2014, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/feb/02/kwame-kwei-armah-center-stage> (accessed 15 January 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 133.

<sup>38</sup> Used, for instance, by Anneke Jong in the context of the under-representation of women in computer science – see <https://www.themuse.com/advice/you-cant-be-what-you-cant-see-how-to-get-more-women-in-tech> (accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://adofthefuture.com/about-us/> (accessed 10 August 2020).

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Wambui Hardcastle, "Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway: 'I wanted to leave the industry with no option but to see us'", *Exeunt Magazine*, 8 December 2020, available at <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/simeilia-hodge-dallaway-wanted-leave-industry-no-option-see-us/> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Hardcastle.

<sup>43</sup> See <https://batterseartscentreblog.com/2018/12/21/announcing-tarek-iskander-as-our-new-artistic-director-ceo/> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>44</sup> See <https://adofthefuture.com/2020/02/02/winner-of-innovation-award-2020/> (accessed 10 August 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 162. The story of Thiarai's departure from the National Theatre of Wales, which she headed between 2016 and 2019, makes for a rather grim point of comparison with the experiences of Emma Rice and Indhu Rubasingham discussed in this article – see, for instance, <https://www.walesartsreview.org/failure-of-wales-the-departure-of-kully-thiarai/> (accessed 10 August 2020).

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, Lyn Gardner, "Emma Rice will have them swinging from the chandeliers at Shakespeare's Globe", *Guardian*, 1 May 2015, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/may/01/emma-rice-shakespeares-globe> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Richard Morrison, "The Globe has been a success story – and Emma Rice is wrecking it", *Times*, 30 September 2016, T2, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> An admission recorded in Mark Brown, "The Globe's Emma Rice: 'If anybody bended gender it was Shakespeare'; new artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe theatre aims to get much greater proportion of women on the stage", *Guardian*, 5 January 2016, available at

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<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/05/shakespeares-globe-emma-rice-if-anybody-bended-gender> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>49</sup> As reported, for instance, in Mark Brown, “Emma Rice to step down as artistic director at Shakespeare’s Globe”, *Guardian*, 25 October 2016, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/25/emma-rice-step-down-artistic-director-shakespeares-globe> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>50</sup> See Hannah Furness, “Emma Rice leaves Shakespeare’s Globe after row about modern lighting”, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 2016, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/25/emma-rice-leaves-shakespeares-globe-after-row-over-modern-lighti/> (accessed 11 June 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Kate Kellaway, “Emma Rice: ‘I don’t know how I got to be so controversial’”, *The Observer*, 1 July 2018, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jul/01/emma-rice-controversial-shakespeares-globe-wise-children> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>52</sup> As reported in Matthew Hemley, “Emma Rice: ‘My working-class background was a barrier at the Globe’”, *The Stage*, 15 December 2017, available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/emma-rice-my-working-class-background-was-a-barrier-at-the-globe> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Kellaway.

<sup>54</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Geary, “The production of taste: ecologies, intersections, implications”, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40:3, 2020, p. 289. The full article is available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2020.1807193> (accessed 23 June 2021).

<sup>56</sup> Geary, p. 290.

<sup>57</sup> This was in itself controversial, with many angered that Rice’s company had been supported before it had become a going concern. Speaking to the *Guardian*, an ACE spokesperson rejected the “unsubstantiated allegation” that “there are different rules for applicants to our funding programmes according to how well-known they might be to Arts Council staff” – perhaps evidence of yet another tier of privilege. See Vanessa Thorpe, “Globe director Emma Rice embroiled in new funding controversy”, *Guardian*, 29 July 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/jul/29/globe-director-emma-rice-funding-controversy> (accessed 11 June 2021).

<sup>58</sup> See <https://www.atthetheatre.co.uk/old-vic-announces-emma-rices-wise-children-new-company-residence/#:~:text=The%20Old%20Vic%20will%20be,a%20second%20production%20to%20follow> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Mark Brown, ‘New Shakespeare’s Globe chief promises far more diverse casting’, *Guardian*, 18 August 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/aug/18/new-shakespeares-globe-chief-promises-far-more-diverse-casting-michelle-terry> (accessed 29 November 2021).

<sup>60</sup> See Natasha Tripney, “Hamlet, thy name is woman: Why Michelle Terry’s Globe is staging post-gender Shakespeare”, *The Independent*, 16 May 2018, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/hamlet-globe-michelle-terry-shakespeare-gender-blind-cross-cast-you-ensemble-deaf-a8350886.html> (accessed 8 January 2021). Terry’s policy, and indeed her acting, were not without critics, as evidenced by Lloyd Evans’s *Spectator* review, available at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/return-to-gender> (accessed 11 June 2021).

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Robert Dex, “Calls for newly named Kiln Theatre to revert back to the Tricycle”, *London Evening Standard*, 17 April 2018, available at <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/calls-for-newly-named-kiln-theatre-to-revert-back-to-the-tricycle-a3815871.html> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Dex.

<sup>63</sup> Ken Chubb et al, “Keep Tricycle name for refitted theatre”, *Guardian*, 2 September 2018, available at [https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/02/keep-tricycle-name-for-refitted-theatre?CMP=aff\\_1432&utm\\_content=Evening+Standard&awc=5795\\_1551369858\\_9efad12a363dfe0902e6f2e8c41e7156](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/02/keep-tricycle-name-for-refitted-theatre?CMP=aff_1432&utm_content=Evening+Standard&awc=5795_1551369858_9efad12a363dfe0902e6f2e8c41e7156) (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>64</sup> Michael Billington, “Over Kiln: the Tricycle theatre doesn’t need a new name”, *Guardian*, 3 September 2018, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/sep/03/kiln-the-tricycle-theatre-indhu-rubasingham> (accessed 11 January 2021).

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, UK Communities secretary Robert Jenrick’s article “We will save Britain’s statues from the woke militants who want to censor our past”, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 2021,

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available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/01/16/will-save-britains-statues-woke-militants-want-censor-past/> (accessed 11 June 2021).

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Amber Massie-Blomfield, “A year on from #MeToo, how much has theatre really changed?”, *The Stage*, 15 October, 2018, available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2018/year-metoo-much-theatre-really-changed-harassment-theatre-industry/> (accessed 11 January 2021).

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Alice Jones, “Vicky Featherstone: ‘This time last year it felt like change was about to happen... Now there’s frustration’”, *the i*, 12 December 2018, available at <https://inews.co.uk/culture/vicky-featherstone-interview-the-cane-royal-court-me-too/> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 52.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, the video available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GO\\_yn5TJLc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GO_yn5TJLc) (accessed 05 August 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Haydon, p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> Lyn Gardner, “Theatre is embracing diversity, but it’s still not enough”, *The Stage*, 3 December 2018, available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/lyn-gardner-theatre-is-embracing-diversity-but-its-still-not-enough> (accessed 7 January 2021).

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in “Talking to Winsome Pinnock ahead of Passages: A Windrush Celebration at Royal Court”, at <https://alt-africa.com/2019/03/10/talking-to-winsome-pinnock-ahead-of-passages-a-windrush-celebration-at-royal-court/> (accessed 15 January 2021).

<sup>73</sup> David Jays, “Vicky Featherstone and Mark Ravenhill on 20 years of bold British theatre”, *Guardian*, 7 December 2018, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/dec/07/vicky-featherstone-mark-ravenhill-british-theatre-royal-court-the-cane> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>74</sup> See, for instance, Tim Elwell-Sutton, Sarah Deeny and Mai Stafford, ‘Emerging Findings on the impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic people’, <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/emerging-findings-on-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-black-and-min> (accessed 29 November 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Keith Saha et al., “An open letter to the Culture Secretary from Black, Asian & ethnically diverse theatre artistic directors and cultural leaders on the importance of protecting representation in the sector”, available at <https://www.youngvic.org/blog/open-letter-from-black-asian-ethnically-diverse-theatre-artistic-directors#close> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>76</sup> The press release announcing the creation and composition of the taskforce can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/culture-secretary-announces-cultural-renewal-taskforce> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Arifa Akbar, “‘There is a growing unease’: will Covid-19 damage theatre’s progress in diversity?”, *Guardian*, 9 June 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/jun/09/covid-19-theatre-diversity> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Akbar.

<sup>79</sup> See Giverny Masso, “Coronavirus: Arts sector urged to commit to diversity after pandemic”, *The Stage*, 22 June 2020, available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/coronavirus-arts-sector-urged-to-commit-to-diversity-after-pandemic> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>80</sup> The press release announcing the bailout can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/157-billion-investment-to-protect-britains-world-class-cultural-arts-and-heritage-institutions> (accessed 8 January 2021).

<sup>81</sup> See Lanre Bakare, “England arts bailout a ‘gamechanger’- but some will miss out”, *Guardian*, 12 October 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2020/oct/12/england-arts-bailout-a-gamechanger-but-some-will-miss-out> (accessed 8 January 2021) and Charlotte Higgins, “Rishi Sunak’s arts bailout is more divisive than it looks”, *Guardian*, 14 July 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jul/14/cultural-rescue-package-artists-institutions-covid-19> (accessed 8 January 2021).