



# SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW... WHERE NEXT FOR THE ARTS?

Event Report from the Open Space  
hosted by the National Campaign for the Arts  
and held online on Friday 26 June 2020 1pm-4.30pm

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## About the Arts Index

[Somewhere Over the Rainbow...Where Next for the Arts](#) was organised as part of the launch of the latest [Arts Index](#). The Index is a snapshot report of the health of England's arts and culture provision and is published every two years by the [National Campaign for the Arts](#). The latest edition was produced in partnership with [King's College London](#) and the [Creative Industries Federation](#).

The Arts Index collates twenty indicators from publicly available sources, measuring a range of indices from investment to audience sizes, West End revenues to attitudes to public funding of the arts. It's a go-to document when you need objective data and analysis as part of your arts toolkit, whether you're making a case for funding, compiling evidence for a report or planning a campaign.

The latest Arts Index charts a steep decline in public and private investment in the arts over the decade since the 2008 financial crash, with the sector now more reliant than ever on earned income from box offices, cafes, bars and gift shops - all of which have been closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The latest Arts Index figures reveal that:

- Investment via public funding for the arts per head of population – via the Lottery, local and national government – dropped by 35% since 2008, with local government funding for the arts falling by 43%
- Business sponsorship of the arts is down 39% since 2013, equating to tens of millions of pounds disappearing from the arts economy
- Earned income by arts organisations (box office sales, venue hires, catering etc) has risen by 47% since 2008
- Although philanthropy grew substantially in 2014/15 the increase was not sustained in the 2017/18 survey, suggesting that it will take many more years to match levels of giving generated in the USA.
- Proportion of all GCSEs being taken in creative subjects is down 20% since 2010
- Financial support from Trust and Foundations jumped by 38% in 4 years from 2014-2018
- The combined expenditure of Arts Council England revenue funded organisations in England grew from just over £1 Billion in 2007/08 to £1.8 Billion in 2017/18.
- Across the study period creative and cultural GVA (Gross Value Added) rose by 15% and cultural employment was up by 21%

You can download a copy of the Arts Index at <https://forthearts.org.uk/publications/arts-index-2007-2018/>

## Somewhere over the Rainbow... where next for the arts?

### Event Summary

On Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June, the National Campaign for the Arts (NCA) hosted an Open Space event on zoom.

[Somewhere Over the Rainbow...Where Next for the Arts](#) was prompted by the launch of the Arts Index, and the current global COVID-19 pandemic.

The following quote from the Barbican's Chief Executive Nicholas Kenyon was used as a springboard for a series of provocations and conversations:

*"Only through radically rethinking the ambitions we have to serve communities and audiences are we going to be able to recover"*

Around 100 people attended the session from across the UK. Some were representing organisations, others attending as freelancers or independents. Sessions were scribed by mentees from [Arts Emergency](#) and members of the NCA Board.



This document contains transcripts of the introductory provocations delivered by NCA Chair Samuel West and producer Tobi Kyeremateng, followed by the agenda that was created by the event's participants. Full notes from the conversations that took place are included at the end of this document.

We've also included a **Manifesto for Change** – a list of individual pledges that attendees created at the end of the afternoon.

## Provocations

**SAMUEL WEST**

**NCA CHAIR, ACTOR AND DIRECTOR**

**Spoke as follows:**



Samuel West  
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The Arts Index demonstrates the distinct increase in arts organisations relying on earned income – which is the very thing that brought the sector to its knees when Covid-19 pushed that earned income off a cliff.

Over the last 10 years, the government have got us talking about money, not art.

They've got us talking about quality not truth.

They've got us talking about ourselves, not the community.

They've got us talking about individuals, not the collective.

I know that freelancers are hurting, we are 70% of the arts workforce, and our contracts are over. I should have a show running in the West End right now with a cast of 17. Some of the older members of that cast have told me they wonder if they'll ever work in the theatre again.

I'll stick my neck out here and say that we are going to get a rescue package. It's good PR, it's anti-gloom, and the former red-wall constituencies need to be shown some cultural love, because Brexit is going to screw the UK for a generation. Where we could still maintain a seat at the top table is in the creative industries. £1 billion for a world-beating cultural sector is pretty cheap. The economic arguments we know are proved. The contribution to GDP, the national brand, the width and power of the talent pipeline is proved. Plus, people now know in their hearts that so many of the things that have kept us sane during lock-down have their roots in the live and the state-supported. We have a blessed pause.

In our eagerness to prove that we are a sound investment, we must remember what we don't want to go back to. We could sometimes be an insular, self-congratulatory wank-fest. Scrutiny, transparency, interrogation, access must continue. We need to hear a lot less from people like me - white, middle-class, public school boys who went to Oxbridge. We have our place, but I don't think it needs to be at the heart of

things. The inequalities in our sector that Black Lives Matter has thrown a spotlight on give us a potential for change that might have taken us years to achieve or even notice. It's crucial that we act for it. This levelling-up agenda in race; in class; in regional equality is the most important fight we have.

### **What else is good?**

Well, it took a pandemic to get every Artistic Director of a Midlands theatre on zoom with a hundred independent artists – that's pretty fantastic. So, what next? Well, put more of them on the payroll, as soon as you can, as makers and facilitators. Put more people of colour into Board and management positions and, overall, make a two-pronged attack. The last ten years has seen the Arts Council champion an agenda that democratises our creative opportunities – they've even got me talking like them! But this democratisation is a good thing.

Meanwhile, arts infrastructure has been struggling to keep up because, as the Arts Index tells us over the same period, government subsidy has been hugely cut – down 41% since 2010. And Local Authority funding has collapsed – down 43% in the same period.

We could burn it all down and try to re-invent the sector, but it's risky. If you end up with less money in the system – which seems likely – the sums don't add up. Or we could abandon the vision of the Arts Council's 10-year strategy to re-trench and lose our progressive energy. Neither of these work on their own. It's time to call for a really big, radical, cultural investment. We've made a powerful argument for what you get back. We've seen the vision of what might be achieved if we became more responsive and more accessible to communities. Both of these visions are compelling. Investment now is not only opportune, it's essential: for god sake, we need to greenlight the panto. Otherwise, we'll have to choose between two very different visions: either/or would be a disaster. We could have extreme accessibility with no infrastructure, a smaller talent pipeline, little economic impact in cities, or a future of boulevard theatre and shouting in the evenings for posh people. Big names, big titles, is an obvious booby trap – art is not just shows just as theatre is not just plays.

And the future of the arts is cheap tickets.

We need to protect infrastructure AND protect freelancers. I won't cheerlead for an anti-building agenda. Besides, many of the people who now run the best buildings were, until very recently, freelancers.

### **What else?**

I want theatres, concert halls arts centres and gig venues to be bursting at the seams with all the stuff they've had to pick up in the last ten years of austerity and is now not happening. As education and community care services have been cut, venues have had to become more than venues – they've become learning centres, hubs of tourism, mental health centres, community centres, youth clubs. We've lost a 104 youth clubs in London alone since the 2011 riots – that's very nearly half of them. And theatres, for instance, love that new responsibility. It gives them meaning and connection with their community. All the services for all the people excluded from education - the elderly, the lonely, people whose mental health is a concern, even people who just want to get out of the rain into a space you don't have to pay to get into – all those safety nets are, as of today, extinct. Don't forget that 800 libraries have also closed since 2010.

I want this crisis to breed a grassroots movement for the arts, which believe that they are not an add-on, not a luxury, not a nice-if-you-can-afford it, but instead they are a human, civilised, right and an essential part of dealing with that tricky condition we call 'human'.

The agenda must be inclusive and green and dangerous. We've made so much progress, we must not go into reverse.

**TOBI KYEREMATENG**  
**CULTURAL PRODUCER**  
**Spoke as follows:**



Tobi Kyeremateng  
© Blaow ([blaow.co](https://blaow.co))

There are lots of things that I wanted to say, and I've written a lot of things down, but I think it's most useful to talk about how I really feel today.

I think a lot of words I have heard over the past few months have been 'unprecedented', 'precarious', 'risk' and I think this really highlights something that the sector as a whole is going through at the moment. But certain communities within the sector have always been sitting within these pockets; have always been 'precarious, have always been 'at risk', have always been going through some sort of 'unprecedented' time.

And, I must say, with everything that has happened over the last 6 months, and years before that, and centuries, it has become increasingly difficult to care about a sector that I feel does not care about me. And does not care about people who look like me and does not care about people who come from where I come from. And so there have been all these conversations, various zoom calls, ranging in size, about what the future of the sector looks like and I really had to question whether I see myself in the future of the sector and what would that even mean?

And there are a lot of conversations around radical thinking; burning it all down and starting again. But a lot of the time these conversations still aren't coming from those people who have always been precarious, that have always been at risk, that have always been living through some sort of unprecedented time of

change; that have had to learn to adapt to our homes and communities being gentrified; to not receiving certain jobs, to having to move countries; to having to move cities.

And so, it's tough to be optimistic. It is tough to imagine the sector as one that centres me, and centres people that look like me. That is an issue.

And so, I want to look at the quote that was used to advertise this event:

*"Only through radically rethinking the ambitions we have to serve communities and audiences are we going to be able to recover"* [Nicholas Kenyon]

I think it's partly true. I also think every time we have these conversations we skip over the learning process that is required, and there needs to be more work done before we even get to a place of having to rebuild the sector or being able to rebuild the sector. And I am personally tired of having those conversations. I have been having those conversations for a very long time now. That is not to say that they aren't important, but at some point, something has got to give.

With this in mind, there are 3 main points to address:

1. What are the things we need to learn to get to the futures we are trying to imagine?
2. What does a cultural reset look like?
3. How we do ensure a sense of justice is at the heart of the future of the arts?

It is impossible to look at everything that has happened in the world, not only over the last 6 months but over the last years, decades, centuries, and not see the arts as complicit in those things. The sector does not exist outside of those wider societal, institutional issues. We are very much complicit as an industry for replicating those issues. And so it is only when we begin to confront those head on, confront how we regurgitate them in our institutions – that's the only way we're going to be able to begin to re-think and re-imagine what the future of the sector looks like.

It's not good enough to suggest free and cheap tickets when nobody wants to come into your buildings. It's not good enough to suggest black and brown faces at senior levels when institutionally it has been made impossible for those faces to survive in those institutions in the first place.

These things are very puddle deep and surface-level. What is that learning and unlearning that we as individuals who exist in and make-up this sector have to do in order for us to re-imagine what the future of the sector looks like? That question is where we need to start.

## CONVERSATIONS AGENDA



An agenda of conversations was created by participants at the Open Space:

1. Can we maintain the cross-country grassroots arts connections and impetus after lockdown? (i.e. individuals collaborating rather than orgs)
2. What is the audience appetite for commercial reality of possible higher ticket prices for more stripped back presentations?
3. Rip it Up and Start again - is it time for a new script for the arts in the UK? What might a big shake-up look like?
4. How we can achieve BAME creatives being at the centre of the recovery rather than on the edges?
5. Touring How?? What could the future be?
6. Sharing experiences of lobbying the government during this period. How best to work together to lobby?
7. How do we ensure people who have already had to struggle to get into the industry aren't now pushed out by further economic hardship?
8. How can arts organisations collaborate more between themselves and with the corporate sector?
9. How can the outdoor sector work with venues to aid recovery?
10. The personal is political. Covid has changed how we think about personal and collective space, agency and consent. How do we think radically about how we navigate cultural spaces and gather together again?
11. What should arts workers/arts "leaders"/the "unfurloughed" be doing to be REAL allies to artists, freelancers and to everyone who 'doesn't look like us'?
12. Is this the time to explore the economics of arts and its ring funding with the public?
13. How can we continue to engage with young people going forward? How can we continue the promotion of arts subjects at GCSE and A-Level?



14. How can the sector inform the disinterested and uninformed arts interviewers in the broadcast media?

Notes from these conversations can be found at the end of this document.

## **Manifesto for Change**

A list of personal pledges was created by attendees at the end of the afternoon:

- Avoid sticking to my tribe - dance, theatre, music, visual arts and literature people have a lot in common, but we have the same conversations with our peers all the time
- The covid-secure details audiences will need to return are pretty much the same as for relaxed performance - so let's do this for EVERYONE!
- Campaign for Universal Basic Income!
- A salaried arts 'leadership' job is a privilege, we need to step away to open up the space for others
- Our activism can be both distinct and joined up, autonomous and collaborative
- Arundhati Roy on Paradigm Shift after a pandemic: pack a light suitcase go through the portal and leave your data behind
- The arts belong to all. I really want to see a world where no young person feels they do not belong and are not 'allowed' to go into a particular place, institution.
- Start making connections with local artists and look for ways of creating/working at grass roots level that isn't reliant on ACE funding or organisations.
- Appoint an artist in residence in every polling district to act as a facilitator, recorder, galvaniser
- Collaborate more. Collaboration means letting go of ownership but retaining a sense of self
- Trust our 'uncommon' sense.
- Encouraging arts organisations to contact/talk to Headteachers who have seen the headlines about arts organisations closing down.
- Ensure ACE get the data about freelancers 'falling through relief gaps'.
- Finally set up the programming forum with our community and Youth Theatre
- Remember what we are for: art, truth, community, collective
- Let go of ownership - ideas belong to the universe.
- Challenge the status quo, things can be done differently, and through different lenses
- Listen more and talk less!
- Look at how to ensure there is equitable access to the conversations/jobs/initiatives/ platforms /resources...
- Support local libraries, and other neutral communal space.
- Companies should do one production a year by someone not already known to them.

## How are we feeling?

At the end of the event we asked everyone to share with us on a virtual whiteboard how they were feeling. Here's what they told us...



## Notes from the Conversations

Notes from each conversation follow. Many thanks to our scribes from the NCA Board and Arts Emergency!

### CONVERSATION 1:

#### Can we maintain the cross-country grassroots arts connections and impetus after lockdown?

##### Conversation Attendees:

Deborah Mason (called the conversation)  
Peter Manning  
Chemaine Cooke  
Natalie (2.40-2.43)

##### Question:

People are socially isolated all the time, one million people, during lockdown – how do you make connections – digitally – arts things happening – not called art – rainbows -sending messages through art – singing together – lockdown easing – connections disappearing – care for mother – host poetry nights, collage workshops across UK – not possible physically – encourage zoom is a room – lose that – broken big town bubble – tiny villages – doesn't matter - can get to these arts events – encourage people to keep it going – London too busy

##### Response:

Parts of the arts not discussed - day to day - huge opportunities, no community arts centre, no place to go – put back – virtual – better technology – can't afford technology?  
East London young people not full access, postable packs, easier through post – how effective local government to provide hardware – reform of curriculum required- not going on in schools – state systems – all ages -infrastructure

Artist in Residence in my street – Scotland, each ward – paper for – creative facilitators for each ward – work really well beyond digital – cross barriers – older people – younger version think it is possible to live on screen, not if older – accessibility problems- panic of organisations – not seeing positive moment – focus on community – arts bringing people together – UBI for artists and facilitators , so for 'free' – Netherlands trialled community element, -could transform community arts – support networks – exchanges – work with other groups locally – local government not going to have more money – essential to live together – what does community mean – when I meet people around me – network – social care/hospital trusts – arts more valuable – public health realm CCG level – non health interventions – arts figured strongly – loneliness – any money for anything *Will provide link – evidence – Southwark and Lambeth – statistics*

Intergenerational - different waves of places – with local football club – 'these kids are just the same' – people alike – de-structuring of creative industries – ask the wrong questions in the media – difficult as very detailed needs support – curricular activity – no arts in curriculum – binary choices -art is the space – creative projects help sustain communities – essence of the artist – how do we influence the influencers – coverage around glamour, the big name – little project with 15 people has as much value as a big choir – get BBC to cover local arts – quantify these things – convince the invincible – see it disappear? – education issue – curricular change? – lobby DFE, arts vital – arts needed for engineers – change of government – instantly change – made commitment to arts and education – papers somewhere – arts for teenagers

Community development – Bradford- diverse - silos – get together -community up – magic of diversity – fight that fight – government and within arts – figureheads battling for that money – value in arts – what the criteria should be – strip away the history – artist intention and carried out intention – value integral to the work – art world just catching up- theatres empty and underrepresented – digital engagement not watching on-line – democratisation via digital – not being judged - free to focus

Directed orchestras across the world – all been taken away – access to forms of thinking – early age – through live - creativity – difference between science and the arts is spurious – compete for support in education not chance to get this right – don't destroy the top and make the base firmer – local government and education - birth to death – inherently creative – removing creative thinking element of curriculum – solving theorems requires creative leap – innovation in science and healthcare

Connect it all up - north and south – London centric -being democratic – artist belief and progression - confidence – each community has own voice- Manchester proper cultural centre – issue with City centric and rural small town – maintaining an eco-system

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## CONVERSATION 2:

### **What is the audience appetite for commercial reality of possible higher ticket prices for more stripped back presentations?**

#### Conversation attendees:

Trish Wadley (called the conversation)

Ilesha

Sally Anne Lowe

#### Notes:

- Do the public understand the full economics of the arts, and might this be a good opportunity to educate them? Do they understand why, for those that have it, charitable status is important and appropriate?
- We need to use the public far more to help us bring about pressure on Government for more support for the arts, particularly in these troubled times. Could we seek to ring fence arts support as part of different Government and local authority agenda? (e.g. health & well-being, social cohesion, placemaking as well as arts & culture budgets/team)
- We need to move from the arts being seen as 'nice to have' to being essential. Ultimately, this is a PR problem, and we should build a campaign around it. Can we move fast enough, with redundancies already being issued?
- When arts productions do resume, in order to retain levels of production will we be brave enough to raise prices? Or might stripped back arts be the way forward (a la Bristol Old Vic with Matt Smith & Claire Foy)
- The arts need a single lobbying message to cut through, and 'We need money' is not it.

### CONVERSATION 3:

#### **Rip it Up and Start again - is it time for a new script for the arts in the UK? What might a big shake-up look like?**

##### Conversation attendees:

David Drake (called the conversation)

List of attendees not noted

##### Notes:

- If you ripped it up then it could be worse although the temptation is strong
- Before we rip it up - why do we want to do it?
- Current arts system was designed in the Victorian era and it was for a particular population. We're now in a different place. We may not get a chance to do it again
- The bailout might reinforce what came before. How do we go about making things collectively and not reinforcing the status quo?
- If big institutions lose funding it gives us an opportunity to reset what is the shape - change is going to come
- It might not happen in the time frame we need
- Evolution is needed not revolution. the world is changing, has changed, and audiences change
- Gradual incremental change is what's needed
- The current cultural infrastructure is set up as winner takes all
- Economies of scale reduce opportunity as in the case of pianists in Vienna who struggled to find work
- We need a sector that is lying close to the ground - a representative sector. Building on culture and artistry
- We need to accept parts of the sector will die. We need to take some pain
- Reorganisation instead of revolution
- This is about renewal not recovery. A seismic change is needed
- What would happen if the Tate closed and then opened as a museum for ethnically diverse art? What would happen if Glastonbury did the same?
- There's not enough flex to end disparity
- Remember - there will be pushback. Seeing sustainable change will happen if we all talk to each other. all parts of the industry. We're still operating as an echo chamber instead of working in a connected way.
- No arts organisations are an island - cuts will have a knock-on effect
- It will take time for effective change to happen if we lose it and start again
- We need the "established" organisations - their resource, expertise, space
- We need to find a way the sector as a whole to talk to each other - who holds that space?
- Build more partnerships including ones that are not in the arts as we keep doing circular conversations
- Build community partnerships - they aren't having their stories told
- Whose stories are being told and where? Creatives still have ideas and are engaging with their communities
- Smaller companies are already doing the work
- Community work is "reviewed" - it's more meaningful, important and sustainable. We should value all audiences whether it's 60 people or 600.
- Participation and community are normally the departments that are cut but during this crisis they're the departments that have continued
- We should be working with health and social services

- People are going to need handholding to come back
- Arts are for all - we're not going to get this opportunity again
- Artistic creation and motivation - stripped back productions are exciting
- We should be facilitating to people who haven't had the opportunity
- Different people should be coming to the space
- Invite others to curate the space
- How do we aim for people of colour leadership?
- We need better education - paid internships and interventions at every level
- Systemic reboot
- Paradigm shift in thinking and now is the time
- Remember what we're for - arts community and collective. the infrastructure are the audiences, staff and artists not the building
- Defunding will not inspire outcomes outlined in the Arts Index
- Art has become expensive, but the engagement has stayed the same
- Advocating a new script and not defunding
- Who is to blame? ACE? Quasi commercial mode? Wrong thinking? If the building is well connected that it survives then it needs its connection with its community
- Snail pace shifting the arts
- Audiences and people who put the work on. We shouldn't be maintaining a building as a business
- The drawbridge will come back up. How do we keep conversations going?

## CONVERSATION 4:

### How we can achieve BAME creatives being at the centre of the recovery rather than on the edges?

#### Conversation attendees:

Louise Grainger (called the conversation)

Lucy Williams

Mimi Findlay

Nilou

Elaine Grant

Yamin Choudhury

J Martin

#### Notes:

- Reason for the room, struck by what Tobi said. And wanting for no one to have that experience with the art sector.
- It's not surprising to have that feeling towards the arts, Socioeconomic background affects a lot on how you experience the sector. Harder to get in.
- Not seeing people like you in the sector, this is not mentioning the fact that it's already hard to get into.
- This is not about race or culture but about minorities as a whole. Talking about colour because it's at the forefront but inclusivity cannot just be token gestures.
- If the arts could change it could reflect and move forwards society. A visible change that could happen. But it's hard to have these conversations when succession is very closed in its establishment when experiencing otherness.
- Getting in is one thing but being heard is another.

- Art is expensive, hence funding from schools and parental value is hard to obtain. To have a career in the arts is hard when having background difficulties. Making a two-way approach focusing on education and job opportunities would help those who want to but can't get into the art world.
- Mousetrap project (Elaine Gran) to get schools to go to the theatre but they are only one org. But they need support from the sector to get more people involved.
- It all comes down to the funding of it all.
- Lack of BAME performers because of the lack of roles written by producers, writers etc. Introduction of apprenticeships?
- The education pipeline on what creatives job and how to get there are. The arts are not represented in careers fairs and are not taught in schools as a viable career.
- Screen skills, and apprenticeships as a whole tend to be on the technical side rather than artistic.
- Amount of people that are expected to get into unpaid internships. Creative Access. For BAME to enter the workplace. Yamin's an advocate to rip the sector apart and create a new one.
- Making the most out of your luck and working harder than most is what most have to do just to get in. Arts council being complicit with the widespread idea of arts being somewhat accessible. The leader of the arts council, and artistic director for BAME being only one person. And not its own society in most ways?
- Emergency funding from the past few months, diversity was not even a criteria. Representation should have been a central idea. Because of the demographics of minorities being involved in theatres or arts, in general, they play further into the social community in which they live in.
- Equity not Equality, the difference between the two do not take in mind the background effects that radical art sector needs to take in mind. Local theatre does not attract young people, to join with the future of the arts and who they are producing it for.
- To radically change the sector, make all UK theatre to make one piece of work by and with someone they do not know. A year maybe? Maybe even training the gatekeepers to do unconscious biased training, or even conscious.

## CONVERSATION 5:

### Touring - how? What could the future be?

#### Conversation attendees:

Gloria L (Called the conversation)

Ian Dolan

Matthew L.

#### Notes:

How can we make it better?

Touring doesn't work as much for dancers as it does for theatre

Ideas about the future- recovery package

What future might look like for touring artists

I don't think we're going to burn it all down but it's going to be a difficult gradual change

There are some opportunities for example in Newcastle they have a very strong base

We all have our challenges, problems that are extraordinarily wasteful of time resources, it's just stupid the way it operates

There's a need for individuals and companies to connect

It's difficult to have a conversation with the audience

20 years and still no change

The lack of resources means you can't build an audience which again contributes to the lack of diversity in the sector

When you can't access your audiences, you're dependent on your gatekeepers

What if we had our own stage?

Some crazy ideas – NEAT infrastructure- give us the million pounds and make artist led theatre with a flat management. This can work if we're mentored and trained to create a hot house model

Theatre warehouses needs to be repurposed, there will be much more equity and progress

Community dance -less waste

Take the subsidy of the big three (national theatre..) and distribute that

As freelancers we are relying on income – we should deliver value

I would love audiences more involved like York does it for example making them part of the process

What if these buildings become more of a hope like a satellite If touring is to continue?

Buildings don't dictate the work

What are you talking about when you speak about your audience?

Logistically- how the hell are you going to do this? Without a vaccine?

There is a risk we will become easy for a commercial market which is not necessarily bad

Each failure is distinct

They were in 8 million debt even before covid

We need a rounded approach

All Successful touring collaborations were led by venues and each brings something with it

What is a collaborate model of working

The market can't go any further down

Glimmer of hope – if people are listening for people with a will to serve, organise and collaborate

But It is difficult to change the direction of the way sector operates. Big companies will have to hibernate

There is a constant figure – how much It costs for a building to run and it remains there even if the buildings not used it's a constant issue

The arts council should be very specific and targeted at producers to make the alternative

The risk is too high but if you want innovation you need to buy your people time and figure out how to get funds out of people

Nimble approach is needed for change

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## CONVERSATION 6:

### Sharing experiences of lobbying the Government during this period. How best to work together to lobby?

#### Conversation attendees:

Fiona Goh (called the conversation)

Ben

Ben Rothera

Clara Giraud

Fiona Harvey

Gail

Jack Gamble

Kully Thiarai

Lizzie Ridley

Michaela Nutt

Rebecca King Lassman

Rosie Luff

Samuel West

Shipra Ogra

#### Notes:

The main thread throughout the conversation was the idea of the Arts sector having a unified voice and how this could enable the sector to lobby more effectively to influence public policy and government decision making.

Discussions on past attempts to establish a unified voice for the sector highlighted previous failings:

- Some felt that there is an uncomfortable trade-off between trying to create a unified voice and standing up for what *you*, as an individual, represent/believe in.
- The sector is relatively fragmented in comparison to their industries, and this presents a difficulty. Individuals/ organisations with greater resources and larger, more established networks are able to “shout louder than the rest” and so smaller organisations, freelancers, and independent artists, for example, are not heard.
- Not all regions of the UK are well represented, and so the voice tends to be very London-centric.

Some participants challenged the very concept of a (read: singular) ‘unified voice’ recognising that it would require an industry with greater access to opportunity and less structural inequality so that the voices heard are more representative— more diverse.

Methods suggested for lobbying the Government with the intent to build a rapport and/or increase the likelihood of public investment:

- The tone of conversations with MPs and the Government needs to soften because if messages come across as too confrontational, it is less likely that the responses to said messages will be constructive.
- In the media, focus on the problems faced by the sector tend to overshadow any positive outcomes, this narrative can be counter-productive when lobbying as it weakens public perceptions of the sector, and thus this focus needs to shift.
- It was put forth that organisations (especially those outside of major cities) should make a concerted effort to reach out to their MPs and build relations. If individual MPs are more engaged with their constituency and the impact of the Arts on the people they represent, they may be more likely to lobby on the sector and their constituency’s behalf.

- By demonstrating the public's need for the sector, the need for public investment will be substantiated. The Public Campaign for the Arts (<https://www.campaignforthearts.org/>) allows individuals to submit videos in support of this cause.
  - There were many offshoots of the point above focused on proving the utility of the sector:
    - The contribution of the sector to the UK economy.
    - The social and emotional benefits of engagement with the arts.
    - The educational value of structured arts activities (although there was some debate on the elitist tone of such suggestions).
    - The arts ability to address other 'issues' of interest to the Government such as youth engagement.
  - Consider life without 'culture', and not just 'high-culture' such as theatre, museums, opera etc. but the likes of TV, music and books, it's such a huge part of our day-to-day lives!

Somewhere over the rainbow:

- Looking outwards (rather than inwards) towards audiences in order to guide how the sector responds to the current crisis and where future lobbying efforts would be best placed.
  - Again, the diversity of audiences was called into question and whether a united voice on this front was too, "chasing the impossible".
- "Organisations that are embedded within communities are the ones that will survive", a statement on the value of organisations being based on their relevancy within the communities that they serve in a 'post-COVID 19' socially distanced future.

Other comments:

- "The arts as a product is celebrated but, not the process", and the process is equally as, if not more, important.

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## **CONVERSATION 7:**

### **How do we ensure people who have already had to struggle to get into the industry aren't now pushed out by further economic hardship?**

#### Conversation attendees:

Lauren W (Called the conversation)

Nicola P

Xena F

Katie T

Michaela N

Faye M

Sylvie F

Jennifer D

Jayne

Nicola T

Cassie C

#### Notes:

##### **Redundancies**

- Precarious industry: people have fought very hard to get into the industry and fought very hard for others to have a space in it
- Discussion of tweet thread that is a very brave thing to share with others and how it motivates others to help
- People have to make some really hard choices with redundancies, trying to keep organisations afloat

##### **Community/ Location**

- Community work has stopped: where do people go?
- 'Meet people' is so hard in certain areas, getting work in other parts of the country is the only feasible option
- Some people fall through the cracks in certain regions, and age groups
- People need to know their community, do not bulldoze the work of freelancers; need a cooperative – how much will it influence policy?

##### **Freelance**

- redundancies can aid freelance sector, not enough help for those doing freelance, no universal base income, no government support, there is a need for hope through funding
- working 7 days a week with multiple contracts
- freelancer: great not to work for a big organisation especially being worried about furlough and redundancy
- Is it the only way to go for some people?
- Freelancers should have a voice in how the sector moves forward
- One freelancer can represent a region: we must be aware that on a task force this person does not get overwhelmed

##### **Representation**

- Socioeconomic, race, class: how to make what is left representative
- The pressure should be on those in leadership roles to ensure that this happens
- Theatres are considered elite—for those of the middle class not the working class
- Needs to be a push to demystify the industry and make it class accessible

## **Funding**

- Is there a need for new commercial models?

## **Employment**

- RSC Birmingham represent a transparent recruitment process
- Workforce campaigning, appeared on BBC, 'Freelancers Make Theatre Work' – explore the depth and breadth of what freelance means
- Trying to preserve jobs of people within organisation: security of employment v creation of new opportunities; no through flow in some businesses, people clutching into jobs and not wanting to move on, harder for young people in entry level positions
- London- carousel of jobs, people move on more; Wakefield, people stay in jobs
- World Book Day—career in publishing, back after 20 years, Arts Council and theatre work during that time, publishing is very behind in ensuring secure employment; fixed term contracts needed; publishing and theatre is commercial—fixed term contracts mean they can take something on afterwards with experience
- Fixed term contracts have the idea of scarcity in the arts; are the jobs scarce?
- People are getting harsh criticism for not protecting jobs due to Covid 19; some people do 'okay' jobs, hard to fire them to make way for new people to come in; how justifiable is it?
- Publishing thinking of bringing staff back from furlough; unlike theatre
- World Book Day—disadvantage exposed, and pressure of Covid 19 challenges, need to tackle disadvantage; need to adapt because post-Covid 19 no one will fund a charity that is not relevant
- People coming out of university and training and needing to create their own employment: need to become entrepreneurs; lack of understanding of industry in general – some people do not grow up with the cultural capital that makes sectors such as the theatre accessible

## **Age**

- Over 30s have less opportunities
- Elders have a lot of transferrable skills and experience

## **Updates**

- Naomi Obeng – provides audio updates on the arts; @nanarty

## **Networks**

- Organisations and how networks can be intimidating; London has a few
- Industry is well overdue for a change, not reinventing the wheel, it is how to make the wheel work, focus on people as opposed to organisations
- Networks need to be accessible; they can be very intimidating; Arts Emergency does the alternative old boy's network really well; all comes back to funding, if there is no money coming in, there is a lack of jobs
- Pathways need to be clear in the arts, hard to know where to go, is it linear? Some people are very protective of their contacts; pulling up the ladder behind them—need for less competition
- Concept of opaque networks
- Hard to meet the people you need to meet to get ahead; it is about organisations, bodies, agencies giving time to make connections happen; reevaluating time and setting it aside
- Nottingham Playhouse, Derby Theatre want to widen their pool, responding to the want of regional theatre representation

## CONVERSATION 8:

### How can arts organisations collaborate more between themselves and with the corporate sector?

#### Conversation Attendees:

Rebecca King Lassman (called the conversation)

Jodi Myers

Robin Cantrill-Fenwick

Chemaine Cooke

Philip Spedding

Serena Fyvie

Jennifer Davis

Katie Town

Louise Granger

Amy Powell Yeates

#### Notes:

##### **Question:**

Redundancies - collaboration v competition – disparate groups – looking after their size, geographic – more staff – new model – HR department for the arts sector – marketing & comms across the sector – all the things we pay for – come together one huge storage space in location – having resources – not just human resources

Visual arts – sector – subsidised – not well paid – commercial galleries – making millions – re-distribution and collaboration – corporate world support the wider arts

##### **Response:**

Appalling at working together, arts and charities – difficult – redistribution of funding - Tate + network – attempt in theatre to start – creative imagination to focus – Arts Council – competitive – chair micro organisation – share back office – still distinct – joint venture – work independently – some functions easier than others – marketing need to be close to the art – not one size fit all – GDPR? – fit for purpose - sharing and pooling personnel and space – French model – regional areas – shared space – address lack of staffing and space – all come together – use less – climate emergency – e.g. re-use set – costume world – fundraising has to be done in-house – arts orgs do pay for PR, Marketing, fundraising, particularly large, they can afford to – other functions HR, governance, H&S – not require team – sharing information – not reinventing the wheel – umbrella trust covering number of organisations (e.g. Salisbury) – pretty successful – back office obvious place – exceptionalism – don't understand us – surmountable – communications and understanding

Money orgs won't have any more – database of 500 arts development – send out about jobs – recruit via network – inbox not looking for job – save money – put our head together – what we can share – some organisations have come together – difference to merger or takeover – ACE encourage not instruct – come from orgs/boards – change of culture – how does that happen? – Example of Covid and street – connected with – arts org local Whatsapp group – not just funded organisations – how do you find the people on your 'street' – ACE broker? – just those they fund – sector specific – orchestras, theatres – knowledge bring people into the room – Poole tent, with local authority, museum, troupe from France – local together local government, museums, arts centre, BID – everybody wants the same thing – more partnership organisations – share the load – 2 ways – strategic networks- geography or sector – too much production capacity – strategic touring – greater collaboration – co-producing partners – ad hoc – strategic – fixed – travel around the country – stripping out production capacity skills and jobs – big eco system – cost saving is people – cost is creative product – current model not sustainable – survival – back office is jobs and

people too – pool resources to support other areas – create appetite – benefit of live performance – hope is temporary measure – going to be out of work anyway – save the organisations

- freelancer for seven years in Coventry – corporate sponsorship – ACE funding – changing the model of dependency – small so sponsors not interested – Salisbury model – offering them a whole range – bring freelancers in – appetite – early career artists push against work as business – changing our language – economic points – consortium - local government funding reducing – cross-country consortia viable – permanent employment – freelance some rather in employment – active BID Manager – BIDs consortium of businesses – same idea – wildly successful and disastrous BIDs

Musical Theatre Network and Mercury Musical Developments – funded together by ACE

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## CONVERSATION 9:

### How can the outdoor sector work with venues to aid recovery?

#### Conversation attendees:

Joe Hancock (called the conversation)

Laura Drane

Henrietta Duckworth

Lucy McMenemy

- Venue based arts organisations seem to be rabbits in headlights at the moment, as they fight to preserve their buildings and staff infrastructure, while outdoor arts organisations have the production skills to get performances going again. Why is all the media coverage going to the former?
- How could we 'find' more outdoor space (e.g. close roads), rather than retreat into Match theatres again (NB we love those building too)?
- In a Covid-19 era, suddenly the wraparound information that make visits to arts events so important for those with additional access requirements become of paramount importance to us all, so let's make a virtue of this - levels of info provided for 'relaxed' performances, for example, could become the norm
- What's the future for 'blended' live and digital performances so we're genuinely accessible to all? How do we monetise digital, and have we shot ourselves in collective feet by giving away too much for free in lockdown?

## **CONVERSATION 10:**

**What should arts workers/arts "leaders"/the "unfurloughed" be doing to be REAL allies to artists, freelancers and to everyone who 'doesn't look like us'?**

### Conversation attendees:

#### **Michaela N (Called the conversation)**

Lauren W

Sue B

Nilou

Sarah

Clara G

Anna

Ian D

Xena

Emily

Jenine M

Kully T

### Notes:

Meeting began with introduction of everyone in the meeting, there was a range of professions and circumstances: freelancers, working with boroughs, civil servants, creative director, lecturer, students, dance industry, producer

Ideas to consider: race, gender, disabilities etc.

### **Introduction/ provocation**

- Creative Forum—Loughton, 'feed up' through discussion every two months
- Youth forum needed: want to pay, fund costs, fears of getting it wrong and not doing enough
- What do people need to feel represented, enabled?

### **Responsibility**

- Need for larger infrastructure
- How do those with influence intervene? How do people make long term change?

### **Power/ power imbalances**

- Resources are needed
- People need to teach about bias when in positions of influence
- Scrabbling to make money as an artist overtakes the need for equality, feeling powerless makes it harder to empower
- Top down approach; artists need to feel able to approach institutions about what they are doing wrong and it is hard so the change should come from institutions
- Find organisations making change and help them make change; make changes that you can as well such as changing scripts to include race and class
- Grassroots orgs have a lot of amazing work that have a diverse team, but they are the ones not getting the funding; you do not have to reinvent the wheel
- POCs being made to feel that they have a chip on their shoulder and being forced into silence
- People are scared that they will waste lots of time trying to change gov views and tear down big institutions
- Covid 19 has made some people really struggle do be able to work, especially with childcare; time can be a massive privilege; some people need second jobs to pull through

## **Freelance arts**

- Freelance means you can choose your rate sometimes and how long to work
- Ideas about paid artists with salaries is hard because it depends on how you classify the criteria of getting paid
- Fears over who decides their salary
- Success for an artist can mean £11,000 a year – freelancers do not always have economic freedom

## **Strategy**

- Access to space is important because it is so expensive; try find schools with big halls
- Think about how to distribute funding and resources to people that may not directly ask for them
- Need for childcare and elderly care—access in the industry is an issue
- How do groups work? How many people in a group is counter-productive?
- Artists need to be on salary in arts centres and organisations
- Spreading money out by sponsoring many, many artists is very difficult—focus on less for more time so they can develop
- Go into communities and see their needs and ask for freelance help
- Accessible language when putting call outs, exclusionary language is common and stops people with skills applying
- ACE funding – individuals can have funding
- Look at other countries to see how they coped; Greek financial crisis, how did their industries survive? Need to learn from our neighbours
- Bradford Producing Hub—paying artists for meetings; city has extra investment; MPO funding as well

## **Women**

- This crisis has hit women very hard
- Less job security for women; women taking redundancy packages
- More women needing emergency funding

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## CONVERSATION 11:

**The personal is political. Covid has changed how we think about personal and collective space, agency and consent. How do we think radically about how we navigate cultural spaces and gather together again?**

### Conversation attendees:

**Jenny Wilson (called the conversation)**

Tessa Gordziejko

Samuel West

Sally Anne Lowe

Yamin Choudhury

Amanda Smethurst

Mary Swan

Tina Taylor

David Drake

Ben

Lucy McMenemy

Stevo Olende

### Notes:

- Fact that humans are social animals and need connections with others. But with that comes in the fact that lockdown has calmed and eased consumption in a capitalistic sense.
- Discussion of the ease of lockdown is centred on how to keep as many people in as well as keep them apart at the same time. Missing being together being in a space with other people.
- The personal is political, since whatever we have done now can be seen as culture because all trace of this lockdown is our actions and work produced from home.
- Shame being weaponised. How individuals with complicated socioeconomic backgrounds deal with green spaces and escaping. How fixed areas are smaller and smaller with low-income houses, with the gov't putting people off theatre and the arts by the media and rising prices.
- Universal basic income is paying for the employers and not the employees. The revolution in thinking needs to criticise what the art infrastructure really is. The buildings aren't the infrastructure but the people, putting more value on the people but not on the space instead.
- The frustration around talking about money and art. Making more opportunities for artists to come to people. When something is validated by the media it stays in one fixed place and does not travel around to reach more people.
- Artist and audience conversation are usually us and them narrative and fixing an already broken system when in reality it may need to be broken and made new. Something that we have lost, that connection with the audience while asking for their money.
- Streaming theatre is not the answer. Not only because of the loss in monetary value but also it provides a distance between the theatre and the audience. But it is still a way for the media to outsource the theatre to be more affordable.
- Bringing theatre to the masses at a young age, little kids and from there on building an appreciation for the arts. A widespread show for kids like a storytime and puppet show to get out to that community and making it cheaper to then go forward.
- In this period of social distancing, how can we engage and make it more interesting? How to package a live experience and make it digital. They are not comparable experiences but what would be the alternative even if you could?
- In a new paradigm of accelerating shift in interest, the lockdown has just made it all that more imperative. Nevertheless, smaller and larger venues alike from galleries to theatre need to reflect on their venues' sizes and interaction with the wider public and not just the niche elite. The red

ladder.org addresses different social issues that affect the local audience because it addresses common issues for a smaller audience would make it more viable for the future. The programming of local theatres is chosen by the community since it allows people to have a more democratic view of what is shown and see what affects them.

- We are for the community and telling a story not so much for putting a show. As an artist, you shouldn't do what people want. But at the same time, it is communal plays that seem to be more viable.
- Universal income, talking about artist essentially. Art and artist being separate from the community when they should be united in most subjects. Artist are not essential in a communal value but art in itself is. Not so much as the authenticity that is given by the plays and shows.

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## CONVERSATION 12:

### Is this the time to explore the economics of arts and its ring funding with the public?

#### Conversation attendees:

Iesha (Called the conversation)  
Rosie Luff  
Jack Gamble  
Rachael Easton  
Lizzie Ridley  
Deborah Mason.

#### Notes:

There is a need to introduce some transparency, what's going on behind the scenes with the people, if not you'll lose support

There are differences in public perceptions whether art is essential or not which needs to be targeted  
There is a shortage of money and all their support goes to big names

Public relations need to be improved – capitalise- make it essential and necessary

Some people might never perceive arts as essential or necessary and that's when we have to remind them "what are they looking at?"

What have they been looking at during lockdown, shows, movies, reading books they have to be reminded art got them through this lockdown once more so it is essential, art and community activities such as rainbows for the NHS, singalongs all come from this sector

We need a UBI for artists

We need creative affiliating on a community level

People need to know that is good for you and it costs more than you think

It is technically funding the whole welfare system in the country by giving the government around 86 percent of the profit which is used to fund welfare

Public institutions haven't changed in the past 15 years

We need to know who is the audience and what they want to hear  
Answers are too structured

Every separate part of the sector has similar good ideas but separately, we need to come together for a change -commercial organisation

Good communications – we need to get out of “everybody agree with you “ mindset and understand that people might disagree and that’s why we should tackle their obsessions and values that are going be affected without their help in other terms speak their language to get the message across

Action needs to be seen, on a reductive level, coordinate all of the stakeholders and build

Brexit – not being able to mobilise the network

It is an ecosystem- big companies need to invest in the ecosystem and evaluate what’s going on  
Parents of children who are going to be Pershing their careers in arts sector need to be engaged in every level of the ecosystem to get support as they are going be thinking about their children’s employability in the future

There is a hierarchy- large -small- freelance artist

Everybody uses art to sell, how does art sell itself?

Addressing isolation, building communities, charities for people to know the actual value of art is beyond profit

People need to understand it can’t be done for nothing forever

There is a value chain

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## CONVERSATION 13:

### How can we continue to engage young people moving forward? How can we continue the promotion of arts subjects at GCSE and A-Level?

#### Conversation attendees:

Lucy Williams (called the conversation)

Fiona Harvey (called the conversation)

Bryony Relf

Elaine Grant

Gail

Jayne Williams

Julia

Katy Snelling

Liz Hill

Nicola Pollard

Nicola Shaw

Nicola Triscott

Patrick O'Sullivan

#### Notes:

As with many other industries, there is a lot of uncertainty about the future and how organisations (both small and large) and individuals can prepare for the new 'normal'. This session facilitated the exchange of experiences and ideas between different actors in arts education.

Participants expressed similar feelings of uncertainty/concern in regard to the following:

- Current guidance on protective measures to reduce the risk of spreading the virus is either non-existent or ambiguous, making it difficult to plan for the safe return of arts organisations to schools or for the safe welcoming of young people to cultural institutions. Once protective measures *are* in place how can its observance, by young children in particular, be ensured?
  - It was put forth that schools must make their own decisions in the absence of clear government guidance.
- When schools do reopen to all students, many expect that the focus will be on helping children and young people to catch up in the 'core' subjects (read: English, Maths and Science), with more practical arts-based subjects relegated to a lower priority level.
  - There were many offshoots of the point above focusing on the knock-on effects of this including:
    - A further decline in the uptake of more practical arts-based subjects at GCSE and A-Level.
      - This also prompted discussions on the false dichotomy between 'rigorous academic' and 'soft practical' subjects and how students are encouraged to pursue the former of the two.
      - To address this false dichotomy, participants suggested that the arts needed to be embedded within curriculums rather than treated as an 'add-on', which has been made the case with the English Baccalaureate performance measure.
    - A reduced exposure to the possibility of working within the creative industry or the different jobs/ careers available, which would only further perpetuate the idea that a) "there are no jobs in the arts" or b) "by studying arts-based subjects you can *only* work in the arts".

The importance of school leaders reaching out to past, present, or potential partner organisations as early on as is possible was stressed.

Given the current situation, there was a focus on the new role of educators in engaging young people with the arts:

- Participants explored the use of the arts to improve mental wellbeing through:
  - Fostering a sense of community by connecting children and young people in this period of social isolation.
  - Providing a creative outlet for expressing new and/or difficult feelings.

Methods suggested for engaging children and young people with the arts in a socially distanced future were understandably more focused on individuals and organisations continuing to cultivate and sustain an online presence.

- It is simply not enough to replicate live experiences in a digital setting, efforts must be made to adapt content as and when is necessary.
- Content should be made in collaboration with teachers and students to encourage deeper engagement with the learning process and so that the product is tailored to the needs of schools, children, and young people.
- As the situation evolves a blended learning approach is more favourable to allow young people to engage more fully with content.

Participants also discussed the challenges of connecting with children and young people who lack access to a compatible device or the internet.

There were also talks of joint efforts between arts educators and the Government-funded National Tutoring Programme or charities such as Action Tutoring (<https://actiontutoring.org.uk/>) to support continuing arts education in primary and secondary schools.

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## **CONVERSATION 14:**

### **How can the sector inform the disinterested and uninformed arts interviewers in the broadcast media?**

No notes were taken.