

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER

RADICAL THEATRE: INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK

SohoPoly



Heritage
Fund

Produced by the Soho Poly with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund

The Soho Poly



Who are we?

In 1968, Fred Proud and Verity Bargate founded a theatre company called the Soho Theatre. In 1972, it moved into a basement on Riding House Street owned by the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster). Here it became known as the Soho Poly and, for twenty years, it was to have a hugely important role on the alternative theatre scene.

Hanif Kureishi, Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Nigel Hawthorne and Simon Callow are just some of those who passed through its doors.

The Soho Poly was a pioneer of 'lunchtime theatre' - part of an attempt to make theatre more inclusive by bringing arts and culture into the heart of the ordinary working day. Lunchtime theatre also offered opportunities to many artists who found themselves excluded from mainstream theatre.

It was a radical space full of change-makers. Plays tackled important political issues around race, sex and class.

Sadly, the basement was abandoned in 1990. The theatre company reverted to its original name and produced work in many other spaces before arriving on London's Dean Street, where Soho Theatre continues to thrive today. Since 2012, however, the University of Westminster has been leading a fundraising project to restore and revive the Riding House Street venue where so many important plays were first performed. Our artistic team has also produced a host of pop-up gigs, poetry readings and theatre workshops and, in Summer 2023, the Soho Poly was officially relaunched as a fully licenced venue (see images on pages 27 and 28).

The Soho Poly has also received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a major oral history and outreach programme. As part of that project, and inspired by the Soho Poly's past, we have produced this pack to help the next generation of theatre makers to think about the type of theatre they want to see in the future.

How to use this pack

This pack is intended for use by teachers and students. Individual sections are packed with interviews, discussion points, activities and practical advice. The sections can be read in any order.

Images: Left: The Soho Poly in the 1970s
© University of Westminster Archives

Opposite: Emmy the Great and Jon Ronson (top right) performing at the Soho Poly © Yaasiin Hossen-saib



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The Soho Poly 1972 - 1990

Read the following thoughts from people who worked at the original Soho Poly 1972-1990.

Which ones feel most relevant today?
Are there any that really speak to you?

“If I became a writer it’s because they gave me opportunities to see my work produced for the first time...

When you’re at the beginning of your career what you really need is to hear actors saying your lines.”

Hanif Kureishi CBE, writer

*My Beautiful Launderette,
Buddha of Suburbia*



“Everything had to be tailored to within the limitations of what we had.”

**Angie Hill,
former stage manager**

“I think at that time there was a very positive movement in the world for change.”

Ann Mitchell, actor and director
Widows, EastEnders



Image above: Simon Callow (right) in *Soul of the White Ant* at Soho Poly 1976
© Nobby Clark / ArenaPAL

Left: Hanif Kureishi
© Kier Kureishi

“I loved the fact of people coming from wherever they were working, and it was a lot of local people who came...

I don’t know how much it was, a quid maybe, something like that? A very small amount of money.”

Simon Callow CBE, actor

Amadeus, Four Weddings and a Funeral

“A lot of the actors, they were not even actors. They were people who we brought from the community to get involved in the arts...

You want to help the community, you go into your community and educate them...”

Jamal Ali, writer



“

I wanted to attract people into the theatre to see something extraordinary, who've never been to the theatre before.

Fred Proud,
former Artistic Director

“It was a good time to be a working class actor, because all these jobs were coming up and all the posh kids were complaining that they didn't have a cockney accent and they couldn't get a job.”

Phil Davis, actor

Sherlock, Quadrophenia



“So lunchtime theatre was breaking the mould about how long a play should be. Are you buying your theatre experience by the yard or are you buying into the quality of the play?”

Dame Harriet Walter, actor

Succession, Ted Lasso, Star Wars (The Force Awakens)

Image top left: Fred Proud, 1973

Below: Harriet Walter in *Three More Sleepless Nights*, Soho Poly 1980

Both images © Nobby Clark / ArenaPAL

Above: Phil Davis

Left: Janet Amsden © Steve Lawton

“There was not one place to match the Soho Poly... Everybody was held by it. There was no separation, everybody was together.”

Janet Amsden,
actor and writer

Eastenders



Can Theatre Change the World?

**What impact can theatre have on the world?
Can it actually change anything?**



► TASK: Can theatre change the world?

1 Take a snap vote in your group.

Can theatre change the world? Yes, no or maybe?



Yes



No



Maybe

2 Read the quotes below. How far do you agree with their sentiments? Which one do you most identify with? Discuss your different choices.

3 Now vote again.

Has your discussion changed anyone's opinions?



Yes



No



Maybe

Theatre has incited protest and change. And it will keep doing so.

ALICE, DIRECTOR

I still love theatre but I'm not sure it's as relevant today.

AMIR, DANCER

I go to the theatre to lose myself in a story. Theatre should be about escapism, not politics.

LEE, REGULAR THEATRE GOER

Theatre can change the world if it changes itself.

ELLEN, YOUTH CLUB LEADER

Theatre can show perspectives you might not have considered. By looking at the world through other lenses we open ourselves to greater empathy and understanding.

MIKEY, ACTOR



Gotcha, Soho Poly
© Nobby Clark / ArenaPAL

Perhaps a play's worth shouldn't only be measured by the impact it has on the whole of a society? Perhaps it's enough if it affects just a single individual?

The actor Phil Davis remembers the powerful impression Barrie Keeffe's play *Gotcha* (1976) made on members of the Soho Poly audience. One woman was so moved by the production – about a boy who is dismissed and ridiculed by bullying teachers at his school – that she burst into tears and made Davis promise her that the play and performance mattered as much to him as it had to her.

Plays that Matter

Here are some examples of plays that many people would say have effected change in different ways.

Hedda Gabler (1891)

Henrik Ibsen was a Norwegian playwright. This play showed how disempowered women were in society at the time. Going to the theatre was one of the few things women could do without a male chaperone, so after matinee performances they gathered and discussed the issues. These women decided to march on Oslo Town Hall and demand the right to vote for women.

Sus (1979)

Barrie Keeffe's play *Sus* was first performed at the Soho Poly. The play focused on a highly contentious law that allowed the police to stop and search people on 'suspicion' of being about to commit a crime. It disproportionately targeted black communities. *Sus* was later performed outside in front of large crowds at Rock Against Racism concerts and became part of the fight to repeal this law, something that happened in 1981. Nevertheless, the play remains deeply relevant today.

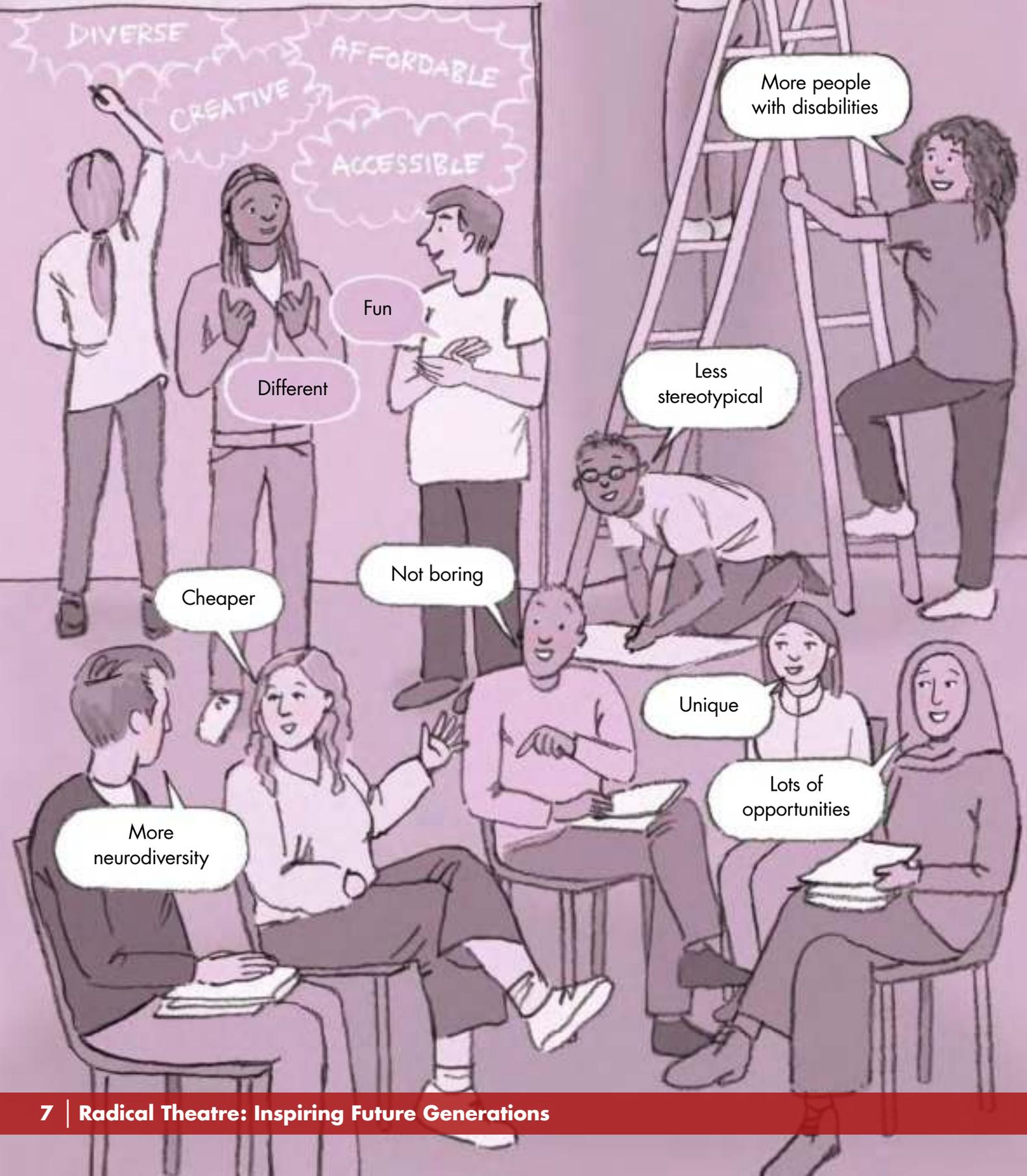
The Colour of Justice (1999)

In 1993, black teenager Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death in a racist attack by a gang of white youths. The police investigation failed to provide sufficient evidence to convict. The Tricycle Theatre production 'performed' the findings of the public inquiry into police failings. It drew much attention to the report, encouraged people to join debates and discussions after the performances and led to wide-spread calls for reform.

Future Theatre

What do we want theatre to be in the future?

We asked teenagers in East London and these are some of the suggestions they came up with.



▶ TASK 1: How to make change happen.

Pick 3 of the suggestions on page 7 – the ones that you think are the most important.
Now write down a few ideas about how you might achieve these goals.
What are the challenges? Are some changes easier to make than others?

▶ TASK 2: What do you really care about?

What do you really care about?
What does *everyone* in your group care about?

Put 10 pieces of paper across the floor with the numbers 1-10. One of the group is going to read out the following prompts:

LOVE
FAMILY
POLITICS
CLIMATE CRISIS
FASHION
MUSIC
EDUCATION
MONEY
POWER

As each prompt is read out, everyone should move up and down the 1-10 scale depending on how passionately they feel about the word read out. 10 means you really care. 1 means you aren't bothered. Do the exercise in silence. And make sure no one is being judgemental of anyone else.

Now add some of
your own prompts.
What things matter to you?



Has the theatre you have seen addressed these issues?
If not, is it time to make theatre which does?

Future Theatre: Sustainability

How do we make sure that theatre is sustainable, and only impacts positively on our planet?



► **TASK 1: Write a list of 5 ways in which creating a piece of theatre might impact the planet.**

Hint: an example might be using fuel to transport the set around the country.

- 1: _____
- 2: _____
- 3: _____
- 4: _____
- 5: _____



Images:

Right: Stuart Heyes

Opposite page: *Bicycle Boy*
directed by Helen Eastman

We chatted to Stuart Heyes, sustainability lead at Fuel Theatre about his job:

What does sustainability mean to you?

What it means, in general, is making sure that we hand on our planet in a better condition than we found it to the next generation. It's about living in harmony with the world, not exploiting it.

And one of the main ways to do that is to love rubbish. All creative projects create waste. The act of designing creates waste. If I cut a beautiful leaf out of piece of paper, the remains of the piece of paper are left on the floor, and I could either choose to forget about that or I could preserve them. And if I preserve them then they can be used in the future.

Why are you so passionate about this?

I've always had a real interest in using things for purposes other than that for which they were intended, and also for looking at an object and imagining what else it could be - seeing the potential for reuse in everything.

What's the biggest challenge?

From my point of view, sustainability is about embracing inconvenience. Because it's the desire to make everything convenient that got us into this mess in the first place.

For example, in theatre, we are often working to deadlines – the deadline of the actual performance being the biggest. And as deadlines approach, it's very natural to start cutting corners and making bad last minute choices. That's something we all need to try and avoid.

Future Theatre: Disability

How can we make sure disabled artists, creatives and audience members can fully participate in theatre?

Image: *Blood Wedding* Graeae Theatre, 2015

© Viktoria Begg

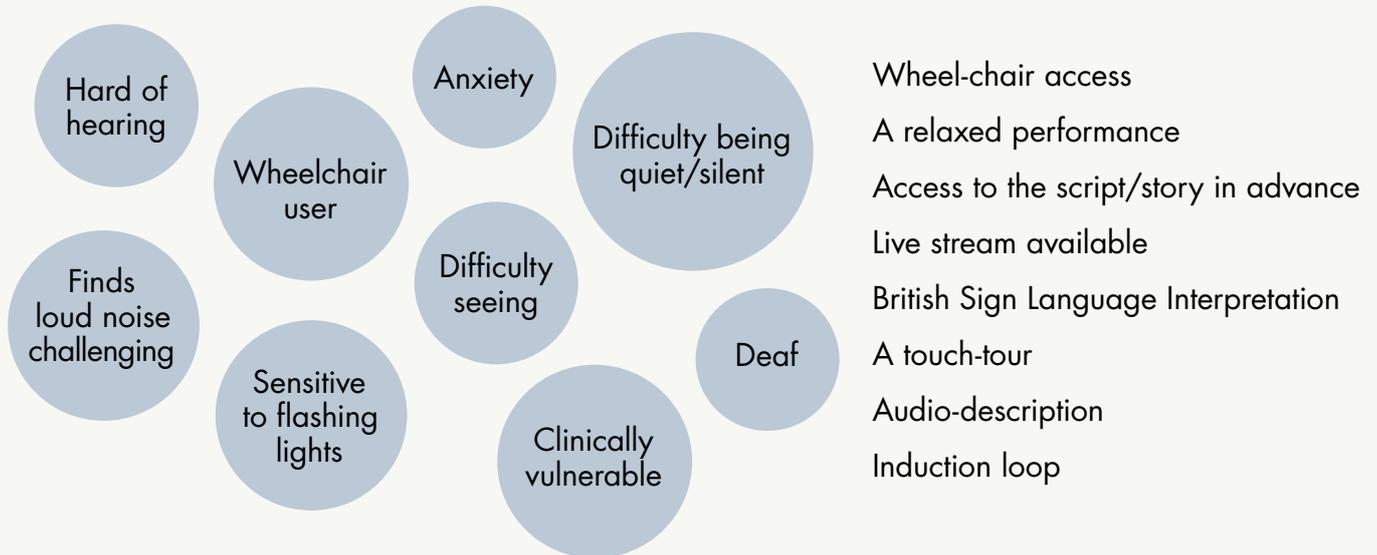


The Social Model of Disability

says that disability is caused by the way society is set up, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. The model, embraced by many but not all disabled artists, encourages individuals and organisations to look at ways of removing barriers that might limit the full participation of disabled people.

► TASK 1: How can we help theatre makers and audience members overcome barriers to participating in performances?

Look at the diagram below. In the bubbles are some physical or neurological differences that may cause difficulties in particular environments or situations. On the right are positive actions that theatres can take to prevent these from becoming a barrier to participation. Can you link the bubbles on the left to the solutions on the right? Can you think of any other ways in which theatres might adapt to encourage full participation?



Remember that some people may have multiple needs. How might that make designing adaptations more challenging?

► TASK 2

On the right of this box are some UK theatre companies that support disabled artists in making work. They all focus on accessibility in different ways. Read the text and research the companies via their websites. (See Further Resources for links.) Now list at least 5 ways in which they support accessibility and participation.

- 1: _____
- 2: _____
- 3: _____
- 4: _____
- 5: _____

Deafinitely Theatre is the first deaf launched and deaf led professional theatre company in the UK

The Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, founded in 1993, is the first company in Scotland to give active employment to disabled and non-disabled actors, and, in 2012, became the first professional company in Scotland to be led by someone with a disability.

The Graeae Theatre Company was founded by Nabil Shaban and Richard Tomlinson and has spearheaded the effort towards the inclusion of disabled actors and writers since their first performance of *Sideshow* in May 1980.

Quiplash is a company run by Amelia and Al Lander-Cavallo, which works with theatre companies to encourage LGBTQ+ and disabled inclusion and representation.

Oily Cart Theatre originally began in 1981 and is now specifically engaged with children with disabilities. Performances are interactive and provide a variety of sensory engagement; their shows include smell, touch, light, music, sound, and movement to stimulate different elements of our senses.

Future Theatre: Neurodiversity

As society's understanding of neurodiversity grows, how can we make sure theatre and theatre making are accessible to all?

We chatted to Vijay Patel. Vijay is a performance artist, writer and neurodivergent access consultant.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world in different ways. There is no 'right' way to be, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

A person might be described as being neurodivergent if the way they learn, behave, or experience the world is different from what is considered 'neurotypical'. Conditions such as ADHD, autism and dyslexia are common forms of neurodivergence.

How do you think the industry can help remove barriers for neurodivergent theatre makers?

Here I always talk about the social model of disability. Once we understand that, we can start looking at disability and neurodiversity in completely different ways.

For more on the Social Model of Disability see information on page 11.

We can ask if the people we work with understand the needs of disabled and neurodivergent people. We can ask if we need to alter our building to make sure people can access it fully. There might also be sensory barriers not related to the physical building – spaces where there are loud noises or lots of people.

And we need to take the pressure off the neurodivergent individuals themselves to have to explain their needs. This is why I advocate for access riders. They mean I don't have to explain myself constantly to people. I'm like, 'just download my access rider, read that, and you'll know most things you need to know'.

An access rider is a document that outlines your disability or access needs to let people you work with know how to ensure you have equal access to work.

And these are basic requirements. I'm not asking for 'x' amount of money. I'm not asking for huge things. I'm just asking for the ways in which we work to shift a little bit, or to think about some extra provision that you could have available for me, in case I need it.

If we can create more opportunities for neurodivergent people to have a voice within organisations, hopefully we can make a much healthier working environment.

But it's constant work. And people shouldn't be afraid of getting it wrong. It's fine to get it wrong. We just have to say, 'okay, how do we move forward?' Because trying is better than nothing.

“

I think it's about research, it's about understanding, it's about talking amongst teams. And it's about talking to other neurodivergent people... about how to make your organisation better.

Vijay Patel



Vijay Patel © Holly Revell

► TASK: Read the interview with Vijay Patel on page 13. Now think of three ways your school or youth theatre could be more welcoming to neurodivergent theatre makers and audiences.

- 1: _____
- 2: _____
- 3: _____

Future Theatre: Look and Feel



When new theatres are built, how do we make sure they are accessible and welcoming? What kind of spaces should theatres be?

Above: Brixton House Theatre

Traditionally, theatre interiors were ornate and elaborate, often decorated with red curtains, murals, sculptures and fancy chandeliers. One of the best-known theatre architects was Frank Matcham and his theatres were opulent and beautiful.

Modern theatres are often much plainer. The architect who designed our National Theatre, Denys Lasdun, wanted it to be a blank canvas so that audiences focussed on the actual performance. Lasdun also referred to the foyer spaces at the NT as 'the fourth auditorium'. They help encourage social interaction and a sense of participation in the life of the theatre.

It is also essential that new theatres are accessible for all theatre-goers. This is a legal requirement, but also an opportunity to create welcoming and inclusive environments.

CASE STUDY:

Brixton House

Brixton House theatre, which opened in South London in 2022, is the new home of Ovalhouse Theatre. Previously located in Kennington, Ovalhouse had a long history of radical and inclusive community theatre. However, in order to help the theatre expand, and to address accessibility issues, Lambeth Council offered it a new site. Crucially, in the new building, there is now full accessibility, not just for audiences but also in all backstage areas, including wheelchair accessible lighting rigs.

Former Artistic Director Gbolahan Obisesan described the theatre's aims to us like this:

We have a large constituency of people to cater for, including people with disabilities and other needs, who we want to incorporate into our thinking in an intentional manner and through active consultation. We can be proud that our building is designed to be energy efficient, but it is also designed for wheelchair users to be able to get around easily, as well as to operate and rig our accessible lighting grids. We also want people fluent in British Sign Language to be very much part of our staff team. Our aim is that people with disabilities or neurodivergent needs can feel comfortable in the spaces we have.

► TASK: Design a theatre foyer space.

A foyer is usually the first thing someone encounters when they enter a theatre. It can set the tone for the whole building. In groups, or individually, consider the following questions:

- 1** What is a theatre foyer for?
Jot down as many possible uses as you can.
- 2** What might be in your foyer?
A café? A gallery? Places to plug in laptops?
What other ideas can you generate?
What would make the space welcoming?
- 3** How might your foyer be made fully accessible?
- 4** Think about colours and textures.
Make a mood board by collaging or using Pinterest.

Brixton House foyer



Future Theatre: Ethnic Minority Participation*

Diversity in the arts refers to the belief that the make-up of organisations, and the work they produce, should be representative of the backgrounds and lived experiences of all people in our society.

A diverse workplace might include people of different sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic background, religion, financial status, age, disability, or neurodiversity. In reality, however, many people continue to face greater barriers to participation than others.

Ethnic minority representation is one major area of concern. Recent reports have shown that people from ethnic minority backgrounds were presented with extra obstacles due to economic and time pressures, and concerns about feeling uncomfortable or out of place.

How can we remove such barriers to equitable and diverse participation in our industry?

*'Ethnic Minority' is the current term used by the UK government to describe all ethnic groups except the white British group. But not everyone will agree with the way people are referred to. Some people prefer to use the phrase Global Ethnic Majority (or variations of this) to draw attention to the fact that white people are in the minority when considered globally.

**We asked actress
Alicia McKenzie
'what do you think
would help increase
ethnic minority
diversity in theatre?'**



The first thing we need to have is more diversity in decision-making roles.

If there was more diversity on theatre boards, among producers, in other top positions – and also amongst the reviewers and critics who decide what's 'good' and what should be put on – that would help to increase diversity in theatre in general.

Another element of it is really valuing cultural heritage and diverse backgrounds in the arts. What theatre looks like in the Caribbean, the kind of performance that I grew up with, is very different to the kind of things that'll be on in mainstream theatres. So maybe there's something about bringing that style of performance into British Theatre as well.

“

**I always remember
that song in Hamilton:
'I want to be in the
room where it happens'**

Alicia McKenzie

▶ TASK 1: Thinking about casting.

One of the most important things that any theatre company can do to address the need for increased diversity is to think hard about how plays are cast. Consider the following questions:



- ▶ **Why is it important for audiences to see themselves represented on stage?**

- ▶ **Should someone's ethnicity or cultural background be relevant when they audition for a role?**

- ▶ **Should we always cast the best actor regardless of ethnicity?**

- ▶ **Are there any plays where we need to be conscious of ethnicity when casting?**

- ▶ **Should we positively discriminate to increase ethnic minority diversity on stage?**

Divide into groups to discuss one or more of these questions. Make a note of points of disagreement, but always remember to be respectful to those who have different opinions.

The questions in Task 1 relate specifically to issues of ethnic minority participation and representation, but similar issues arise with regard to people who might identify, for example, as LGBTQ+, disabled or neurodivergent.

These days, many theatres include a diversity statement on their website. Here is an example from the National Theatre:

We believe the National Theatre should as far as possible reflect the diversity of the UK on its stages, in its workforce and in its audience reach. Our ambition is to achieve greater diversity in the areas of gender, race and ethnicity, disability, sexuality, socio-economic background, faith and age.

▶ TASK 2: Research your own case study.

All theatre companies need to think hard about diversity. However, some companies are specifically dedicated to the representation of particular groups that may have struggled, or continue to struggle, to have their voices heard. In groups, or individually, carry out a research project into one of these 5 theatre companies in preparation for a short presentation:

Tara Theatre

New Earth Theatre

Talawa Theatre Company

Eclipse Theatre

Tamasha Theatre Company

Consider the following questions in your research:

- ▶ **How and why was the company formed?**
- ▶ **What is the company's aim?**
- ▶ **Which groups does it represent and hope to reach?**
- ▶ **How do its past and current productions demonstrate its commitment to its goals?**
- ▶ **What can we learn about the company from recent reviews of its productions?**

Future Theatre: Queer Spaces

We chatted to playwright Tom Wright about how we can make theatre a welcoming space for queer artists.

How can we best support and empower young queer artists?

One gift of queer art is that by celebrating the richness of our queer experiences, we empower all audiences to live more freely. To enable this we must be open and flexible to 'queer' ways of creating theatre.

This goes beyond important practical considerations like gender-inclusive spaces, and includes encouraging diversity of thought, or even reimagining the physical form such work might take.

One of the key differences between queer artists and those from other protected backgrounds is that we are very rarely born directly into our community. As we discover who we are as young LGBTQ+ people we have to seek out people who share and affirm our experiences.

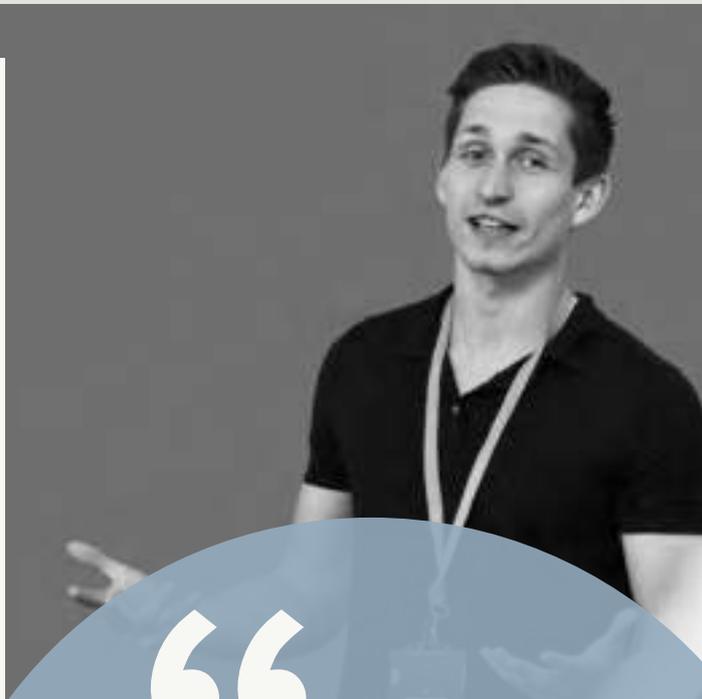
What do you understand by 'queer space'?

There has been a lot of recent debate as to what a 'queer space' is and should be. But most would agree that it's a physical place created by and for queer people to inhabit uniquely as themselves. The main ambition of any queer space is to build an alternative way of being that's non-hierarchical and contains a plurality of voices and queer experiences, safe from fear of violence or ridicule.

Why are queer spaces important, and how have they been important in your own work?

In my own work, I have always prioritised collaborating with other LGBTQ+ artists. Through creating a safe space in rehearsals these artists often feel comfortable in sharing personal experiences and having enlightening conversations about things that matter to us.

Creating work directly for my community is hugely satisfying and inspires me to be a better artist.



“

Queer artists of all kinds are seeking new ways of being proudly different and subversive.

Tom Wright



Ben Walters at a Badge Cafe 'takeover' of the Soho Poly. Ben's badge-making hangouts, which are open to everyone, have their origins in his work with the queer performance collective Duckie.

Interestingly, when you make work for your own target audience in this way, you soon notice that other audience members are also attracted to it and are excited to join in and learn about lives different than their own. Even seeing themselves in some of the universal emotions and experiences.

There's extraordinary diversity in queerness and so many queer stories that haven't been told. In an industry where audiences are crying out for new stories, this can only be a good thing.

What are your hopes for the future of theatre?

I hope that we can free ourselves from restrictive ideas of what theatre can be. How it typically has been made and by whom. This is where queer people are uniquely placed to think outside of the box and to inspire others.

► TASK: Research an early play addressing LGBTQ+ experiences on stage.

Shockingly, the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK only began in 1967. Then, in 1968, theatre censorship was abolished. Before that all new plays had to be checked in advance by the Lord Chamberlain. Suddenly, it was possible for writers to address LGBTQ+ experiences directly on stage.

Conduct a short research project into one of the plays to do this and explore the impact of the play's first production. Good places to start are the Queer Theatre History pages of the Stratford East Theatre website, the Gay and Lesbian pages of the Unfinished Histories website, and the online magazine Drama and Theatre. (See Further Resources page for links.)

Community Theatre

Youth, amateur and other community groups are often where people have their first experience of theatre. They can also provide opportunities for people to come together and be creative at all stages of life.



Glyn Maxwell © Anna Leader Solas

“

All you have in common is that you're doing it for love. Which is great, because that's the best part of anything

Glyn Maxwell

We chatted to poet Glyn Maxwell and Ellen Havard, Senior Youth Worker at Newham Council, about what makes these forms of theatre so important.

Why is amateur/community theatre important?

GM: Partly because it brings the telling of stories old and new to people who might live a long way from any professional theatre, or people for whom professional plays are out of their reach economically. You will find many famous actors and directors who got their start as kids in youth, amateur or community theatre.

How is it different from working with a professional company?

Amateur actors aren't being paid, so you have to be aware of their wider situations in terms of family, work, health, age, and the distance they have to travel to take part. In a professional company your obligations to everyone else are underwritten by a contract. In amateur theatre they are based upon an understanding of the time each one of you is giving to the enterprise purely out of love, passion, curiosity and friendship. Amateur theatre is a famously good place to make friends. I made some for life there.

Who can get involved in community theatre? Is it just for actors?

No! Absolutely ANYONE who can bring something useful to the putting on of a play is embraced in amateur or community theatre – actors, directors, stage designers, stage managers, set builders, set painters, technicians, composers, costume, sound or lighting designers, marketing people... the list goes on.



In the last few years, everything's been quite difficult and challenging. What has youth theatre been able to do to help people through this weird time?

EH: At the beginning of the pandemic, I was the director of Southwark Playhouse's Youth Theatre. And when we were all on Zoom it was just about coming together and being silly. Because life suddenly became small and scary, and quite boring. Professional theatre is often slow to respond to the world and to events. It can take a long time to write a play, to get the money together, all of that. Youth theatre was one of the ways to get people creating throughout and capturing moments.

What would you say to someone who wants to get involved in youth theatre but doesn't see themselves as an actor?

That was like me too, then, and there's definitely a place for you! I guess it's about talking to whoever the leader is of a particular Youth Theatre. I work quite closely with Theatre Royal Stratford East and they've run a young technicians programme for example.

Can theatre change the world?

Yes. But so many people don't think theatre is for them. Too often, the people who need to change the world aren't the people making theatre. Theatre can change the world if theatre changes itself.

▶ TASK: What do you understand by the term 'community'?

- ▶ Do you feel you belong to a particular one?
- ▶ How would you describe it?
- ▶ Is it defined by geography, culture or religion, a particular interest, or something else?
- ▶ Are there several communities that you belong to?



Dark Days, Light Nights, Soho Poly, 1976, written by Jamal Ali (pictured) starred many non-professional actors, drawn directly from the local Brixton community that the play's subject matter addressed.

Disrupting your Everyday

The Soho Poly was known for its lunchtime theatre. People could see a play in their lunchbreak. Their day was interrupted - or disrupted - by a piece of theatre, which made them stop and think.

We believe that everyone's life is enriched by the arts, so we've been running a campaign to get people to do one cultural thing in the middle of their day. It might be as simple as reading a poem or taking the time to listen to some music.

Recently, we surprised shoppers on London's Oxford Street with poems in the windows of stores.



► TASK 1: Can you disrupt your own day?

If you were asked to disrupt your own day with something artistic, cultural, or just different to normal, how might you go about it? Are there specific events or activities you would choose? Where would you seek them out? Or could you just do them yourself (read in a café, watch a busker play an entire song, knit in a park, chase down a poem online)? Try and make a list of 7 things that you think you would enjoy, but that you rarely make time for, and see if you can actually do one every day for a week.

Of course, not everyone likes the idea of disruption. Do you find it a positive word? Perhaps you prefer the idea of routines. If so, is there a way you could build joyful activities more regularly into your weekly schedule?

YOUR WEEK

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Post your most interesting
or satisfying experiments on
social media with the hashtag
#DisruptYourEveryday

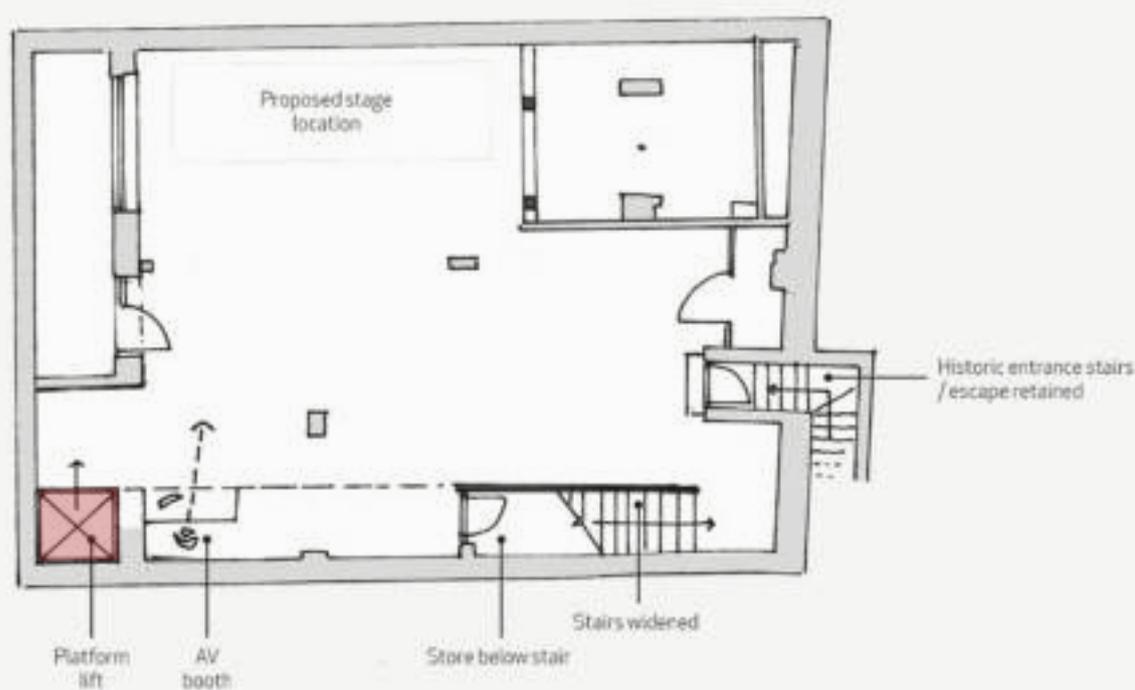
What Next?

Designing the theatre of the future

If you're reading this pack, then you could be one of the next generation of theatre makers. What are your dreams for the future? Do you think theatre still has a role to play in making a better society? What would your Future Theatre look like?

Right: We wanted to preserve some of the Soho Poly's original look, to acknowledge the importance of its history and radical/alternative theatre philosophy.

Elevation of the revamped Soho Poly © Rock Townsend Architects



Left: The biggest part of our Soho Poly restoration project involved creating space for an accessible 'platform' lift. In the 1970s and 80s, people with mobility issues would have found it very difficult to visit many alternative theatre venues, which were often in basements or function rooms above pubs. Making the Soho Poly version 2.0 fully accessible was our primary goal.

Plan of renovations to Soho Poly © Rock Townsend Architects

Below: The original entrance to the Soho Poly
© Nobby Clark / ArenaPAL



▶ **TASK 1: Design your own theatre.**

- ▶ What sort of building will the theatre be?
Look back to pages 15 and 16 and think carefully about who might be included or excluded by the choices you make.
- ▶ How will you address questions of sustainability?
(See pages 9 and 10 for ideas.)

▶ **TASK 2: Choose the first three plays that your theatre will produce.**

- ▶ Think about who you expect your audience to be and what they might want.
- ▶ Will the plays be old classics or new writing?
Or a mix? Which 'voices' do you want to showcase? The plays you choose can be ones that really exist. Or you can invent ideas for plays that you wish existed!

1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

▶ **TASK 3: Write a Social Media post announcing your theatre's opening.**

- ▶ What is the name of your theatre?
- ▶ How can you describe it in a dynamic or eye-catching way? What are your theatre's values?
- ▶ Include at least one image that sums up something about your theatre and gives people a sense of what their experience of visiting it will be like.

The Soho Poly Today

Musicians Ashaine White and David Lance Callahan performing at the Soho Poly's relaunch festival.



Playwright Ben Musgrave and actor Anisa Butt leading a Year 9 drama workshop.





© Claudia Cantarini



© Claudia Cantarini

**A Badge Cafe
Summer Solstice party.**

**A 2023 reading of Jackie Kay's ground-breaking play
Chiaroscuro, first performed at the Soho Poly in 1986.
In the picture, director Olusola Oyeleye and actor
Stephanie Stevens. Produced by Unfinished Histories.**



© Kris Myerscough

Jobs and Pathways

With students from some of the schools we've been working with, we brainstormed 50 jobs in theatre. Which roles could you see yourself in?



Creative Team

- 1 Director
- 2 Designer
- 3 Lighting Designer
- 4 Sound Designer
- 5 Choreographer
- 6 Writer
- 7 Composer
- 8 Costume Designer
- 9 Conductor/
Musical Director

On Stage

- 10 Actor
- 11 Puppeteer
- 12 Understudy/Swing

Technical Team

- 13 Production Manager
- 14 Head of Lighting
- 15 Lighting Operator
- 16 Spotlight Operator
- 17 Head of Sound
- 18 Sound Operator
- 19 Head of Wardrobe
- 20 Hair, Wigs and Makeup
- 21 Stage Crew
- 22 Company Stage
Manager
- 23 Deputy Stage Manager
- 24 Assistant Manager

Creative Support

- 25 Dramaturg
- 26 Intimacy Coordinator
- 27 Fight Director
- 28 Dialect Coach
- 29 Physiotherapist
- 30 Casting Director

Management

- 31 Producer
- 32 Accountant
- 33 Lawyer
- 34 Agent
- 35 Finance Director
- 36 Fundraiser
- 37 Investor

Marketing

- 38 Marketing Director
- 39 PR Specialist
- 40 Website Designer
- 41 Ticketing Manager
- 42 Poster Designer
- 43 Photographer
- 44 Social Media Manager
- 45 Theatre Critic

Front of House

- 46 Theatre Manager
- 47 Ushers and Bar Staff
- 48 Bar/Catering/
Merchandise Manager
- 49 Cleaners
- 50 Security

► **TASK: Choose the job that most appeals to you.**

Go online and see if you can find any current job adverts.

What qualifications or experience would you need to apply for similar positions in the future?

Further Resources

Explore the links below for more information about many of the areas covered in this pack.

Sustainability

Julie's Bicycle
juliesbicycle.com

National Theatre
nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-us/sustainability

Theatre Green Book
theatregreenbook.com

100 Plays to Save the World
nickhernbooks.co.uk/100-plays-to-save-the-world

Disability and Neurodiversity

A Younger Theatre (directory)
ayoungertheatre.com/disabled-theatre-companies-and-organisations-across-the-uk

Graeae Theatre Company
graeae.org

Quiplash Theatre Company
quiplash.co.uk

Deafinitely Theatre
deafinitelytheatre.co.uk

Birds of Paradise Theatre Company
boptheatre.co.uk

Oily Cart Theatre
oilycart.org.uk

Access all Areas Theatre Company
accessallareatheatre.org

What I Don't Know About Autism (play)
nickhernbooks.co.uk/what-i-dont-know-about-autism

Ethnic Minority Participation

Nick Hern Books (directory)
nickhernbooks.co.uk/global-majority-authors

Tara Theatre
taratheatre.com

New Earth Theatre
newearththeatre.org.uk

Talawa Theatre Company
talawa.com

Eclipse Theatre
eclipsetheatre.org.uk

Tamasha Theatre Company
tamasha.org.uk

LGBTQ+ Theatre / Gender

King's Head Theatre
kingsheadtheatre.com

Unfinished Histories
unfinishedhistories.com/categories/gayandlesbian

Stratford East Theatre / Queer History
stratfordeast.com/news/here-and-queer-a-brief-history-lesson-in-queer-theatre

Drama and Theatre online magazine
dramaandtheatre.co.uk/practical/article/five-great-plays-for-exploring-trans-issues

Globe Theatre resources list
shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2022/08/19/gender-identity-a-resource-list

Jobs and Pathways / Other

National Theatre
Young People pages
nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/young-people

Get Into Theatre
getintothetheatre.org/blog/complete-list-of-jobs-in-theatre-industry

Restoring the Soho Poly
westminster.ac.uk/about-us/alumni-and-supporters/support-us/restoring-the-soho-poly

Arts Council Resources
artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/diversity

Howlround
howlround.com

National Youth Theatre
nyt.org.uk

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