
PRODUCING PRODUCERS

Enhancing Career Development
and Training Opportunities for
British Theatre Producers from
the Global Majority

TARA ✕
THEATRE



Arts and
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UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Tom Six

Reader in Politics and Performance
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Rafia Hussain

Independent Producer

Jessica Bowles

Principal Lecturer in Creative Producing
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Helen Jeffreys

Executive Director and Joint CEO
Tara Theatre

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*In memory of our friend Abdul Shayek (1984-2023)
Artistic Director and Joint CEO, Tara Theatre 2020-2023*

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS

Justina Aina
Susannah Bance
Natalie Chan
Yamin Choudhary
Emily Coleman
Jo Crowley
Amaya Dent
Mimi Findlay
Sean Foley

Maria Goldrin
Andrea Pieri Gonzalez
Kristina Hall
Isobel Hawson
Karan Kaul
Caleb Lee
Gloria Lindh
Catt Lyons
Katrina Man

Danielle Marshall
Liz O'Neill
Emma Rees
Jen Sullivan
Pam Fraser Solomon
Valerie Synmoie
Clarissa Widya

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Executive Summary

This project was initiated following an industry roundtable at Tara Theatre on 2 November 2022. The partnership between Tara and Central has developed over many years and this event was instigated by Abdul Shayek with Jessica Bowles. Its original focus was the need for a more joined-up strategy for industry placements, but it became quickly clear that work was required to address the lack of sustainable pathways into producing for people of global majority heritage.

In 2021, the National Producers' Taskforce identified: a) a 'lack of sustainable pathways into employment and leadership roles' for producers, b) 'challenges in recruitment of young producers', and c) the need to ensure 'that those from already underrepresented backgrounds don't fall through the gaps during the current employment crisis'.¹

This project was led by the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in partnership with Tara Theatre. It arose from the commitment of both organisations to widen understanding of career development routes for independent producers, and to identify and address specific barriers and challenges faced by producers of global majority heritage.

The project team comprised the four authors of this report: Jessica Bowles (Principal Lecturer in Creative Producing at Central), Rafia Hussain (Independent Producer), Helen Jeffreys (Executive Director and Joint CEO at Tara), and Tom Six (Reader in Politics and Performance at Central).

The team set the following aims for the project:

1. to produce robust research on employment models and existing career development routes for independent producers and the barriers and challenges faced by racially minoritized producers in the UK;
2. to consult with producing companies, conservatoires, sector organisations, and both emerging and established global majority heritage artists to identify both formal and informal training and progression routes into the industry for racially minoritized producers, and identify gaps in existing initiatives;
3. to develop policy recommendations for stakeholders in the sector to address the challenges identified and

¹ ['Why the cultural sector should be investing in young, diverse producing talent'](#), The National Producers' Task Force, June 8, 2021.

build on pathways into the sector that have proved, or promise to be, effective in improving the racial diversity of the profession.

In relation to aims 1 and 2, the report's key findings are:

1. Theatre producing in the UK tends to be divided between institutional responsibilities such as management, administration, planning and budgeting, and responsibility for overseeing the delivery of shows. Producers are more likely to have primary responsibility for institutional functions than for delivering individual shows, but they will usually undertake both kinds of work (see 2.1).
2. Very few theatre producers are well paid. They tend to be paid a little under the UK median wage and substantially less than those with comparable roles in other sectors (2.2).
3. Unpaid work and overwork are both endemic to theatre producing (2.2).
4. The racial pay gap in theatre producing is about 20% (2.2).
5. While freelance work does not dominate theatre producing, it is usually characterised by a mixture of employed and freelance work, with freelancers commonly working with only two or three companies (2.3, 2.4).
6. The majority of theatre producers in the UK have worked previously in the British theatre either in administrative, creative or performing roles (2.5).
7. Career development in theatre producing depends upon an infrastructure that is best described as a network of permanently temporary arrangements that are often predictable, but also informal and lacking in transparency (2.5).
8. Significant barriers to career development in theatre producing include the general conditions of the sector (such as low pay and high levels of precarity and expectation), and a more specific lack of training opportunities for producers and awareness of the role, as well as limited networks and contacts (2.6).
9. Although the racial diversity of respondents to our research reflected that of the UK population

as a whole, other research strongly suggests that the theatre sector remains disproportionately white, and dominated by people from middle-class backgrounds.² In this context, findings 7 and 8 above show some of the ways in which the institutional norms of the theatre sector perpetuate structural racism.

10. The barriers to career development identified in the project mean that antiracist progress for theatre producers will not be possible simply through an additive approach, in which racially minoritized theatre producers are given more opportunities to access training and work in the sector as it is. Significant structural changes will be necessary, and will benefit all producers (2.7, 3.2).

In relation to aim 3, the report's key recommendation is that an independent body should be established with a remit to:

- provide training and mentoring for producers;
- create networking and peer-support opportunities for producers;
- map and disseminate opportunities for producers' career development;
- develop paid pathways into producing, a high proportion of which should be designated for people of global majority heritage who would not otherwise be able to access a career in theatre producing;
- provide guides to best practice in working with producers;
- conduct advocacy, lobbying and collective bargaining on behalf of theatre producers in partnership and/or dialogue with other representative organisations.

This body should be:

- underpinned by an antiracist methodology focused, in particular, on addressing structural and systemic racism;
- funded and led independently;
- supported by a diverse network of theatres and producing companies, with particular attention paid to the representation of small and medium-sized companies and those with a remit to support racially minoritised theatre-makers and audiences.

² See, for example, Dave O'Brien (2020) 'Class and the problem of inequality in theatre', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40:3, 242-250, DOI: 10.1080/14682761.2020.1807212.

The following report sets out in more detail the research that underpins these recommendations for changes to policy and practice in the sector.

SURVEY AND INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

We surveyed theatre producers working in England between 25 April and 26 July 2023. We used social media and directly targeted emails to producers, theatres and companies to reach respondents and ensure a racially diverse group of respondents. Organisations were encouraged to send the survey to their in-house producers at all levels, as well as share with independent producers they were working with. When contacting organisations, we said the survey is for those working across: productions, participation, artist development, as well as executive directors and CEOs.

Our survey received 187 responses in total, which is relatively high. By way of comparison, the 2020 survey conducted by the Freelance Task Force's Producers and Self Producing Artists Working Group received 137 responses (of whom 122 worked in theatre),³ and Freelancers Make Theatre Work's (FMTW) 2023 survey of freelancers across the sector received 1156 responses.⁴ Our survey responses represent 16% of the FMTW 2023 sample size, and producers represent a much smaller proportion of the total theatre workforce than this.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on Zoom by Rafia Hussain between 23 May and 16 August 2023. Participants were sent questions in advance and agreed to interviews being recorded for transcription. All identifiable information (such as names of people or organisations) was redacted in our records to maintain anonymity. Information from these interviews was used to clarify and amplify the findings of the survey (section 2), which were then communicated to the focus group as a basis for discussions designed to produce recommendations (section 3).

About our Survey Respondents

1.1 LOCATION

Almost all respondents were based in England, with all Arts Council England regions represented:

- 21.4% were based in the North;
- 19.3% were based in the Midlands;
- 37.4% were based in London;
- 13.4% were based in the South East;
- 8.6% were based in the South West;
- 1.1% were based in Wales.

1.2 RACIAL IDENTITY

We asked respondents how they normally describe their racial/ethnic identity and grouped the responses to enable comparison with data from the 2021 population census:

- 77.5% were White/White Other (compared to 87.9% of the general population);
- 3.7% were Black (compared to 4% of the general population);
- 5.9% were South Asian (compared to 6.9% of the general population);⁵
- 5.9% were Mixed (compared to 2.9% of the general population);
- 2.7% were East/South East Asian (compared to 2.3% of the general population);⁶
- 1.1% were Middle Eastern;
- 2.1% were Latin American;
- 0.5% were Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (compared to 0.3% of the general population).

As we can see here, the racial diversity of our respondents was broadly representative of population data.⁷ By way of contrast, however, Freelancers Make Theatre Work's 2023 survey, which targeted a large cross-section of freelance theatre workers, identifies just 9% of respondents as being of global majority heritage.⁸ We would therefore caution strongly against concluding from our data that racial diversity in either theatre producing or theatre more widely is healthy. Our view is that the racial diversity of our respondents is principally due to a concerted effort to reach producers of global majority heritage in our survey.

5 The [2021 census](#) divided the UK population into 19 ethnic groups. We have added together the figures for the 'Bangladeshi', 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' groups to reach the figure of 6.9%.

6 This figure represents the groups identified as 'Chinese' and 'Asian other' in the 2021 census.

7 None of the differences between the racial/ethnic identities of respondents and population data is statistically significant in a sample of this size.

8 '[Underpaid, Undervalued, Under Pressure](#)'.

1.3 JOB ROLE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

38.5% of producers surveyed were in full-time employment. Of the remainder, the majority worked on a freelance basis (36%) or divided their time between part-time employment and freelancing (21%). Only 5% were part-time employed without additional freelance work. Over half of our respondents (57%) were therefore at least partly dependent upon freelance work.

33% of our respondents described themselves as show producers in the subsidised sector, and a further 6% as show producers in the commercial sector, meaning that 39% of the producers surveyed worked primarily on delivering shows. 22% of respondents described themselves as an executive director or executive producer, and the other roles significantly represented in the data were Artist Development Producer (14%) and Participation/Community Producer (11%).

1.4 THE CAREER STAGES AND PAY OF OUR RESPONDENTS

Our respondents covered all career stages, with very few ticking 'entry level', suggesting that producing is not typically an entry-level role. Self-identified career stage was closely correlated with income level:

- 2% identified as 'entry level' and their median income was £0 - £5,000;
- 33% identified as 'early career' and their median income was £20,001 - £25,000;
- 43% identified as 'mid-career' and their median income was £25,001 - £30,000;
- 22% identified as 'established' and their median income was £40,001 - £50,000.

For comparison, data taken from The Big Freelancer Survey 2023 suggests that the median income for female theatre workers is £15,000-£20,000 and the median for male workers is £25,000-£30,000, and that more male respondents earn 100% of their income from theatre work.⁹ Producers are more commonly female than male, but producing is a relatively senior role, so our data is likely to be representative of the sector.

⁹ 'Underpaid, Undervalued, Under Pressure'.

Findings from the Survey and Interviews

In this section, we make the assumption, for the reasons given in Section 1 above, that our data is broadly representative of the current state of theatre producing in the UK, and ask what they tell us about it as an occupation and its function in the sector.

2.1 WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THEATRE PRODUCERS?

Our survey data allows us to make a few conclusions about the main responsibilities of most theatre producers in the UK. Respondents were divided, broadly speaking, between primary responsibility for delivering shows (39%) and for institutional functions (47%).¹⁰ Of those producers who are not primarily responsible for show delivery, the most common job role is Executive Producer/ Executive Director (22%), followed by Artist Development Producer (14%) and Participation/Community Producer (11%). In practice, however, these responsibilities are not neatly divided. While 22% of our respondents describe themselves as an executive director or executive producer, of these only 3 respondents (1.6%) said they usually had no responsibility for producing shows. Likewise, among Artist Development and Participation/Community Producers, the large majority had lead responsibility for no more than two shows per year (67%) with 17% producing none, but a significant minority (33%) had primary responsibility for three or more shows per year. We can therefore conclude that producers are most likely primarily to serve institutional functions within the theatre such as leadership and management and the ongoing development of artists and community programmes, but are very unlikely to have no responsibility at all for delivering shows (8% of the total).

“ I’m a fundraiser, artist manager, coordinator, project manager, producer, assistant producer, projects producer, producing coordinator... ”

Across all respondents, the median average of shows produced per year was 3, with the mean somewhat lower (2.66), partly because 17 respondents did not produce any shows, but also because more produced two shows (19%) than four (11%). A not insignificant minority of respondents produced five or more shows per year (13%), which - even taking into account the possibility that some may be very small in scale - is unquestionably a high level

¹⁰ The latter figure is the sum of respondents describing themselves as Executive Director/Producer (22%), Artists Development Producer (14%), and Participation/Community Producer (11%).

of activity to sustain.

We noted that 50% of our respondents said that they do not work as assistant producers, and only 18% assistant produced 2 or more shows per year. It therefore appears that either a) assistant producing is relatively rare in general, or b) assistant producers do not identify as producers sufficiently to respond to surveys such as this - perhaps because producing is more defined by its relative seniority than by the activities it involves. The low level of assistant producers also reflects the very low number of respondents identifying their career stage as 'entry-level' (2%). This, coupled with the rarity of respondents who began their career in the theatre as a producer or assistant producer, suggests that producing is a role that people graduate into (see 3.2 below).

“ You are not only producing a show, but you’re also carrying the burden of being antiracist, you’re double checking the building, you kind of get to the point where you don’t leave the building, because you feel like you have to take care of people from underrepresented backgrounds ”

2.2 HOW MUCH ARE THEATRE PRODUCERS PAID?

The median pay of all respondents was between £20,000 and £25,000. This is significantly lower than both the median pay for all UK workers, which was £29,895 in April 2023, and for full-time employees, which was £35,448 (only 5% of our respondents were employed part-time without additional freelance work).¹¹ There were, however, significant outliers at the bottom end of the income distribution, with 17% of respondents earning below £5,000 from producing in the year 2021-22. In total, 24% of respondents earned £10,000 or less, and 12% earned above £40,000. With these respondents removed, giving an income range of £15,000 and £40,000, the responses follow a normal distribution curve, centred on the region £25,001-£30,000. This figure is therefore probably a more accurate representation of the normal rate of pay for producers. It is lower than the UK median income, and significantly lower than the average pay for project managers in other sectors, which is £47,500.¹²

¹¹ These figures have been calculated from the estimated median weekly pay in ONS data from April 2023, the end of the last tax year for which survey respondents would have had figures.

¹² 'Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023', Association for Project Management, undated.

Crucially, however, not all work in theatre producing is paid. Not a single respondent to the survey reported no experience of unpaid work at all. 81% said that they had worked without pay, but all of the remaining 19% reported either having either done an unpaid internship or not having been paid for all of the hours they worked in the last month (we describe the situation of having to work over a contracted number of hours to complete the contracted tasks as ‘overwork’). Furthermore, all of the 81% of respondents who reported working without pay either said that they had worked unpaid but not through overwork and had not done an unpaid internship, or that they had done some combination of the above. We therefore assume that the large majority of theatre producers have worked at some point in their career either completely without pay or been overworked to such an extent that a significant proportion of their work was unpaid. In relation to this point, interviewees suggested that it is common for periods of work undertaken ahead of funding being secured not to be paid or to be significantly underpaid. In total, 34% of respondents reported having done an unpaid internship, and 51% reported not having been paid for all of the hours they worked in the last month.

Examining our data for evidence of a correlation between pay and racial identity, we see that the median income of producers we have categorised as being of global majority heritage was £20,001-£25,000. The median income of white producers was £25,001-£30,000, giving a racial pay gap of about 20%. This is somewhat lower than the nationally calculated median ethnicity pay gap for 2021-22, which was 27.3%.¹³

We therefore make the following conclusions about producers’ pay:

1. A significant number of theatre producers (a quarter of our respondents) earn a negligible amount from producing, and are therefore combining producing with other sources of income.
2. Very few theatre producers (fewer than one in ten) could be described as well paid, particularly given the likelihood that they will work in London or other cities where the cost of living is high.
3. If producing is your main source of income and you are not in the early stages of your career, you are most likely to be earning between £25,000 and £30,000 p.a.

¹³ ‘Ethnicity Pay Gap Report, 1 April 2021- 31 March 2022’, Competition and Markets Authority, 30 March 2023.

4. If you are a theatre producer you should expect to work or to have had to work without pay. There is a good chance (1 in 3) that you became a producer partly by doing an unpaid internship, and you are very likely to have developed your career by working for free. There is a still greater chance (1 in 2) that you are currently overworked, and a greater chance still (4 in 5) that you have worked without pay at some point in your producing career.
5. There is a significant racial pay gap in theatre producing of about 20%.

2.3

WHAT DOES THE SURVEY TELL US ABOUT THE EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS OF THEATRE PRODUCERS IN ENGLAND?

The majority of respondents with primarily institutional responsibilities were employed on a full or part-time basis (65%). Nonetheless, this means that a third of our respondents who have significant responsibility for institutional functions, such as management and sustaining and developing resources in the sector are working on a self-employed basis. The risk represented by this situation to the infrastructure of theatre production in the UK is self-evident.

The producers who identified their primary responsibility as the delivery of shows, on the other hand, were fairly evenly divided between full-time employment (40%), freelancing (33%), and a mixture of part-time employment and freelancing (26%). It would therefore be inaccurate to say, based on this data, that theatre producing in the UK is predominantly casualised. Nonetheless, more than half of our respondents whose primary responsibility is for delivering shows are dependent to some extent on freelance work (59%). It is also possible that because we used email, in addition to social media, to reach respondents, targeting key organisations, employees of those organisations may be somewhat over-represented in the data.

We conclude from this that theatre producing as a role and theatre producers as workers most commonly involve a mixture of employed and freelance work. In other words, the average producer's work is most likely to involve a mixture of employment and freelance work, and the functions of theatre producing are most likely to involve a mixture of employed and freelance work. Therefore, although much of the work of producing

is subject to casualisation, freelance work does not dominate the profession in the way it does acting and most other roles designated 'creative' in the theatre (e.g. writing, directing, and design).

66

“ I think I’m compensated for 50-60% of the work I do. ”

2.4

WHAT DOES THE SURVEY DATA TELL US ABOUT THE NATURE OF FREELANCE THEATRE PRODUCING?

We can also make some conclusions about the nature of freelance theatre producing on the basis of this data. Freelance producers are most likely, for example, to be dependent upon two companies for the majority of their work (29%). The mean average number of companies was, however, higher than this (2.46), and 39% of freelance respondents spread their work over three or more companies. Nonetheless, almost half depend upon two or fewer companies (47%). While this is understandable, given the sheer time required to deliver a project, it also suggests a significant level of precarity in the producing workforce, who would only have to lose a single source of freelance work to find their livelihoods under threat.

66

“ Can we just employ more POC [people of colour] in buildings? ”

2.5

WHAT DOES THE SURVEY DATA TELL US ABOUT EXISTING CAREER PATHWAYS FOR PRODUCERS?

66

“ I just fell into it. ”

Respondents were asked about their routes into producing. The largest single group came to producing from administrative roles in the theatre sector (39%), with people who had previously worked in a creative capacity, including performers, next largest (31%). Very few people seem to come to producing from technical or production roles (5%), but a quarter of respondents came from a broad plurality of other roles, including from outside the sector. This data speaks to the situation,

commonly referenced both by interviewees and in the focus group, that although the pathways into producing are not transparent, they are very often predictable, with routes frequently involving people who either work primarily in an administrative capacity in the theatre, or have professional training in some kind of creative role, taking on responsibility for self-producing work in fringe contexts. Self-producing creatives seem commonly to find that, while they may not be able to secure sufficient paid work in their first-choice discipline, they can work as a producer to support themselves to some extent, and gradually this becomes the major part of their portfolio career. In the other direction, early career-stage producers who also work as theatre administrators seem to find in producing opportunities for career development that are not directly available if they remain in purely administrative roles. Pathways from other sectors are too diverse to summarise similarly, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they are also lacking in transparency and experienced as peculiar to an individual's unique circumstances because they are shaped by the emergence of particular opportunities through individuals' networks.

This situation may usefully be thought of as a permanently temporary arrangement that is maintained by a) the unequally distributed over-supply of labour in the sector, b) the project-oriented focus of producing as a role, c) the informality of institutional norms in the theatre sector, and d) the unpredictability of projects, particularly in a context of precarious funding. It is self-evident that, in this context, relative economic security and a high level of social and cultural capital are particularly significant determinants of success. It is likewise clear that, in a situation where standardised pathways into employment and career development are commonly experienced as bespoke opportunities, there are structural barriers and resistances to antiracist interventions because of the informality - and even invisibility - of the infrastructure.

“ Did a couple of acting gigs and realised I liked to hold the show. Started to organise [a] one-nighter but didn't know this was producing. Had work experience at a local fringe theatre, started doing scratch nights. Then produced a 3.5 week run at the fringe. Burnt out.”

2.6 WHAT DOES THE SURVEY TELL US ABOUT BARRIERS TO BECOMING A PRODUCER?

By far the most common barrier to career progression as a producer cited by respondents was pay: 68% of respondents said that the level of pay had been a barrier they had faced in their career as a producer. 58% of respondents reported that the inconsistency and precarity of work was a barrier, while 52% noted that excessive expectations of producers was also a barrier to progression. Notably, the least frequently cited of the main barriers to career progression noted was a shortage of work: only 37% of respondents reported that they had experienced this issue. By contrast, the lack of infrastructure for developing producers was seen as a significant barrier, with 53% noting a lack of training opportunities, 49% reporting a lack of contacts or networks, and 41% having been held back by a lack of awareness of the producer's role. Interestingly, only 35% reported a lack of skills or experience holding them back, suggesting that training is perhaps not seen only as a way of acquiring the capacity to produce, but also as a means of career development.

We conclude from this that career development for producers - and particularly those of global majority heritage - cannot succeed without addressing levels of pay and working conditions. We also conclude that there is a significant lack of infrastructure in the sector to train and develop producers.

“ To grow [company name redacted] I honed skills, worked largely (70%) unpaid for 5 years; I subsidised it through bar work etc. ”

2.7 WHAT SUGGESTIONS DID SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAVE FOR IMPROVING CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PRODUCERS?

When asked how these barriers might be overcome, over a third of respondents suggested more training or mentoring schemes for early and mid-career producers (35%), and just under a third suggested paid work experience or training opportunities (29%). Relatedly, almost one in five respondents suggested that better networking support would have a significant impact

(18%), and about the same number advocated for better communication of the role of the producer within and beyond the sector (20%).

“ There are few opportunities for structured support outside of a few programmes/degrees. ”

In addition to these recommendations that focused on improving infrastructure, visibility and transparency, there were a number of less frequently cited suggestions whose horizon sat beyond the immediate concerns of producers and producing. Almost one in ten respondents suggested more funding opportunities (9%), and almost as many thought that improving collective bargaining and other forms of union support for producers would shift underlying factors that inhibit career development for producers (7%).

“ A stronger government agenda that centres arts and culture. ”

Finally, some respondents noted that hierarchies and exclusive practices that have become institutionalised in the theatre would need to change. 5% thought that more inclusive practices in arts organisations across the board would make a difference to producers' career development opportunities, and 3% noted that ensuring that 'the regions' (a term that in the theatre means 'outside London') are represented in funding schemes and opportunities is important. With London becoming ever more unaffordable, we expect that this will become more salient in the coming years.

“ Writer / Director / Producer hierarchy. Producers are at the bottom. ”

A focus group was held at the Hackney Empire on 20 September 2023. It was facilitated by Jessica Bowles, Rafia Hussain and Tom Six and attended by 25 producers working for 23 different organisations from across the UK as well as independently (attendees are listed at the start of this report). The meeting began with an overview of the research findings at that point, with an opportunity for questions and clarifications. The meeting then proceeded to address two sets of questions in small-group discussions whose key points were fed back to the group. It concluded with a plenary session focused on drawing together the group's discussions into a coherent set of recommendations for changes to policy and practice in the sector.

3.1 TRAINING PRODUCERS

These discussions were prompted by the following questions:

- What would good training for producers in the subsidised sector look like? What areas of knowledge and skill would it need to cover, and what kinds of activities would it involve?
- How can we develop more equitable and transparent pathways into producing, particularly for people working in administrative roles in the sector, or as performers?

In response to the first question, members of the focus group highlighted existing schemes including Stage One's New Producer's workshop (focused on commercial producing), China Plate's Optimist programme (addressing the subsidised sector), and the CGO Institute's DipCP. Members spoke highly of these and other schemes, but noted that their remit is limited, and does not meet the extent of the demand for training. For example, such schemes tend to focus on specific skill acquisition delivered in single sessions or intensive courses. This model necessarily limits the capacity of training to be dialogic and responsive to individual needs or shifting contexts.

It was also generally agreed that the skillset for producers is both extremely wide-ranging and dynamic, so that it would be much more effective for training to be provided through a responsive model rather than based upon the assumption that the job is more stable and predictable than it is. The focus group agreed that good training would feature a mixture of skill acquisition, guidance and mentoring from senior producers, collectively organised

forms of training such as skill-sharing, and - most crucially - experiential training such as work experience or assisting. The group agreed unanimously that, to be considered equitable, any experiential training must be paid at a level that is commensurate with union-agreed pay-scales.

Responding to and endorsing the finding from survey and interview data that infrastructure in the sector is best described as 'permanently temporary' (see 2.5 above), focus group members observed that equitable and transparent career pathways are particularly challenging to construct. Under these infrastructural conditions, training and career development are typically sought and provided informally and/or as a by-product of the institutional reproduction of the sector. We see this, for example, in fringe productions created - in part, at least - to enable theatre-makers to develop their reputations and careers. These offer crucial experience for inexperienced producers who can afford to take advantage of them. Likewise, the recent growth of courses in Creative Producing speaks both to the sector's need for trained producers and higher education institutions' need to diversify and expand their postgraduate taught programmes to maximise fee income as undergraduate fees have declined in real terms.¹⁴ In both of these examples, training for producers is structured by the wider needs of the sector and its organisations that mitigate against equity and transparency. For these reasons, there was general agreement that training and career development for producers should be provided through projects dedicated to that purpose (and funded to ensure that it is equitably available), and not allowed to be subsumed under other initiatives or agendas.

Focus group members also advocated for a range of measures to ensure that the role of the producer is better communicated, and its responsibilities and necessary skills more openly discussed, and in transparent language, so that it is seen as a viable career option by people currently excluded from it by a lack of knowledge or resources.

3.2 CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PRODUCERS

These discussions were prompted by the following questions:

- What can we do to address pay and conditions for producers, as well as to reduce the frequency of unpaid work?

¹⁴ MA programmes are offered at [Bath Spa University](#), [Central](#), the [Digital Cultures Research Centre](#), [Mountview](#), the [Royal Central School of Speech and Drama](#), and the [University of the West of England Bristol](#)

- What would a sustainable career development infrastructure for producers in the subsidised sector look like? How would it be organised and by whom?
- When thinking about these questions, how can we ensure that we centre producers of global majority heritage and address the additional challenges and barriers that they face?

Members of the focus group advocated for more transparency on pay and conditions, using agreed fee structures and contract templates, and for organisations to commit to more open conversations about how they work with producers and their expectations of the role. They also argued that funders should ensure that there is adequate budget for all roles in a project, and that time spent in developing projects and preparing funding applications does not default to being frequently unpaid. Some members of the group were aware of the French unemployment insurance scheme called the 'régime des salariés intermittents du spectacle' (scheme for intermittently employed workers in live performance). This allows organisations to issue an unlimited number of very short fixed-term contracts to freelance workers, and gives workers who have met the threshold number of employed hours in a given time-frame an automatic entitlement to unemployment benefit when not working. Members of the focus group agreed that this kind of intervention is the most robust way to support the pay and employment conditions of workers whose employment is inevitably variable and precarious.

In relation to sustainable career development infrastructure, members of the focus group advocated both for more openly available mentoring, networking and peer support, and for mechanisms to enable producers to 'move up' in terms of both budget and scale. These would include schemes to enable producers to spend time shadowing, as well as paid assistant producer posts, particularly on larger productions. There was strong support (see 3.3. below) for schemes such as this to be undertaken by one or more independent organisations.

Finally, members of the group agreed that an antiracist methodology to deliver the changes recommended here cannot simply be additive. Structural issues that have systemically racialized effects were referenced so frequently that the group agreed that measures aimed at introducing a more racially diverse talent pool into the sector as it stands would represent a failure to learn the lessons not only of this research but numerous other reports and interventions. For this reason, there was

agreement that an explicit plan to address the roots of structural and systemic racism must be at the heart of any attempt to implement the recommendations of this report.

3.3 FOCUS GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus group identified some key initiatives that, it was generally agreed, were most likely successfully and substantively to address the issues raised by the survey data and discussed in response to the questions in section 2 above.

The initiatives recommended by the group were:

- the provision of training and mentoring for producers at a range of career stages;
- the mapping and wide dissemination of existing opportunities for producers' career development;
- the development of pathways into producing to enable producers to develop their skills and experience through paid work;
- the provision of guides to best practice in contracting and employing or collaborating with producers;
- the creation of networking and peer-support opportunities for producers;
- the conduct of advocacy, lobbying and collective bargaining in partnership with other representative organisations;

It was generally agreed that these activities should form the remit of a single, independent body, which should:

- be independently funded and led;
- be materially supported by a network of organisations;
- retain as a core aim the development and maintenance of an antiracist methodology underpinning all of its activities.

Focus group members agreed that if the activities proposed were broken up across a range of initiatives led by different groups or organisations, there was a significant risk that they would prove difficult to sustain, and therefore fail to make a significant impact on practices and policies in the industry. There was also agreement that the evident overlaps between initiatives proposed above represented an opportunity substantially to increase their impact, provided that they are grouped together. For these reasons, a single body was considered far preferable to a range of projects each focused on a

single strand of the recommended initiatives above.

The group took the view that the independent body undertaking this work should balance independent funding and leadership with material support from a network of theatres and producers of theatre. This approach is intended to reflect the balance between the need for such a body both to represent the interests of producers (rather than the companies for whom they work), and to benefit the sector as a whole, which it would be unable to do without the material commitment of organisations within the sector. The consensus was that supporting organisations should therefore make a material contribution to sustaining this body and its work, but not make a contribution so significant that it would give any organisation a controlling interest in the body's activities. Furthermore, numerous members of the group advocated for diversity in terms of the location, scale, remit and positionality of supporting organisations to ensure that the independent body does not disproportionately serve the interests of one or more parts of the sector. The strong preference of the group was also for a majority of small and medium-sized organisations, to ensure that existing, innovative practices are not outweighed by, or overlooked in favour of, dominant approaches.

Finally, it was agreed that it will be essential that any independent body that seeks to fulfil the remit described above has, as a core aim, the development and maintenance of an antiracist methodology underpinning all of its activities. The findings of this report emphasise that any such methodology should be focused, in particular, on redressing structural inequalities and resisting hardening sectoral norms that have failed to deliver antiracist objectives.

3.4 NEXT STEPS

Following the dissemination of this report, its authors will be meeting with individuals and organisations to explore ways of facilitating the implementation of the recommendations above. Interested parties should contact them at the following addresses.

Jessica Bowles: jessica.bowles@cssd.ac.uk

Rafia Hussain: www.rafiaproduces.com

Helen Jeffreys: helen@taratheatre.com

Tom Six: tom.six@cssd.ac.uk