



tamasha



In Conversation evaluation report

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This report was commissioned by Tamasha and Arts Council England

The art of conversation:

(a) talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information are exchanged

(Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary)

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- celebrating diversity

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Methodology

This evaluation report is written by Sita Brahmachari, a freelance arts education practitioner and writer. Sita attended two out of the three conversations (London and Bristol) and was given access to audio-recordings of all three conversations. Sita also attended two of the preliminary meetings leading up to *In Conversation* in London. At the London and Bristol conversations Sita took detailed notes of the discussions and subsequently listened to recordings of the sessions. For the Birmingham conversation Sita listened to the audio recordings and transcribed the session. Throughout the project Sita liaised with Kristine-Landon Smith, joint Artistic Director of Tamasha, and Anna Umbima, Project Manager. Following the final conversation Sita interviewed Anna Umbima, Kristine Landon-Smith and Isobel Hawson, Senior Theatre Officer of Arts Council England, to get an overview of their assessment of the project.

The aim of this report is to offer the reader a record of each conversation. Sita describes each session, paying close attention to the detailed progression of the conversation. Participants are quoted at moments in this description, so allowing for the fine nuances of language, tone and vocabulary to be captured 'as spoken' and scripted.

Sita offers the reader an orientation around some of the key concepts, which are central to all three conversations. The reader is encouraged to critically engage with some of these theories and concepts prior to reading the conversations.

Sita has taken the decision to offer a record of the conversations as they occurred consecutively in each venue leaving the reader to draw their own conclusions. Sita views the script of the conversations as a valuable resource on which all artists and companies involved can draw in developing discourses around their work. In one conversation Sudha Bhuchar, Joint Artistic Director of Tamasha, explains that critics are often quoted in discussions because 'it is clearer in reviews what's going on. The written review,' she says, 'is more tangible than conversations with peers and colleagues in the industry.' By recording and scripting *in Conversation* Sita hopes that these more complex discussions will contribute to future discourses around cultural diversity and the arts.

Following the record of the three conversations Sita offers her own interpretation of the emerging themes of the conversations

It is a given that the small number of conversations recorded and interpreted in this document contribute a small piece in the jigsaw of understanding the complexities of culturally diverse arts in Britain in 2005. It is not the aim of this report to draw conclusions; this document provides the scripts of these conversations and an interpretation of the themes emerging from the script. Tamasha's method of summarising previous conversations at the outset of each new conversation allows the reader the opportunity to identify important elements of the discussions, which came progressively into focus over the course of the three conversations. This report aims to provide a 'temperature gauge' of the passions and problems of engaging in an open dialogue with culturally diverse arts organisations and artists in 2005.

Sita considers the value of this scripted conversation to lie in the openness of its authors (panellists and participants) to move out of the safe house of political correctness and into a less comfortable, and sometimes more confrontational domain.

Participants in each conversation were informed that the purpose of the recordings was for evaluation, transcription and dissemination purposes only. Sita has quoted individual speakers only for use in this report and stresses that these quotations should not be used elsewhere without seeking the prior agreement of each individual speaker.

Sita employs the qualitative research model of 'narrative inquiry' in which the researcher and participants are engaged in a common process of 'telling their stories' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). All stories are interpreted differently by different listeners. Having listened at the meetings and transcribed the tapes, Sita offers her own interpretation and poses questions arising from each conversation as part of the narrative. This method allows the evaluator to enter a new conversation with the reader of the report. Sita's interpretation is offered as one interpretation of elements of the conversation. This research model is employed as it most closely reflects the aims of *In Conversation* to create an open forum for discussion in which the stories of all participants are debated.

Background to *In Conversation*

In Conversation emerged as a result of a number of discussions between Tamasha's Artistic Directors, Kristine Landon-Smith and Sudha Bhuchar and Isobel Hawson, Senior Theatre Officer at Arts Council England. These preliminary discussions took place prior to January 2004 and were initiated by Tamasha which was exploring, as part of the internal development of the company, issues around the perceived positioning of Tamasha's work in contemporary British theatre.

The themes emerging from Tamasha's discussions were broadly focused on the following:

- the reception of the company's work and identity: in the mainstream; with audiences; in the press and among fellow theatre practitioners
- the perceived role of the company as audience developers
- the role of the company as a funded theatre company creating culturally diverse work

Tamasha identified that addressing the issues outlined above would be key to the future development of the company, but in order to do this, an open and honest conversation, fostering greater understanding of the work and position of culturally diverse artists and companies, would need to take place. Tamasha also felt that other companies and individual artists, working in the area of culturally diverse arts, may be sharing similar experiences and that there would be a value in opening Tamasha's internal conversations to a wider group.

In discussion with Isobel Hawson it was decided that *Strictly Dandia* (2004) at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, which had recently transferred from the Edinburgh Festival, would provide a clear focus for discussing some of the issues raised by Tamasha in their 'positioning' meetings. The discussions from the initial meeting hosted by The Lyric Hammersmith focused on having a conversation with regional touring venues, London venues and critics about the detail of the production and reception of Tamasha's work. Those taking part in the discussions were invited to a showing of the work and therefore were able to use the production of *Strictly Dandia* to contextualise discussions.

A record of the initial meeting on 30 January 2004, at The Lyric, is offered in this document. Issues around marketing, the quality of the work, press reportage versus the popularity of the production with audiences were openly addressed at this meeting. Tamasha and Isobel Hawson agreed that further opportunities should be sought to progress these discussions.

On 17 March 2004 a round table meeting was held at The City Inn in Westminster to discuss how the conversations could progress. Once again the meeting consisted of a wide range of people, each with their own part to play in the creation and reception of culturally diverse work, ranging from critics and marketers to directors and educationalists. This session was dominated by a conversation with critics about how culturally diverse work is reviewed. The tone of the meeting was, at times, terse and appeared to be reaching a deadlock situation in which some of the culturally diverse companies and artists appeared to be arguing that mainstream critics revealed a lack of engagement in the artistic creation and cultural understanding of the work. The critics then denied this as a proposition. A number of culturally diverse artists and companies then argued the need to create and rely on their own critical discourses.

Following this meeting Isobel Hawson and Tamasha put together a small steering group to discuss how the conversations could be progressed. It was agreed that any progression of the discussions should have a cross-arts focus and that future conversations should not be dominated by discussions with or about critics, although this may be one element of the conversation. It was also agreed that any discussions should be held in different regions to ensure that a range of people from outside of London would have the opportunity to take part in the debate.

A short time after this steering group meeting, Isobel Hawson and Kristine Landon-Smith met and agreed that the best method of progressing the discussions was for Tamasha to host a series of three conversations with culturally diverse artists and companies in different regions. It was also agreed that a cross-arts focus to the conversations would allow participants to draw parallels between their experiences as writers, musicians, actors, directors, educationalists and administrators, and ultimately to assess where the commonalities and differences lie in debates around cultural diversity for each artform. Tamasha employed Anna Umbima, a freelance journalist, writer and broadcaster to develop the three conversations.

Anna worked with Kristine Landon-Smith to develop the vision statement for *In Conversation*. Attendees were invited to attend a:

conversation on the current positioning of culturally diverse artists and companies in different artforms. The aim is to have a new and serious discussion about how identity shapes the work but also how this informs the way it is received and judged. We hope to examine our thinking and practice on the subject and explore how to avoid making labels of identity an imprisoning cocoon

(From letters to attendees, Tamasha, May 2005)

In May 2005 Anna began researching possible participants and venues for the next three conversations. Venues were offered free of charge through contacts in each organisation.

The preliminary discussions and the *In Conversation* series were funded by the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre and the race equality scheme at Arts Council England. Specifically, the *In Conversation* series was funded on the basis that Tamasha would provide:

a series of three 'conversations' to take place in three different regions across England. The 'conversations' will explore how work, from a range of artforms, is programmed and produced: how work is perceived and received: and the relationship between identity and making of work

Recruitment

Anna liaised with the Arts Council regional offices and used her own contacts through individuals, companies and venues in each region. These contacts then suggested others in the regions in which the conversation took place. There was no attempt to approach everyone involved in cultural diversity and the arts in each region. Given that the Eclipse report and the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre project had included many venues and individuals, Tamasha asked Anna to select individuals and representatives of companies who may not have taken part in such debates on a regular basis. Letters were sent to individuals inviting them to attend. Once each venue was secured, artistic directors, literary departments, administrators and educationalists from each theatre venue were also invited to attend. A full list of participants attending *In Conversation* in each region is found in the appendix of this report.

The three conversations took place on the following dates:

Birmingham Repertory Theatre – 28 June 2005

London National Theatre – 29 September 2005

Bristol Old Vic – 13 October 2005

Structuring the conversations

Each conversation was approximately one and a half hours long and followed the same structure. The chairperson of each session briefly outlined the aim of the session and introduced the two panellists whose presentations were to act as a catalyst for discussion to get the participants' 'creative juices flowing' (Anna Umbima).

At each conversation the first presentation was given by a senior company member and the second by a panellist from a non-theatre background. Each presentation by the Tamasha panellist aimed to contextualise the conversation. At the first conversation in Birmingham, Deepa Patel explained the journey of *In Conversation* initiated by Tamasha's own journey and the previous discussions around *Strictly Dandia* at The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. In the second conversation Kristine Landon-Smith was able to summarise the discussions in Birmingham and offer these discussions for consideration by the London attendees. Finally, in Bristol, Sudha Bhuchar summarised discussions from the previous two venues.

An advantage of this structure was that attendees were able to engage with previous conversations and, although it was clearly stated that the previous conversations were not intended to set an agenda for the next conversation, it offered attendees the opportunity to engage with an ongoing discussion in the three regions in which the talks took place and to consider commonalities and differences between their experiences.

Orientation: an exploration of some of the key concepts

Sita Brahmachari offers the following ideas as a useful method of orientating the reader to the complex conversations in this report. These ideas are given here to invite the reader to critically engage with the discourses around cultural diversity and to recognise the complexities of both the texts and the subtexts of the conversations.

Phases of engagement

Tony Graves identifies four phases in his students' (De Montfort University) journey towards engagement with cultural diversity. Sita suggests that these phases of engagement can be 'generalised' to apply to the participants of these conversations.

Phase 1: Assimilation

The students feel that there is no need to identify with people differently but as they go deeper they realise that there are other 'points of reference' and that people are not all playing 'on a level playing field'.

Phase 2: Multiculturalism

Students explore the difference and what they can share about 'difference'. This phase can be described as 'multiculturalism'.

Phase 3: Resistance

In this phase Tony described students going through a process of 'bereavement' and having to come to terms with the fact that they will have to take on different perspectives.

Phase 4: Exchange

The next phase is an exchange, which can be described as an open conversation, 'not hectoring' in which the students are able to 'capture the nuances of the work'.

It is this final phase of exchange to which Tamasha aspired in setting up these conversations.

Reading through these conversations, the reader is invited to consider which phase or phases in the journey of cultural diversity and the arts the participants and speakers involved are engaging with at different points in the conversation. We also invite the reader to consider where we are in the overall journey of cultural diversity in the arts.

‘Cultural diversity’ – reports and initiatives

A second useful orientation to the reader of the report is offered here as an overview of the development of various reports and initiatives which inform the development of culturally diverse arts as we speak in these conversations. The following summary is taken from notes on Isobel Hawson’s introduction to the preliminary conversation at The Lyric Theatre Hammersmith.

These conversations are a means of gauging where we all are in an ongoing discussion, which emerged as a result of the Theatre Review (2000). As a result of this review theatre received an investment of £25 million and a national policy for theatre in England was agreed with cultural diversity at its heart.

The Black Regional Initiative in Theatre (known as BRIT) has emerged as a constant review of every aspect of work which relates to cultural diversity in the arts for every venue including training and partnerships between core venues such as Huddersfield, The Wolsey, Leicester, Nottingham and Bristol to name but a few partnerships between these venues and Black arts centres. The Black Regional Initiative in Theatre is a constant, and it emerged from the industry and as a result has created a changing mindset to programming.

The Eclipse report has emerged from the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre and includes 24 recommendations ranging from programming and understanding work from a non-European perspective to equal opportunities issues related to employment and training. Seminars have taken place to look at the relationship between touring companies and producing theatres. The Eclipse report has led to a range of work including exploring culturally diverse companies and artists and the rural touring circuit. Eclipse has also led to developing close relationships with local arts officers.

The Arts Council theatre department is working with the BBC, developing Black and Asian writers with the promise that the BBC produces one quality piece by a Black writer per annum. At Nottingham they have worked with 10 Black writers and that feeds in to work being done at Manchester Contact Theatre and Nitro in London and has led to a new Black directors initiative.

Bringing up new young artists is central to the work as is audience development. Developing consortiums between companies and venues is seen as a positive development for long-term engagement with culturally diverse artists, companies, venues and audiences. The South Asian Touring Theatre Consortium (SATTC)

was developed for outer London, and venues such as the artsdepot allow more culturally diverse work particularly from smaller scale companies to be seen and accessed by culturally diverse audiences.

Musings on the 'mainstream'

A third point is one made by John McGrath of The Contact Theatre in Manchester and concerns the term 'mainstream' which is used variously, by different participants in the conversation to describe audiences, artists, critics and venues which do not address any particular cultural group. However, it is also used in turn by speakers to mean 'those with power' and 'majority', as a code to talk of more traditional theatre productions and more traditional white middle class theatre-going audiences. It is sometimes used to mean mixed audiences.

Simon Mellor of the Lyric Theatre describes this traditional mainstream theatre audience as 'over-50, white, middle-class, which is being replaced by a new generation'. He says, 'It's a rapidly changing theatre environment reflecting a changing demographic.'

In the same conversation John McGrath questions the notion of 'mainstream'. He says, 'The focus of much of our work is to attract people in the ages of 13 to 30.' John describes a normal day in the theatre to include workshops, performances, discussion groups, etc. On one such typical day he was visited by a director from, in his own words, 'what would be seen as a "mainstream" theatre' who commented "how fabulous you have managed to capture that 'niche' audience!" John replied, 'WE don't have a niche audience, YOU have the niche audience, and we have everyone else!' John argues that we need to turn around the idea of 'mainstream' and that as a concept in itself it is outmoded.

These musings on the term 'mainstream' are illustrative of the kind of conversations which have taken place over the course of the *In Conversation* series. A focus on the vocabulary used about cultural diversity and the arts will be an important part of the story of these conversations. Readers are invited to engage in this kind of detailed analysis of language and concepts, a process, which requires people to think outside of the box.

Parallel lives?

Trevor Phillips, in his speech 'Sleepwalking Towards Segregation' (September 2005) identified that Britain, like France and America, could not afford to be complacent in relation to its own culturally diverse population. He stated that he believes that Britain is a country where cultural diversity does not equate to

cultural engagement and that many communities are living 'parallel lives' in which there is little connection or understanding between people.

The title of his speech 'Sleepwalking towards segregation' suggests that Britain is living in a dream world in relation to cultural diversity and that we are not facing the realities of our lives. In the light of terrorist attacks on New York, London and throughout the world, the war in Iraq, heightened sensitivity to Muslim religion and people, interracial rioting in Birmingham, increased police powers and laws in which civil liberties are being diminished... it is clear that Britain is a country in which a conversation about cultural diversity is highly sensitive.

The response to positioning conversations about the arts in the real world is often 'but we are talking about the arts, not hardcore politics'... Yet In Birmingham *Behzti* caused a furore among some members of the Sikh community and the actors were placed under siege conditions. This example is offered here only to illustrate that these conversations in the theatre take place at a highly sensitive and volatile moment in discussing cultural diversity, such a dialogue is about the reality of all of our lives, not simply a nicety but a necessity. Jenny Davis, author, describes how she is placed as an artist in all of this. She makes the point that this is a discussion, which concerns everyone:

Now where are we in Multicultural Britain? The arts have a role to play in that and I have a role in that, not to wave some banner, but this is about me and my life, I don't want my art to be ticking boxes but it won't be exactly the same as another's. Cultural diversity means all of us, because everyone's culture is different.

(Jenny Davis, *In conversation*, Bristol Old Vic)

Cultural diversity

'Unity in diversity' or 'diversity without equality?'

It is worth pausing at this stage to consider what we actually mean when we use the term 'cultural diversity' in Britain today. The term cultural diversity emerged in *The Landscape of Fact* (a 1997 Arts Council paper, reviewing the significance of cultural diversity for the English funding system). The term:

reflects an increasing desire by funding bodies to create some form of dialogue with the arts and artists in question and to unpack some of the more overcautious assumptions of multiculturalism

(*The Landscape of Fact*, p.35)

The term cultural diversity was thought to encompass a stronger aesthetic philosophy, engaging as it does with the theories of interculturalism and

intraculturalism. Despite the all encompassing nature of the term, it was generally felt that the term engaged with the aesthetic traditions, adaptations and hybridisation of shifting cultural and artistic identities in British society in a way in which multiculturalism had failed to do.

We should consider whether the term cultural diversity has brought with it a shifting mindset from the multicultural philosophy. Is cultural diversity little more than a statement of fact about Britain today? In reality what does the term offer us that multiculturalism was unable to? Is it fair to say that 'cultural diversity' up to this point has tended to focus on Black and Asian identity, or on those who it is possible to 'visibly' differentiate? How do the new communities of Eastern European immigrants fit into the terminology?

The following metaphor was used in the Netherlands presented in a 1995 paper entitled 'Panster or Ruggeraat' (Armour or Backbone). It may be useful in helping us to locate our own place in this journey.

Those who use culture largely as a demarcation sign, those who propagate cultural identity as a means of delineating the difference between one's own group and others, are likely to end up in a culturally unfruitful and defensive role. To them, culture develops into **an armour** that protects them from the world that is seen as hostile. This armour may provide them with a sense of security but it also shields them off from the outside world, thus impeding all further growth. Conversely, those who carry their cultural accomplishments with them as an inner certainty... Which makes it possible for them to openly engage with others without fearing loss of self-identity, are always capable of change. This is as much true as for groups as for countries as a whole. A society of armoured people will be divided by mutual suspicion; yet a society whose people choose **culture as a backbone** may evolve towards a community characterised by 'unity in diversity'

(*Volkesgezondheid en Cultur*, 1995, p.51)

In the following conversations Tamasha clearly presents itself as a company whose culture provides the backbone to the artistic work they create and through *In Conversation* the company seeks an 'open engagement with others without fearing loss of self-identity'.

In the journey toward cultural diversity companies such as Tamasha exist to tell the stories of culturally-specific and under-represented communities. As the conversations progress the reader is invited to consider whether the mainstream

companies consider culturally focused companies such as Tamasha to be 'armoured'. Does this perception stem from the fact that such companies were created from the perspective of a multicultural philosophy?

Cultural theorist Chris Bilton argues that multiculturalism has limited people to over-integrated notions of identity. While the foundations of multiculturalism stemmed from a wish to challenge the 'dominant group', this challenge may constitute little more than the accommodation of difference rather than presenting a challenge to the status quo. Bilton argues:

Multiculturalism, to me, is part of a liberal humanist tradition, which is, whilst seeming to be accommodating and open actually a form of closure because it says to people you're Asian, You're Gay, You're Black, You're White. You do your own thing, no problem there. Yet at the same time the system remains static and the dominant group remains the dominant group. It's diversity without equality.

(Bilton, quoted in Brahmachari. S. MA. Central School of Speech and Drama)

When reading the following conversations the reader is asked to consider whether, despite shifts in terminology, British arts are still engaging with the kind of multicultural philosophy, which Bilton describes as a 'form of closure'.

The term 'cultural diversity' accepts that people have multiple memberships and that they belong to overlapping cultural groups, some of these groupings may be about interests as well as identity. Cultural diversity also engages more complex notions of identity such as the notion of 'diaspora', described by Paul Gilroy as a 'cross cultural poetics' He says:

Diasporas cross cultural poetics allows for a complex conception of sameness and an idea of solidarity that does not repress the differences within in order to maximise the differences between the 'essential' community and others.

(Gilroy, 1995, P.24)

Cultural diversity engages with intercultural and intracultural theories and practices, as well as debates around the aesthetic focus of the work and the roots and form of art created. Tamasha profiles its engagement with intercultural and intracultural theories and practices at conferences in Black Regional Initiative in Theatre and in Europe. Kristine Landon-Smith has been invited on several occasions to the National Theatre of Denmark to showcase her intracultural theatre praxis. Tamasha is also in dialogue with Rustom Bharucha who critiqued European intercultural theatre practice and coined the term 'Intraculturalism' in his book *Theatre and The World* (1993). This term was used to describe the

complexities of the cultures within India. Bharucha argues that the challenge is to create a national culture that 'incorporates the immediacy of particular histories within an intracultural framework' which is both 'coherent and respectful of difference'.

In engaging with the theories of intraculturalism alongside interculturalism Tamasha and other culturally-focused companies are engaged in 'communicating the complexity of British culture' and aspiring towards 'a cross-cultural poetic'. The following conversations will explore with whom this 'complex communication' is taking place and what impact the 'communication' is having on the development of British theatre.

The reader of this report is invited to gauge how the participants of these conversations are engaging with some of the theories discussed above. Are we operating in a parallel system of 'diversity without equality' or are we evolving towards a position of 'unity in diversity'?

Preliminary conversations

Lyric Theatre Hammersmith

30 January 2004

Chaired by Sue Hoyle, Deputy Director of The Clore Leadership Programme
(See the appendix for the list of panellists and other attendees.)

The initial conversation at The Lyric Theatre Hammersmith was structured around Tamasha's production of *Strictly Dandia*. Isobel Hawson began by offering an overview of the reports, initiatives and developments around culturally diverse work. (This overview is summarised in the 'Orientation' section above.)

Kristine Landon-Smith then went on to share the aim of the session with participants, which she outlined as follows: 'To create a greater understanding of theatre from non-European backgrounds and to explore issues around the positioning of the work.'

Kristine begins by discussing the positive reception of *Strictly Dandia*, which had played at the Edinburgh Festival to a majority white Scottish audience. Reviews in Edinburgh had been positive. However, when the show returned to London it received harsh critiques. Comparisons were immediately made between 'The Kumars' and Bollywood musicals. Kristine believes that the work is being categorised by its ethnicity, which, she says 'creates a veneer so that people can't see what they are seeing'.

She explains that *Strictly Dandia* is set in the Gujarati community in North London 'It's about community and a large proportion of the audience in London came from the Gujarati audience', Kristine believes that if an established venue were to do a show like *Strictly Dandia* they would be praised for their 'bravery' but that in Tamasha's hands it was considered by many to be 'unsophisticated' and even the best reviews compared it to a 'Bollywood hit'. Kristine argues that reviews in London affect whether the show is programmed for a regional tour. Simon Mellor who was booking the tour experienced great difficulties in finding a regional co-producer. The main concern was the 'lack of Asian audience in different regions'. Kristine has always felt that the work produced can explain itself, but the reception of *Strictly Dandia* has forced her to re-evaluate this and she feels it is important to contextualise the work for people through having such conversations.

Sudha Bhuchar, Joint Artistic Director of Tamasha, begins by discussing the journey of creating *Strictly Dandia*. She describes how it came about after a

conversation with actress Mala Ghedia about the Gujarati community in Sydney. She describes the tension between dancers from Sydney and a suburb of Sydney, who each October took part in competitions around the festival of Navaratri. Originally Tamasha had been seeking a co-production with Australia but despite great enthusiasm for the project Tamasha had eventually decided that it would be simply too expensive.

Kristine and Sudha then had the idea of researching Navaratri dance sparring on the North Circular in London. Sudha describes the research, which happened over the nine nights of Navaratri in Balham, Chiswick and Bounds Green where 'smelly trainers in sports halls' were replaced by Asian communities dancing in the evening. Over the nine nights the company researched and interviewed Asian people 'dressed up to the nines' trying to outdo each other on the dance floor. There was a showcase of the work for decibel in Manchester, which was useful for the company to explore how to write the piece. The genre of the production was a fusion of text and dance. Sudha described the great joy of meeting (in the audience) young girls who go to dance schools to prepare for the festival.

In terms of the Gujarati community, the fact that the show opened in Scotland built up expectations. Sudha describes the Gujarati community as being highly cohesive and organised 'one person will bring along 80 people' to one show. Despite the fact that in Scotland the audience was largely white Scottish with approximately 100 Asians in for each of the six shows, the consensus from the audience was that the work was 'accessible'. However, in London, Tamasha played to a predominantly Asian population, which was reflective of the communities in which the research had taken place.

Sudha says that Tamasha is often asked if it has a 'core' audience. Sudha believes that Tamasha attract a different audience for each show. In the first two weeks of the *Strictly Dandia* 2005 run, 5% of audience were white, by the end of the second week of the run the show started to attract a more mixed audience. Sudha says that 'the intention of the work has always been to attract mixed audiences'. Sudha feels that you do not have to be a member of the community in order to understand the show. She says that they had thought about simplifying some of the subdivisions in the community and decided that it was important to be true to the research.

Sudha says, 'It is important in our work to be culturally rooted'. When she read the reviews Sudha asks whether the reviewers thought that the actors had been picked from the community! One evening a friend of Sudha's, the filmmaker

Pratibha Parmar, attended the production with a colleague. Pratibha is Gujarati and recognised the stories and characters. She asked her friend what he thought and he said, 'I don't know the reference points to make those judgements, I cannot comment on stereotypes.'

Simon Mellor, Executive Director of the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, discusses his eight-year relationship with the company. He describes how the work was initially placed in the studio and has now transferred to the 'main house'. He says Tamasha is his 'safe bet'. Simon offers some statistics, which show patterns of behaviour among Tamasha's audiences:

- 66% full price tickets compared to 50% by Shared Experience (a comparable middle-scale company)
- a high percentage of audience come in larger numbers
- Tamasha received 60% of bookings from groups larger than seven compared to 37% by Shared Experience
- Asian audiences buy more tickets online than other audiences
- Tamasha's audiences will travel. For *Strictly Dandia* a large number of people travelled from the East End

Simon adds he is always keen to know what the next Tamasha show is. He describes Tamasha as a theatre company that knows how to get an audience. He is unconcerned about what reviewers say. He says the audience works by word of mouth and connection with the company.

Kristine suggests that reviewers' responses to the work can have a negative impact on those producers the company have not yet had a relationship with, which can affect possible future relationships and collaborations.

John McGrath feels that an important function of Contact Theatre is to focus on work by emerging companies and provide a sympathetic environment for culturally diverse artists and companies to work in. John believes that if this environment is provided artists will be brave with their choices. He says, 'It's an important part of the mix, studio programming for emerging artists provides support and opportunities for conversations with artists.' John offers the example of *Live And Direct*, an emerging artists programme for Black and Asian Theatre Directors. This programme has had a knock-on effect on the non-specific programme which has subsequently had an unusually high take up by Black and Asian applicants. John suggests that once the right environment is created it may not be necessary to create a specific programme for Black and Asian applicants.

Contact Theatre co-produced *Slam Dunk* by Nitro. This piece started in a workshop at Contact in 2001 and the show opened at Contact and then transferred to the Hackney Empire to huge audiences. The show brought in a new core audience. John points out that what *The Guardian* says about a show like *Slam Dunk* may be less meaningful than a reviewer of 'hip hop' or 'basketball'. John McGrath speaks of creating a 'healthy theatre ecology' where companies can exist, grow and move on.

Sue Hoyle asks, 'Do you listen to reviews before programming work?'

John McGrath explains that work is programmed far in advance of reviews. Directors of Contact and a young peoples' focus group would ensure that they see the work for themselves before booking a show.

Simon Mellor explains that some of the decisions are made on 'trust', on 'how you feel about the artists concerned'.

John talks about building a dialogue with a community of artists. He says, 'I ask myself, what do people like Kristine, Felix (Cross) or Shobana (Jeyasingh) think and say about this work. John says he might have different viewpoints but he would take note of what a community of artists who know the venue think is a piece of work which would fit in his venue.

Simon Mellor talks of the critical artistic relationship between The Lyric and Tamasha. 'It's important for a venue to be able to question a piece of work. If you are not confident enough to do so then there can be no co-production. Where you have white producers and culturally diverse artists there may be a reticence to question what is being created.' Simon says that the Lyric 'seeks an artistic engagement with the work, not just good returns at box office'.

Sudha Bhuchar feels that reviewers have an important role to play in that they can open or close a door to a specific sector of an audience. If a show has a four or five star rating in *Time Out* then it encourages all people to come. If the reviewer's reference points are so narrow that they cannot review the piece, the reviewer can ensure that the piece attracts a 'niche' rather than a mixed audience. Sudha describes how one reviewer from the *Telegraph* attended *Strictly Dandia* on a night when the audience was full of Gujarati people. The review was extremely negative despite the evident enjoyment of the audience. No mention was made of this audience in the review itself. Sudha says that she would like the work to be assessed artistically and that the relationship between the work and the audience

was an essential element of the form of *Strictly Dandia*, which was ignored by reviewers.

Kristine agrees with Sudha that poor reviews can create a domino effect when trying to book venues for a tour. Kristine says, 'We have had reviewers who have killed our shows.' Kristine acknowledges that all companies and plays get good and bad reviews but she believes that, in many of the negative comments, it is clear that the reviewer simply did not engage with or attempt to understand the work. Kristine says that 'an alternative critical debate is needed' in which the company can bypass the critics and get programmers to come and see the work.

John McGrath acknowledges that The Lyric and Contact theatres have a different level of involvement with the culturally diverse companies than many venues. The programming of these companies for The Lyric and Contact is about the ongoing development of the venue. Kristine contrasts this to other venues in which she has sometimes experienced little or no discussion about the work at all. Kristine agrees with Sudha that 'critics open doors to some audiences' and too many regional theatres, particularly those without large culturally diverse audiences, judge the work on what the critics have said. If the critics have suggested that a piece is for a specific audience then venues will offer the reasoning that that audience is not available to them.

Kristine concludes that at this stage in Tamasha's development she had not expected such a 'resistance to the work'. She says, 'I thought, by this stage, that there would be a willingness to understand the work.' Kristine suggests that *East is East* was a cross-over success because it was about mixed relationships but also the structure of the piece was a three-act play and the 'genre' was one with which reviewers were more familiar.

Hardish Virk offers a detailed description of audience development and outreach work around *Strictly Dandia*. Hardish began by asking, 'What is the profile and the branding of Tamasha in England and in Edinburgh?' He began to research 'what the relationship is between the South Asian Communities in Scotland and the Edinburgh Festival'. Hardish discovered that at a previous Edinburgh Festival five Asian artists had been profiled and that audiences had come to the work but this audience had not returned. Hardish began by contacting the South Asian Voluntary Sector organisations in Edinburgh and Glasgow and found that audiences would travel from Glasgow. Hardish targeted the voluntary sector organisations by direct mail letter and made sure that the copy was translated into different Asian languages.

Hardish talks of the tendency to group all Asian audiences in one, ignoring the differences between communities in terms of religion and cultural habits. He says, 'The challenge is to engage with the diversity of the South Asian voluntary groups.' Print was distributed to all these organisations and Hardish built a relationship with 'key players' in different organisations. Hardish undertook cultural diversity training with the box office staff at the festival. When interviewing members of the audience who attended the production, people were very happy to have been invited by personal mail and they were very positive about the effort that had been made to contact them.

Hardish succeeded in attracting 436 audience members of South Asian background to the production. However, he feels that without a dedicated human resource at the festival it will be impossible to sustain a relationship with this audience. Hardish asks, 'Is it seen as Tamasha's responsibility to develop the South Asian audience?' Hardish sees the company as a 'catalyst' to attracting this audience and he argues for an understanding of the complexity of this audience, he says, 'The Muslim community in Crawley is very different to that in Birmingham.'

Juliette Bevis, Marketing and PR Manager of Tamasha at the time, describes how she views the play *Strictly Dandia*. She asked a number of questions to find out what kind of show this was the answers were:

- It's a love story
- It's a light- hearted comic look at a community
- It includes dance but is not a dance show
- It gives a public voice to a community that is not often visible
- It is for both Asian and mainstream audiences.

Juliette described how she put out a general press release and approached the Gujarati community and was surprised to find that it was no more difficult to draw the Gujarati community in London to the 2004 run of the show than drawing any other audience. For the 'other' audience Juliette felt that there was nothing to stop a general audience accessing the work. She says, 'From my own white middle-class perspective I recognised elements of the characters in my own community and going to church.'

The response from the critics was that the play was full of stereotypes. However, the 2004 show sold very well and began to attract a Gujarati audience of first-time theatregoers but it failed to attract a mainstream audience. Why? Juliette asks, 'Is

it because of perceptions about the company itself? Is it reviews? Does the audience Tamasha attract set it apart from the mainstream?’

Juliette feels that reviews can affect the future life of a production. She suggests that it is important to work with venues to ensure that the work is part of a programme, which is addressing diverse audiences.

Colin Beesting, decibel Communications Manager, Arts Council England, argues that venues need to have a long-term commitment to programming so that communities grow to have a trust in venues producing a range of work, which they can access. He adds that in multi-artform venues you do not have the same issues of ‘Asian work for Asian audiences’. He argues that thinking in this way excludes a large group of people from the work.

He offers the example of Watermans where Asian and Black audiences liked the programming but they also wanted to see other work representative of a larger geographic area than their community. He argues that ‘the problem is that working in and about the community can work for venues and against companies as venues can also say “We haven’t got that audience so why programme the work?”’ Colin asks whether companies should be careful in the creation of work to ensure that they do not alienate a non-Asian audience to avoid an East-West divide.

David Prescott is Artistic Associate at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. He argues that regional theatres are often underestimated. He argues that his audience and community is largely white but that programming aims to show audiences work which is ‘reflective of the country we live in not just the community we are from’. He says, ‘ We want to engage with different stories.’

Shabina Aslam, Head of Radio Drama at the BBC, quotes a piece of research which revealed that white people want to hear more work by Black and Asian writers.

Simon Mellor of The Lyric Theatre talked about the complex nature of audiences and challenges the idea of a ‘core’ audience for a venue or even for a company. He says most theatres have very little cross-over between plays. 60% of the audience does not go to see another piece of theatre at the venue. For Tamasha’s show *14 Songs*, 75% of that audience have not seen anything else at The Lyric. He challenges the notion of ‘a Lyric audience’. He says that for almost every show a new audience is being built from scratch. Much of Tamasha’s audience does not

know the Lyric brand. It knows Tamasha's brand and is willing to travel from anywhere in London for a show it wants to see.

Beatrice Udeh, Arts Council Rapporteur, who produces the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre programme at The Nottingham Playhouse says that trust is essential in building a relationship with audiences and a venue.

John Adam Baker, Cultural Outreach Worker at the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich, talks about Ipswich as a rural environment, which is also a changing audience of young people with an appetite for dance/music/theatre fusion. He argues that even if a piece has specific cultural roots it will attract young audiences if it is perceived to be a universal story.

John McGrath prefers the term 'identity of venue' rather than 'brand'. He argues that the same profile of audience return to Contact Theatre twice a year but they feel that they have a relationship with the venue. He argues that it's about programming work which can offer something to those audiences.

Hardish Virk described his work in setting up The Hawth, a community centre in Crawley, which has the largest South Asian Community in Britain. He describes a very solid engagement with the South Asian community which has been achieved through offering training across all departments of the organisation which has resulted in a confidence in programming work. Hardish argues that having a firm strategy and policies in place will result in effective practice not only in programming work but also in creating an environment of trust for visitors.

Ewan Thomson, Head of Press at the Royal Court, argues that in all the preceding conversations that nobody has looked at the quality of the work.

John McGrath of Contact Theatre argues that 'the whole conversation has been about the quality of the work although not an abstract absolute debate about quality'.

Ewan Thomson argues that a debate about the quality of the work has not run in tandem with the discussion. He argues that the artists that he comes into contact with do not wish to be described as Black artists or Asian artists.

Kristine Landon-Smith suggests that people can't come to the quality of the work because ethnicity is always at the centre and the work itself is at the parameters.

Colin Beesting of Arts Council England argues that the work is a unique expression of the artists who make it and identity is an important part of that.

Charlotte Franklin, Marketing Director at the Donmar Warehouse, argues that the characters presented in *Strictly Dandia* are not in-depth characters. Charlotte feels that her comments are not about the ethnicity of the work but about the quality of the work.

Kristine Landon-Smith responds that she had intended to offer a slice of the life of these characters rather than in-depth character portrayals.

The session ended at this point due to time limitations.

Round Table Meeting, City Inn, Westminster

17 March 2004

Chaired by Bridget Thornborrow, Freelance Press Consultant

Panellist: Kristine Landon-Smith, Joint Artistic Director of Tamasha

(See the appendix for the list of attendees.)

Following the conversation at The Lyric Theatre, Tamasha and Isobel Hawson brought together a group of critics, theatre practitioners, individual artists, educationalists and venues to discuss how the conversations at The Lyric could be progressed.

Kristine Landon-Smith outlined some of the discussions, which had taken place at The Lyric Theatre and invited those present to comment. Themes which emerged, echoed the Lyric conversation and are summarised here.

- The range of responses by culturally diverse artists and companies to the 'labelling' of their work through identity
- The positioning of culturally diverse theatre companies in the mainstream
- The audience development role of culturally diverse companies and the impact of funding requirements on these companies
- The impact of culturally diverse companies beyond their own communities and audiences
- The perception of culturally diverse companies among peers and fellow artists in the mainstream
- The impact of critics on the work of culturally diverse artists and companies
- The responses of critics to the direct address of culturally diverse artists and companies

- The perception of the artists working from culturally diverse theatre companies in the mainstream
- The positioning and experiences of freelance artists as compared with companies
- The progression roots for middle-scale culturally-diverse companies

Steering Committee Meeting, Arts Council England

Summer 2004

(See the appendix for the list of attendees.)

A steering committee meeting was held at Arts Council England in which it was decided that the conversations should continue on a regional level and have a cross-arts focus.

Following the Arts Council meeting it was decided that there were many elements of the conversation at The Lyric Theatre and The City Inn meeting which could be further explored through the three following conversations entitled '*In Conversation*'. In fact many times throughout the following three conversations, artists and companies and venues revisited the discussion points outlined above.

In Conversation 1: Birmingham Repertory Theatre

28 June 2005, 4–5.30 pm

Chaired by Anna Umbima, Broadcaster and Event Producer

Panellist 1 Deepa Patel, Freelance Consultant and Chair of Tamasha

Panellist 2 Delia Jarrett-Macauley, Writer

(See the appendix for a full list of participants.)

This conversation started when we began to ask ‘Who are we? Where are we allowed in?’ With this came the perception that our work is seen in the mainstream as an ethnic art.

(Kristine Landon-Smith, Artistic Director, Tamasha)

Kristine Landon-Smith speaks of Tamasha’s work feeling labelled as ‘ethnic art’. At the same time she discusses the success that her own and other companies were having in transforming the theatrical landscape. The question posed in the opening quote suggests that Kristine believes there is a resistance to Tamasha’s work entering the ‘mainstream’.

Kristine Landon-Smith talks of how her own identity as a mixed-race Punjabi-Australian woman is bound up in her work. Kristine believes that it is imperative that people engage with the identities of culturally diverse artists through their work. She says that when she works with actors she absolutely states her own identity because she says, ‘Who I am is why I’m working on this.’

Kristine’s analysis that the work of Tamasha is seen as a ‘separate development in theatre categorised under “ethnic art”’ is echoed by Delia Jarrett-Macauley in her panellists’ introduction. Delia tells a story which illustrates how publishers can influence the reception of her work in the mainstream:

With one of my novels the publishers came up with a book cover which they felt best represents the African nation and I thought I was writing a story about an individual...Now there is a new shift so Black artists can become ‘the voice of multicultural Britain. This is a code for holding onto optimism for the work.

While it is true that a publishers choices can influence the reception of any piece of new work, for a Black or Asian writer these decisions can weigh heavily on the writer forcing a more limited interpretation of her work.

Delia discusses the ambivalent attitude towards being categorised as a Black artist ‘programmed under an African banner’ and the burden of representation which is

placed on her, particularly by publishers. Delia stresses her absolute ambivalence related to the way in which her work is categorised. She says:

We are people and people do not throw away their genesis. It makes sense for people to collect those stories... On the other hand I like it when I am just categorised as a fiction writer... When people are talking about the language and the rhythm of my work and the characterisation.

On a positive note Delia feels that there have been many developments in publishing culturally diverse work since the 1980s when one looked to America for the great Black literature; now she can see a whole body of work developing by Black British writers in the mainstream.

During the conversation Giles Croft, Artistic Director of the Nottingham Playhouse, questions the value of creating culturally specific networks eg 'Asian Network' and programmes like *Silver Street*. These, he says, are seen as a positive force. However, he poses the question as to whether such culturally specific networks are taking the place of mainstream programming. He argues that if the money has gone from Radio 4 to the Asian Network and *Silver Street*, there will be less Asian work accessible to mainstream audiences. On the other hand he felt that actors, writers and other producing artists were given an opportunity by the creation of such networks to be trained and that these people would naturally go on to develop their work outside of culturally specific programming.

Kristine discusses the way in which Tamasha is valued for developing Asian audiences but she questions how much these audiences are, in turn, valued themselves. Kristine cites the success of a recent show set in the Gujarati community *Strictly Dandia*, described by Kristine as 'a big new contemporary musical set in north London', which attracted 70% Gujarati audiences. This audience viewed the characters as 'authentic representations' of their own community. Kristine feels that this sizeable Gujarati audience 'went against [the company]' when the play was reviewed. The press and peer perspective on the show was starkly contrasted to the popularity of the show with its audience. The production was labelled, by a sizeable portion of the mainstream press, as 'a community show' representing stereotypical characters.

Kristine feels that the artistic identity of the work was never critiqued because of the perception of the work as being from and for a particular community. The sub-text of Kristine's argument is that there is a patronising response to this new Gujarati audience attending a production in a mainstream theatre. Reviewers,

even those who sat in the centre of a Gujarati audience who clearly enjoyed the show, did not comment on this positive response of this audience. Kristine says:

My feeling is that if the audience is validated then the art is too... My question is around how valued that audience is at the centre/in the mainstream and how that impacts on the status of our work as a company.

Kristine speaks of the difficulty in booking *Strictly Dandia* for a middle-scale tour. Despite the fact that the genre of the piece was a 'populist musical', many venues had concerns about the culturally specific nature of the work. Venues were worried that there were few Gujarati people in their audience make-up. Kristine says:

No amount of telling people that we played to a virtually white Scottish audience in Edinburgh, who came in their droves, could convince venues to take the work.

Kristine speaks of Tamasha's work, historically, as beginning in community and this initially led to the company carrying a 'community' label. However, she argues that those communities are now theatregoers and she feels that the economic power of this audience, and their willingness to attend mainstream theatre venues, will affect a shift in attitude towards this new audience.

Kristine recalled Simon Mellor, when discussing the successful box office of Tamasha's work at the Lyric Theatre, describing Tamasha as his 'safe bet' in terms of attracting audiences. Later in the conversation, Giles Croft makes a distinction between early work by 'immigrant communities' and contemporary work. He asks, 'Was it not historically the case that immigrant communities were creating work for their own communities?'

Giles suggests that 'contemporary' work is expected to be played to a mixed audience. He suggests that as *Strictly Dandia* attracted a largely Gujarati audience in London this may have been responsible for labelling the work under an 'ethnic art' banner. Interestingly, *East is East*, which was successful in transferring to 'the mainstream' was a play which attracted a mixed audience and featured a mixed community.

Giles resists the notion that audiences should be courted as 'our Black, Asian or Jamaican audience'. Giles believes that the audience comes to see work at the Nottingham playhouse which is programmed in terms of 'genre', rather than ethnic identity. In contrast, while Tamasha attracts a new audience specific to every show it is clear that 'ethnic identity' is central to the way in which Tamasha and other culturally diverse artists and companies are programmed.

During the course of the conversation Tony Graves outlines his own students' journey in engaging with the complexities of cultural diversity (described in the 'Orientation' section above). Sarah Champion of Chinese Arts in Manchester began to apply Tony Grave's metaphor to her own experience of working with artists of Chinese descent. Sarah focuses on the different ways in which artists she works with engage with her company at different points in their own journey. She too has observed different phases in their own wish to be associated with the company. She identifies that at the beginning of their journey artists want to be seen as 'Chinese artists'. In their middle phase of development they wish to drop the label of 'Chinese' artists and be seen as 'artists' in their own right.

Sarah describes how when artists become even more established they 'often return to the fold.' Sarah feels that it was important to focus on the 'fluidity of the artist's identity.' However, Kristine Landon-Smith made a distinction between the fluidity of culture and the way in which labels for artists and companies are fixed. The question was raised on several occasions as to whether the giving of a specific identity to a company arising from funding opportunities (eg Chinese or Asian) brought about a separate treatment of the work, by critics, peers and audiences. Sarah Champion comments on the difficulties of programming Chinese artists as 'contemporary' work without venues commenting on the need to attract a Chinese population.

Delia Jarrett-Macauley identifies a worrying tendency for publishers labelling work as 'the voice of multicultural Britain'. Delia believes that this is a code for 'holding on to an optimism for the work'. Later in the conversation, contrasting his own Scottish identity and Giles Croft's Huguenot roots, Hamish Glen adds, 'Being visible means you have family pressure and community pressure.' While he points up the complexities of his own identity, he recognised that for him 'being invisible' in terms of colour 'allows you to choose'.

Lorien Gichuke, Multicultural Arts Officer, South Hill Park, argues that this discussion on visibility, Huguenot, and Scottish identity was a completely different experience than that of a Black or Asian company or artist. Lorien speaks of the deep racism inherent in society, and the arts are a part of that society.

In Conversation 2: National Theatre, London

29 September 2005

Chaired by Deepa Patel, Freelance Consultant and Chair of Tamasha

Panellist 1: Kristine-Landon Smith, Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha

Panellist 2: Shobana Jeyasingh, Choreographer and Director, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company

(See the appendix for a full list of participants.)

Kristine begins by summarising the previous conversation, which took place in Birmingham. She acknowledges that there were many parallels to be drawn between the publishing and producing worlds in theatre. Just as Black and Asian literature is entering the mainstream so too there have been some successes in the mainstream of theatre, film and television. However, Kristine argues that having reached this point that there is a risk of complacency.

She suggests that in the last conversation there was a resistance by some people to engage with or even acknowledge the complex issues around the positioning of culturally diverse work. Kristine's explanation for this resistance is that some work has entered the mainstream and therefore the problems around positioning are thought to no longer exist.

Kristine goes on to discuss a recent adaptation of *Lysistrata* which she directed for the World Service, adapted for radio by Ranjit Bolt. Kristine explains that she had chosen a cast of British Asian actors. She says, 'I led the actors to the text through improvisation in Hindi so the production also had a bilingual feel.'

During the making of the piece Kristine observed that the studio managers were nervous because they had not experienced working in this way and that this nervousness extended to the executive producer. Kristine suggests that the executive producer had underestimated the complexity of British Asian work and how the adaptation, working with these particular actors, might present something so different. However, this producer was 'brave' enough to stand behind the production. Kristine feels that the bravery of this producer, to engage with the complexities of culturally diverse work is what is needed by producers in order for work to evolve further.

Kristine asserts, 'We need to be talking honestly and openly around identity in the arts, so that we can ensure that in our area [theatre] we are not travelling backwards or remaining static.'

Shobana Jeyasingh poses the broad question, 'Is it possible to be both ethnically specific and British at the same time?' Shobana outlines the history of her company, which is 14 years old, and asks what Tamasha, a company of about the same age (16) and her own company, have in common. She identifies that both companies 'deal with issues about multiple realities in 20th century urban settings and that issues of identity are central to the work'. The main dissatisfaction she has identified is 'the difference between the audience reception of the work and the public discourse'. Both Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company are considered to be established companies and both companies are at a point in asking themselves 'How are we thriving or failing to thrive?'

She argues that the critical discourse around her work has a telling effect on the survival of her company and the way in which 'we value our lives as artists'. This experience is similar to that discussed by Tamasha in relation to *Strictly Dandia*. Shobana says, 'I am struck by the extremity of the different responses to my work.' From ecstatic reviews from young British Asian audiences to comments in 'the mainstream press that the same piece of work is "Totally purposeless, obscure and mechanical"'. Such a lack of consensus in response to her work has led Shobana to ask why. She believes that as an Indian artist she has experienced a level of condescension, which is based on the reviewer's pre-conceived expectations. Shobana feels that there is a mismatch between British Asian reality (a reality of which Kristine spoke when discussing her radio piece) and experience of her work and other expectations about what we should be creating as British Asian artists.

Later in the conversation Sara Wajid, curator and critic echoes Shobana's sense of a mismatch between British Asian reality and expectations. Sarah describes a project she was part of at Tate Britain about some books she had edited. She describes how Tate Britain produced a massive list of Muslim organisations to be contacted for her event. She says, 'I asked them, "What makes you think that it will be Muslim Asian women who want to come?" I think they thought they would get some brown bums on seats at a mainstream platform event.'

She feels that these sorts of platforms are still concerned with the ownership of the audience. She asks, "Why would I want to work with them as an audience developer?... I want to work them as an artist not an audience developer.'

Deepa Patel poses the question, 'Who is responsible for helping us and other artists and companies experiencing this mismatch to overcome those "blocks"?' In

response to this question there is an uncomfortable silence. The following exchange is quoted directly from the text as it illustrates the uncomfortable nature of the conversation in which the various speakers were keen to establish the rules of engagement in the conversation.

Vayu Naidu: The struggle is that we have to create our own discourse.

Kristine Landon-Smith: I want to talk about the extremity of the varied responses from British Asian audiences and the public discourse around the work.

David Lan: Who is included in the term 'public discourse'? If we are to have an open and honest conversation, participants need to know who is being spoken about. Are we talking about critics here or are we talking about other public discourse and peers?

Kristine Landon-Smith: Who are our peers?

Sudha Bhuchar: The focus of the conversation is not to whinge about bad reviews and critics. Reviews are cited because it is clearer in reviews what's going on. There is evidence of the discourse, which is more tangible than conversations with peers and colleagues in the industry.

Shobana Jeyasingh: We are talking about 'gatekeepers'. Who decides to book what and why and public discourse does have an impact. I experience 'No we can't book this or that because Asians aren't here. If I make a piece of work about Martians where will it go?'

Deepa Patel: In the last 10 to 15 years has this discourse moved on? Is there anything that can be done to move the discourse on a bit?'

Later in the conversation David Lan asks for clarification of what the conversation is about: 'Are we talking about how the work is received by peers and funding bodies or how it is critiqued?' Kristine Landon-Smith argues that peers, producers and 'gatekeepers' are connected in a fine web as producers and peers read what is said by critics and 'write off the work'. She argues that critics do have an impact on the reception of the work.

Lyn Gardner, Theatre Critic of *The Guardian* expresses a nervousness about the direction of the conversation if the focus of the discussion was to be about critics

'as I don't want to be a hate figure in the corner'. Lyn expresses surprise that Shobana and Kristine expected more of the critics understanding of their work as 'reviewers are likely to be white Oxford-educated men and women'.

Lyn argues that it is important to get beyond reviewers in this conversation and asks if Simon Mellor, Executive Director of The Lyric Hammersmith, is right when he says, 'Why worry about reviewers?' However, Lyn also recognises the worry is about lack of acceptance and the work being validated as any other work is validated. Lyn argues that if the companies want to be reviewed and validated as any other work is validated that such companies can't be 'a special case.'

Lyn compares the experiences of Kristine and Shobana to that of women playwrights in the early 1980s. She argues that a lot of their work was unfairly dismissed. Such work is a 'delicate flower' and needs nurturing but then it does flower. She argues that today people don't talk about female playwrights and asks if this is the same process at work with the development of companies like Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company. Lyn believes that the women playwrights are validated now because 'women now write better plays'.

She believed that the successful Black and Asian playwrights and novelists have no need of 'labels' and that's, she says, 'when confusions die away'. Lyn agrees that there is a protection needed to develop work, and money is ring-fenced for this purpose, but that this funding means that companies need to 'face the fact of not being part of the mainstream'.

At the close of conversation at the Lyric Hammersmith there was a discussion about the 'quality' of work being produced by Tamasha and in particular *Strictly Dandia*. It is suggested that if the company wanted to engage in an open conversation then it would need to be open to a frank discussion on the quality of the work being produced and that that conversation had not been central to the conversation at the Lyric.

Other participants feel that the whole conversation had been about quality... about the nature of the work as it has developed. One participant suggests that 'an abstract and absolute view of quality' is not a helpful position. This notion of aspiring towards and achieving 'quality' is echoed by Lyn Gardner. The implication in Lyn Gardner's assessment of the development of culturally diverse work is that once 'quality' is achieved then the work of such companies is done in nurturing new artists for the mainstream.

Dr Alda Terraciano suggests that critics may need to consider other channels of commenting and expanding understanding and experience of culturally diverse work. She argues that in *Strictly Dandia* 'the Gujarati audience realised the subtleties missed in higher discourse'. They understood the subtlety of the discourse. This requires an attention and understanding from those who are there from outside that community.

Suman Bhuchar, freelance marketer, believes that companies such as Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company are 'reaching a glass ceiling'. Suman expresses the opinion that the South Asian Touring Theatre Consortium (SATTC) has created a touring circuit for South Asian work which has placed it in 'the ghetto'.

Isobel Hawson responds by giving the background to the development of the SATTC. It emerged from the Eclipse report and the Theatre Review in which two gaps in provision were identified:

- 1 The lack of African Caribbean theatre of quality touring in Britain
- 2 The lack of venues available in areas with large South Asian communities in outer London, which would provide a circuit for companies to tour to and real opportunities for audience development. As a result, three outer London venues were selected (artsdepot, Watermans and Croydon Clocktower). The response was to develop a consortium because companies can become part of a touring circuit

Sudha Bhuchar comments that 'most companies want the acclaim of their artistic peers as well as audiences'. Sudha believes that the SATTC is producing 'one-nighters'. She questions what such an initiative is doing to help middle-scale theatre companies thrive.

Isobel Hawson comments that at the heart of SATTC is audience development but it also allows venues to get to know more about the companies. Isobel feels that it is early days with this initiative – she says, 'We need to see how things grow.'

Vayu Naidu, Artistic Director of Vayu Naidu Company has a more positive response to the initiative. She describes her own work as a storyteller as being an 'independent' position. She asks herself, 'Why did I feel the need to create a theatre company? What is the need in terms of the discourse? Why did I feel the

need to go into a larger foundation? Was it for funding or was it to create a new convention?’

Actually the truth, she answers, is a combination of the two. Vayu argues that the act of setting up a company and the work produced creates its own critical discourse. Vayu admits that the struggle is that ‘we have to create our own discourse’.

Suman Bhuchar, freelance marketer, suggests that the SATTC benefits work which moves into London but there is no such initiative to develop the work from London to Kent. She feels that the journey is one way.

Jack Bradley, Literary Manager of the National Theatre feels that there is a limit to what can be done in terms of developing Black and Asian writers as, he says, the ‘work is not being sent. If the work isn’t there you have to actively promote and accelerate writers and you can only do this if they are there to push’. The suggestion here is that the writers are not out there.

Jocelyn Cunningham, Creative Director of Creative Partnerships, London North challenges the openness and flexibility of the National Theatre’s identity. She says, ‘I work with an unbelievable group of diverse kids, kids who are still thinking and asking who they are. Are you?’

Kristine Landon-Smith addresses Jack Bradley’s claim of lack of scripts. She feels that this is an old argument. She asserts that ‘if the National Theatre came to Tamasha we could develop a play with you every year’. However, Jack Bradley states that ‘it’s difficult to argue with statistics. 10% of the population of Britain is Black.’ And the implication is that therefore only a small percentage of work produced by the National Theatre will be by Black writers.

Jack Bradley feels that the emphasis is on developing stories he hasn’t heard before and he argues that most theatres have an open door policy to new stories.

Hassan Mahamdallie of the Ethic Researchers Network responds to Jack Bradley’s statistics by producing some of his own. He says ‘If you are going to bandy about statistics...40% of Bangladeshi men drive taxis, 40% of Bangladeshi men run corner shop. He stresses that ‘we are not talking about a level playing field here’.

Jack Bradley states that initiatives are in place to offer additional support for Black and Asian writers and that such initiatives have supported writers like Tanika Gupta, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Roy Williams and Ashmeed Sohoje. In the case of Kwame's work Jack says that 'the play brought a whole new audience into the building and then the same audience came back for his next piece'.

Suman Bhuchar suggests that there is a different 'dynamic between working with individual artists and theatre companies'. Jack responds, 'It is my job to commission playwrights. We are an artist-led organisation.'

In Conversation 3: Bristol Old Vic

13 October 2005, 3.30–5.00 pm

Chaired by Anna Umbima, Broadcaster and Event Producer

Panellist 1 – Sudha Bhuchar, Joint Artistic Director of Tamasha

Panellist 2 – Jenny Davis, Writer and Performance Artist

Panellist 3 – Rita Ray, Broadcaster and World Music DJ

(See the appendix for a full list of participants.)

Sudha Bhuchar, Joint Artistic Director of Tamasha, begins by summarising and analysing the previous two conversations. She asked, ‘Do we live in a parallel universe without meeting points?’ She asks whether there are glass walls between culturally diverse artists and the mainstream. Sudha poses the question, ‘Do culturally diverse artists want it both ways – to be both ‘special cases’ and have an impact in the mainstream?’

Sudha talks of a recent interview she did for Tamasha’s then most recent show, *The Trouble With Asian Men* in which verbatim interviews are performed on stage. Sudha interviewed a banker who talks of living a double life at home with his parents and family, he is culturally rooted and deferential to his parents but he brings none of this into his work where he says he ‘forgets he’s brown’. On the other hand he makes it his mission to employ other Asians at work. He says he brings in his ‘turkeys’ to the grey suits and takes a ‘punt’ on them. He gives them a chance. Sudha thinks that in theatre ‘we are the turkeys’, adept at living parallel lives, but to make a real impact ‘we need someone to take a punt on us’.

Jenny Davis, writer and performance artist, feels ambivalence in relation to cultural diversity and the arts. Debates about cultural diversity can, she says, make her ‘glaze over’ and feel that she is unconnected to the discourses. She feels that the term ‘cultural diversity’ leads to a confusion as identity is always fluid. Jenny would like the freedom to write about whatever touches her as a human being ‘not just create a bit of Black art’.

Jenny speaks of an Irish character in her first play, which was informed by her own experience of living in Ireland. She says that in this play she was interested in the way we do come together as well as the walls we build around ourselves. Jenny uses the metaphor of a ‘veil’ to describe cultural diversity and she feels that the presence of it as an agenda blocks communication both ways.

She feels that with the best intentions in the world, debates around cultural diversity can end up in a polarised 'us vs. them' situation. Interestingly Jenny makes a distinction between the political correctness in her 'bread and butter world' of social work and the arts. She says, 'I am a social worker where it is all PC [politically correct] but where the world is still open because it has to be equal access. What I notice in the arts is it tends to work around who you know and it does not allow for real collaboration.'

Jenny is 'hooked on' the reality TV show *Wife Swap* because every household has their own cultural differences. She says, 'We don't test out our own difference until we're in another space, without fear of being shouted down.' Talking about Bristol, Jenny comments that 'it is full of artists and healers and that there are communities of people but there are still large pockets of people you don't know. If this is the case in a city then it is bound to be reflected in the arts.'

Rita Ray, Broadcaster and World Music DJ, responds by questioning how the arguments about the 'positioning' of work relate to her. She admits that she tries not to angst about such things as 'it can suck your energy', 'it's so complex'. Rita describes her own journey creating a club night called 'Shrine' which was an homage to Felakute. This night was so successful that it became a regular slot in a central London venue. At that point she did not think of positioning, she says:

We had positioned this club in the trendiest place. It was there for four years but it's not any more. We put on one night a week and we got the right audience for the club. They had this chic Afro night and were pulling in the punters; owners came and entertained journalist friends and used it as a platform to show their work and they put the rents up the whole time. They said that the punters were not drinking enough! The rent went up so much we could not keep up our artistic flair or muscle so instead of scrimping we just stopped. Now I've lost that position.

On the basis of what he has heard from the panellists, Andrew Hilton, Theatre Director of the Tobacco Factory, says, 'I am thinking about self-evaluating on the basis of what you have said' in relation to issues of equality of opportunity. He describes his process of recruiting actors as 'open access'. He says his process and attitude that he feels he might have to re-evaluate is as follows:

In auditions people come to me. That's how I work. Why would I come to you? If people don't want to do it then I don't want them. I have a massive queue of people lining up. Why would I go elsewhere for other people who haven't queued up just because there isn't a culturally diverse queue?

Simon Reade, Artistic Director of Bristol Old Vic, recognises that Andrew 'may have to review his process as the playing field is not even, from education onwards', but he also feels that casting directors were very important and that there is now a whole generation of actors who had come through drama colleges who could be accessed. He also sympathises with Jenny's point about 'glazing over'. He feels that sometimes key issues could be 'glazed over' by terms. Simon says that in his work he is looking at where you have the opportunity to have a diverse audience and you can start to do this by casting.

Sarah LeFanu, Director of Bath Literary Festival, talks of the lack of cultural diversity among the people she works with. Her audience, she says, is 'elderly and largely white'. However she has been working with five Black first-time novelists and getting them an audience and a profile with the book buying public. She recognises that if these writers are published by an unusual publisher such as Chatto or Cape there is a resistance and difficulty to get in a wider audience. Despite these problems, Sarah is holding an all-year-round education programme to profile this work.

Bertel Martin, writer, raises the question of where the labels around work come from. If the writer is 'categorised under Black literature then labels are handed down and boxes are ticked around Black literature and identity and then the writer's work develops a different quality and is viewed on parallel lines to the mainstream'.

Samina Zahir, Arts Consultant and Writer, says, 'I question this idea of a club. The moment we become an issue I question that. We are not seen as peers.' She argues that the margins serve their purpose by connoting the centre, that 'at the risk of sounding cynical, culturally diverse companies were established by the Arts Council with a primary function of feeding the mainstream companies.'

Kate Sparshatt, Creative Producer for Plymouth Consortium for Cultural Diversity, shares the way in which they had decided not to put funds into a Black arts centre but instead decided to create a consortium between The Racial Equality Group, Theatre Royal and Plymouth Arts Centre. Kate argues that the Theatre Royal, informed by the consortium, then remains the central place where artists developed rather than a separate other. Kate argues that 'in a consortium model the mainstream organisations share the responsibility, not passing the buck to other organisations'.

Bertel Martin stresses the value of the Black arts centre in that people feel that there is a focus for energy and a networking point for people who have more in common.

Sudha Bhuchar comments that as the first non-white person in *The Archers* she was required to give an explanation for everything she did. She would have to explain what Diwali was before having a scene about it. 'I am going to the Diwali celebrations, that is the festival in which Lord Rama and Sita...!' Sudha feels that a lot of Asian actors find it a freedom when they work with Asian theatre companies not to have to explain themselves constantly.

Jenny Davis voices 'reservations about culturally specific organisations on the grounds that a lot of responsibility is placed on their shoulders', and Jenny has concerns because those responsibilities have little to do with being artists. Jenny cites as an example a project she was involved in Reading in which she was asked to develop plays with young writers to fulfil a quota for people who had got the funding. She says, 'Three people drifted in off the pavement and none of them wanted to write a play!'

Megan Thomas, formerly a marketer at Bristol Old Vic, remembers hosting *Ghostdancing*, a Tamasha play written by Deepak Verma as part of the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre project. As a complement to the company visit she planned to link up with writers in the area, rather than doing a specifically Asian outreach project. In the event Deepak had to go to India, but there was a lot of interest generated through this. Megan suggests that the larger venues need to think of other ways of connecting to culturally diverse companies – not always going for the obvious routes of Asian identity show, Asian audience.

David Straun, Director of Queen Elizabeth Hall Theatre, analyses his response to Tamasha's work. He says that his company works with individual artists. He adds, 'Your company makes a unique statement. Sometimes when I have received your flyers the work seems to be "over packaged" so that I think that is a complete thing... that's their thing... I have to ask "Where is the room for collaboration?"' He concludes, 'I think that the company profile works in a negative way to disguise the artists.'

Sudha Bhuchar responds by talking more about her motivation as an artist, what kind of work she is interested in and why the company does each piece of work.

Interpretation of the content and tone of *In Conversation* in each venue

Birmingham Repertory Theatre

The conversation in Birmingham focused largely on interpretations of 'identity' of culturally diverse artists and companies and those without a 'visible' cultural difference. Kristine Landon-Smith described how Tamasha's work is viewed as 'ethnic art' whereas she herself, saw her own 'identity' and the 'identity' of the company as providing the 'backbone' to the artistic creation of the company. There was a broad discussion on whether a focus on identity in Tamasha's work could be compared to the issues affecting the work of a Scottish director. Using Tony Graves' framework for assessing the journey towards engagement with cultural diversity, the discussions on 'identity' in Birmingham had an 'abstract' feel to them, as if the arguments being stated by culturally diverse artists and companies were theoretical rather than a reality. Interestingly the production of *Bezhti* at Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which had been the catalyst for protest outside of the theatre in which actors were unable to leave their green rooms, was not mentioned in the conversation.

At the close of the conversation one participant voiced her frustration that 'racism' is a reality, but not being addressed here. This was the first time in the conversation that the term was employed. Anna Umbima, Project Manager described the Birmingham conversation as 'a tickle of a conversation' in which there appeared to be a gentle resistance to accepting the specific complexities of the positioning of culturally diverse work by companies and artists. The burning question that arises from this conversation is whether the freedom to choose between identities or focus on 'genre' rather than 'ethnicity' is more of a freedom to those whose identities are not visible. Cultural diversity is a broad term and encompasses Scottish, Huguenot Jewish, the new immigrant population from Eastern Europe as well as African, African Caribbean and Asian identities.

National Theatre

In contrast to the conversation in Birmingham, the discussion at the National Theatre was characterised by the culturally diverse companies and artists coming to the centre to challenge the status quo. There was a combative tone, which was evident in the use of vocabulary throughout the conversation. The conversation at the National Theatre clearly focused on the place of culturally diverse artists and companies in relation to the mainstream. Artists and companies were clearly conscious that the conversation was taking place at the National Theatre. The centrality of this conversation appeared to act as a metaphorical reminder to

culturally diverse companies, in particular of their own feeling of distance from the centre. The discussion seemed to focus largely on the nature of the conversation itself in which the culturally diverse artists were struggling to have a conversation at the centre, which moved beyond statistics, quotas and tick boxes. The struggle in the conversation was to find common ground between the discourses of the culturally diverse companies and the centre. This might be re-stated as the perceived margins and the mainstream.

The conversation at the National Theatre illustrates a 'clash between discourses'. Taking Tony Graves' phases of engagement with cultural diversity as a framework, it is evident that there is a 'hectoring tone' in the discussion, which falls short of 'engagement'. This clash is clearly seen in the sharpness of the exchanges between speakers and participants throughout this conversation.

A level of defensiveness and frustration permeates this exchange and the vocabulary used is loaded. The term 'gatekeepers' used by Shobana Jeyasingh summons the image of bodyguards at the gates blocking the entrance. Whether this is a perception or a reality the use of such a term indicates a passionate belief on behalf of the speaker. During the course of the conversation this term was picked up and used by other artists. Opinions varied whether the conversation itself did constitute a coming together notwithstanding the discordant tone. Vayu Naidu felt that it was 'a coming together'. Anjul Sharma, of the Ethnic Research Society, pointed out that people are talking about a discourse, but that there were multiple discourses operating in this conversation. There were the culturally diverse discourses and those of the critics and 'gatekeepers'. He suggested that though they have come together in a conversation they were clashing because there was no sense of common ground between the discourses.

Sudha Bhuchar agreed that they were, to use Trevor Phillips' phrase, 'parallel realities'. She said:

Maybe we have to accept that we have a parallel journey. It's a more difficult journey. And when you set up a company you have to ask yourself, 'Is it a harder journey because we have labelled ourselves as a South Asian theatre company?'

Hardial Rai, Formerly Asian Arts Programmer at Waterman's, was sceptical of any 'coming together'. He said:

I don't know if there is going to be a coming together. I think we are seeing a separate development of work like Trevor Phillips said, and I'm not sure whether we are seeing the audiences break through either.

While Hardial felt enthusiastic about the wealth of talent from culturally diverse groups, he wondered where middle scale companies can go. He concluded with the question 'Where do you go in this parallel existence?'

Bristol Old Vic Theatre

The final conversation in Bristol seemed to come closest to Tony Graves' framework of the final phase of cultural diversity which is 'engagement without hectoring'... an open exchange of conversation. In this conversation participants spoke of 'self-evaluating' on the basis of what had been discussed in the conversation. The conversation was clearly an open exchange in which all participants felt able to voice their opinions. Interestingly, Tamasha's call for greater opportunities for collaboration was greeted in the final conversation with a request that the company itself shed some of its 'unique statement' so that mainstream venues and producers can identify possible opportunities for collaboration. Jenny Davis, author, stated at the Bristol conversation that 'with the best intentions in the world, debates around cultural diversity can end up in a polarised "us vs. them" situation'. Indeed, many of the exchanges at the conversation at the National Theatre in London appeared to be just that. Such a conversation can only end in all artists and companies feeling 'armoured' – this is clearly not a productive position. Interestingly, Jenny made a distinction between the political correctness in her 'bread and butter world' of social work and the arts. She said:

I am a social worker where it is all PC but where the world is still open because it has to be equal access. What I notice in the arts is it tends to work around who you know and it does not allow for real collaboration.

In the conversation in Bristol all participants appeared to accept Tamasha's and Jenny Davis (author) assertion that 'culture' is the backbone of their artistic work, although it was clear that Tamasha did appear to some mainstream companies to be 'armoured' and self-contained. The Bristol conversation came closest to fulfilling the aims of *In Conversation* and to achieving 'unity in diversity'.

Interpretation of the themes emerging from *In Conversation*

Engagement with ‘culturally diverse’ companies and the mainstream

From the conversations described in each venue it is clear that there is no one interpretation of the term ‘mainstream’. Many of the mainstream companies clearly aspire to engage with culturally diverse artists and companies as a core part of their programming and view this programming as the main stream of their work. In discussions at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, John McGrath of Contact Theatre challenged the old notions of the mainstream as being outmoded. John suggested that the new ‘centre’ or mainstream of British arts are the culturally diverse artists and audiences. However, in this report it is clear that the culturally diverse artists and companies do not perceive this new reality to have affected the positioning of their work. Essentially the ambivalence of this position is what all the conversations have been about.

Tamasha hosted and led the conversations, and as a result there is naturally a focus on the relationship between the culturally diverse theatre companies and the mainstream. From the conversations above it is clear that there are several factors that are affecting the ‘engagement’ of culturally diverse companies and the mainstream.

Culturally diverse companies are funded to produce work, which tells the stories of particular groups of people. The fact of the position of culturally diverse companies was described variously in this report as acting as a ‘veneer’ which stops people from outside these groups, hearing and seeing the artistic work clearly and could result in people ‘glazing over’ instead of engaging with the debates which surround the culturally diverse companies. At several points in the journey of the conversations, artists and companies spoke of the lack of engagement with their artistic work in the mainstream. Jenny Davis, author, disliked categorisation on the basis of cultural diversity as she believed that ‘a lot of responsibility is placed on their [companies] shoulders and those responsibilities have little to do with being artists.’

It may be that there is a perception in the mainstream that culturally diverse companies are working towards different goals and that political agendas are at the forefront of these companies rather than artistic work. When at the National Theatre, Deepa Patel asked, ‘Who is responsible for progressing the work of the middle scale companies?’ There was a telling silence in which one participant muttered, ‘Ask the funders.’ It may be that there is a perception that culturally diverse companies find their peers in funding bodies and policy makers rather than

other artists in the mainstream and that there is a perception that it is with these people that the discourses of the culturally diverse company properly belongs.

I suspect that the 'clashing discourses' which chimed throughout the conversation at the National Theatre, and the impetus to clarify what the artists were talking about 'peers, critics, public discourse' was due to a sense that the meeting would be driven by the agendas of culturally diverse companies and their funding bodies rather than a discussion about the work itself. This is the point at which the discourses clashed, the culturally diverse artists and companies wanted to talk about the identity of themselves, their work, how it is produced and received and to explore what was particular in these processes and their wish to be considered as part of a developing canon of work. On the other hand the mainstream companies and critics were generally focused on a discourse, which wanted the freedom to assess all work in the same way.

Lyn Gardner, Guardian Theatre Critic, echoed the view of critics attending the round table conversation at City Inn, Westminster when she said: 'If the companies want to be reviewed and validated as any other work is validated such companies can't be "a special case".' In relation to the critics Lyn compared the experiences of Kristine Landon-Smith and Shobana Jeyasingh to that of women playwrights in the early 1980s. She argued that a lot of their work was unfairly dismissed. Such work is a 'delicate flower' and needs nurturing but then it does flower.

She argued that today people don't talk about female playwrights and asked, 'Is this the same process at work with the development of companies like Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company?' Lyn believed that the women playwrights are validated now because 'women now write better plays'. She believed that the successful Black and Asian playwrights and novelists have no need of 'labels' and that's 'when confusions die away'. Lyn agreed that there is a protection needed to develop work, and money is ring fenced for this purpose, but that this funding means that companies need to 'face the fact of not being part of the mainstream'.

At one point in a conversation at the National Theatre Kristine Landon-Smith asked 'Who are our peers?' Following Lyn's argument there may be an assumption that the work of culturally diverse companies is simply not of the artistic standard of mainstream companies. Lyn suggested that until such companies shed their labels, their artists will never have 'peers' outside of their

own world. It is clear that this position is 'diversity without equality' but that the middle-scale culturally diverse companies are seeking 'unity in diversity'.

Giles Croft has suggested that the blocks to engaging with the artistic work of culturally diverse companies stem from the labels and categorisations such companies have been given and/or adopt for themselves. Giles suggested that the term 'contemporary work' might be a useful addition to the vocabulary of this conversation. Could Tamasha's work and the novels of Delia Jarrett-Macauley, Jenny Davis and Sarah Champion's Chinese dance company be categorised as 'contemporary British work' in the future, and would such a term allow for a more satisfying engagement in their work? This is certainly the aspiration of the culturally diverse artists and companies expressed throughout this paper, but how far away are such companies and artists from this goal?

When Shobana Jeyasingh argued that the critical discourse around her work has a telling effect on the company's survival and the way in which 'we value our lives as artists' she exposed the vulnerability felt by all artists. However, in the setting of this conversation it is clear that both Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company are exposing their work and the *raison d'être* of their companies to be critiqued in an open forum and they are seeking this conversation with some of the companies at the centre of power.

It is clear that these companies and artists are seeking this communication because they view them as their potential peers or collaborators. The question is, does the wish to collaborate work the other way? Is there a genuine interest from mainstream venues and companies to engage with the culturally diverse companies and the artists who work within these companies? In terms of the work produced, the artists themselves, artistic discourses played out in the work itself, methods of working, the audiences such companies attract and the accessible training, development and education wings of these companies.

Tamasha is in collaboration with the National Theatre on one project and it will be interesting to see in the future if such collaborations become part of the journey of the middle-scale culturally diverse companies. In time, will such collaborations lead to an engagement with the work of the artists from these companies and offer a two-way conversation in which the mainstream theatres begin to engage with the skills base of these companies, to access and develop the work of writers, directors, actors and theatre practitioners? What would be the benefit of such collaborations for all parties? For middle-scale companies this may be the next stage.

Many individuals make their way from the middle-scale culturally diverse companies to write and perform at the National Theatre and other mainstream theatres, arts venues or media. In 1990 Tara Arts and Talawa Theatre Company both performed their work at the National Theatre. Is there a sense in the mainstream today that there is no longer the need for engagement with culturally diverse companies because individual artists are coming through and these artists may have come direct through, for example, drama college routes? There may be the sense that the infrastructures have now been created, outside of culturally diverse companies which can 'feed the mainstream' with culturally diverse artists. However, at several points in this conversation we have seen that this may well be a complacent viewpoint.

As Jack Bradley pointed out, not enough culturally diverse work is submitted and Theatre Director Andrew Hilton was prompted to review his method of recruiting actors because not enough culturally diverse artists are coming through... because we are still not operating on a level playing field. Sudha Bhuchar and Dr Alda Terraciano have pointed out that the mainstream may need to think of new methods of providing access to culturally diverse artists and that culturally diverse companies use such methods successfully in the development of their work. Does Kristine Landon-Smith's assumption stand, that there is a resistance to engage with the work of culturally diverse companies because 'some of the work has entered the mainstream and therefore the problems around positioning are thought to no longer exist'?

The terms 'glass ceilings and glass walls' and 'ghetto' were used to signal the sense that culturally diverse middle-scale companies may have reached a position from which it is difficult to progress beyond. Samina Zahir, Arts Consultant and Writer explained this position. She said, 'I question this idea of a club. The moment we become an issue I question that. We are not seen as peers.' Samina stated that 'the culturally diverse companies were established by the Arts Council with a primary function of feeding the mainstream companies'.

The work of some middle-scale culturally diverse companies is no longer confined to the margins and these companies want to be considered for their artistic contributions in the mainstream. These companies see their own identity and the artistic work they produce as being inextricably bound and they wish to communicate this work to critics, peers and audiences in the mainstream.

Interestingly Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh have both engaged with the theories of interculturalism and intraculturalism in their work but their artistic praxis is rarely engaged with in their conversations with peers or the analysis of their work by the critics. However, both companies are invited to showcase and discuss their artistic work and the theories that underpin it, in other European countries.

It is no coincidence that middle-scale culturally diverse companies have chosen this moment to discuss their futures. Tamasha and other companies and artists are creating art that brings culturally diverse audiences to the arts, and this audience is no longer seen as a 'community' audience in terms of its willingness to travel to the centre.

Kristine Landon-Smith has suggested that the lack of acknowledgment of this audience may have a negative effect on the value of the work. Culturally diverse companies are signalling to the mainstream that their work can no longer be viewed as 'community work'. It may be that culturally diverse and culturally specific (in the case of the Gujarati community for *Strictly Dandia*) audiences coming to the centre, are forcing both culturally diverse companies and mainstream companies to self-evaluate.

In this reciprocal process of self-evaluation David Straun analysed his response to Tamasha's work. He said that his company works with individual artists. He added, 'Your company makes a unique statement. Sometimes when I have received your flyers the work seems to be 'over packaged' so that I think that is a complete thing... that's their thing... I have to ask, "Where is the room for collaboration?"' He concluded, ' I think that the company profile works in a negative way to disguise the artists.'

In the cases of Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company it is clear that in their art and in their theorising about their own work they do not operate in an 'armoured' position. Their aim is to communicate their work to a mixed audience. However, it may be the case that the multicultural philosophy out of which these companies emerged has led such companies to become totally self-sufficient and self-enclosed and therefore inaccessible to the mainstream.

In these conversations, Tamasha and the artists involved in these discussions have been seeking to move out of positions of 'mutual suspicion'. As quoted in the Netherlands policy document *Armour or Backbone*, a society of armoured people will be divided by mutual suspicion; yet a society whose people choose culture as a backbone may evolve towards a community characterised by 'unity in diversity'.

It is this society for the arts to which culturally diverse artists and companies aspire.

The individual artist and the mainstream

Once an artist hits the mainstream is the emerging artist given the freedom to work outside of the labels? It is clear that individual artists (not working from culturally diverse companies) are able to engage with the mainstream with a greater freedom than is possible for companies. However, as we have heard in Bristol from Delia Jarrett-Macauley, author and Rita Ray, World Music DJ, problems of inappropriate labelling persist. It is clear from these conversations that the independent culturally diverse artist faces many of the same challenges as the middle-scale culturally diverse companies. These challenges are around the way in which the work is represented in the mainstream. Ironically, although there is an insistence in the mainstream of working with the 'individual artist', this artist can often be made to represent whole communities if not continents.

At the National Theatre, the literary manager Jack Bradley, pointed out that he works with individuals and not companies and that his work is 'artist led'. The response that mainstream companies and artists work with 'individual' artists is stated several times throughout these conversations, in Birmingham by a BBC producer and in Bristol by Director, David Straun. In each instance the speaker seemed to be suggesting that when working with the individual artist the art itself takes precedence. By implication then, when working with the culturally diverse company it is all the other agendas that are perceived to be taking precedence and these agendas have more to do with funding than artistic engagement.

Once artists hit the mainstream, are they expected to shed their difference or fit into labels, which suggest that their work is 'contemporary' and universally appealing? As they have stated in these conversations most artists want to, in the words of author Jenny Davis, 'not throw away their genesis' but at the same time want recognition as writers, directors, actors or choreographers. However, we have read that for culturally diverse artists working in the mainstream, artists have experienced a mismatch between what they have created and how they have been represented and as a result how their work has been received.

Just as Black and Asian literature is entering the mainstream, so too there have been some successes for culturally diverse artists and companies in the mainstream of theatre, film and television. However, Kristine Landon-Smith argued that having reached this point that there is a risk of complacency.

Identity is key to the art of a culturally diverse company just as it is for the individual. Artists in these conversations have repeatedly expressed the importance of their own cultural identity in relation to their artistic creations whether they be musicians, choreographers, directors, actors or writers. However, as several participants have pointed out, many culturally diverse artists in the mainstream do not wish to be referred to by their ethnicity. This wish to escape categorisation stems from the impulse to have the work heard or viewed in the most open way possible. Where work is categorised under, for example, Black literature or Asian literature, it clearly affects the way in which it is read and who engages with it.

Kristine Landon-Smith talked of how her own identity as a mixed-race Punjabi-Australian is bound up in her work. Kristine believed that it is imperative that people engage with the identities of culturally diverse artists through their work. She said that when she works with actors she absolutely states her own identity because, she said, 'Who I am is why I'm working on this.' Kristine spoke at that moment as an individual artist. It is clear that the individual artist is better able to escape rigid categorisations than the company. David Straun has pointed out that Tamasha can package its work so fully that it 'hides' the artist. Possibly more work needs to be done to profile the work of the individual artists who run the culturally diverse companies.

Culturally diverse companies as audience developers

Are culturally diverse companies seen in 'the mainstream' largely for their roles as audience developers, for training and education purposes and as such are these companies seen as 'special cases' in terms of funding? Do the multiple roles of these companies lead to a lack of engagement with the artistic work by peers, venues and critics? Is there a perception that the multiple functions of such companies affect the quality of the work produced because such companies are considered in the mainstream to be identity rather than artistically led and does this distinction ultimately mean that there is no progression root for such companies, and that their existence remains a parallel one?

Tamasha has always aimed to attract a mixed audience. However, when Tamasha attracted a large Gujarati audience of first-time theatregoers but failed to attract a mainstream audience, this was thought to have a negative impact on the artistic reception of the work. Kristine Landon-Smith said:

My feeling is that if the audience is validated then the art is too... My question is around how valued that audience is at the centre/in the mainstream and how that impacts on the status of our work as a company.

Giles Croft made a distinction between early work by 'immigrant communities' and 'contemporary' work. He asked, 'Was it not historically the case that immigrant communities were creating work for their own communities?' Giles suggested that 'contemporary' work is expected to be played to a mixed audience. He suggested that as *Strictly Dandia* attracted a largely Gujarati audience in London this may have been responsible for labelling the work under an 'ethnic art' banner. Interestingly, *East is East*, which was successful in transferring to 'the mainstream', was a play which attracted a mixed audience and featured a mixed community. Can such companies provide the infrastructure needed to produce culturally diverse work without carrying stigmatisation, only when the 'mainstream audience' becomes a 'crossover' or culturally mixed audience?

Giles Croft resisted the notion that audiences should be courted as 'our Black [Asian] or Jamaican audience'. Giles believed that the audience comes to see work at the Nottingham playhouse, which is programmed in terms of 'genre', rather than ethnic identity. In contrast, while Tamasha's work attracts a new audience specific to every show, it is clear that 'ethnic identity' is central to the way in which Tamasha works.

Hardish Virk's posed the question, 'Is it seen as Tamasha's responsibility to develop the South Asian audience?' Hardish saw the company as a 'catalyst' to attracting this audience. In these conversations the audience development role of the culturally diverse companies has been seen as an ambivalent one.

In the case of Tamasha's show *Strictly Dandia*, the large Gujarati audience may have led to the perception of the show as a 'community show'. However, the fact that any audience by its nature is attracted to an artistic creation surely reflects that the story being told is one with which they connect.

As Jack Bradley pointed out, when Kwame's work is performed at the National a new audience is attracted. It is also clear from Simon Mellor's marketing statistics at The Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, that the Gujarati audience can afford to attend productions in mainstream theatres if the work attracts them. John McGrath's comment, that at The Contact Theatre in Manchester he does not attract a 'niche' audience but the 'new mainstream' audience which is everyone that the old mainstream theatre does not attract, clearly indicates the need for the more traditional theatres to re-think the way in which they engage with new culturally diverse artistic work and the audiences who are attracted to this work.

Would a closer connection to the culturally diverse theatre companies and the mainstream theatre companies of Britain benefit both parties and give peers, venues and critics the opportunity to engage with the artistic work of the companies which are both identity and artistically led? Shobana Jeyasingh's question 'Is it possible to be both culturally specific and British at the same time?' is an interesting one in this context.

Progression routes for culturally diverse companies...

If the margins only exist to connote the centre then what, if any, progression route is there for middle-scale culturally diverse companies?

The discussions around the South Asian Touring Theatre Consortium initiative addressed the work and interest of many of the smaller scale, or younger theatre companies and clearly enable companies coming from outside of London to place their work on a London circuit. Both Tamasha and Tara Arts have produced smaller-scale work for SATTC venues. However, the conversation also focused on the journey of middle-scale companies. The introductions by Kristine Landon-Smith and Shobana Jeyasingh offered an insight into the way in which, after 16 years, both companies feel that they have arrived at a point in their journey in which it is not clear, that there is a place to operate outside of the worlds, which they have created for themselves. The terms 'glass ceiling' and 'glass walls' were used.

Such companies might therefore be highly successful in terms of an audience's recognition of their work, and in changing the landscape of the arts (who makes it, what the stories are and who comes to it) but these companies may still not have any impact on the perceptions of peers or critics. If such companies do, in their work, create their own discourses, these discourses will be shared among their own and not affect the discourses which contribute to an emerging canon of British art. This parallel vision of the future is shared by Hardial Rai when he asked, 'Where do you go in this parallel existence?' This phrase echoes Trevor Philips' speech in *After 7/7: Sleepwalking towards Segregation*. If Philips' proposition is correct, does theatre mimic the trend in relation to cultural diversity in Britain as a whole?

Critical discourses around culturally diverse work

A major theme emerging in these conversations has been 'the lack of coherence in the audience reception of the work and the public discourse'. Both Tamasha and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company are considered to be established companies and both companies are at a point in asking themselves 'How are we

thriving or failing to thrive?’ Poignantly, Shobana argued that the critical discourse around her work has a telling effect on the survival of her company and the way in which ‘we value our lives as artists’. This experience is similar to that discussed by Tamasha in relation to *Strictly Dandia*. Shobana said, ‘I am struck by the extremity of the different responses to my work.’

Throughout these conversations a number of speakers from mainstream theatres have taken the view that what reviewers say about the work is of little importance, as it does not have a major impact on the audience. When Contact Theatre co-produced *Slam Dunk* by Nitro the show brought in a new core audience. John McGrath points out that what *The Guardian* says about a show like *Slam Dunk* may be less meaningful than a reviewer of ‘hip hop’ or ‘basketball’. It may be that the culturally diverse companies should stop looking to the centre mainstream for critical acclaim and focus on looking among its own peers of culturally diverse artists and those mainstream companies who clearly wish to engage with them.

In the mean time the culturally diverse companies have stressed that reviewers have an important role to play in that they can open or close a door to a specific sector of an audience. If a show has a four or five star rating in *Time Out* then it encourages all people to come. Sudha Bhuchar said, ‘If the reviewers’ reference points are so narrow that they cannot review the piece, the reviewer can ensure that the piece attracts a “niche” rather than a mixed audience.’

Vayu Naidu argued that the act of setting up a company and the work produced creates its own critical discourse. Vayu admitted that the struggle is that ‘we have to create our own discourse’.

Throughout the conversations participants discussed the need to create alternative discourses, of which these conversations and this report form one example. Kristine Landon-Smith said that lack of critical debate around the work can also have a negative impact on work being programmed for a tour – ‘an alternative critical debate is needed’, she said, ‘in which the company can bypass the critics and get programmers to come and see the work.’ Dr Alda Terracciano suggested that critics may need to consider other channels of commenting and expanding understanding and experience of culturally diverse work.

Recommendations for the future development of *In Conversation*

Create further contexts for collaboration (other kinds of conversations through collaboration) between middle-scale culturally diverse companies and ‘the mainstream’

The wish to explore the journey of culturally diverse arts was a key aim of the *In Conversation* initiative. In the final stages of engagement outlined in Tony Graves’ model there is an openness to engage in the nuances of the work. In order for common ground to be found there is a need to create further contexts in which conversations can take place about the nuances, development and artistic vision of work produced. During the course of the conversations much stress has been placed on cultural identity, audience development, and the critics, Kristine, Sudha and Shobana Jeyasingh have all commented on the mismatch of response from British Asian audiences, critics and peers. In the literary world, Jenny Davis suggests that she sometimes carries a burden of representation as ‘the voice of multicultural Britain’ which skews the way in which people respond to her work, and in the music business Rita Ray spoke of the financial pressures in which her club night was placed, finally affecting the quality of the artistic work.

The wish to express the motivation of artists was an important aim of Tamasha in hosting these conversations. In future conversations the focus might be on artists explaining their motivation for developing a particular show, or offering open access to the sharing of a method of working. It is clear from these conversations that it is demoralising for artists of culturally diverse companies to feel that they are working in isolation.

It emerged through a preamble chat to one of the conversations that some artists taking part in this conversation are producing work by the same Indian author. A collaboration between these companies could be on the level of recording their own specific journey of developing a piece by the same writer. It might offer artists and administrators the opportunity to share each other’s practice. An evaluation following each stage of development of a production in a culturally diverse company and in a mainstream venue could offer a detailed picture of the different artistic processes and producing cultures involved and offer a mutually beneficial and insightful picture of the worlds in which these companies are operating... where they run along parallel lines and where they are connected. Wherever possible it would be preferable to focus future conversations around the development or production of a piece of work. The issues around cultural diversity and the arts are so complex that discussions that lack a specific focus can end in frustration and, occasionally, silence.

Clearly, to get to an open conversation about the nuances of the work of culturally diverse artists and companies this conversation will be best progressed through participants identifying real opportunities for artistic collaborations with mainstream venues. The impulse for creating consortiums, as developed through the Black Regional Initiative in Theatre, between mainstream companies and Black arts centres, eg the one described at Plymouth, may provide a way forward for the culturally diverse middle-scale companies.

Create opportunities for critical discourse around culturally diverse work

Opportunities might be sought for critics to have access to the creation of the work of the culturally diverse theatre companies. This access would be encouraged as part of a question which would ask critics to consider what their reference points are in engaging with a particular piece of work. Culturally diverse artists might also be asked the same question, and by placing the critiques side by side we may begin to identify the 'common ground' between the discourses of culturally diverse companies and the mainstream.

Invite a range of artists and companies to host *In Conversation*

This document charts Tamasha's journey through *In Conversation*. Despite the fact that many other artists, producers and critics from different artforms took part in the conversations, Tamasha were responsible for focusing and progressing the conversations in each venue. Naturally, on some occasions, the emerging conversation did appear to be orbiting around issues raised and led by Tamasha. In this report there is a definite focus on the work of middle-scale culturally diverse companies in theatre. Individual artists have contributed valuable insights into the culturally diverse arts world, which have allowed Tamasha to see that they are dealing with common challenges in the development of their work. In the next stage of *In Conversation*, another company, possibly a mainstream theatre, music or dance venue, or a smaller-scale culturally diverse company, may wish to host the conversation. If a number of these conversations and reports were developed by different companies or individual artists it might be possible to place the scripts and interpretations of these conversations together and begin to have an overview of where culturally diverse companies and artists are positioned 'through their own eyes' in the early stages of the 21st century. This conversation offers a 'snapshot' of the image through the eyes of Tamasha.

Sita Brahmachari
9th January 2006

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Phillips, T. CRE *After 7/7: Sleepwalking towards segregation*, Manchester Town Hall, 22 September 2005

Appendix: Lists of participants

Lyric Theatre Hammersmith

30 January 2004

Chair

Sue Hoyle Deputy Director of The Clore Leadership Programme

Panellists

Hardish Virk	Director, Multi Arts Nation Ltd
Simon Mellor	Executive Director, Lyric Hammersmith
John McGrath	Artistic Director, Contact Theatre, Manchester
Kristine Landon-Smith	Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha
Sudha Bhuchar	Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha
Juliette Bevis	Marketing and PR Manager, Tamasha
Isobel Hawson	Senior Officer, Theatre, Arts Council England

Attendees

John Adam Baker	Cultural Outreach Worker, New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich
Malika Andress	Communications Coordinator, Leicester Haymarket Theatre
Shabina Aslam	Head of Radio Drama, BBC
Rahela Begum	Administrator, Tamasha
Colin Beesting	decibel Communications Manager, Arts Council England
Maya Biswas	Artistic Coordinator, Leicester Haymarket Theatre
Giles Croft	Artistic Director, Nottingham Playhouse
Rose Cuthbertson	Artistic Director, Lawrence Batley Theatre
Gemma Emmanuel-Waterton	Senior Officer, Diversity, Arts Council England
Sue Emmas	Associate Artistic Director, Young Vic Company
Charlotte Franklin	Marketing Director, Donmar Warehouse
Jennie Gentles	Marketing Director, Watermans
Lorien Gichuke	Touring Circuit Coordinator, South Hill Park
Chloë Gilgallon	Assistant Theatre Officer, Arts Council England, London
Claire Gossop	Projects and Events Coordinator, Tamasha
James Gough	Audience Development Manager, Arts Marketing Hampshire
Patricia Gould	Audience Development Officer, Smart Audiences
Helen Jeffreys	Black Regional Initiative in Theatre Review report writer
Ben Jeffries	Audience Development Officer, Arts Council England, London
Tim Jones	Arts Programming Manager, artsdepot
Jonathan Kennedy	Arts Programming Manager, Croydon Clocktower

Clare Lewis	Marketing Manager, artsdepot
Catherine Mallyon	General Manager, Arts and Theatres, The Hexagon, Reading
Rebecca Manson Jones	Director, Almeida Projects, Almeida Theatre
Carolyn Murphy	Arts Development Officer, Crawley Borough Council
Frederica Notley	Marketing Manager, Gardner Arts Centre
Louise Ormerod	Theatres Programmer, The Lowry
Diana Pao	Coordinator, Arts Council England
Bryan Savery	General Manager, Tamasha
Jacqui Somerville	Education Associate, Donmar Warehouse
Nadia Syed	Showhow Fellow, Almeida Theatre
Ewan Thomson	Head of Press, Royal Court Theatre
Anne Torreggiani	Director, Audiences London
Beatrice Udeh	Rapporteur, Nottingham Playhouse

Round Table Discussion – City Inn Westminster

17 March 2004

Chair

Bridget Thornborrow Freelance Press Consultant

Attendees

Sudha Bhuchar	Joint Artistic Director – Tamasha
Sita Brahmachari	Freelance Arts Education Practitioner/ Writer
Felix Cross	Artistic Director, Nitro
Rachel Halliburton	Deputy Theatre Editor, Time Out
Isobel Hawson	Senior Officer, Theatre, Arts Council England
Tyrone Huggins	Writer for theatre, dance and radio, and founder of Theatre of Darkness
Kristine Landon Smith	Joint Artistic Director – Tamasha
Indhu Rubasingham	Freelance Director
Aleks Sierz	Theatre Critic, <i>Tribune</i> and <i>The Stage</i> , and freelance critic

Arts Council Steering Meeting

Summer 2004

Sita Brahmachari	Freelance Arts Education Practitioner and Writer
Isobel Hawson	Senior Officer, Theatre, Arts Council England
Kristine Landon Smith	Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha
Dr Alda Terracciano	Future Histories, Middlesex University
Bridget Thornborrow	Freelance Press Consultant

Birmingham Repertory Theatre

28th June 2005, 4pm-5.30pm

Chair

Anna Umbima	Broadcaster and event producer
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Panellists

Deepa Patel	Freelance Consultant and Chair of Tamasha
Delia Jarret-Macauley	Writer

Attendees

Paul Burns	Project Manager, Punch Records
Sarah Champion	CEO, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester
Giles Croft	Artistic Director, Nottingham Playhouse
Alex Darbyshire	Executive Director, Tamasha
Beverley Dartnell	BBC Drama series Producer
Lorien Gichuke	Multicultural Arts Officer, South Hill Park
Hamish Glen	Artistic Director, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
Tony Graves	Lecturer of Arts Management, De Montfort University
Caroline Griffin	Audiences Central
Thrisha Halder	New audiences and project researcher, SAMPAD
Isobel Hawson	Senior Officer, Theatre, Arts Council England
Skinder Hundal	Operations Manager, SAMPAD
Kristine Landon-Smith	Joint Artistic Director – Tamasha
Hassan Mahamdallie	Diversity Officer, Arts Council England
Ben Payne	Deputy Artistic Director, Birmingham Repertory Theatre
Amanda Roberts	Director, Derby Dance Centre

National Theatre

29 September 2005, 2.45pm – 4.15pm

Chair

Deepa Patel Freelance Consultant and Chair of Tamasha

Panellists

Shobana Jeyasingh Choreographer and Director, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company

Kristine Landon-Smith Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha

Evaluator

Sita Brahmachari Freelance Theatre Education Practitioner and Writer

Attendees

Sud Basu General Manager, Vayu Naidu Company

Rahela Begum Marketing and Administrative Officer, Tamasha

Sudha Bhuchar Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha

Suman Bhuchar Freelance Marketer

Ruth Borthwick Head of Literature and Talks, South Bank

Jack Bradley Literary Manager, National Theatre

Jocelyn Cunningham Creative Director, Creative Partnerships, London North

Lyn Gardner Theatre Critic, The Guardian

Julia Good Administration Intern, Tamasha

Isobel Hawson Senior Officer, Theatre, Arts Council England

Ed Higginson Producer, Rasa Productions

David Lan Artistic Director, Young Vic Theatre

Steven Luckie Producer, Eclipse Theatre

Hassan Mahamdallie Diversity Officer, Arts Council England

Josie Murphy Development Intern, Tamasha

Vayu Naidu Artistic Director, Vayu Naidu Company

Hardial Rai Freelance Artist, Formerly Asian Arts Programmer, Watermans

Rebecca Russell Development Manager, Tamasha

Anjul Sharma Ethnic Researchers' Network, The Market Research Society

Pauline Tambling Executive Director, Development. Arts Council England

Dr Alda Terracciano Future Histories, Middlesex University

Ben Thomas Acting Artistic Director, Talawa Theatre Company

Sara Wajid Curator and Critic

Jenny Williams External Relations and Development, Cultural Diversity

Nick Williams Officer, Arts Council England
Theatre, Arts Council England (on behalf of Sian
Alexander)

Bristol Old Vic

13 October 2005, 3.30pm-5.00pm

Chair

Anna Umbima Broadcaster and event producer

Panellists

Sudha Bhuchar Joint Artistic Director, Tamasha
Jenny Davis Writer of play, novels and screenplays; performance artist
Rita Ray Broadcaster and World Music DJ

Evaluator

Sita Brahmachari Freelance theatre education practitioner and writer

Attendees

Alex Darbyshire Executive Director, Tamasha
Sara Green Artist
Kamini Gupta Cross-artform practitioner
Andrew Hilton Theatre Director, Tobacco Factory
Simon Kohli Asian Arts Agency, Bristol
Sarah LeFanu Director, Bath Literary Festival
Bertel Martin Writer and formerly at Kuumba in Bristol. Now developing
City Chameleon
Gloria Ojulari Visual artist
Joanne Peters Arts and Development Officer, Social Inclusion, Arts
Council England, South West
Simon Reade CEO and Artistic Director, Bristol Old Vic
Amble Skuse Arts and Development Assistant Officer, Diversity and
Inclusion, Arts Council England, South West
Kate Sparshatt Creative Producer, Plymouth Consortium for Cultural
Diversity and the Arts
David Straun Director, Queen Elizabeth Hall Theatre
Megan Thomas Formerly Bristol Old Vic, now freelance and working
with Colston Hall, Bristol
Samina Zahir Arts Consultant and Writer, working on diversity plan
with Arts Council England, South West

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