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Diversity Event Contact Theatre

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Introduction

Welcome to this year's diversity event, which Arts Council England is delighted to be running in partnership with Contact.

Thank you to everyone who's come together to shape what will be a busy and stimulating day.

This is a key date in the calendar, allowing us to reflect on progress with diversity, to share experiences and to discuss how we can make things better.

In previous years, the event has taken its cue from Baz – who has now handed on the diversity baton to me.

He's been an inspiration. And I'd like to thank him for ensuring that there's been real action on diversity, across the sector.

For me, diversity represents an immense and exciting opportunity.

It's the energy behind my involvement with the arts.

As you may know, I have a background in cultural education, as the author of two independent Government reports, highlighting the crucial role of the arts and culture in improving social mobility and life chances for children.

But, for many children and young people from minority communities and from the least prosperous parts of our society, the arts aren't a part of life.

That exclusion holds back their progress.

And this represents a huge waste of our national talent, at a time when we need it more than ever.

The Arts Council is the national development agency for the arts, for museums and for libraries.

It's our role to ensure that everyone, everywhere, can enjoy the best of art and culture, and all the benefits that flow from that.



So we have to break down barriers to participation across the protected characteristics of race, disability, gender and sexual orientation.

And I want us to do more to address socio-economic disadvantage, into which many from the protected characteristics fall.

And which includes those children from economically deprived backgrounds, for whom social mobility currently looks like a fantasy.

All children and young people should have the chance to benefit from the inspiration, skills and happiness the arts bring.

And if they want to pursue a career in the arts, then opportunities for entry, training and employment should not be restricted by ethnicity, disability or social disadvantage.

As I'll be showing in this speech, we're making progress with diversity in some areas.

But, as ever, much more needs to be done.

In the broadest sense, our challenge is to remain focused on that mission – to bring great art and culture to everyone.

In one way, that's about improving the breadth of our audiences, which are still dominated by the better off social groups.

But beyond these headline figures is the need to have a two-way relationship with those who think, for one reason or another, the arts aren't for them.

We need an approach that doesn't impose ideas of culture, but goes out to meet the public, ready to help them explore what culture might mean to them.

We're doing some excellent pioneering work around this now with our Creative People and Places programme, which I'll come to later.

We need more of this.

And within our organisations, it's vital that we do more to consolidate change where power lies, in our structures and in our leadership.

So that young people wishing to work in the arts, or in museums, or libraries, have real opportunities, see a level playing field, and can go as far as their talent takes them.

There's some inspiring work happening that we should celebrate - including that of our hosts, Contact, here in Manchester.

In this building, there's a long-term commitment to putting young people from local communities at the heart of decision making.



This informs a culture in which more than 30% of audiences, and 50% of commissioned artists, are black and minority ethnic.

And more than 30% are from the social groups who are least likely to be engaged with the arts.

In my first speech for the Arts Council, I talked about the need for a 25-year talent plan, pulling together the various ways in which we support entry and progression routes for children who otherwise wouldn't have the chance.

From cultural education, through apprenticeships, training and skills, to higher education, to leadership opportunities.

We need to see where the barriers and gaps are, and how we can overcome these.

Any young person, whether disabled or not, black, Asian or working-class white, urban or rural, should feel that if they've got the talent and the commitment, we're offering them a roadmap to success.

I can tell you that we've begun work on that talent plan, in partnership with De Montfort University in Leicester.

And next year, we'll be telling you more about what it'll look like.

Meanwhile, talent needs fertile ground to flourish.

So we need an arts and cultural sector with a workforce, leadership, and programming that are representative of our 21st century society.

Today, I'm going to talk about what the latest figures from our survey tell us about the make-up of the arts and cultural sector.

I'll talk about how we're supporting that work through our investment.

And I'll look to the future and outline the challenge we all face.

Report

First to the annual report.

This year we produced a more detailed survey.

We made changes to the data we gather, widening types of employment and including volunteers alongside permanent and contractual staff.

The new data requirements had steam coming out of the ears of our systems – so my thanks to everyone for their patience.

The survey has given us a better picture of diversity across the whole sector.



But it means that in some categories, we can't make direct comparisons with last year.

From data submitted by National Portfolio Organisations in 2015/16, we see that black and minority ethnic representation is now at 17%, slightly more than in the working age population as a whole.

But we need progress to be reflected in the leadership.

This year, for the first time we captured data on the diversity of chief executives, artistic directors, and chairs.

From this, we see that only 8% of chief executives are black and minority ethnic; 10% of artistic directors; and 9% of chairs.

For change to be real, there needs to be more diversity at the top.

We want boards to have succession plans to ensure their skills and diversity, as well as the diversity of their organisation's senior executives.

These plans should ensure that leadership is being recruited appropriately and refreshed regularly.

We are on it. And now we have benchmarks.

It was also extremely disappointing to see the high percentage of respondents to the surveys who preferred not to give an answer.

Credible data is crucial to our case for public investment.

It's expected from us; so we must expect it from the sector as a whole.

We must be able to present an accurate picture of progress and of problems.

And when we identify those problems, what we're going to do about them.

We ask funded organisations to provide correct and comprehensive data.

Inevitably, going forward, we will have to look at the funding conditions of those that do not comply.

There's also progress, with caveats, around gender.

Well over half of the workforce are women, but the percentages are much lower in the most senior positions.

Disabled representation within the arts and culture workforce now stands at 4%.

We all have to do better – and I include the Arts Council in that challenge.



Last year, we commissioned research from the EW Group to help us get a better picture of why this figure is now so low.

This showed that disabled people still face significant barriers to employment, especially around access to work.

We've expressed our concerns to Government about recent changes and their impact on the ability of disabled artists to develop their careers.

We're watching what happens next and will continue to make representations.

We're following that report with a good practice guide on disability.

It'll make recommendations around access and progression routes, changes to the working culture and increased awareness.

We'll be publishing this new guide next year.

Disabled representation at individual leadership level is largely in line with the workforce.

But we're encouraged that disability-led organisations in the National Portfolio have increased from 5 to 19 under our existing definitions.

When self-defining, 23 organisations now describe themselves as disability led.

So progress can be made. And we'll be reporting back again next year.

This year's survey also tells us about the Major Partner Museums workforce, of which 7% is Black and minority ethnic, while figures on disability and gender are similar or better than those across National Portfolio organisations.

There are historic reasons for the make-up of the museums workforce.

We know they're playing catch-up with the rest of the sector, and we'll be looking to them to get up to speed.

The Art's Council's own diversity also comes under scrutiny.

Our data for this year shows progress at director level but with overall figures much the same or with small decreases.

Across the workforce, black and minority ethnic representation is 11%.

We plan to do more, including looking at how we recruit.

Creative Case

But overall, the report shows a sector that is beginning to evolve.



We do have leverage – equality action plans, and the implementation of the Creative Case.

These are separate, but they work together – ensuring that we not only fulfil our obligations towards employment practice, but that we go further in putting diversity at the heart of our creative thinking.

The Creative Case demands fresh thinking about the relevance of our repertoire and how we connect with audiences.

We're seeing evidence of this change on stage and in the auditorium, but just as important are the programmes for talent development.

Look at the work of the Literary Consultancy, which we fund to offer free manuscript assessment and mentoring to writers who face social and economic barriers, or who are from diverse backgrounds.

Or Tomorrow's Warriors, dedicated to finding, developing and shepherding the best diverse jazz talent, and filling a crucial gap in learning and participation.

Or Sadler's Wells, which is offering creative opportunities for young people through its Summer University, Wild Card and Breakin' Convention programmes.

Or the International Curators Forum, which has built a racially and culturally diverse network of the next generation of British artists and creators.

This investment in the future will bring what was once marginal into the centre.

Day after day, I meet inspiring people who understand the importance of giving opportunity to tomorrow's talent.

Last month, I was at the Royal Academy of Music.

There, I heard from the Principal about the significant work they're doing to increase participation among black and minority ethnic students.

Through their Open Academy and its collaboration with music education hubs.

And through the Chance to Play scheme, which encourages children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

They hope to discover many more talented youngsters like their current student, 17 year old state-school educated Sheku Kanneh-Mason from Nottingham, whose parents are from Antigua and Sierra Leone.

A cellist, he's just been named BBC Young Musician of the Year.

He's smashing preconceptions about classical music, elitism and ethnicity – as are his six siblings, all of whom are enrolled with Royal Academy of Music programmes.



Strategic funds

All of the Arts Council's funding supports and promotes diversity, including our Strategic funds and Grants for the Arts.

And it's encouraging to note that we've seen an increase both in both eligibility and success rates among black and minority ethnic Grants for the Arts applicants.

As announced last year, we also have a suite of Strategic Funds that are addressing specific gaps around diversity.

These include Elevate, Sustained Theatre, and Changemakers.

One of the issues raised after the last NPO investment round was the need to ensure that we have more strong applications from diverse organisations.

Through Elevate, we're investing £5.3 million in developing the work of 40 organisations, that are outside the National Portfolio, but which are making a strong contribution to promoting the Creative Case for Diversity.

We're investing in organisations that put on carnival and promote hip-hop; that support the work of black and minority ethnic dancers; that create opportunities for disabled artists and for those who are socially excluded to make, produce and present new work.

We're investing in social enterprise, theatre and music, in the leadership workforce, and in the art-forms of tomorrow.

We want these organisations to be business-ready to apply for regular funding in future investment rounds.

Our Sustained Theatre fund is investing £2.1 million in new writing, new thinking and new leadership among black and minority ethnic artists.

There's an ambitious project that brings together Birmingham Repertory theatre and Talawa, along with the commercial acumen of Bill Kenwright and the Ambassadors Theatre Group.

Sheffield-based Eclipse Theatre will support more than 1,200 black and minority ethnic artists.

Tamasha Theatre will be providing placements for associate producers in theatres across the country.

Tiata Fahodzi will be delivering a talent development programme.



And the Bush Theatre in London will give power – and resources – to a new generation of diverse directors.

The importance of this work was brought home by the recent diversity report on British theatre sponsored by Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber. It lamented the dearth of diversity across theatre as a whole.

The flow of talent between organisations with public funding and the commercial theatre gives us a way to influence this.

So, a significant shift in our work will, in time, change the whole environment.

A third strand in our Strategic funding is Changemakers.

This £2.57 million investment brings together arts and cultural organisations with inspiring members of the black and minority ethnic and disabled communities.

We're supporting 20 Changemakers across literature, visual arts, orchestras, theatres, and museums.

One of the lessons of the Changemakers programme is that a diverse leadership makes strong business and creative sense for all organisations.

We want to see more diverse leaders across the whole sector.

I'm pleased that we've got some of the Changemakers here today, who will be talking about their work.

Through Unlimited, we're investing £1.8 million to support new commissions by disabled artists and disability-led companies.

Unlimited recently announced a shortlist of 60 projects, from which a final selection will be made.

We're putting more of our money into increasing diversity.

In all, we're investing £11.8m specifically on diversity this year.

That's an increase of almost 40% on the £8.5m we originally announced in 2015.

The wider context for our investment

Lastly, I'd like to talk about our plans for the future, and the challenge we face in ensuring that our work is for everyone, everywhere.

Through the Taking Part survey, we know that black and ethnic minority and disabled members of the public are under-represented in arts' audiences.



The report includes new data from Audience Finder with a break down of ticketed and non-ticketed audiences for NPOs.

This shows that audiences are weighted towards the top three socio-economic groups, out of line with the make-up of the general population.

But it also shows that the differences are reduced with non-ticketed events – so when events are more inclusively programmed, they can achieve more equitable results.

As I said at the start of this speech, we need to go out and reach those who don't currently engage, in ways that are relevant to them.

In my first year at the Arts Council, we announced that by 2018 we would be spending at least 75% of our National Lottery funding outside London.

This included the creation of the Ambition for Excellence Fund, supporting talent and leadership right across England.

We've also extended funding for the ground-breaking Creative people and Places programme.

We're now spending £37m targeting 21 areas with low arts engagement, urban and rural, helping people to explore and express what culture means to them.

In its second year, it reached some 450,000 people, 90% of whom were from the middle to lower end of the spectrum of engagement.

And we're also finding new audiences through Strategic Touring.

Last year, we made a grant of £2.3 million to Ramps on the Moon, a consortium of seven organisations led by New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich.

It recently completed a successful tour of The Government Inspector, which I enjoyed catching up with at Birmingham Rep.

All this work will cross boundaries of geography, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic status.

More people will have the life-changing chances that art and culture bring.

As I said, diversity is an opportunity that all of us must embrace.

In this era, we cannot rely on a sense of entitlement.

Great art and culture for everyone is the only way that public investment can have a future.

This autumn we announced our new investment plans for 2018 to 2022.



These will underpin the positive changes taking place, encouraging a richer cultural ecology, doing more to support artists and organisations of every size, scale and type, across the country.

We've opened up our funding streams to a wider range of applicants and matched our expectations accordingly.

A commitment to greater diversity will be at the heart of our funding processes.

Conclusion

Today, I've talked about how we're doing more to bring together our work on diversity with our drive to break down socio-economic barriers to participation.

Talent development, and offering opportunity to all, will be the key to this.

We looked at the report – at progress around BME representation and the work that still needs to be done for disabled people.

And I reiterate the need to improve the reporting of data.

This is an existential issue for publicly funded organisations.

We must all show an accurate picture of how public money is being spent, or face questions.

We looked at the Creative Case, at gaps in the leadership and how we can broaden our audiences.

We are seeing progress with diversity – thanks to you all – but we need to push on.

We don't expect overnight change. What counts is sustained change.

That means putting diverse talent at the centre of our work – and at the top of our organisations.

We want a situation where diversity is so much the case, it's unremarkable.

But to achieve this new ordinary, we need extraordinary effort, and extraordinary art.

Diversity matters now more than ever.

Difference fuels the dialogue of constructive change.

It gives us new ideas, new ways of thinking.

The strength of our nation is that we've been able to embrace and encourage difference.



At this time, we need to speak more strongly than ever of the opportunity that diversity represents – and the values it promotes.

Fairness, tolerance, compassion: progressive and inclusive values that will secure our future as a society.

At a time of change, and uncertainty, when young people especially must wonder what the future holds, all of us must be prepared to speak out clearly about the power of diversity.

Thank you for listening.