

UK RESEARCH + FINDINGS

Collage Arts

Director of Research and Development

Dr. Denise Stanley

UK INTERVIEWS WITH

Institutions

- **David Pritchard**, Head of Production/Deputy Technical Director at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London
- **John Mackinnon**, Technical Director, Roundhouse, Camden, London

SMEs

- **Julie and Linda Hurst** , Scenic Construction and Design Micro Business, Wales
- **Piers Shepherd**, Wonderworks
- **Ben Ringham**, Conspiracy

Freelancers

- **Polis DeLoizou**, Art Director,
- **Eleanor Field**, Theatre Designer
- **Tim Speight**, Technical Sound and Sound Engineer
- **Karen Whiteread**, Scenic Artist, Chocolate Factory

Education

- **Andy Franks**, Mountview Theatre School, London
- **Peter Maccoy** Central School of Speech and Drama, London

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Set design and stagecraft sectors

- There is a future for the sector as live performance 'always requires scenery and costume'
- Skills of the sector can easily be used in other industries such as theme parks or events e.g. weddings, leisure, corporate entertainment, Olympics etc.
- Despite funding cuts, there is a clear commitment from organisations to pay great attention to scenography

Technology and Handicraft Skills

- New technologies have not caused or will not cause a loss of handicraft skills
- New technologies are enhancers of skills and mesh seamlessly with existing skills
- You can actually print quite a lot of the 'scenic painting' nowadays'
- Creativity and Interpretation cannot be replaced
- Mundane and repetitive work may be replaced
- New technologies as enhancement rather than substitution
- May require new forms of collaboration with technicians
- May also open up new career opportunities in the technical side of theatre or film (Av Designer, CAD, Computerised lighting and sound)
- Technology can reduce production costs
- Challenge to do things in a new and different way

Impact of funding cuts

- Funding cuts stifle training opportunities in small theatres
- Using less money means organisations have to be more 'canny'
- Funding cuts hugely impact small theatres which impacts learning opportunities on young people
- Funding gets allocated to large organisations and not smaller ones
- New funding opportunities such as kickstart are considered

Careers and Educational Pathways

- Pathways into current jobs all vary, no common element. Some came into sector via technical courses, others had degrees in drama, textiles or design before coming into the field
- In technical theatre easier to find full-time employment than in other areas of theatre
- Often young people don't know the broad range of opportunities available in technical theatre
- In some cases fringe theatres were a stepping stone into current careers in theatre

Awareness of educational system of needs and opportunities of the sector

- Don't think the educational sector is aware of needs and opportunities within the sector
- Education should provide clearer advice on the broad range of opportunities within theatre, particularly in technical side of theatre
- Skills gained in technical theatre can easily be transferred to other sectors and industries
- Backstage work is often not seen as 'sexy' and so less people choose this path even though it may offer better career opportunities
- Theatre is not given enough importance in primary and secondary school
- Challenge is to find people who understand BOTH artistic and technical side of theatre-there is no educational pathway and snobbishness from both 'sides'
- People coming from university often lack work experience

Recognition and Valorisation of Skills

- No formal recognition of skills
- Personal networks were crucial for careers
- Recognition via 'being known for quality of one's work'. This is a way to be hired again in the future
- Hard skills are easier to valorise, soft and creative skills are more difficult to quantify
- It is successful to have more experienced and less experienced working together as the latter can learn from the former
- There have been attempts by industry ABTT and PLASA to give validation
- There is no successful NVQ for stagecraft yet
- Work experience is highly appreciated often more than formal qualifications

Difficulties in collaborating with other professionals in the sector/industry

- Creative teams are often changing as projects of limited time therefore necessary to work with a wide range of people
- Some staff are not aware of technical and financial boundaries
- Some technical staff don't have enough understanding of the creative staff
- Usually there aren't any major problems
- It is important to reach compromises

Most needed Professional Profile

- Audio-visual skills have become crucial
- Departmental career paths have gone
- Hard to find a drafts person/construction engineer
- Management skills as in Production
Management are lacking also the ability to manage broad range of people with different skills
- Designer with a background in building is rare

How welcoming is the sector to immigrants

- The sector is generally welcoming to immigrants
- Many productions are produced with an international team
- In construction immigrant labour is associated with cheap labour (minimum wage) which is occurring (false economy of cheap labour)
- Language was reported to be a problem in some cases when people don't understand the technical terminology

How welcoming is the sector to women

- Although the sector is welcoming to women most people working in technical theatre are men
- Reported experiences of being questioned or confronted with stereotypes as women working in the sector
- Most interviews report that the situation has become better and is expected to improve in the future

European Labour Mobility

- Some have experience of working in Europe, although not permanently, but for specific events or projects
- There are Associations at a European Level for Technical Theatre and members meet regularly to exchange experiences and discuss current issues
- Lack of foreign language skills among British people makes it difficult to work in another country unless Australia, North America
- Some fringe theatres go abroad with their work
- British excellence in the sector is respected

Coverage of questions:

- Careers and Education Pathways (15.54%-5.69%)
- Difficulties in collaboration (13.22%-4.62%)
- Educational system aware of needs and opportunities (15.8%-4.63%)
- European Labour Mobility (17.35%-4.74%)
- Impact of Funding Cuts (14.58%-4.66%)
- Most needed Professional Profile (16.84%-1.88%)
- Recognition and valorisation of skills (11.97%-5.57%)
- Sector welcoming to immigrants (37.64%-5.49%)
- Sector welcoming to women (14.46%-2.84%)
- Set design and stagecraft in the labour market (9.72%-4.06%)
- Technology versus handicraft skills (14.43%-4.39%)