

NEWS

Low pay and skills shortages ‘threaten industry’s future’

GEORGIA SNOW

Low pay, diminishing arts education, skills shortages and regional equality are among the most acute challenges threatening the future success of the creative industries, according to new research.

Despite continued growth within the sector, and the expectation that creative jobs will prove more resilient in a future labour market than other skills, questions remain as to whether there will be the required talent and opportunities to allow industries such as theatre, film and TV to thrive.

These are the questions posed by a new report into the challenges facing the creative industries, which has been penned by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, an initiative led by Nesta.

It identifies nine critical issues spanning skills, talent and diversity which “if left unaddressed could undermine the success of the creative industries and economy”. They are:

- Job quality and working practices, including “low-paid and precarious” work that jeopardises the health and well-being of the workforce.
- Skills evolution, which questions whether the creative industries are prepared for the technological demands of the future.

- The “devaluing and deprioritisation” of creative education.
- A shortage of effective entry routes and career progression opportunities that will support and nurture the workforce.
- Difficulty accessing international talent because of Brexit.
- Skills shortages in some areas of the creative industries and oversupply in others.
- A lack of industry investment in learning for those already in work, which “is creating skill deficiencies in the workplace”.
- Failing to make use of diverse talent.
- A need to better use “local talent pools” across the country, meaning the creative industries are “deeply segmented”.

Overall, the report argues that the future for the creative industries is bright and claims there is “growing global appetite for UK content”. However, it asks: “As we witness unprecedented tightness in the UK labour market, combined with a continued growth in high-skilled roles, will there be talent available to fill these roles?

“In the face of rapid change in the market, can we be confident that the skills businesses need to thrive in the future are being developed by those learning in schools, colleges and universities today?

“As we strive to build a balanced and inclusive UK economy, will the opportunities

created in this vibrant sector be accessible to everyone – regardless of their socio-demographic background or where they live?”

The report was written following nine months of research and was drawn from more than 300 sources of evidence, including information from 50 organisations.

- The report has been published soon after The Wire star Wendell Pierce argued that at least 10% of seats in all theatres should be filled by schoolchildren. He was speaking at last month’s Evening Standard Theatre Awards 2019, where actors Hayley Atwell and Cush Jumbo called for more access to theatre for schools.

Pierce, who is currently appearing in Death of a Salesman in the West End, told The Stage: “I think the schools should bring more kids to the theatre all the time, it should be a prerequisite. I’ve been asked to speak at so many different schools [...] and I’ve said ‘I’ll do it, any time you want, I just have one precondition: you have to bring a group to see the play’, and all of a sudden they rescind the invitation.

It’s actually appalling. You just chuck people like me through the school every once in a while, and say ‘Here’s another person of colour – you see he’s made it so you can too’ – but you don’t want to expose kids to the very thing.”

Pierce added: “I would like to see 10% of the house with kids and schools all the time.”



MARC BREWER

Jeremy Herrin: Regional cuts will lead to less risky work

GIVERNY MASSO

Headlong artistic director Jeremy Herrin has warned that a lack of funding for regional theatre will “homogenise the work” and result in producers taking fewer risks.

Herrin, who recently announced his final season with Headlong, also called on Arts Council England to set up a forum for theatre companies to discuss issues with touring work.

“I think the Arts Council has got to really acknowledge that it just doesn’t give us enough money for us to simply tour theatre,” he said.

“We’ve got to work in co-production, which limits the amount of work we can get out there, limits the amount of money we can spend on audience development, and eventually it’s going to homogenise the work and it’s going to mean that people take fewer risks.”

Herrin said that unless there was significant investment into regional theatre from local and national government, he was “not optimistic about the state of regional theatre”.

“It would be great [for the Arts Council] to set up some kind of conversation, whereby the people on the front line trying to get regional tours together are able to share some of their gripes and try to work out a new strategy, because frankly it’s not working at the moment, it’s not working for anyone,” he added.

His comments follow concerns raised by Bristol Old Vic artistic director Tom Morris that theatres are at risk of losing their individual identities as co-productions become more necessary.

Secondary ticketing site Twickets joins Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers

MATTHEW HEMLEY

Secondary ticketing site Twickets has joined the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, making it the first organisation of its kind to become a member.

Twickets, which last month announced it had partnered with LW Theatres to allow theatregoers to sell on unwanted tickets, said the move was part of its effort to “prevent blatant profiteering in the secondary ticket market”.

Twickets founder Richard Davies said: “This is a key development for us as it reaffirms the business as the legitimate face of resale, working to bring fairness and transparency to event-goers everywhere. Our goal is always to improve the ticket-buying experience, and we look forward to collaborating with other STAR members to prevent blatant profiteering in the secondary ticket market, which not only harms fans but damages the industry as a whole.”

STAR chief executive Jonathan Brown said Twickets had “steadfastly focused on its

mission to enable fans to resell tickets they can no longer use for the price they paid or less”.

He described the company as “a key player in the new landscape of authorised, fan-friendly ticket resale”, adding: “Customers can buy from Twickets with the reassurance that they are accountable to the STAR Code and dispute resolution service, receiving the same high standards of service and information as from other STAR members.”

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Spotlight joining criteria under fire

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“I know people with hundreds of commercials under their belts and award-winning short films who are not eligible. However, once on the site, despite having all these other credits, a lot of the jobs are for commercials and short films,” she said.

She added: “My question to them is: if those jobs are not good enough to join the site, why do they offer those jobs in the first place?”

Responding, a spokeswoman for Spotlight said it had to “adhere to strict entry

requirements to ensure all performers are of a professional standard”, and that the casting site accepts both “training and professional credits”.

“Spotlight performers are some of the best in the world and we work hard to ensure casting directors can find these performers,” she said.

She added: “For performers who do not meet our entry requirements, we always invite them to re-apply once they have more training or experience. In such a competitive industry we do understand how hard it is, which is why we look at each application individually and help wherever we can.”

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