



ENSEMBLE THEATRE CONFERENCE

23rd November 2004

The Pit, The Barbican, London

Background Material

Introduction: A Definition of Ensemble Theatre; The Context of the Conference; The Conference Steering Committee.

Quotes on Ensemble: A selection of quotes provided to Conference participants and referred to at several points by speakers.

A Note on the Transcription of the Conference

Conference Sessions

Welcome: Harry Landis (President, Equity).

Key Note Speaker: Michael Boyd (Artistic Director, Royal Shakespeare Company).

First panel Session: Ensemble outside of the UK - Mikhaïl Stronin (former Literary and International Relations Manager, Maly Drama Theatre, St Petersburg, Russia), Agata Siwiak (Artistic and Programme Coordinator of International projects, Sławy Teatr, Kraków, Poland).

Chair: John Carnegie (Theatre Directors' Councillor, Equity).

Second Panel Session: Ensemble in the UK – Hamish Glen (Artistic Director, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry and founding Artistic Director of the Dundee Rep Ensemble Company), Alan Lyddiard (Artistic Director, Northern Stage), Barrie Rutter (actor and Artistic Director, Northern Broadsides).

Chair: Ruth Mackenzie (Co-Artistic Director, Chichester Festival Theatre).

Third Panel Session: UK Administrators – Ruth Mackenzie (Co-Artistic Director, Chichester Festival Theatre), Nicola Thorold (Director of Theatre, Arts Council, England), Joanna Reid (Executive Director, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry and former Administrative Director of Dundee Rep Theatre).

Chair: Felix Cross (Artistic Director, NITRO).

Round Up Session: Discussion of the Conference Recommendations – led by Philip Hedley (Director Emeritus, Theatre Royal, Stratford East).

Ivor's Final Thought: Ivor Benjamin (Honorary General Secretary, DGGB).

Concluding Materials

Conference Conclusions: The advantages of ensemble for the theatre company; The advantages of ensemble for the artists; The advantages of ensemble for the community.

Conference Recommendations

Biographies of the Conference Speakers in Alphabetical Order

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A List of Conference Participants

The Challenges of Ensemble Theatre

Introduction

A DEFINITION OF ENSEMBLE THEATRE

Ensemble theatre occurs when a group of theatre artists (performers, artistic directors, stage management and the key administrative staff) work together over many years to create theatre. Other artists (such as writers, performers, directors, designers, composers, choreographers, etc) will be brought in on an occasional basis to refresh and develop the work of the ensemble - although the focus will remain on its permanent personnel.

THE CONTEXT OF THE CONFERENCE

Ensemble theatre used to be far more widespread in the UK than it is at present. It was the principal way of working from the actor consortium companies of Shakespeare's day through to the nineteenth century actor-managers' stock companies. However, in the twentieth century with the advent of director-led theatre, this changed and the ensemble principle was largely abandoned. There are notable exceptions to this - such as Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, Laurence Olivier's National Theatre Company, the early years of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Peter Cheeseman's work at Stoke on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme – but today there are very few professional ensemble companies in the UK.

However, in the rest of Europe, there is a different picture with the ensemble theatre tradition still flourishing and attracting substantial audiences. Despite creeping commercialisation, many companies continue to have a long and proud history of the ensemble way of working. Unlike the UK, they have assimilated the change to director-led theatre within their ensemble structures.

The Equity / Directors Guild of Great Britain Joint Conference on Ensemble Theatre brought together directors, actors, other theatre practitioners, funders and administrators from across the theatre community to examine the ensemble principle and in particular discuss:

- what makes it different from other structures.
- the ideology (alongside the practical needs) of establishing and operating in an ensemble company.

THE CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE

For the DGGB: Ivor Benjamin, Sue Parrish, Sakia van Roomen.

For Equity: John Carnegie, Patricia Doyle, Louise Grainger, Virginia Wilde.

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Quotes on Ensemble

A selection of quotes provided to Conference participants and referred to at several points by speakers.

Kenneth Tynan in “Theatre in Moscow” in “Harper’s” 1956:

“To say that youth is not at the helm of the Russian theatre is an understatement: it is lucky if it is allowed to scrub the decks. The power and the glory of Soviet theatre resides in its older actors, who are by far the finest I have ever seen. With age they do not wither or grow frail, as our actors often do. They expand in mind and muscle... There is a simple reason for this continuity of development: economic security. Once an actor has been accepted by a company and proved himself in it, he has no financial worries. Variation of repertoire keeps him from going stale or gaga; he is seldom asked to act more than four times a week, and when he retires the state steps in with a liberal pension. Compare the plight of the old actor in England, ashamed of his age and doubtful whether he can learn his lines in three weeks’ rehearsal. In Moscow, age is a badge of merit, and there is time for certainty and for perfection... Theirs is the greatness that can come only to actors who do not need to worry about how great they are.”

Kenneth Tynan in “Bertolt Brecht” in “The New Yorker” 12th September 1959:

“The [Berliner] Ensemble today consists of sixty-two actors, plus a staff of administrators, office workers, stagehands, musicians, designers, dress-makers, scene builders, electricians, ushers, waitresses, and cooks that brings the grand total of employees up to nearly three hundred. Its yearly subsidy, paid by the Ministry of Culture, amounts to more than three million marks. Rehearsals, in this happy set-up, may go on for anything between two and six months; when I was there in June, the cast of *The Threepenny Opera* was already wearing full costume and make-up, although the opening was not scheduled until October. It sometimes worries Helene Weigel [Brecht’s widow and the then Artistic Director of the Ensemble] that in its ten years of operation the Ensemble has presented no more than twenty-five plays. She need not disturb herself unduly, because the main reason for the company’s low output is, quite simply, its fame. Its productions are being reverently filmed for the East Berlin archives, it is constantly being invited to foreign countries... and it spends a lot of time polishing and recasting its existing repertoire.”

Joan Littlewood (Artistic Director from 1945-1975 – and saboteur and concierge, according to her – of the Theatre Workshop company which was based in the Theatre Royal, Stratford East from 1952) writing in Encore magazine in October 1961:

“I do not believe in the supremacy of the director, designer, actor or even of the writer. It is through collaboration that this knockabout art of theatre survives and kicks. It was true at the Globe, The Curtain, The Crown, and in the ‘illustrious theatre’ of Molière and it can work today.

No one mind or imagination can foresee what a play will become until all physical and intellectual stimuli, which are crystallised in the poetry of the author, have been understood by a company, and then tried out in terms of mime, discussion and the

precise music of grammar, words and movement allied and integrated. The smallest contact between characters in a remote corner of the stage must become objectively true and relevant. The actor must be freed from the necessity of making effective generalisations.

I could go on but you know how the theatre must function if it is to reflect the genius of a people, in a complex day and age. Only a company of artists can do this."

Laurence Olivier writing in February 1962 to a fellow director about the prospect of setting up an ensemble company at the new National Theatre:

"At the moment it looks like being the most tiresome, awkward, embarrassingly forever-compromise, never-right, thankless fucking post that anyone could possibly be fool enough to take on and the idea fills me with dread."

Michael Elliot (at the time a director of the Old Vic Company, London) interviewed by Kenneth Pearson in "The Sunday Times - Colour Supplement" 23rd September 1962:

"You know, the greatest danger of national companies is the complacency they breed. In Sweden, for example, some of the actors are given 25-year contracts. That makes for complacency. There's a lot to be said for the improvisation of the English theatre. The actor who's been out of work comes bursting with enthusiasm. Not that they should be out of work, but the fact that they are... You get a kind of tension, a kind of drive."

Peter Hall (at the time the Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company) interviewed by Kenneth Pearson in "The Sunday Times - Colour Supplement" 23rd September 1962:

"The National Theatre should be like a public library service, but even then it'll depend on one man's taste - as it should. It's no good running these things by committees. That's where the Continent's national theatres come adrift. They go on and on with 20 or so plays in repertory, growing tired and tired, with no point of view. We want a National Theatre, not a Nationalised Theatre."

Laurence Olivier (at the time the Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Great Britain) at the NT's First Press Conference reported in "The Times" 7th August 1963:

"We aim to give a spectrum of world drama and to develop in time a company which will be the first in the world. The company for the first year are being engaged on a one-year basis; the future aim is to offer long-term contracts in which actors receive a basic salary supplemented by extra fees for each performance so as to approach West End scales. There is no need for anyone to be punished for the sake of art and prestige. If you want good actors you have to pay for them."

Laurence Olivier in a letter of 30th March 1967 to Tyrone Guthrie:

“Study and observation of the last thirty years of theatre has led both Peter Hall and myself to the same conclusion, that a permanent ensemble is the only way to keep the standard consistently on a high rise. There will be some star visitations of course, and these have happened from time to time, but you will not get any actor in a troupe nowadays (unless he is above a certain age) to accept that his level is Benvolio throughout. They all expect opportunities, and they are right. The last thirty years aforementioned have shown us that there are a handful of stars who may come season by season... You wear them out quite quickly and in a very few years they have played all the parts they want to play... In the meantime, you have done absolutely nothing whatsoever to promote a feeling of continuity or unity of purpose and spirit in the rest of the Company, which is the only thing that a permanent company has to offer...

I would give a couple of limbs never to have to tour, but I could never get the subsidy to run a Company of this size... If I only had the Old Vic to run I could offer, of course, much more ideal casts all of the time but in this case I would be training, preparing, giving opportunity, to practically nobody for the future. In short, the theatre would bear the decayed look of the Comedie Francaise or the Moscow Arts in no time. I have to admit, of course, that I am madly fond of them all, and very proud of most of them.”

Albert Finney (quoted in the 1970's television series “Acting in the Sixties”):

“I do like working in repertoire. One night you may be playing Billy Liar and the next evening you might be playing Luther; then you're satisfying different sides of your talent. But, when playing one character for a long time, one isn't, and I do find this very frustrating: I don't enjoy it. I also think it's bad for actors; it is for me... Doing that amount of work and that variety of work is something I've always been keen on. Actors can explore themselves at the National or the Aldwych [the then London home of the Royal Shakespeare Company) quicker than by just performing in the commercial theatre, where you probably do ten plays in ten years, if you're lucky. But in the repertory theatre to play six parts in just over a year was marvellous. The experience of being at the National, once I'd settled down again to the theatre and got my stage legs back, was an environment that one could explore. It was not only the plays, but differing directors with such varied styles and different ways of working that was so enormously valuable to any actor, whatsoever stage he happened to be at.

Tadeusz Bradecki on taking over as Artistic Director of the Stary Teatr, Krakow in 1990 (shortly after the collapse of communism):

“The Stary Teatr has always been a company theatre and its manager has only formed a part of this self-controlling organisation... The Stary Teatr has never been a theatre of one director, one style, one literature, and therefore it has been exceptional. We have always been an association of artists who have sometimes quarrelled, competed with one another, and sometimes gone hand in hand, and I feel obliged to preserve this model, and to give it a new meaning. I am afraid that soon few theatres in Poland will afford to follow the idea of company work and artistry in the broad meaning of the word. But the Stary Teatr must do it. I refuse to treat it in the free market categories; otherwise it is going to lose its value. Even with a lack of funds and the generally poor condition of the country, the Stary Teatr has every

reason to remain a permanent company of high-class professionals: actors, directors, stage-designers, technicians, etc; a company representing an aesthetic and ideological variety, but united by the same concern for the art of the theatre.”

Robert Stephens (who had been a founder member of the National Theatre of Great Britain) interviewed by Alan Strachan in "Kaleidoscope, 7.20pm, BBC Radio 4, 20th June 1992:

(Talking about the early years of the NT under the direction of Laurence Olivier when many “New Wave” actors from the Royal Court Theatre became part of the company): “What was interesting about that - the National as it began - was that they brought in this extraordinary Knorr soup of all the different ingredients: all different sorts of actors with different personalities. Also, from the West End, in came Maggie Smith and Larry brought some of his people in. As a diplomat. Superb. So everybody felt important. And if you can, I think, in life in general - I certainly learnt it from him - if you can gain people’s goodwill, they will do anything for you.”

Lev Dodin (Artistic Director of the Maly Drama Theatre, St Petersburg) interviewed in Theatre Scotland August 1994:

“Britain has a lot of talent, a lot of spiritual forces and a lot of people with spiritual strivings and desires, but these forces remain unutilised... People very often are not aware that their spiritual energy is wanted by someone. Theatre people have to be more independent and more determined in their attempts to fulfil their artistic rights. By doing this they prove that their art is wanted by society. They have an artistic right to work and to be wanted. I don’t think artists should consent to the situation when they find themselves in a small recess on the side of life in which society has put them.

However great the industrialisation of society might be, art should always be independent of this process. Art is not subject to any kind of industrialisation. It is not subject to the speeds or the laws of industrialisation. It is absolutely divorced from this process. But it deals with external human values and artists should fight for the right to speak about eternal human problems. If we compare industry and art: in industry the value is in the result; you produce a thing and they pay you for what you have produced; in art the value is not in the result but rather in the process. This process is about the relationships inside an artistic organism such as theatre, or the relation between theatre and audiences and *this* is the value. If we speak about payment of artists, we should speak about paying for the process, something that is intangible but which should be paid for.”

Trevor Nunn in 1999 arguing the case for the National Theatre returning to its roots by creating an ensemble company:

“I first read about theatres like the Moscow Art and the Berliner Ensemble in the late 1950s. What I read stirred my nascent idealism, as I understood that theatre companies were in some sense societies in microcosm, and that a democratic, libertarian, egalitarian company presenting plays of great diversity could express an ideal of a world I wanted to live in. The concept of a group of artists working and progressing together, with give and take, through times of both hardship and plenty, conjured up for me co-existing images of heroism and humility, of artistic imperatives

taking precedence over the ad hoc assumptions of the market place, the 'vogue', the bauble of personal fame.

I now know that things were never quite like that in those trail-blazing ensembles, and that the artists probably fell short of the ideal commitment even in Shakespeare's company, or on any other occasion when this demanding approach to collaborative creativity has been attempted. I learned during my eighteen years at the RSC that compromise is a daily necessity in the life of a permanent ensemble, and that not everybody is prepared to make the personal sacrifices necessary for the system to work as it should.

When at the end of that time I retired to the chimerical vivid-green pastures of film and television and commercial shows, I experienced relief for a while that I was now only expected to look after number one. But the contrast was great and the relief short-lived. I missed the community and spirit of colleagues who, admittedly to varying sacrificial degrees, had made their life and their work interdependent. I knew that one day I would have to find that spirit again.

Kenneth Tynan, the legendary dramaturg and eminence grise of the early National, was an impassioned advocate of the ensemble principle, and persuaded our greatest actor-manager Laurence Olivier to set up the brave new enterprise as the English attempt to match the inimitable achievements of the Comédie Française and the Berliner and Moscow companies. The golden age of the National at the Old Vic was the triumphant expression of that dream.”

Giles Havergal (at the time the Artistic Director of the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow) interviewed by Susan Mansfield in “The Scotsman” 13th March 2002:

“[I am] torn between knowing that many of the really major theatres in other countries have sprung from ensembles, and knowing that if you're trying to do a cross-section of work, unless you have a very big ensemble you might get less good casting in some individual plays. The thing is to do plays which suit the ensemble, but most of us have to think much wider than that. It's also the case that actors of a certain experience don't always want to tie themselves down for that long. But it's a marvellous idea if it's right for your theatre.”

Philip Howard (Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh) interviewed about ensemble theatre by Susan Mansfield in “The Scotsman” 13th March 2002:

“It's not necessarily for everybody. It wouldn't work for the Traverse, as a new writing theatre. We believe we have to make sure each writer writes exactly what they want, and having to write for specific actors does tie the hands of writers. It's too constricting.”

John Ramage (founder member of the Dundee Rep Ensemble Company) interviewed by Susan Mansfield in “The Scotsman” 13th March 2002:

“Everybody outside of here was convinced it would fall apart within three months. Actor friends were asking us who was fighting with who. But there have been no failures. There have been imbalances and one or two rescue jobs and there have

been spectacular successes... I don't think any of us came here with the thought that this was a chance to play big parts. We did it because we were interested in the experiment."

Steve Grimond (Director of Arts and Leisure, Dundee City Council) interviewed by Joyce McMillan in "The Scotsman" 30th September 2002:

"In our view, the ensemble experiment at the Rep has been a huge success. It's a key contribution to the city's growing cultural reputation, and that in turn helps to encourage visitors, to raise Dundee's profile as a place to live and invest, and to generate new commercial development."

Antony Sher (Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company) interviewed by Mark Shenton in "What's on Stage" 10th March 2003:

(On performing in a five play repertoire): "The privilege of being in the West End at the moment and not playing the same part eight times a week as normally you would is just delightful beyond belief! I find the West End very difficult from that point of view – I find the endless repetition required really, really hard, trying to keep inventing and to keep a performance fresh. That problem is completely removed here, and instead there is a mild terror at all times, because you are never quite sure when you last did this particular show. But terror is very healthy for a good performance... The benefit of not being punch drunk with the show, but instead really thinking freshly through it, is just completely invaluable. I would prefer to work in this system always."

Nichola McAuliffe in "Good Company" in Arts News Summer 2003:

"As far as [British] theatre is concerned, I have been shocked at how unexcellent we have become... I saw the [Swedish National Theatre in] *Ghosts*... The ease and extraordinary cohesion of the actors' performance broke through any language barrier. They have worked together as a company for years – in Sweden acting is a respected profession. I very much doubt they are looked on with pity by the checkout girl in the Stockholm Sainsbury's because they are not in a soap... If only there was an opportunity to create a company of actors and directors whose working conditions meant they didn't have to continually be chasing television work and fame, who could stay together and work on texts not for three to nine weeks but for years – as continental companies do – we may be able to establish a new era of great classical theatre in Britain."

Simon Callow in a review of Richard Eyre's Diary in The Guardian 4th October 2003:

"The riot that is at the theatre's heart – the gaudy assertion of carnival values, upturning everything, embracing everything – cannot be reduced to a note, or a gesture. It springs from the primitive act of theatre – an actor and an audience – fuelled by an all-consuming, raging need on both parts of the equation, which is why a theatre that doesn't have a company at its centre will always, by one means or another, end up cerebral, and that spells death for it."

Nonso Anozie in a diary entry about visiting Moscow with the Cheek by Jowl production of “Othello”: The Guardian 10th November 2004:

“The theatre culture here is unbelievable. It’s much more revered than film. We had a press conference and the room was full of TV and newspaper reporters. And the way actors work is crazy. The average Russian actor, if lucky enough to join a rep company, will spend up to three years rehearsing a single play, and then perform the same play for up to 15 years. I spoke to an actor after the show; he said he loved it but he could see it was still young and fresh and that it needed “five years to get to the right place”. I laughed – it’s just a completely different mindset.”

Simon Callow writing about in his first experience of seeing the Maly Drama Theatre (in his introduction to “Dodin and the Maly Drama Theatre – Process to Performance” by Maria Shevtsova, 2004):

“It is scarcely possible for me to exaggerate the impact that evening had on me... The connectivity of the actors was almost tangible, an organic tissue which made them breathe as one and move with a profound awareness of everything that was going on within the group. I was overwhelmed. I had never seen a group like it and never had a comparable experience in a theatre...”

Such a company is not, let us be realistic, commercially viable; moreover, it demands absolute commitment over a long period of time from its participants. To exist at all it requires enlightened support from government sources, and necessitates the abandonment by the company of other professional possibilities. It is not for all actors or directors. But surely somewhere, somehow in the English-speaking world it is possible to truly honour the art of the theatre – to which so much lip-service is paid – by investing in an organisation comparable to the Maly.”

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A Note on the Transcription of the Conference

The sections that follow represent as accurate a transcription as has been possible to take from the two separate recordings (audio and video) made of the conference. It was possible to hear virtually every word of the platform speakers. However, some of the contributions from the floor are rather indistinct on the recordings and the transcriptions of some words of these occasionally represent informed guesswork.

Subsequent to the conference, the platform speakers were sent drafts of the transcripts and had the opportunity to make minor amendments to their contributions in order to take account of readers rather than listeners.

Other than that, changes were only made for one of the following reasons:

- (1) Unless they give a flavour of the tone of the conference, any passages that deal solely with the ordering of conference business have been omitted.
- (2) Any obvious factual errors have been corrected.
- (3) Most verbal tics and hesitations (such as “I mean”, “kind of”, “um” and “er”) have been omitted.
- (4) Passages that have been corrected by speakers (as they changed their flow of thought mid sentence) have been omitted.
- (5) A couple of very brief passages have been omitted in which contributors from the floor made possibly defamatory remarks.

Passages in square brackets represent editorial interventions – either to (a) make grammar clearer for the purposes of reading, (b) supply full names to people referred to by speakers only by Christian name or surname or (c) provide additional information that may be useful to readers of the transcript

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WELCOME: HARRY LANDIS (EQUITY PRESIDENT)

Good Morning. I'm Harry Landis. I'm the President of Equity and I'm here to welcome you to this conference on behalf of Equity and the Directors Guild of Great Britain.

I have a great interest in Ensemble Theatre and I think I'm going to take a few minutes to tell you all about it. When I was fifteen working in a factory, I used to go to the Hackney Empire first house every Monday. They were 6.30pm and 8.40pm and the first house was a bit cheaper than the rest of the week. I think now I realise it's because the band had only just got sight of the arrangements for the acts and - after one quick run through in the afternoon - the first house on Monday was liable to be a bit dodgy. It got better in the second house and for the rest of the week. And the next morning I'd go to work and do the show on the factory floor in the tea break. How you can be such a cheeky little sod as I was, I don't know. And I didn't do the dancing bits and the acrobats but I did all Max Miller's jokes and all the impressions of the time that the impressionists did.

And one day the shop steward came up to me and he said: "Harry, have you ever seen a play?". Now, I think he was a bit of an intellectual. On his bench he had the *Daily Worker* and something called the *New Statesman and Nation*. I remember opening it one day when he wasn't about and it said: "Editor: Kingsley Martin". I remember thinking: "Who the bleedin' hell would call their son Kingsley?" but that was East End thinking of the time. He said: "Have you ever seen a play?". I said: "No. I go to the Hackney Empire every week. Where do you see plays?" He said: "Well, if you go to the West End, that's where they are in London, and there'll be a wonderful set and French windows at the back". (*Laughter*) I didn't know what they were but I didn't say anything. And he said: "The play will be about the trials and tribulations of the upper classes". I said: "Pardon?". He said: "It'll be all about the troubles of posh people". I said: "Oh.". He said: "But there is a theatre at Mornington Crescent. It's called the theatre of the labour and trades union movement called Unity Theatre. You should be there." He said: "They do plays about real people and their problems". He said: "I'm going on Sunday with my wife. Would you like to come?". And I went. And I was knocked out. The play was about a bus strike called *All Change Here* by Ted Willis. And the people on the stage were my neighbours. And the dialogue they spoke was the language I was used to in the East End of London. And it knocked me out. I couldn't move.

Then I auditioned for the company. And Ted Willis was one of the people who auditioned me, I remember. And I was in. And the first thing I learned... my education began... we weren't there for self-aggrandisement. We were there to try and sell an author's statement by getting every bit we could out of every scene by working together as a group unselfishly to sell the author's point. The next thing I was shown was the Unity Theatre handbook. This piece we have printed on the video *The Story of Unity Theatre*. And this piece said out of the book: "True art - by truthfully interpreting and faithfully portraying life as experienced by the majority of the people - can move the people to work for the betterment of society". Well, of course that sounds a bit simplistic today. Things have moved on. We're a bit more sophisticated and that's nearly seventy years ago that that was written.

Sybil Thorndike came to talk to us when I was there. She said: "We can do for the human spirit what the medical profession does for the body". She said: "At its best, our work - like all the arts - can illuminate the human condition and make us look at

our neighbours in a new light.” Well, there isn’t much philosophy of that sort about today. Well, perhaps things have moved on and there’s no room for it. I don’t know.

(Holding up a copy of the Conference discussion document “Quotes about Ensemble”) I’ve looked at this piece here that you all have - what others have said – and I’ve taken a few points from it. I rather regret Michael Elliot’s contribution. Lovely man. Wonderful director. I worked with him at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. Great man. But he says: “The actor who’s been out of work comes bursting with enthusiasm”. Well, he would, wouldn’t he? “You get a kind of tension, a kind of drive.” Well, my experience of that is the kind of drive you get is they do the Casting Director’s performance - not the performance for the play. It’s not the kind of tension... the right sort of creative tension that you get when people work together in a collective situation without the danger of being out of work tomorrow.

There wasn’t much about the philosophy of our work in those statements. There was a lot about the right building, the right company, the right sort of money so that you could have the confidence of an ensemble Theatre. However, Tadeusz Bradecki of the Stary Teatr, Kraków, speaks of “a company representing an aesthetic and ideological variety... united by the same concern for the art of the theatre.” Ideological? I don’t think he knows it’s a dirty word in this country.

Lev Dodin from the Maly Theatre, St Petersburg, tells us that “artists should fight for the right to speak about eternal human problems”. Now that’s rather wonderful.

Our own Simon Callow warns us that “a theatre that doesn’t have a company at its centre will... end up cerebral, and that spells death for it”. And he’s so right.

I’m sure we all know a theatre like the Theatre Royal, Stratford, that has got a philosophy and has for many years carried it out. But that’ll all come out in your discussions and all I can say is I wish you a wonderful day in your discussions to-ing and fro-ing and I hope you enjoy it. And that’s all I have to say. Thank you.
(Applause)

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MICHAEL BOYD (ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY)

[Read Michael's biography.](#)

Harry Landis (President, Equity): It's now my great pleasure to introduce to you our keynote speaker, Michael Boyd. Michael, as you know, has taken over the RSC of recent months. He has a wonderful production of *Hamlet* on in London and I'm very, very thrilled to introduce him to you now.

Michael Boyd: I would like to offer a series of provocations and observations and leave some time for us to talk about the consequences of these afterwards.

I am here to a certain extent in a very practical capacity. The reason I took on the job at the RSC was because of the opportunity it seemed to offer for me to really take the Ensemble idea seriously. The RSC was founded on the principles of Ensemble in late fifties, early sixties and the inspiration came, interestingly, from abroad - from Peter Hall's love affair with the Berliner Ensemble, his inspiration of their example when they were firing on all cylinders. Through the eighties and certainly by the end of the nineties, it seemed that those ideals of the possibility of developing artists within an artistic community over years had lost their courage. The idea of Ensemble was honoured sometimes as much as in the breach as in the observance and, when I took over, it seemed a good opportunity for the company to reassert its faith in what was possible in terms of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. A very exciting time.

I am now taking the first, the baby steps towards trying to make that a reality. Part of me is still on the philosophical starting blocks - the heady speculation about what we could achieve - and part of me is in the nitty-gritty of persuading leading actors that there is a virtue in not always playing leading roles. We're now at the end of our first year of operation and for the first time in a long while it's actually physically possible for the Royal Shakespeare Company's Shakespeare Ensemble to come back next year- something that has just not been possible for a long time because of the rhythm of the company. So the first building brick is in place: it is now possible and it is stated as desirable that company members roll over into the next season.

I say baby steps because right now a lot of our company - I would say about eighty percent - want to come back, but they're not all going to be able to. And that's not just about parts, it's also about directors. If you are a director and you have the choice of either casting your play from this talent pool of forty people or the entire universe of acting talent, it's a difficult choice to make, both within the mini culture of the RSC and in the wider theatre culture. It's a difficult choice to make to say: "I turn my Horatio Nelson eye patch to the entire talent resources we have in this country (and indeed abroad) and I will choose from these forty people".

This is a pragmatic hill that the Royal Shakespeare Company has to climb and I'm confident that we can. What it probably boils down to is casting the company before you cast the directors. We haven't done that yet but we're on our way. I am emboldened at the Royal Shakespeare Company by precedent - by the inspiring statements of Peter Hall, Peter Brook and Michel Saint-Denis [the RSC's founding directorial triumvirate] starting out on the journey. I am also emboldened, and in some senses relieved, by the extent of modest failure on the way. The RSC has always been a compromise. Michel Saint-Denis's training mission, his studio, quite quickly got sidelined - mostly for economic reasons. It crept back with The Other

Place [the RSC's smallest theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon] and it has continued in fits and starts: the notion of continuous professional development; of lifelong learning as an artist; the idea of trying to introduce into Warwickshire the same approach that a Bunraku puppeteer has to bring first to the hand, then to the leg, the body, the head and (by the time they're ninety) being allowed to bring to the eyes. That idea of a lifetime achievement: it's an alien one at the moment.

It wasn't hard for me to make the policy decisions that I've made about the RSC. It's been quite obvious that Ensemble is the RSC's place in the firmament. The place where we can do our job best is not as a Harvey Nichols or a Harrods of theatre. It is as a manufacturer; as a particular theatre company with the humility to accept that we're just one theatre company, but with a particular stink. We're let off the hook in some ways compared to the National in that the National is the company that is expected to represent English culture: to be the best. I don't think that's our proper role. Obviously we have our house playwright, which is central to our proper role. But equally central to that role is our opportunity to breed a company of actors that has a distinct character. It won't be everybody's cup of tea. We don't need to have the ambition to be universal. We don't necessarily need to have the best actors all the time during the entire repertoire. We're allowed, I think, to be specific and that's exciting for me and I think it is quite clear that our role is to make stars and not chase them. We've been very, very, good at that in the past and I see no reason why we can't go on being good about it.

I've had an enormous amount of support for the approach that I'm taking at the RSC - both internally and externally. "Thank goodness Michael Boyd is returning the RSC to its founding principles and re-emphasising the idealism over the pragmatism" if you like. But, as you start the journey, you do bump into the case against. The resistance and the case against is maybe not in this auditorium right now but it's powerful and it's strongly felt. "Ensemble" is a foreign word and many people don't like it for that reason alone. (*Laughter*) They prefer the word company. For me, company is over ambiguous in a sense with a commercial operation. I like the word "Ensemble" but some people don't and actually, internally, in terms of the great and the good around the RSC, the same people who don't like the word "Ensemble" thought that the Spanish Golden Age season would be a disaster because: "Middle England would not be interested in the Spanish Renaissance. We've never heard of these plays really. Will they hold up? Who is Lope de Vega?" I'm glad that they have been proved wrong. But there is a great provincialism in our culture - particularly in English culture, which was reflected, for instance, in the scepticism about our doing the Spanish Golden Age season

So it's foreign, "Ensemble". It's often seen as an un-English promotion of the whole at the expense of the parts of the individual artists. It is seen [as] - and indeed it can actually be - an imposition of a beige and worthy homogeneity on a group of talents that would be better celebrated in their vivid individuality. It smacks for some of the non-libertarian left and of the egalitarian delusion that we're all improvable to the point of brilliance; that you can impose democracy on the mercurial love affairs between performer and audience. Our received repertoire is not necessarily democratic. Shakespeare writes kings and messengers, do what you will. The ensemble pieces that Shakespeare wrote are the Histories. You can't do the Histories all the time at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

There are two identifiable things here. One is ensemble playing and another is ensemble companies. I'm assuming that we're talking about ensemble companies. But there's a resistance to ensemble playing as well. "Ensemble means too much choreography and control freak directors who hypocritically preach participation and

inclusion. Leading players will emerge from out of the over-choreographed pack and attract an audience more than any high-minded aesthetic or political agenda. We have in England...". (It's weird talking in this voice.) "We have in England a great humanist dramaturgical tradition with its roots in Shakespeare. We are at our best when focussing on the paradoxical individual who defies categorisation. The audience wants us to create charismatic characters played in a spotlight by stars with whom we can empathise; while Ensemble insists on portraying the scene, pulling focus onto the minor characters, keeping the lights turned on like a killjoy and forcing us to be aware of context. Context. Thus Ensemble is over serious and pious and encourages mediocrity by starving the star of their follow spot." (*Laughter*) I am happy to hear all this and had great fun thinking it all up - and I'm also happy to park it.

Going back to the Histories. You can't do the Histories every year, but isn't it interesting that the RSC has seemed most like itself when it has done the Histories - whether it's [Peter Hall and John Barton's productions of] *The Wars of the Roses*, whether it's Terry Hands' epic journey through them, Adrian [Noble]'s *Plantagenets* and most recently - even in the midst of some philosophical chaos - the RSC emerged coherent with the *This England* Histories series. And actually if you think about the iconic moments of the RSC beyond that - *Nicholas Nickleby*, [Peter Brook's] *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - they are ensemble pieces that demonstrate quite clearly, I think, that Ensemble does not mean mediocrity or imposing false glass ceilings on talent, charisma or charm.

I am a good candidate for being a sucker for the ensemble foreign "fifth column" principle. I was profoundly sheep-dipped abroad in Moscow at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre as a trainee director under one of my heroes, Anatoly Efros. The first read through I attended took three weeks and it was good. I started going to the theatre when I moved to Edinburgh as a schoolboy, that was when I started going to the Theatre. To be able to walk into town and see a Japanese Bunraku company who have been together for centuries; to see Tadeusz Kantor [the late Director of Cricot 2 from Kraków]. There's a good example of a leading English actor's worst nightmare: Tadeusz Kantor. An almost wordless piece [with the actor] being asked to work like an automaton with the director actually physically on stage manipulating the action. The work was good though. The work of Lev Dodin at the Maly in Leningrad for an awful long time now has been demonstrating the power of forming a relationship with people even before they become professional actors and feeding that into the company and staying with you. The work of Eimuntas Nekrosius in Vilnius in Lithuania has been an inspiration both to me and to Hamish Glen who founded the ensemble in Dundee.

I am convinced about the good historical stories at home too: The Old Vic Company, the RSC at its best. There are very good examples now in Britain - like Dundee, Northern Stage and Kneehigh. It's interesting: three prominent ensembles in Britain and they're geographically extremist. The realisation that it's a good idea - and maybe even a necessary idea - to create some critical mass to stop the leakage to the metropolitan centre, can be a good driving force behind the creation of an ensemble. So we have those examples. Probably, in terms of this country, my main inspirations of Ensemble have been the informal ones, the under funded ones that over the years have emerged out of the [Edinburgh] Festival Fringe: like *Complicité*, *Communicado* in Scotland, *Cheek by Jowl*. These are informal ensembles of like-minded individuals who don't always work together but usually do and keep faith with each other and carry on. That's allowed in this country. And now there's another particularly experimental drive. People like *Forced Entertainment*, *Told by an Idiot*, *Shunt*, *The Riot Group* from NY; people who know they're going out on a limb;

people who inspire each other and spark each other. That's Ensemble. It's not necessarily exactly the same as the inspiration from Eastern Europe or what, over the years, has been talked about at the RSC - but it's nonetheless current practice, vivid and enormously successful. Cheek by Jowl in a sense is an ensemble of two – Declan [Donnellan] and Nick Ormerod. That's okay. That's an Ensemble too.

But these companies exist in a context of what I would call almost a crisis of individualism that I think, in many ways, the RSC fell victim to. I suppose this has its roots in the eighties: the emergence of the boring, famous phrase "There's no such thing as society"; the failure of consensus; a retreat into not just "number one-ism" but portfolio careerism; a scepticism, a cynicism about possible causes around which it's possible to gather consensus; a failure of political consensus; false dawns of election days and senses of betrayal; a crisis of political, moral and spiritual authority resulting in a natural tendency to shrink and try and find the place where good faith is kept in your breast pocket, in your front room, in your tiny studio theatre or in your one-off event in a railway station with an audience of one every thirty minutes; a failure of a confidence in gathering together in reasonable numbers and agreeing on something. The RSC has been particularly vulnerable to this. Richard Eyre has been very eloquent on this about the National [Theatre]. It's very easy for Richard to sometimes have sounded old fashioned and Reithian about public service and large theatres when he was Artistic Director of the National, but I think he was onto something. I think there's something frightening about a retreat into something fragmented, small. I find "Design your own television stations" frightening. I find watching videos much less enjoyable than watching broadcast television. Maybe I am just funny that way but there's something... Even with telly, I think there can be a sense of community and I think we're losing out. I think we're victims of a cult of choice. It's currently the most abused word in political discourse. It's an illusion - and I think it's an illusion for a young actor having a misleading conversation with their agent about keeping their options open. I think we need to find centres of critical mass where we feel free and strong enough to choose away from choice - to stay put and just grow - and I think the RSC can provide that.

I think we're also victims of the reduction to absurdity of the cult of celebrity. I think it's clearly getting out of hand and it is ultimately reduced to absurdity with reality soaps. They are now developing TV reality programmes that are actually scripted. They're story boarded and you can sort it through the casting. You decide what it's going to be, you cast non-actors to be in it, you manipulate the situation, do the rest in editing and you've got drama. And it's coming to this country now in a very sophisticated way. An ensemble theatre company, I am glad to say, represents the opposite end of that particular scale.

How can you build future generations of leading players with range, depth and stamina if you don't create a situation where they are happy to stay put and learn for a significant amount of time? How do you escape the shallows of a career dominated by money, status and celebrity? Where do you nurture the art and craft of our trade, the rigour, the self-respect and the sense of pride in our profession? A shelter from "short term-ism", opportunism and the fear (as Harry was talking about) of unemployment, which I agree is not a creative spur. Is there nothing we can agree on about our art? Is that not an interesting exercise to pursue over the years? Is it impossible to reconcile our egos in consensus or can an ensemble company act in some sense as a maquette version of the real world; a better version of the real world on an achievable scale which celebrates the virtues of collaboration, the collaborative skills of theatre as something valuable beyond the pragmatic promiscuity of "loveyness" which is so reviled by our culture? A preparedness to open up to other

people has to be one of the central virtues of a good actor. They have to. They have no choice. It tends to make them, I think, rather nice people.

Growth and change is painful. It hurts. It suggests: "You weren't very good before". It stretches your muscles; it requires humility, effort; and there's no guarantee that you'll be better, that you'll get more money. So it might all be for nothing. You might be hurting yourself for no immediate visible benefit. So why risk that - unless there is a world that can support that, feed it and catch you if you fall. And so you don't shine like a blazing beacon this year - but, next year, maybe you will. We all have rhythms; some days we're better than others. The best artistic organisation is going to accommodate those peaks and troughs in an individual's creative life and dig deep. Outside the doors, we've never had more cause to realise the grave importance of our interdependence as humans and yet we seem ever more incapable of acting on that realisation with the same urgency that we all still give to the pursuit of self interest. Theatre does have a very important role because it is such a quintessentially collaborative art form. That gift of collaboration to the audience - and (potentially, yes) to the outside world - is a very precious one.

By staying together longer at the RSC, I hope that we're going to be able to access a deep voodoo as opposed to a shallow magic. I think it takes time for us to trust each other enough to embarrass ourselves in front of each other while being rigorous to access that which means most to us individually and collectively. The search for truth and the means of expressing that truth (which is the proper business for rehearsal) is a task not best undertaken, frankly, with strangers. I think you can go further out on your personal limb in the company of friends (even if they're brutally critical friends) and you can approach the condition of a profoundly understood and shared spiritual act - as opposed to constantly being dependant on the momentary serendipity of the great shot on camera or that moment in rehearsal that was fantastic and shook us all and was very profound but "How do we repeat it again and again?".

The RSC is in a position where it really shouldn't just philosophise about it. It can do it. It is a company - I despise the word "brand" - but it's a company that people will come to see. We have the resources and there's something geographically important about us - we're not Dundee, we're not Cornwall - but we are Stratford. Thanks to our catastrophic rail service, we are a long way away from London and there's something about making theatre on retreat that makes things possible. We should do it. It's part of our founding principles and I think we've got a responsibility to do it in terms of the theatre culture of the country. I think we probably must do it because, if we don't, we will become indistinguishable from other companies who are perfectly capable of doing Shakespeare very well, thank you. I think it's what people want us to do. It's our place in the market. So I'm optimistic, if necessarily patient.

There are other issues that tie in with this. I haven't really gone into any great depth about training, which is made more possible in an ensemble context - by a two year contract rather than a one year contract; certainly more by a one year contract than an eight week contract. Schools and drama schools don't give us all the grounding in the Renaissance language that maybe they used to. I don't think that drama schools either necessarily train us for non-naturalism. Inevitably there is a great emphasis on naturalism (i.e.: that which can be performed in a tiny wee theatre or on camera) but it doesn't prepare us for big spaces. How do you speak with a large voice to a community of maybe eight hundred and up in a theatre without it seeming false, in bad faith, phoney, shallow, brittle, rhetorical. Those non-naturalistic skills allow theatre to speak with a big confident voice. And training is necessary in order to avoid staleness. It's necessary to raise the ceiling of your ambition for your work. At

heart, I suppose, it's necessary to deepen our understanding of the relationship between our actions on stage and what they mean for our hearts, our minds and the world we live in. Peter Brook's point: look at dancers, look at musicians, look at actors - the daily preparation that goes in. We have begun at the RSC to encourage actors to look at their work as if they were dancers or musicians. Those that are under twenty five are up for it. Those over sixty are up for it. It's the middle range: people of my age that find it the hardest. I think we feel we've got [the] most dignity to lose or something, I don't know. But we're getting there. We're getting some lardy actors doing Brazilian Capuera and hurting their thigh muscles - and I'm here to say that Toby Stephens was rolling around in newspaper during rehearsals for the New Work Festival and saluting the sun. We're moving in that direction. I'm as sceptical as the next person but I'm glad that we're risking being pretentious, even though there is no guarantee that it will produce results. It certainly won't produce results quickly.

We've got a great tradition of training, to a certain extent: training in doing. The best are staying there and carrying on doing it - not least actually in terms of directors: Adrian Noble, Katie Mitchell, Trevor Nunn, Matthew Warchus, Greg Doran, Dominic Cooke, Lawrence Boswell, Dominic Hill (who is now part of the Dundee set up), Mark Thompson running the Lyceum in Edinburgh. They've all trained at the RSC. They were all assistant directors at the RSC. There is good precedent. There's reason to be confident that we can move forward.

Mostly, for me, it boils down to time. I think it's because I'm slow. It was [the] press night of *Hamlet* last night and I never sit in a show that I've directed and just feel a sense of achievement. I always feel that I have to be sort of dragged off the set as it were. I always think: "Oh yes, now: the next layer of that onion". I've always hugely enjoyed reviving shows. One of the things I love about the rhythm of the RSC is [that] you open in Stratford, then you re-open in Newcastle, then you re-open in London and maybe (with revivals and international tours) you might open again and again: layers and layers and layers of onion. That takes time - and it takes time for us to do that as individual artists: to peel our own layers off and to reach that which is profound within us and be able to express it. It takes time to change a perception about a company. It takes time to change an actor's perception about themselves. It takes time to get to know someone. It takes time to get to understand Renaissance England. It takes time to speak Renaissance verse as the jazz that Peter Hall waxes lyrical on. It takes time to learn to tumble, to fight, to get fit, to learn timing. It takes time to not be exhausted. This is a sin. At the end of the *Henry the Sixth* tetralogy that I directed, I loved that company. I think it was a sort of mutual admiration society and, at the end of that contract, we would have all marched on if I'd had something for them to do. We could have marched on into the sunset happily together but for the fact that they were all completely fucked. It was just too much, too much work and we have historically at the RSC worked people too hard. So I have to create more time for people to maybe have the odd night off before they start rehearsals at ten o'clock in the morning.

It takes time to create the space for public understudy runs: a simple act that we've done that has worked. It has radically changed the way that some of the supporting (in inverted commas) actors at the RSC are perceived by the company: the fact that they know from day one that they are going on in front of the public and performing those understudy roles gives them a dignity in the company, makes them work harder, makes the assistant directors' life easier. It's not an egalitarian measure but it is a spreading of respect throughout the company. But it takes time.

So bear with us.

I hope that we can turn around the notion that life is too short to make a two-year commitment to one theatre company to the perception that actually life is too short not to make that commitment. That life will be over quite soon and, by the end of it, you will want to have done something extraordinary. I hope that we can close the gap between the passion for the notion of Ensemble that is clearly out there and the reality of persuading the best people to take part in it.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

Mike Bernardi (?Service? Theatre): I was thinking as much about what Harry had said as what you had said: in the idea that a lot of the ensembles which you looked back to with some reverence and fondness seem to have been based at at least some level around some political agenda. Harry also mentioned the idea of a concern of artistic integrity: the idea of putting that at the centre of an ensemble. Are those kinds of concerns with a particular theatrical agenda enough to unite individuals in this individualistic society... enough to hold an ensemble together if you don't have, for example, the infrastructure of the RSC? Perhaps even if you do.

Michael Boyd: I'm not entirely sure that I know exactly what you're getting at. Are you asking: "Do I think you need a manifesto around which people can recruit – otherwise you're not going to get a coalescing of talent"?

Mike Bernardi: I wondered what might be the requisite ideal around which a company can group itself?

Michael Boyd: I'm not personally a massive sort of manifesto man. In the lovely list of quotes that Equity and the Directors Guild have got together about Ensemble, there was one from Robert Stephens about the mad party of actors. It's something to do with... putting actors at the centre of things that would be my manifesto. We're easy. We've got Shakespeare. That's good. That's clear. We have a house playwright. We have a duty to that house playwright to keep him clean and fresh and interesting by doing new work and by being experimental. Otherwise I think it's about the mad dance between the individual and the collective in the company of actors and that out of that something potentially very deep can come – as well as the silly side of carnival (which is lovely) - the more ritualistic, as I say, deep voodoo side. If that's not very articulate, then that's tough.

Leo Lawson (Playtime Project): [Lawson's question is indistinct on the recording and very little of it can be heard. Topics to which he can be heard to refer include young actors; obsession with technique, joining the RSC, training at British drama schools and his contribution concludes with:] What concerns me is that there is too much about the voice and not enough about everything else.

Michael Boyd: Yes, absolutely. Well, the RSC's expertise historically in terms of training has probably centred around the voice and it is a precondition of moving forward that that expertise spreads down the arms and gets to the toenails – probably by the time I retire. I see no reason why it can't be possible. There's a separate point also. It's not just a neck up sort of thing - which I think is gradually beginning to become not true anymore frankly. But the moment you get into the idea of self improvement and training, it can be very dodgy. Yes, because you can do everything right and still be rubbish. And you've got to realise that. And, by trying too hard to get it right, you can almost guarantee that you'll be rubbish. Well, we've got to avoid that. And we won't always avoid it. We will make mistakes. We will. But, if the alternative is just accepting that fear and therefore running away from

taking our job seriously, then I would rather run the risk of a few people falling into the over technical trap than being a sort of amateur shambles for ever.

Philip Hedley (Director Emeritus, Theatre Royal, Stratford East): Thank you. Yes, I found what you said inspiring. I'm interested in your comment about finding that great moment in rehearsal and how it could be repeated. And there's a sort of paradox, isn't there, in that companies that last for a long time are sometimes accused of the performances becoming deadly in Peter Brook's definition of "deadly theatre". Yes? Yet, if at the heart of what one does that training and change is at the heart of it, and imagine in a company that really is alive to that... Forgive me, my mentor was Joan Littlewood and I have to say this that Joan's ability to live paradoxes – and a great deal of what you've said is paradox: between the company and between individuals. And essentially I suppose, in the give and take, it's all paradoxes. And in my five hour interview to be Joan's assistant she suddenly said: "You see, I've found my life on the rock of change". And she lived that. Only change was her safety. Only danger was her safety. And Joan was a person who had no problem with that: living with paradoxes. Now, inside a company, I think that should be at the heart of what you are doing. And the person here talking about political aim and social aim - it being crucial, Joan's company did have that as well. But at the heart of the art of what she was doing there was something that we were all learning together training at... a constant aliveness to the moment, to change in the performance is, I believe, what stops the show becoming dead after you've been playing the same part for fifteen years. I think it's possible for it not to become dead after fifteen years if that's at the heart of what you're doing with people being prepared to live paradoxes. I'm sorry, this is purely questions. I was trying to pick up on something you were saying.

Michael Boyd: Well, it's a warning and I take it to heart. I think it's very important that... it's very... just the time I spent in Moscow in 1979 under Brezhnev was very salutary in that sense. I had a good friend who was a member of the Pushkin Theatre Company and he had all the joys, you know, of a permanent ensemble but he only performed once every three months. He was on salary all the time. But he didn't enjoy that. It wasn't good for him. And I saw a production of Gogol's *Dead Souls* adapted by Bulgakov that was still accredited to Stanislavsky in 1979. And a more deadly example of deadly theatre you could not possibly witness. So the bogies are there certainly and the cobwebs are waiting. But we have people who can be there to warn us; you, Mike Alfreds – who was working on the Spanish Golden Age season. He is terrifying in his permanent moment of change every night. That seed has got to be part of the project.

Frances Rifkin (Utopia / Equity Small Scale Theatre Committee): You talked about Kantor, Brook, various people. What kind of approach are you going to use? Is it going to be a relatively coherent programme of plays or eclectic? How are you going to put that together? Because when we look at the theatre in Russia or Rumania, whatever, we're looking at something that's developed over a long period of time. It's got Meyerhold in it. It's got Stanislavsky in it. And this has got plusses and minuses obviously. I saw a production of *Hamlet* where somebody had been playing for fifteen years – a quite remarkable Rumanian actor. There were all sorts of problems around it. So I was just wondering what kind of approach you were putting together out of this history – given that it's not well rooted in this country?

Michael Boyd: Well, just as the great European ensembles have appropriated Shakespeare as their own, there's no reason why we can't appropriate their great auteur director tradition as our own or their great ensemble acting strength as our own. But also, I don't think there's any great sin... any new movement in Britain

that's going to succeed is going to be eclectic. It's just going to be. I know it. Certainly on the scale of the RSC. I think a small ensemble can start up with absolutely monomaniac method, ambition, ideology, whatever, and be brilliant. I think if the RSC did that it would probably last five minutes, and, for the RSC to succeed, it's going to have to last years. So it will take its inspiration both from within... from those prophets in the wilderness that we have – Declan Donellan, Mike Alfreds, Nancy Meckler (those other people who have pursued Ensemble on a smaller scale) - and try and feed it into where we are. That I'm told has to be the last question.

Harry Landis: That's the end. Please, a vote of thanks for Michael. (*Applause*)

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FIRST PANEL SESSION: ENSEMBLE OUTSIDE OF THE UK

**Chair: John Carnegie (Theatre Directors' Councillor, Equity).
Panel: Agata Siwiak (Stary Teatr, Kraków, Poland) and Mikhaïl Stronin (formerly of the Maly Drama Theatre, St Petersburg, Russia).**

John Carnegie: It's my pleasure to chair the next session. This session is going to be about foreign ensembles in Eastern Europe and will give examples of that. The cast list for this session is different from the cast list when you first were invited to the conference. I should just explain that. Mikołaj Grabowski had a change of schedule in his theatre (so he couldn't be here today but sends his good wishes) and Stephan Müller had this chance today to get essential surgery and it was the only day they could do it. However, our situation is a bit like those people who bought tickets for *The Producers* thinking they were going to have to suffer Richard Dreyfuss and who found they'd got tickets for Nathan Lane. (*Laughter*) Because we are lucky to have here today representatives of the Maly Drama Theatre in St Petersburg and the Stary Teatr in Kraków in Poland. For my money, these are the two greatest theatre companies in the world. Now, obviously that's a personal opinion but I'm not the only person that thinks that. I'm sure that what these two speakers have to say and what you will have to ask of them will be very useful indeed. The two people we have here are Mikhaïl Stronin - who until very recently (he's just given it up) was the Literary and International Relations Manager of the Maly Drama Theatre in St Petersburg, worked very closely with the Artistic Director, Lev Dodin, and was central to the whole development of that company – and Agata Siwiak who is the Artistic and Programme Coordinator of International Projects at the Stary Teatr in Kraków – among many other jobs she does as well. Having talked to her, she seems to be in a different city every night. But we're fortunate to have her here today.

The way we're going to structure this session is that I'm going to say a few words first about these companies. Then each of our speakers is going to talk and then I'll ask a few questions and then we're going to throw it open to you to ask questions.

Okay, these two theatres: they have similarities and they have differences. They're both not in capital cities. I think that's very important. They're not in Moscow. They're not in Warsaw. There're in former capitals that used to be the royal capitals. They're capitals of intellectual ferment: very beautiful cities where there is a big student population; where thought and other arts (not just theatre) have always been very important. These theatres have long had and still have ensemble companies: seventy actors or so on the payroll for each of them (with some guest actors coming in) and a large administrative staff as well. These are people who are employed not just for the kind of contracts that Michael [Boyd] has been talking about - trying to stretch things to two years - but for decades. My first experience of seeing the Stary Teatr was in 1975 at Southwark Cathedral. They did a performance of a play by Adam Mickiewicz called *Dziady* that I suppose you could translate in English as *Forefathers' Eve*. Just before I came down here, I was looking at the programme for that production. Interesting to note that – of the seventy or so actors around at that time – thirty one are still performing with the Stary Teatr in Kraków. Now obviously some people have died, some people have retired, a few have gone on to become international film stars. But to have those people - older, more experienced, still there, still working with passion - is an extraordinary experience that we simply do not have in this country.

Both the Maly and the Stary have more than one theatre. They have a relatively big theatre. The Maly's big theatre has 460 seats and their small theatre has between 26 and 57 seats depending on the layout. The Stary has 350 seats in its biggest theatre and has three other spaces: one with 262 seats (a beautiful theatre - one of the best physical spaces in the world - called the Scena Kameralna which is a perfect machine for acting in), a small 96 seat theatre and a room in which you can put the seats in any way you want.

The actors in these theatres perform for long runs in repertoire. I was over in Kraków in May. I saw a production of Thomas Bernard's *Kalkwerk* [*The Limeworks*] - adapted and directed by the great Krystian Lupa - which had been running for twelve years. Fresh as a daisy. Inspirational theatre. Not tired. (Michael's absolutely right that Ensemble Theatre does not guarantee stunning theatre if the talent and hard graft are not there. I saw a vile production in Vilnius in Lithuania last year that I walked out of at the interval. It had been running five years and didn't deserve to run two minutes.) But, in these two theatres we're talking about, productions run for a long time and get better and better as they're running in. I've seen nine productions by the Maly Theatre. I've seen twenty six productions by the Stary Teatr. None have been mundane, mediocre, boring - which is, frankly, as we all know, the norm here. Every one has been interesting, some of them have been extraordinarily interesting and more than a few have been the most thrilling and vital theatrical experiences I've ever had in my life - where you sit there thinking: "It's happening now. It's the moment now. It will never be as good as this." Totally thrilling.

The other similarity of these companies is that they are both intimately connected with their drama schools. Most of the actors come - in a way that only happens here with the Royal Ballet School pupils going into the Royal Ballet company - of actors starting off in the drama school, working with the directors with whom they will work in the theatre and then gradually moving into the company. And then these directors continue to work with both the theatre and the drama schools. That's something we will talk about further - particularly in regard to the Stary Teatr.

There are differences between the companies. The Maly has not been going quite so long as the Stary. The Maly started in 1944 by Government dictat in a 35 seat theatre ("Maly" means "Small") to do theatre for the workers. The Second World War was still going on. By all accounts, the company floundered around a bit until, in 1983, Lev Dodin came in as Artistic Director and, since then, glory days from start to finish. Every one a gem. The Maly Theatre is very much based around Lev Dodin's work. I looked up the internet to see what they have in the repertoire at the moment. Of the twenty shows in the main theatre, eleven are directed by Lev Dodin and the others tend to be directed by his directing students. A few coming in from outside - Declan Donnellan has directed a wonderful production of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* - but most things revolve around Dodin's work and his philosophy. He tends to do three types of shows. One is adaptations of novels - not just old novels like *Nicholas Nickleby* which is the only equivalent we have here - but contemporary novels very much about life in Russia at the moment. The whole thing of "glasnost" ["giving voice; openness"] and "perestroika" ["restructuring"] was as much motivated by the Maly as reflected by the Maly. So Dodin can do something like Dostoevsky's *The Devils* that runs over an entire day (about nine hours of theatre) and this takes three years or so in the preparation. He's able to do that kind of work. He also does work - particularly with the students who are working in the theatre - on improvised shows: shows like *Gaudeamus* and *Claustrophobia* that are created from the work done in improvisation, presented to an audience and then continually changed

throughout the runs. And he's very famous for his Chekhov productions. He's done most of the major plays of Chekhov in ways that you haven't seen done elsewhere.

The Stary Teatr started in 1781 ("Stary" translates as "Old") in Kraków. It got its main building in 1799 and it's still there: the oldest theatrical space in Poland. It's been remodelled several times since. It brings in a very wide range of guest directors (some of them foreign) but it very much has its own star directors. On Friday night they're opening Andrzej Wajda's production of *Macbeth*. He's still going strong. He's most famous as a film director but is also a great theatre director. In his eighties, still doing theatre. Their real star director - somebody of whom most of you have probably never heard - is a gentleman called Krystian Lupa: one of the ten greatest theatre directors in the world. His work has never been seen in England and only very briefly in Scotland (by very few people) but let me tell you: I've seen a number of his productions and they are absolutely stupendous. And, because of the ensemble system, the Stary Teatr last year was able to do a festival of his productions. They had about twelve productions by Lupa - most of them with the original casts, some of them had been running for years - brought back into repertoire. You can do that kind of thing if you have an ensemble company. Also you can do what he's done with his current production. He opened it at the Olympic Arts Festival in Greece in June, thought it was okay but not really to his satisfaction. He did it for a workshop presentation last month in Kraków. He's going to keep working on it and the general public won't get to see it until next May. That's the kind of work you can do if you have an ensemble company.

Okay, as the director said in *This is Spinal Tap*: "Hey, enough of my yakking". Let's get on and let other people speak.

Mikhaïl Stronin: To begin with I'd like to thank the organisers of this very, very important conference that they have invited me and, more than that, I would like to thank the organisers that they have decided to have this conference because I think we can't underestimate the importance of this event and the importance of the talk about the ensemble theatre because, in my opinion, we are speaking about the future of the theatre as art, and practically "To be or not to be" for the theatre, and I hope you understand and I want to develop this idea. We are particularly talking about the present context in my country and everywhere in the world - because I have had a chance with the [Maly] theatre company to travel much around the world. The situation is similar. The commercial theatre is taking the upper hand. This is the fact. The star system is taking the upper hand. The general standard of theatre is going down - due to the fact. That's why I consider the ensemble theatre the only hope, as the only counter-balance to the present day situations. I have been greatly impressed by what Michael Boyd has said here. I intended to speak about different things but, within ten minutes, I can't say everything I want to say.

I'd like to say a few words about the word "Ensemble". It's a foreign word. It's a foreign word for everyone (*indicating audience*); for us (*indicating platform speakers*). It's a French word which means "together". And what I want to say [is] that Russia is mainly a country of rep theatres. But that doesn't necessarily mean that every rep theatre is an ensemble theatre. It doesn't mean that the physical presence of a company and a repertoire makes it Ensemble in the true sense of the word. Ensemble means working together and working together means, in the first place, ideology. Ideology - not in the vulgar understanding of the Soviet times but ideology: what the actors think about art; what they think about the style of acting; what they want to say.

I've known Lev Dodin for practically forty years. Long before he became a student, long before he became a director, we worked together in another theatre before the Maly. For five years, he was an Associate Director in the theatre for children [Leningrad Young People's Theatre: LenTYuZ] – a very good theatre in Leningrad at the time. It was between 1970 and 1975. I was the dramaturg of that theatre. The theatre was directed under Zinovy Korogodsky who unfortunately died last May. And, after that, Lev Dodin was a freelancer for quite a few years [and] had a very, very rough time. And I remember very well what he used to say when he went to very good theatres, like the Moscow Art Theatre in Moscow, to many other theatres: seventy percent of the time was spent on working out a common language. Seventy percent of the rehearsal time. And he worked with outstanding actors like [Innokenty] Smoktunovsky in Moscow and many others. It was a rep theatre but they didn't have a common language. They didn't work as [an] ensemble. And this is very important to understand: the mechanical or, I would say, the formal presence of the permanent company and the presence of a repertoire doesn't ensure the ensemble in the true sense of the word.

And here I would like to develop the idea of Michael Boyd: what he said about school. I think one of the most important things is school, school of acting, and school of acting within the theatre. Because Lev Dodin's idea is that theatre is the continuation of the school. School continues in the theatre. And naturally this situation is possible only if the actors are your own pupils and you continue to work with them. Lev Dodin has had great luck that eighty... I haven't counted but maybe eighty five percent of his actors are his former students and they really speak the same language.

But I want to draw your attention also to the problem of theatre schools because it's very important to understand what you teach future actors. You teach their formal skills, like voice, movement, choreography and even improvisations and acting. But you have to be very, very careful about teaching them ideology. Again I mean ideology of acting. Because the formal skills do not necessarily ensure what is inside their minds. And only this – the ideology – can ensure ensemble work. Because what is ensemble work? [It] is one body with many heads - but many heads who work in the same direction.

I must say that ideology is the only guarantee for ensemble theatre to survive. Because, in my opinion, in Russia - maybe the motherland of rep theatres because with Stanislavsky who brought this idea of a permanent company at the end of the nineteenth century with the foundation of the Moscow Art Theatre and, during the Soviet time, this idea was developed. But now Russia is in great danger of disintegrating as far as ensemble theatres are concerned. Still the majority are repertoire theatres but the ideology is rather attacked from the side of the commercial theatre due to different reasons (mainly economic reasons) and even theatres (that used to be good) due to some reasons began to go down. And there is a very, very great danger that one day maybe the government will say that "let's follow." Because there have been voices. Well, it's paradox. Britain is speaking about the ensemble theatre and there are voices in Russia who say: "Let's follow the British or the Western system. Why should the state finance the theatre? Let theatres provide for themselves." This is because the government and maybe some artists do not understand what, practically, theatre is and what language theatre should speak.

Here we deal with the notion of culture. Recently I've read the Nobel Prize speech by Joseph Brodsky – one of our greatest poets, you know, who was made to emigrate to America; became famous there; Russia just ousted him in Brezhnev time and [he] got a Nobel Prize for literature. I thoroughly recommend to read his Nobel

Prize speech. He mentions, by the way, many names from English culture, such as Dickens, and saying that, if people read Dickens, there would be less crime in the world. *(Laughter)* Yes, well, these are his words. Among other things he says (he's speaking not about theatre but about literature): "Many people think that literature should speak the language of the people – the language of the streets. If they want the literature of the country to stop developing, they should follow this advice. Otherwise, if they want literature to develop, then people should speak the language of literature." I ask you not to understand this literally: that we should ignore how people speak. The first speaker [Harry Landis] said he was present at the performance and he recognised the voice of the people there. No, well, of course, yes we should. But what he [Brodsky] meant and what I understand: "Who is the leader: the artist or the audience?". The artist should offer the audience. And, very often, the audience do not know what they will like or not because they can't know what they don't know.

I remember very well when Lev Dodin began rehearsing *The Devils* and this is a novel and he said that the performance would last nine hours. Our managers... *(Laughter)* Well, I recognise your reaction. You foresee or you know what they said: "Nobody would come" they said. Of course, it's because Lev Dodin is the master in the theatre and he said: "It will be and we'll see." And *The Devils* were here at the Barbican, *The Devils* were in Glasgow and *The Devils* were in Paris with a very, very hard audience in Paris – spoiled audiences who have four hundred places to go every evening. The house was full and nobody left the theatre during nine hours. The administrators say they know before – they know very well what the audience will like.

This is all ensemble theatre. Only ensemble theatre can offer and lead the audience. Otherwise, we will die and we will be on the outskirts of our commercial television with shootings and things every moment. I don't know what is happening. I have no chance to watch every day British television but you switch Russian television... And this is the reflection of what is happening in the theatres too. You switch and you will see the same actors shooting. And the same actors, so you don't know what film you are watching. *(Laughter)* Really. *(Applause)*

Agata Siwiak: First of all, thank you that I am here. And I would like to apologise here for my English which is not as good as I would wish. I would like to tell you about ensemble theatre and also about the new ways of creation of ensemble theatres that has also some dangers.

In general, the landscape of repertoire theatres in Poland looks like we have three kinds of subsidies: some of them – national theatres – are subsidised by the Ministry of Culture, some by city councils and the others by the Minister of the region. On average, in the repertoire theatres, there work one hundred to two hundred people. That is really many. Obviously there are some costs. But now I try to point to the positives of that about which we were talking so much.

There is some... we can call it even some kind of the "nutrient" in theatres in Poland. We try to have very consequent programming in the theatre. We try to give them some special profile: some kind of special taste like the Stary has. And what is important in the national Stary Teatr now is that it is at the time of some kind of artistic revolution since we have a new Director. Now Mikołaj Grabowski has been the Director for three years. So the most important artistic profile was – let's call it the big literature – like Krystian Lupa's productions of the adaptations of great novels: of Fyodor Dostoyevsky [*The Karamazov Brothers*], of Hermann Broch [*The Sleepwalkers*], of Thomas Bernhard [*The Lime Works*], and also the big dramas.

As John said, Krystian Lupa is one of the greatest world directors. I would like to tell a bit about his way of working which would be impossible if it were not for the ensemble theatre system. Krystian Lupa is a very difficult artist in his work. Sometimes he rehearses for three months and he's saying: "Okay, sorry. I can't give the premiere. I need a few months more." And he rehearses for a few months again and then he says: "Okay, I need some time more." Everybody's obviously angry. There passes a year. Everybody's furious. And he says "Okay, I'm ready" and we have the premiere like how it was with *The Master and Margarita* [from the novel by Mikhaïl Bulgakov] and everybody's saying: "That's great that you had this year because we have a wonderful performance: really artistically incredible with wonderful acting". And I think in economic theatre, in commercial theatre, it would be impossible because economic rights are very, very strong.

What is also interesting about Krystian Lupa – I don't know, John, if you know about it – is that he has chosen his actors from the ensemble of Stary. They were forgotten actors. Not the actors who were so-called "stars". Not the actors who were the most wanted by the directors. And Krystian Lupa - let's say that, fifteen years ago, he was wasn't this great, well known theatre star and, in the Kameralna theatre which is the smaller space, they started to do very slowly their work. Nobody was looking at them because it wasn't the main stage. It was a kind of laboratory. They didn't look at it for... let's call it "success". This success wasn't absolutely the reason. It was really a very strong artistic reason to create something which is very deep and, after a long time, it showed that these forgotten actors, these actors who are not the most wanted, they were some kind of a mine of human emotions, human world, and he created with them – because, for sure, the way of his work is to take and to work with people - to create the team. I am also the assistant of Krystian. So sometimes I am at the rehearsals and I know that the process of working is very important for actors. I talked to some of them. They told me that they change as people after a few years of working with Krystian. From being very closed people, they started to discover incredible things as humans in themselves. I think that something like that wouldn't be possible in the system when the actors are chosen by casting. We meet for a few months. We say "Bye". We play performances. It's something deeper and everything that is really deep needs time.

Also, I said that I would tell a little bit about programming because we have this... let's call it "regular" profile of the Stary Teatr: the big production, the expensive production. We invite big name directors like Andrzej Wajda, like Jerzy Grzegorzewski, like Krzysztof Warlikowski. But also, I think that theatre should be some kind of revolution and I believe I need also the theatre which is very experimental. And Mikołaj Grabowski invited Paweł Miśkiewicz (who was the Director of the Teatr Polski in Wrocław) and me to create something which is the contemporary part of the Stary Teatr. So I would like to show that, in these repertoire ensemble theatres, we can do something which is big art, big literature, but also it can be some kind of very experimental field. So we started to make some kind of dramaturgy laboratory when we make a lot of workshops for young drama writers, for young directors and for the actors. And we created "baz@rt.fr Intermediale Forum Teatru" [Base for Art Inter-media Forum of the Theatre]. It's a kind of festival - for which, this year, we produced ten workshop performances. Very low budget. Very short time of rehearsal for Poland: it's a month. I know that, in England here, it's normal but, in Poland, a month...it's really like a [short] while. And maximum risk: new texts. And, from these performances, we have chosen four which will be permanently in the repertoire of the Stary Teatr. So I wanted to tell you that it's not only for the big names and people who are older. We have also the directors who are very young, very experimental, very brave.

It was very interesting to hear what Mikhaïl said: that the theatre is one body with many heads that look in the same direction. I would say we wanted to do something opposite. We want to have arguments in the theatre. We want to have a lot of various thinkings. We want to have the place when people meet and discuss and argue. And we have sometimes very hard discussion. Sometimes some people go out from the room when we are thinking about some project. But I believe that - from this kind of very hard atmosphere, very hard discussions – can come something really fresh which is the mixture of tradition (of that which we have from our big theatre directors, big older actors) and of something that can bring on the young artists. It is very important for us.

I wanted to say one thing, for example, that the “baz@rt” - this new programming; this very contemporary part of the Stary Teatr – involves the theatre school a lot. All the students are involved in the projects. They are acting. They are directing. They are dramaturgs. So, we can also bring up and discover the new talents. And I think that something really interesting can come from the meeting of a twenty two year old young director and an eighty year old actress who has been in the theatre for forty years. We produced in one of the performances which was very experimental... we used, as the stage design, computer graphics, There were projectors and all the design was like a website. And for this eighty year old actress (who played in Konrad Swinarski’s productions, Andrzej Wajda’s productions), starting to work with such a young director, she was full of doubt. After this work, she played wonderfully. She played with a different taste of acting than usually I could see with her. She said: “I feel like I am thirty years old again.” It’s something which was very refreshing and, for sure, for these young actors too.

Also, John said that we can see the performances after many years. We had a very interesting thing with this Lupa Festival because *The Karamazov Brothers* wasn’t played in the repertoire of the Stary for, I think, six years. And I saw it about eight years ago and again, after these years. And it was incredible because to see all these people older, more tired of life, it gave us quite a different interpretation. Maybe much more mellow. And also, I think that it was an interesting meeting for the actors because they could see themselves in the other context at the other times. So, it was very special also for the people who saw it after a few years. And I think that all these performances... really they start to be something deeper because it’s not like they are in the same form all the time. In the repertoire theatres, the directors have every so often rehearsals with actors so as not to let the performances die. And they are developed. They are sometimes going in different directions. They are maybe even better but sometimes they are quite different after a few years because they are alive. We are alive; we are different after a few years. So the performances are too. It’s okay, I think. If you have some questions...

John Carnegie: Yes, okay. I had lots of questions but I’d rather you (*indicating the audience*) ask questions because you’ve (*indicating the speakers*) actually covered virtually everything I was going to ask. So, let’s throw it open to the audience. Any takers?

Stuart Bennett (ASSITEJ: The Association for Theatre for Children and Young People / Small Scale Theatre Committee, Equity): Do you in Poland and Russia have the same commitment to building young audiences as you had previously? You said – very alarmingly – that you were moving rather more towards the Western system. What we have had from our contact from theatres in your country – and we had a lot of contact during the Soviet period, when children’s theatre was something that was a bridge and we had working contact with the Maly Theatre, the Taganka

Theatre in Moscow, the legendary Natalia Sats - and we were very, very impressed by the model of theatre and ensemble theatre which had a commitment to performing for young audiences and it was highly valued. The best actors and the best directors worked there. So the question really is: are you able to continue working in that way? The quality of the work that you produced (which was the same kind of quality that was seen on the main stage) is something that I wish we were able to emulate. The RSC and the National Theatre here have excellent educational programmes but they're totally stupid because they don't do theatre for young people. How do you build an audience if you don't actually do specific productions for them?

Agata Siwiak: I must say, in Poland, I feel the kind of hunger for good theatres for children. For young people – by which I mean twenty year old people... let's say they are in pop culture, so we need to find some different language. I don't mean commercial. But we are surrounded by new media, for example, so why not use them in the theatre. It's their language. But, about children's theatre, they are never tied to the repertory theatre for adults. We have, obviously, ensemble theatres for kids.

John Carnegie: You also have the Teatr Ludowy [People's Theatre] that does theatre for adults and kids. I've seen school parties there with rock theatre shows that are absolutely alive to the audience. The Stary Teatr itself virtually never does theatre for children. It is specifically for adults – although the Maly Theatre, you do have theatre for children.

Mikhaïl Stronin: We have a few plays for children. And I must say that we don't have a special programme to educate the audiences. I think that our audiences are being educated by our plays and by the fact that they stay in the repertoire for a very long time. And even in the worst of times when “perestroika” began, we had (and have up to now) absolutely full houses. And what is interesting [is] that we have a lot of young people in the audiences and new generations watch old plays like *Brothers and Sisters* [a two part play based on the writings of Fyodor Abramov which was Lev Dodin's first production as the Maly's Artistic Director and which has become something of a signature piece for the company]. It's been in the repertoire for about twenty years and now children (and probably grandchildren) came to watch. But, if the quality's there, well this is the education.

Faynia Williams (DGGB Council / Equity Theatre Directors' Committee / Former Director of the Tron Theatre in Glasgow and now freelance): My question is really about how language – literally language – can effect ensemble theatre. Usually, most ensemble theatres speak the same language so (as Mikhaïl was saying) they're going in the same direction. I was very interested about what Agata said about arguing and debating and going forward in that way as an ensemble company, keeping the ensemble fresh. I've just recently directed a dual language *Hamlet* in Mongolia where the Hamlet spoke English and everybody else spoke Mongolian. It's been a wonderful way of getting people together as an ensemble. And I just wondered what people felt about the possibilities now of other people doing that – of using language to bring about a new kind of ensemble theatre.

Agata Siwiak: I believe that the common language is very important but I wouldn't agree that there is also a necessity of the same language. It's like with an apartment. It's good to have the same base but – from time to time – we would like to change the colour of the walls. We could change all the furniture's places. I believe that we can have the base... we can have home but we need everything. The language is changing everyday. To our vocabulary come some new words. So the young people with their fresh aesthetics, with their new dramaturgy thinking... I don't mean only dramaturgy in the meaning of verbal dramaturgy. Now we are speaking about the

dramaturgy of performance. You can have dramaturgy of the rhythm, dramaturgy of the music. So I believe they bring this and they break everything we know because they are teaching us something new. And this is also something we can find in the ensemble theatre because we can meet the people who speak the same language, who are brought up by the same directors and the people who are on the opposite sides and something between them can be the new artistic thinking, the new artistic categories.

Mikhaïl Stronin: In fact, I don't find any contradiction in what I have said about one body with many heads and what you have said. What I mean by one body is one wish to create art rather than to play with the audience and be very successful for the sake of being successful. And the practice of our theatre proves that. We have a lot of argument inside, of course. And the style even, if you take a realistic piece like *Brothers and Sisters* and *Gaudeamus* (absolutely avant-garde with music and with movement), the language is quite different. But, if your general direction is that of art, then you can allow yourself to use different means.

Agata Siwiak: Also, sorry, I would like to add one thing because the ensemble theatre doesn't mean claustrophobia. It doesn't mean it's closed.

Mikhaïl Stronin: Exactly, exactly.

Agata Siwiak: It is like that we have permanent ensemble actors but some of them are playing a lot, some of them less. They are free people. Maybe I will explain a little bit about how it works practically. They can work in the other theatres as a guest performer. And this always happens that one actor feels: "Okay, I have one home but I visit the other homes. I am the visitor." They play in the movies. They play in the other theatres. They do their experimental things. But they have the base and this is important. And also, about the directors: we have one director who is permanent, Krystian Lupa, who also directs around Poland and a lot abroad. But we are thinking about not only inviting directors who are the graduates of the Kraków school but we are trying to invite directors from abroad who have quite a different thinking, who can change something. We are trying to invite the directors from Warsaw also – just to make the mixture. Because it's very important for us to us to make some sort of theatrical air conditioning from time to time.

John Carnegie: I think that's it's very important - this exchange of personnel between theatres - because it can create problems. One of the administrators of the Stary Teatr I was talking to said to me her nightmare was trying to organise where all her actors were at any particular time because somebody wanted to go to Warsaw to star in a production there and (because it's a repertoire system and you're doing different things every night) the jigsaw problem is an enormous one. But, if you can solve that problem, it is very good indeed for the artistic health of the actors.

Richard Berry (Freelance Director): I come from Cardiff, South Wales, which isn't in England, by the way.

John Carnegie: (*Laughing*) I come from Scotland so I'm sensitive to that.

Richard Berry: When I went to the Ukraine, I was very aware that... We were talking about an ensemble. I'd worked with an ensemble there and it was a very interesting experience. Fifteen years of doing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and it was very, very fresh. The young lovers had become the old lovers in that time. But I was aware that theatre wasn't just the ensemble of actors. We had very big

problems with technical staff and the front of house staff and the actual mechanics of getting our productions on. Are there still problems in the old Soviet way?

Mikhail Stronin: I think in every theatre there are always problems. (*Laughter*) Theatre can't live without problems. Yes, there are problems. In the first place, economic problems. But, nonetheless, the Maly Theatre and Lev Dodin in the first place... they're trying to create... What is important [is] to create a feeling of family. This feeling is still there and - due to this – the Maly manages to keep the majority of their technical workers in the theatre. There are many people who have worked for twenty five, thirty years in the theatre and are still there.

Richard Berry: [Referring to Michael Boyd's earlier remarks] Still on the follow spot.

Mikhail Stronin: (*Laughing*) Oh yes, exactly, exactly, exactly.

Richard Berry: You are still having trouble with technicians who are maybe not wanting to do what the director wants?

Agata Siwiak: I think it was a little bit different in the communist time when everybody had to have work. Now, I think, in the theatre there are people who have the desire and are not there by coincidence. But it was the problem of the system and I think there are some dangerous things about the ensemble theatre that the communist system developed but, when you manage that well, you can avoid it absolutely. Like bureaucracy, like people who are working but they don't know for what really. No, I think it's just the matter of good management and it was the horror and nightmare of the past system.

John Carnegie: I can give an example of that. I remember that Stephan Müller (who couldn't be with us today because he's gone for this operation) said that, in the Vienna Burgtheater, the way they dealt with actors who had been on the payroll too long and had got stale was to allow them to go out and work with other theatres and (if they enjoyed that more) to let them go – but provided that they still had a new theatre company as a home. So there are ways of gently dealing with the system without going to the extent of creating unemployment.

Okay, now I'm sure lots of other people would like to ask questions but there are other people waiting to speak later today. I hope that we've given you a taste for the delights of ensemble theatre. I hope that – as well as trying to do it yourself – you get the desire now to go and visit these two theatre companies and enjoy what they have to show. Difficult to get to St Petersburg but now EasyJet from Luton are doing a very cheap fare to Kraków. (*Laughter*)

Agata Siwiak: Advertising!

John Carnegie: I couldn't recommend it more highly.

(*Applause*)

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SECOND PANEL SESSION: ENSEMBLE IN THE UK

Chair: Ruth Mackenzie (Co-Artistic Director, Chichester Festival Theatre).

Panel: Hamish Glen (Founding Artistic Director of the Dundee Rep Ensemble Company and now Artistic Director of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry), Alan Lyddiard (Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Northern Stage) and Barrie Rutter (Artistic Director, Northern Broadsides).

Ruth Mackenzie: I'm one of the Artistic Directors of Chichester Festival Theatre, but I'm not going to give you my three minute explanation of Chichester now because I magically turn in fifty minutes from being an Artistic Director to being an Administrator and I get the chance to tell you then. In this session, as an Artistic Director, I am sharing the platform with a very distinguished group of colleague Artistic Directors and it's fantastic actually to see them all again. Very sadly, Juliet Stevenson's child was taken to hospital this morning but the obvious substitute is Barrie Rutter. Hurray!! And we're hugely grateful to Barrie for joining this session. Each of my colleague Artistic Directors is going to give us a bracing three minute visionary and energetic start to what we refuse to accept is the death slot. So this is going to be the highlight so far of your day.

Alan Lyddiard: It's really good to be here. I really enjoyed this morning. It thought it was fantastic to hear those people speaking about Ensemble and to recognise that things are moving here as well, and it's very exciting times here in England and Scotland and in Wales and Northern Ireland and Europe as well as Eastern Europe.

I started the ensemble in Newcastle as a result of a trip that I made to Moscow and to St Petersburg in 1987 where I first saw the Maly Drama Theatre and saw Mikhail Stronin (who was then covered with papers at his desk that he was desperately reading, and smoking like crazy, and looked a hundred years older than he does now). So he's doing very well, Mikhail. Lev Dodin was an extraordinary mentor for me and an extraordinary person to meet at that time, to kind of make me think about what I wanted to do in the theatre. And, at the same time, I was living in Scotland and working towards [Glasgow's role as] the City of Culture in 1990, and again that was an extraordinary period of time to be in Scotland and many of the colleagues I was working with then are here now as well. I learnt an enormous amount at that time, and what I think I learnt from both Lev Dodin and about Ensemble from Scotland was the principal idea that actors were important and performers were important, and that there was an extraordinary wealth of talent in Scotland that just was about performance. When I went to see the Maly Drama Theatre, the very first thing that I saw was a group of people sitting onstage in *Brothers and Sisters* eating bread for what seemed like half an hour but probably was about a minute. And again, I could just recognise a kind of performance quality that was just extraordinary. And I wanted to try to emulate that. I wanted to try to make that happen in a theatre somewhere.

I left Scotland and went to Newcastle. (I'm trying to be very fast here, so forgive me.) I came to Newcastle and what seemed to be happening in Newcastle was there was, again, a fantastic amount of local performers who lived and worked in Newcastle,

who were performing at companies like Live Theatre and Bruvvers who had been going for a long time. But, actually, all the work seemed to be about the North-East, about the people of the North-East, for the North-east – and I was very excited about the possibility of trying to open up to the rest of the world. So the Lev Dodins and the Peter Brooks, the Maly Theatre, all seemed to me to be a route that I could take in terms of encouraging a new type of performer working in Newcastle. And so the first thing that I did when I arrived in Newcastle in 1992 was to bring the Maly Theatre to Newcastle and Peter Brook to Newcastle. And we also formed a little company at the same time. So it was like a little international season and we did *Andorra* by Max Frisch in the middle of [Peter Brook's production of] *The Man Who* [by Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne] on one side and the Maly Theatre's *Brothers and Sisters* on the other side. And we had our own Geordie company of actors doing Max Frisch's *Andorra*. The most important thing about it was that, actually, the company from Peter Brook were working every day with our actors doing workshops and warm-ups and class and, as the Maly arrived, we were doing exactly the same thing with the Maly. So this little group of Geordie actors sat in the middle of these great companies and worked with them. And we had, in a way, an opportunity to see what we should be aiming for.

So, ten years later, we're still there. Those actors are still there. They're still working and they're still creating work. But they're not just being performers onstage. They are doing a whole range of different things now. So, for example, this summer we did a site-specific opera for children in Darlington. We work with children from Redcar. These are foreign countries: Redcar, Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Darlington. And we worked with young children in those schools creating this opera. Not an Outreach team, not an education team, but me, the actors, every single person in our company, our ensemble, was out there working in those schools developing a piece together. We brought it together. We performed it in Darlington: great success. "Creative Partnership" project. Those same actors a year before had been sitting in Allenheads in the middle of Northumberland working with Lev Dodin and Mikhail Stronin on *Uncle Vanya*. In fact, the first day, Lev Dodin read the whole of *Uncle Vanya* to us in Russian. We sat, and we listened, and we started then working on it. It was, again, a most extraordinary process. Three months before we were in Darlington with our children's opera for "Creative Partnerships", we were opening our show *Homage to Catalonia* in Barcelona with the company Teatre Romea with the Artistic Director Calixto Bieito working on a show that had Catalan actors in and our ensemble of actors in. Those actors in Catalonia are also part of an ensemble company and we are now working with that ensemble company for the next five years. Calixto Bieito will be directing for us in Newcastle in 2007 and we are creating again a future for that ensemble and for those performers.

Barrie Rutter: I've always been involved with families: the National Youth Theatre when I was a student; and then the RSC through the seventies; the National Theatre through the eighties. I loved school, and I think that is probably because I had a very bad home. My history as a teenager is dreadful but I always loved families. So the word Ensemble is something I've embraced all the time. I am a theatre animal. I've done bits and bobs of TV, radio and film, but I am a theatre animal and I've always chased theatre as opposed to any other form of employment - culminating in 1988 with Tony Harrison (the playwright who writes everything in poetry, everything in verse - whether it's opera, poems or theatre): a play called *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* [premiered by the NT Studio in association with the European Cultural Centre of Delphi at the latter's ancient stadium in Greece], a part written for me, and we toured up to a mill, Salts Mill in Bradford, one of the great mills of the North, where the natural voice of the play met its natural audience.

I then took on a sort of “road to Damascus” idea and said “I want to do more of this, in my own voice”, classical work, in spaces which, as far as I could, were (and it was my coinage this, wherever else you heard it) “non-velvet spaces”. (Laughter) And so in '92 (which was a dreadful year 'cause the recession was bad), I started my own company with a lot of other help. I thought I had one good idea. That was *Richard III* with an all Northern company. And it took off, and next year is our fourteenth season. We regularly earn the plaudits of Ensemble, etcetera, and people come back - which has its own economic strictures because you have to up their wages every time they want to come back. But it saves you a week in rehearsal because they know the ropes. So, when you have to raise your own money and you're not a building-based company, that's very important.

I love language. I'm a language man. I'm a sort of classicist by practice, not by education. We tour all over. The second year we went to India. We've been to Brazil. We've been to New York. We've been all round Western Europe. We regularly put eighteen/nineteen actors on a stage. The Spring tour is sixteen weeks next spring with *The Comedy of Errors* and a new play commissioned from Alan Plater. In '06, it's our fifteen. So we do some'at big and Michael Boyd is doing some'at big with the RSC where they're doing the whole of the canon and we're providing the *Wars of the Roses* section. So that's for our fifteenth celebration. I don't suffer fools gladly. I don't suffer the bureaucrats gladly, although I do recognise when they help me out. Which is not enough. (Laughter) End of statement.

Hamish Glen: The philosophical, political and intellectual arguments, I think, were summed up by Michael really clearly and I would agree with all of that. And that was all in my head because I too shared the experience of growing up in Edinburgh and the 1990 experience in Glasgow and seeing those companies. I also went and worked in Lithuania for three months - with [Eimuntas] Nekrosius's company that Michael mentioned - as the tanks rolled in, actually. So that was very interesting because that started the debate about the dismantling of the ensemble system in Eastern Europe and that started around that time. The trigger for me in creating an ensemble in Dundee was when the Lottery allowed revenue support as opposed to purely capital support. And, at that moment, I sort of saw the opportunity to create the idea of a new way of making work in Scotland. The lottery provided 25%. I must have been mad at the time. We ended up collecting the other 75% of the money to make the ensemble work out of private trusts and out of private fund raising with the belief that you could build audiences. Both of those came to pass as it transpired.

So, what I did was I offered eleven actors a three year contract. That was the duration of a lottery project. And we called it a pilot because the ambition was always to take this forward and make it something that would live in the theatre infrastructure in Scotland on a permanent basis, not simply a gesture. And, on top of those eleven actors, three apprentices joined us from the schools in Scotland - Queen Margaret [University College] or RSAMD [Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama] - for a year's apprenticeship. So, a company of fourteen actors. I would like to reinforce the idea of the skills' development. We had weekly (sometimes twice weekly) development of skills of all the actors from the sixty year olds to the twelve year olds.

We did about seven shows a year in the main house. But, using an ensemble, a whole lot of other opportunities emerged. We could do what we called Platform productions - which were late-night shows that sat on top of our main house performances and allowed us to do shows with more swear words. It allowed actors who aspired to direct to have an opportunity. There was a lot of room for investigation and creative adventure within the ensemble because the base is taken

care of. The base exists. All the actors are paid for. We did early morning storytelling for kids. We tried to revive all our work into a summer rep (like a sort of Chichester model). This was less successful as there weren't a lot of tourists for Dundee. Another huge advantage was the shows being held in repertoire allowed us to further exploit them. So we didn't have to bin them after three and a half weeks. So we went on No. 1 tours. We transferred the shows. I could offer a range of shows to these No. 1 houses ("Do you fancy a Shakespeare. Do you fancy a musical? Do you fancy a contemporary comedy. Blah blah blah,") and they could take their pick. And we would take those ones out. Shows would live in our repertoire for up to two years. *The Winter's Tale* – that we reasonably famously took to Iran - was a show that had been made some two years earlier.

The advantage of the ensemble for me lies in the quality of work. It seems an obvious thing to say. I could go on with this list. I mean I'm a fan, a huge fan of the ensemble, as you might guess. The financial security of the actors should not be underestimated. They do not have to look to find where the next show is. Therefore they do not need to be the one that stands out. There is ease of performance between them. There is no hierarchy required. There's no sense of trying to outdo. So a real joy and ease of performance emerges. The length of the rehearsal periods: we rehearsed from three months to six weeks - never under six weeks. I think the very interesting idea that hasn't been mentioned is the idea of commissions: where you commission writers to write for specific actors. And I think - whether you are talking about Shakespeare or Chekhov - that's a model that's disappeared and I think that new writing has suffered for it. And they can write for fourteen actors. You can attract international class directors: directors that wouldn't even dream of doing a show in three and a half weeks - and you're pushed to get them to do it in three and a half months. You've got strength throughout your cast. You have adventurous and exciting and unexpected casting. You are forced into that. And I think it's absolutely crucial you don't break the rule of the ensemble. And, you know, my argument with Michael would be: if you're going to bring in names to play the main parts then in fact you undermine the very nature of Ensemble. The point is in a sustained commitment to the same artists over an extended period of time. You can retain your success. You don't bin it. It is fantastic for audience development. In a way, you make your own stars and, when they [the audience] bump into them in Tesco's, they have a chat with them. It's a great audience development tool. As I say, you can genuinely facilitate national and international touring. People can see the work. They can hear it. We used to do showings of the work. It is pragmatic though. I mean I think the other thing that's interesting is that the choice of work is determined by the company. Is that a bad thing? In other words, actors are at the heart of it. You need to provide a sort of fairness of opportunity for actors. I'll reinforce the idea that this is not a prison sentence. Actors were allowed out. They could do other shows. They were invited for TV. They could go. There was no problem about that at all - with enough notice.

And crucially, I think, the power structure of the theatre shifts. It shifts away from an artistic leader/director to the actors. Peter Hall, I think it was in the thing [the selection of quotes provided about Ensemble], suggested it shouldn't be run by committee, but I'm not sure. The debate that was talked about in Poland or Russia about what shows you're doing (and why and to what end and to what purpose) is not a bad thing: which directors (the actors will have pretty strong opinions about who they might want to invite to their company) to the price of coffee. The power structure shifts.

And I'll finish with a wee quote from Rimas Tuminas (who's the other great Lithuanian director) who came and made just a superb *Seagull* [by Anton Chekhov] with the

company a few years ago. And we were sitting in the bar and he was talking about what the difference is - and for him (*pointing outwards with both hands*) our actors were going that way and his actors were going that way (*pointing downwards with both hands*). And we always dreamt of bringing those two companies together because he would like his actors to go that way a bit more and I wanted my actors to go that way a bit more. And I think that's in a way at what the heart of an ensemble's all about.

And here somewhere is James Brining who took over Dundee Rep from me, and it would be great if you could just give us a sort of update as to where that ensemble sits because not all the actors but some of the actors there are in their sixth or seventh year.

James Brining (Current Artistic director of Dundee Rep): I used to work in Glasgow. One of the things that attracted me to the Rep was the legacy that Hamish had left - and also Alan to some extent with the work that he did there in Dundee before that. Dundee's an interesting place: it's on the margin, if you like. Somebody [Michael Boyd] said earlier that Dundee's not in the metropolis in kind of Scottish terms. And myself and Dominic Hill (who's my Co-Artistic Director at the Rep), we kind of inherited this fantastic experiment which had been running for four years by the time we took over. It was no longer an experiment. It was a way of working. It required from me certainly - I'd never worked in an ensemble context before - a total shift in the approach to putting plays on, to working and living with a group of actors, performers. We've also got a dance company at the Rep. So, on a daily basis, there are twenty five performers in the building - never mind technicians, designers, lighting designers. It's a very creative environment.

But what we wanted to do (because it wasn't our company; it was Hamish's company; he'd invited those actors there; quite an unusual situation in terms of actor power, if you like, to be the directors who kind of inherited actors), we wanted a company that was slightly smaller. And I think Joanna Reid (who will be talking on the next panel) was working with us before she jumped ship and went with Hamish to Coventry. But we went through a process whereby we had to rationalize to an extent the company, or get them to examine whether they wanted to remain in the company that we were going to run. So we introduced elements of flexibility and one of the things people may want to question is whether flexibility is an anathema to the idea of an ensemble. Somebody [Agata Siwiak] I think mentioned earlier about air conditioning and we wanted some fresh air to blow through the ensemble and we wanted to bring people in and out of that ensemble. There were some difficulties in the transition from the group of eleven actors. It'd kind of dwindled to about nine or ten by then, but it was still a core. Some issues to do with employment law (which are totally practical issues; as far away from the artistic ethics of an ensemble as you can get) but nonetheless - if someone's sitting here thinking "I want to set an ensemble up" - there are issues that you need to be aware of relation to that which are to do with employment law which changed from when the ensemble was created to where we are now.

And what we have now is an ensemble which is light on its feet, we hope. What that means, practically, is it's a slightly smaller core (as we call it) of about eight or nine actors. We've introduced an idea of Artistic Associates. So we have actors who are connected with the company who have worked with us; who aren't necessarily committed full time but come back and work on a regular basis. We're still able to do the things that Hamish mentioned: which is to revive work - which is a fantastic opportunity. We're also looking to split the core company at times. So, for instance, next year we're doing a co-production with Paines Plough which is playing down here

while the rest of the company is carrying on playing in Dundee. And, later in the year, we're doing [Alfred Jarry's] *Ubu* here as part of the Young Genius Project which the Barbican and the Young Vic are promoting. So that kind of a flexibility of an ensemble (knowing who you've got, being able to plan ahead) is a fantastic outcome of having those group of actors.

Training still carries on. We have something called "playtime" (which sounds terribly frivolous) but we do that every week. It's to do with training and development - and it's something away from the text which is in rehearsal. It might be to do with singing or musical instruments or whatever, but it's a fantastic opportunity for people to keep working and learning together. We also continue to have long rehearsal periods relative to the normal period of time: eight, nine, ten, sometimes eleven weeks, not necessarily full time; but sometimes actors are not in all the shows so they can sometimes be living with that part, you know, for going on for three months.

And the biggest thing, I suppose, is about actor-focus - which is what to me (kind of being thrown into this environment of an ensemble) is the biggest challenge and also the greatest reward - which is that the focus is very much on the actor. And Dominic and I met at the Orange Tree, and Sam Walters [Artistic Director of the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond on Thames] is here. Something I learnt when I was at the Orange Tree was about the focus on the actor. It's a theatre in the round. And that idea of the actors being the heart of the theatre. And, when Hamish said about the coffee that's in the bar, he isn't joking. The actors have opinions about everything and I would say "quite right". A theatre without actors in it is just a building that puts on plays. Our theatre has actors working in it spending ten o'clock in the morning to eleven o'clock at night. Often. And it makes it a very creative environment, quite challenging in management terms, and I think the woman from Poland [Agata Siwiak] mentioned the idea of management. That's a key thing. You have to manage the people that you've got to make sure they don't end up absolutely exhausted at the end of the time. But it makes it a very rich, very engaging environment to be making work in.

Ruth Mackenzie: Thank you. Before I open up to you (*indicating the audience*) I just wanted to ask the panel just a couple of questions if I may. And the first question, actually, just picking up on your presentations: what I think is exciting about this session is that you are Artistic Directors who have in different ways taken forward the notion of the ensemble but you're also artists. Now, perhaps it's a statement about what happens to an artist when you become an Artistic Director but actually, all of you talked slightly more on the sort of management side - with the possible exception of you, Barrie - than from the personal, artistic side. I'd be quite interested to hear just a couple (from whoever) of moments that you as an artist just simply could not have achieved without an ensemble. I think that: just very concrete things. The big framework has been very brilliantly sketched in but just a couple of vivid, you-as-a-director, how you achieved something extraordinary because of your family, your ensemble and the way of working it allowed. Who wants to jump in there?

Barrie Rutter: I thought I had a bloody good idea. That's why I started it. And I couldn't do it without other people 'cause that was the point of it. I'd come from big families, except my own, right through my working life. And so, as an actor - I think I'm the only actor as well on the panel - as an actor/director and a founder and all those high-blown titles, you have to keep it going. Our audiences look to me to perform as well as direct and run the company. And who do you do it for? I do it for meself. By extension it goes to other people but, you know, you only put your own head on the pillow. And even if there's someone else's head there, you only dream your own dreams. Do it for yourself: your own integrity. There's no point inviting

other actors and audiences to pay money to something that you haven't given your full integrity to. So you do it for yourself: everything for yourself. And that was the burning thing, because I thought I had a good idea. And I myself was excited by it. The fact that it's lasted so long is testament to other energies, other people, the ensemble-ness of it. But, initially, I wanted to please meself. So I did. (*Laughter*)

Alan Lyddiard: I agree with that. You do do it for yourself. I've been very, very conscious a lot of my time feeling very much on the outside of the establishment, always kind of being on the edge of something. And I'm very excited about other people that feel in that same position. And I particularly was interested in the last few years about the Roma people and the Gypsy communities of Eastern Europe. And I organized a festival in Newcastle which was called the Gypsy festival. And we created a piece of work alongside that Gypsy Festival, so we as artists working in Newcastle made our own piece [entitled *Black Eyed Rose*] based on Gypsy stories, Roma stories, and brought many, many Gypsy companies to Newcastle to perform alongside us. And there was one particular voice that I heard which was a singer from Hungary, called Mitsou. I heard her sing but I couldn't find her. And I was desperate to find her and I travelled to Budapest and I travelled all over Eastern Europe trying to find her, and eventually I made a contact somewhere in Hungary and they said, "I know her". So I rushed across and talked to her, and this was five weeks before we were about to do the show. We'd rehearsed it. We'd been doing it. It was a fantastic opportunity that we were doing this big festival. We were making a piece. We had all these Gypsy companies, Roma companies with us - but I hadn't found Mitsou yet. And then I found her, and I said to her, "Would you please come and be in our show?" And she said "Yes". And so she flew over and she was in our show. We changed the show. You know, we'd been working on it for a year. All the company had learnt musical instruments in that year. We had created a music within a year. And then suddenly we changed the whole show in five weeks because Mitsou had arrived. And it was a fantastic show. Now we are going to take our next big project, which we're going to make in January of 2006. We start rehearsals in January of 2006. We start work on it now. We've already been rehearsing it; we've already been looking at the text; and we're already learning to play music for that show. And we will develop our musical skills over a year before we even start rehearsing it. And it's those kinds of projects that I could not do in any other situation that I feel so passionate about and so excited about.

Ruth Mackenzie: That's fantastic. I'm still looking for you, the artist, and a moment onstage that you could create only because of the ensemble. That was almost it. (*Laughter*) But I wonder if, Hamish, you've got one?

Hamish Glen: I suppose I do, because it became the moment that was also when the company came together properly as an ensemble - because that took about two years, if the truth be told, before it was genuine. And it's nothing as arty or as ambitious. It was our production of [Kander and Ebb's] *Cabaret* that I was doing. And we'd had extensive training with actors to develop their voices. They weren't singers. They weren't singing performers. We had done huge amounts of work in class in terms of developing their movement skills and dance skills. It was a six week rehearsal period. Towards the end of that, we were running three rehearsal rooms. They were coming up from where they were working on the choreography; they came back from where they were learning songs; and we hit this stage (it have been a run-through; I can't remember) and the skill levels, the ease of performance, the self-confidence, the depth of their performances, their commitment to the project, transformed my idea about that show and how it could be presented and what it meant to me and what I felt it could mean to audiences. Is that what you mean?

Ruth Mackenzie: Mmmm. Fantastic. I mean, for me, my Maly Theatre story of the day (because I with you, Alan, we brought the Maly to the regions and commissioned *The Man Who*): I remember with *Brothers and Sisters* understanding what you saw onstage was the life of a village and a community from five years old or so to grannies; and that this community were played by a community; and that, when we saw it, the leading actors had started as children and, as they grew up, they took on an additional generation. Obviously, some of the older members of the ensemble had passed on. So you were watching a real community of actors playing a community and they'd been playing the community then for twenty-something years. And the sense of depth that you got is a goal I can't imagine how any of us will ever achieve but, when we talk about ambition, that was the template.

Alan Lyddiard: I've just got a little tiny story: I've had a show in our repertoire for eleven years, *Animal Farm*. It's toured all over England. It's toured all over Europe. It's been a fantastic kind of base for us, you know. We've done it lots and lots and lots of times. And, just recently, people have asked us to revive it again and we might well be reviving it with *1984* and *Homage to Catalonia*. So we'd do a trilogy of Orwell. But the big thing that really excited me about it was: the Chekhov Festival said to me "I would like you to come to Moscow to present *Animal Farm*" and Lev Dodin said to me "I would like you to come to the Maly and do *Animal Farm* in the Maly" and suddenly, you know, I went, "Well, this is what I've always dreamed of. You know, I would be able to touch close to what those people had done fifteen years earlier. That I was in the same place with the same people trying to create the same sort of theatre." And that was a really kind of moving moment for me.

Barrie Rutter: You know, I'm not going to downgrade all this but I can get the same feeling in Skipton Cattle Market. Which is the only cattle market in the land with a theatre licence. Where the same farmers and all of that, where they sell the sheep on a Wednesday - and Shakespeare on a Thursday, they buy it from us. There is something absolutely wonderful about taking on and metamorphosing a place and using classical language in that way that only really classical language can do. You know, if you do *Look Back In Anger*, you have to have a proper ironing board and a proper doorbell and proper Sunday newspapers. In that short time, Shakespeare and the Greeks have been to the moon and back. And so, that also comes with the travel around and the enormous amount of different venues that we, as a touring company, play: from a proscenium arch... we have to play velvet now because [of] economic strictures but we still go to a cattle market, an indoor riding stable, an underground Victorian cellar (which is my place in Halifax) and Guildford and Bury St Edmunds and Cheltenham and all those other velvet places. I don't mean to put your international story down, Alan, but I get a real thrill about people who don't necessarily go to the theatre but they go to see theatre in their own workplace (ie: Skipton Cattle Market). And that has given me some of the best thrills I've had, and I've been all over the world with theatre.

Alan Lyddiard: I think the important thing is the relationship between the two things. I think it's all very good and fine to be international but you've got to be local at the same time. And you've got to recognize that you work in a local community with local people on developing the work. This why I made the comments earlier about working in schools in Redcar and the same actors are doing that on a full time basis but also working with Lev Dodin in Allenheads in Northumberland. And I think it's that relationship that I have particularly pursued in my particular theatre at a particular time. But I absolutely agree with you that the work that you're doing in those places is just as important and just as critical in terms of developing people's appreciation of art and creativity.

Ruth Mackenzie: I'm going to ask the audience to come in now.

Jehan-Sam Manekshaw (Trainee Director on Birkbeck MFA in Theatre Directing course): I'm asking a question of a self-interested kind about the role of directors within ensemble companies: how the balance of powers changes or the shift of weight in terms of who makes decisions and how this process goes with this ensemble of actors. I'm just looking for observations on the whole notion of how directors (who some people say is the loneliest job in the world) fit in and benefit from this and how they're learning – especially young directors who are just starting out.

Hamish Glen: I think there's not a huge difference in terms of... Well, yes, there is a big difference. But I don't think there's any greater or lesser chance in terms of a young director getting going in the context of an ensemble, or in the context of another theatre working differently. In fact, I think an ensemble gives one much more room for experiment - young voices, the uncertain, the unknown - than would otherwise be the case because the biggest cost of a production are the actors, on the whole. If that is a given, and so your concern is not about that cost, then directors you can give them [something] like the platform performance. I used to invite a lot of young directors to just come in and cut their teeth. They've got the advantage of working with actors with huge amounts of experience - and we heard a bit about that from the Polish experience. And, as a young director, or any director, you'll learn a hell of a lot from actors. So I think it is as rich a place and there's as much opportunity in the context of an ensemble for young voices - if not a greater chance, I would say.

James Brining: I think Hamish is right. I am in the odd position of following quite closely after Hamish having left. So, in a way, many of these things he set in place we've inherited and they're evolving – and that's a different job from setting the whole thing up. I think that, as a director coming into a set group of actors, there can be particular challenges - and I know that, sometimes in the past, that has proved problematic. We've got a Trainee Associate Director who's on a scheme with us, Martin Danziger (who's here today as well), and he's directing *The Visit* [by Friedrich Dürrenmatt] in the New Year. So I think his experience will be interesting. But the idea of working the actors who you'd never get a chance to employ in terms of their experience or whether they're prepared to work with [you] - often young directors are in [the] context of small companies or doing touring work - and I think that's one of the great opportunities within an ensemble that you do get access to the whole range of actors from twenty to eighty. And the platform idea, and the opportunity to just do something: we did a reading of a play the other week that was just a local writer who wanted to hear what that play sounded like out loud. And this kind of experimentation. And that can be a one-day event. It can be a week's event. It's about timetable. So that's why we're being drawn back to the administrative functions sometimes. It's not that it occupies so much of your head but it's a kind of different way of thinking about it. It unlocks opportunity. And in that context, if people are willing to let young directors in or less experienced directors, then I think there are lots of opportunities to exploit.

Ruth Mackenzie: I just would add one thing from my observation, which is that I think it is harder because of the power shift, because the actors are at home, because they are not looking to a Guest Director as being their natural authority, because also for a young director the warm-up activities (of, you know, bond your team and find out what their name is and what they like to drink in the pub): you can't do any of that. They're already a team. You're the outsider. So that actually you just have to start work from day one on the text. I think it's much more demanding actually.

James Brining: What I would say is that it's about creating an atmosphere in which there's an openness to people coming in and, if they're a young director, there has to be an acceptance on the part of those performers (and other people within the building as well because it's not just about performers; it's about technicians and whatever else) that this kind of energy is a good thing. I'm not saying it's always that simple - of course it's not - but that's the kind of atmosphere that you need to try to create within the building. So it's about accepting that and being open to it.

Rhonwen MacCormack (Crucible Theatres): Are you saying that the companies develop a house style and that, when directors come in, they have to work to that style – or what happens?

Hamish Glen: We didn't at Dundee. I think there are two ways of working that. There could be a very strong voice that determines the style and the shape of the work you do. Ours was different. Dundee was and is an ordinary city theatre. It is the only professional producing house in the city. It therefore seems to me to have an obligation to produce work for a whole range of audiences. So the eclecticism that Michael [Boyd] was talking about was right at the heart of what we were doing. And, indeed, I tended to try and find directors whose voice was in opposition to mine in a way. It would pull in the opposite direction.

Alan Lyddiard: I would say the opposite. I would say that we have got a house style and that we do create directors who are kind of close to what we do. And I also encourage very much performers to direct, to take their own projects forward and that happens a lot. One of our actors went to the base camp of the Himalayas and came back and made a show about it and it was a very important part of the development of the company. It again made the performers very important in the process.

Bob Pearce (Freelance Director): We have heard a lot about the long term opportunities for actors in the context of an ensemble. But again – following on from the question about directors was – you're all directors who have created ensembles based on your vision. Are you offering long term opportunities for directors coming in to be integrated into that ensemble? Which one of you can give me a job? *(Laughter)* Are you developing people in that way as well? Because, obviously, you're all directors of that kind of pitch. But is there that opportunity? Are you looking to provide that? Is that part of the plan?

Nathan Curry (Tangled Feet ensemble based in London): There seems to be a disagreement. A few of you said that it's very much actor-focussed and that's very important - and Barrie was about doing it for yourself. Is there a danger that you don't pay enough attention to what your audience wants? And sometimes an ensemble show can be extremely interesting for the ensemble in rehearsal and performance, but then again may not be in performance for an audience.

Ruth Mackenzie: Not just an ensemble show, I'd say! *(Laughter)*

Andrew Lukas (Honorary Treasurer, DGGB / Freelance Director): Given the comments made in the previous discussion about the importance of common knowledge and nomenclature, should there be a precondition that directors should at some point train as actors or have knowledge of acting - not necessarily as a career - so that they can have mutual understanding of the creative process and thereby create that common knowledge on that basis?

Ruth Mackenzie: Wow! Right then, I'm going to ask each of the panel to answer whichever of those questions interested them most. It's interesting that it is the directors who have spoken out here in what all of you have described an actor-centred process but, there we are, that's directors for you. (*Laughter*)

Barrie Rutter: As an actor as well (and I act in everything that we do), so I'll kick off. You're right. You have to keep an open eye on what your audiences want and - the way my theatre company is funded - I couldn't afford to do that sort of blind ignoring of the audience and the venues' demands. And it's amazing what we can't sell. *Antigone* last year (which was brilliant, a new version by Blake Morrison), we nearly didn't have a tour because venues wouldn't have it. They just want from us the Shakespeare. This year *The Bells* is on tour - the Leopold Lewis new version of *The Bells*, a Victorian melodrama. The tour nearly didn't happen because the venues wouldn't have it. Audiences want it but venue managers don't want it. Because they're thick! (*Laughter*) So you always have to keep aware. If a tour doesn't happen because you can't sell it ... I have to sell everything. Again, uniquely, I'm not building-based. I have a little theatre - a space, an underground cellar - and we open there and then we go around the nation. So we have to keep an eye [on the finances] and if the thing isn't budgeted before it goes into rehearsals then the thing doesn't happen. And, as for directors and acting skills either way, Richard Eyre said he became a director because he was such a bad actor. You might find you were a bad actor if you go back from directing to acting. I don't know. Again, I just had a burning ambition to do what I thought was a good idea. So I'm in both camps. And, as I said, next year is our fourteenth anniversary. So we're doing some'at right.

James Brining: What I'd say about the actor-focus thing... I suppose the distinction I was trying to make was that, as opposed to a normal process (where you've got short term actors brought in; maybe you've worked with some of those people before and they're gone again), because those people are around all the time you have a different kind of relationship with them on a personal level. In a way, it needs a more grown-up relationship than often you can get away with. You go: "I'm not going to work with that person again because, actually, I didn't get on with them. They didn't get on with me. We weren't on the same wavelength. Whatever." You know you're going to have to work with that person next time. So you're going to have to address a kind of methodology of work, I guess, and that could sound pretentious but what it basically means is, "How are we going to continue to work together and to develop together?" So I suppose that's why the actor-focus thing seems to me an important thing to stress.

But let me tell you - having run a touring company, TAG [a Glasgow-based theatre for young people], which Alan used to run and Tony Graham ran after him, where I had no consideration for the commercial needs of the audience but absolute consideration because they were young people who would cough or get bored or walk out if they were not interested - running a venue in Dundee (which is not a theatre-going city by tradition) you're very aware of the needs of the audience. So you've got to try and marry up what's going to stimulate you as artists to what your audience is actually going to come and see. What I would say is that one thing we do try and do is to market the ensemble almost as a unique thing about our theatre; and there is a proportion of our audience who come to see the work that we put on because it's the ensemble and they're interested in how the actors are going to go from one show to the next to the next. So the sense of connection - and meeting them in Tesco or Azda does happen. They do get berated by members of the public for playing *Lady Macbeth* in a particular kind of way and I think that's good. There's a connection between the community and the theatre - which is what it's about for me. That's what's so exciting about running a theatre in Dundee.

The other thing – why it’s actor-focussed – is because actors do get cast against type more often. You know, if you’ve got your choice of anybody in the universe (as Michael Boyd says), well, you’ll try and get them if you can afford them. Whereas actors within the ensemble system do have to play parts which they’re slightly too old for, they’re slightly too young for, maybe don’t have the skills for. They’ve got to build those skills up. So that’s why the focus can be on the actor more because it’s about what this performer can bring to this particular part in this show. And it’s about...

Ruth Mackenzie: Stop. STOP! Good. *(Laughter)* Alan?

Alan Lyddiard: About getting a job as a director in the company: I think there’s a prerequisite of what you need to bring to a company that’s an ensemble and it’s really about not being one particular thing. Not being an actor, not being a director, but being someone that has those skills but wants to – in a way - think broader than that and to be able to bring other things as well. So, a lot of my actors are composers and film makers and are writers and are many other things. And I have got young directors working with me, but I also bring directors in who I think are going to challenge those actors and are going to take them (if you like) to the next level - always trying to improve the work and always trying to develop the work. So, I think a director or anyone that joins our company has to come with more than just one skill and, secondly, they’ve got to be able to feel that they can live and work and be part of something that is very, very kind of complicated.

Hamish Glen: Do you need to be an actor? I hope not, because I’m not. Never have been; never trained as. Clearly I’ve got knowledge from years of working but I’ve never been on stage as a performer, really, in my life. Something I’d would like to say about audiences and the notion of leading audiences - because I think there is something more interesting than a cherry-picked cast (however brilliant they are) which is about an actor in transformation. And, if you are coming back to see the same actors on a weekly or three weekly basis or whatever, what you are seeing is them transformed. And I think that’s right at the heart of what is enjoyable about being in the theatre, and I think we’ve maybe a bit lost the sense of an actor transforming himself or herself as part of what’s enjoyable and we tend to cherry-pick our actors.

Ruth Mackenzie: Thank you. That’s a very good note to end on. My own cherry-pick: from “transformation” to being screamed at “in Azda”. Actually, the most brilliant thing that I’ve heard this afternoon is: “It’s only your head on the pillow.” I think that is a really important note for every artist in this room and for everyone with a vision: it’s about the importance of selfishness actually. Ironically, supremely, in a debate about teams and sharing and empowering and developing.

Thank you very much, colleagues, for allowing me to bully you remorselessly. We’re five minutes over time which is because you asked too many questions. *(Laughter)* It’s my task to introduce the next Chairman, who’s another wonderful Artistic Director and old friend, Felix Cross. He has the happy task of bullying me. But before he comes up to start bullying, could you just clap these ones, please. *(Applause)*

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THIRD PANEL SESSION: UK ADMINISTRATORS

Chair: Felix Cross (Artistic Director, NITRO).

Panel: Ruth Mackenzie (Co-Artistic Director, Chichester Festival Theatre), Joanna Reid (Former Administrative Director of Dundee Rep Theatre and now Executive Director of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry) and Nicola Thorold (Former Director of the Independent Theatre Council and now Director of Theatre for Arts Council England).

Felix Cross: Good afternoon. I'm Felix Cross and I'm the Artistic Director of NITRO, which is a black musical theatre / national touring company. I've been running the company for eight years. It formed, however, twenty-five years ago [and] was up to five years ago as Black Theatre Coop. And indeed, in 1979 when it was formed, it was an ensemble. It was a cooperative. And referring back to some comments earlier this morning - about perhaps the political motivation for organizations such as this - Black Theatre Coop was, in 1979, very much set up as an ensemble of black actors, directors and writers to redress very obvious and clear imbalances. Things have changed; things have become slightly different in many different ways; but perhaps the fact that it was a cooperative mitigated against the fact that it was an ensemble: the success, the longevity of the ensemble. Cooperatives have a certain shelf life. So, that's me.

This morning Michael Boyd spoke of that wonderful example of the Cheek by Jowl example – being an ensemble of perhaps two. And I thought that was a wonderful way of looking at it: this ongoing and developing, profound relationship/understanding that happens between individuals over a period of time. This can happen with enormous success between artists and producers and administrators. It doesn't always have to happen among solely actors, for example, or actors and particular directors. If one thinks about various organizations where groups of people (maybe Artistic Director and General Manager or Producer roles) have worked together for periods of time; and also relationships (and understandings and sympathies and empathies) that build and develop together - not only between artistic roles in the theatre and producing roles and administrative roles in the theatre but also the other agencies in the world of the theatre: the funders and other organisations who fund the system – clearly led principally by, in England, Arts Council England. I would like to set the context of this next session as a sort of a: "This is the arena we work in." We all work in this sector. We are all concerned with the notion of building a nest or a series of nests (if you like) that protect, nurture, nourish, help develop the work that lives and grows in that nest. And that some of us may be actually creating the work; some of us may be producing it, administering it, some of us may be funding it, and that's really the context in which we have this wonderful august group of people here.

Joanna Reid: I was at Dundee Rep working with Hamish [Glen, then Artistic Director] when we were setting up the ensemble, and we called the whole project the "New Ways of Working". What I thought I'd do is really just tell you briefly the main planks that went into establishing it - with the hope that it will spark off ideas for all of you. We took about two years to develop the ideas from the Lottery saying "It

doesn't have to be capital. You can go for revenue." It took about two years from that before the actual project started – which was 1999. We were on revenue funding from the Scottish Arts Council and Dundee Council of about half a million [pounds] and, as Hamish says, it actually was a completely barking idea that we could possibly run an ensemble with that kind of foundation. But what was key was the Lottery agreeing that what we called "New Ways of Working" was not our core activity. So that, by doing that they agreed that, yes, we were there to produce theatre but actually we were going into a downward spiral and we couldn't afford to produce as much theatre as we needed. In order to win the argument that our core activity was different to what we wanted to do with the ensemble, we worked up a whole programme about what the theatre would look like in the three years if we weren't doing ensemble work and took that as a basis. That financial basis was what we would be doing for the next three years and anything else (any extra expenditure and any income) was all to do with the ensemble. We also won the argument with Scottish Arts Council Lottery that this was not a stabilization project (well, up there it was called something else), that this was not going to be something that could fund itself in three years' time and therefore it was a pilot project and we just all had to see what would happen. The Lottery underpinned it, but it only provided about a quarter of the cost. And, as Hamish says, the rest of it we had to raise and also we had to earn through the box office.

Another key decision was that we commissioned an economic impact study and compared what we called the "Do Nothing" scenario with "New Ways of Working". We also linked in with the ensemble idea the capital project that we were doing which was a three point two million [pound] refurbishment of Dundee Rep. And, by combining those two ideas together, we could then go off to funders to talk about the re-positioning of the theatre and the fact that, with those two elements together, we were creating a state of the art theatre and that that deserved funding. It was because of the capital project that some funders could put money in - like Dundee City Council and our local enterprise agency. But, actually, they only put the money in because of the ensemble project. We also linked "New Ways of Working" into Dundee City's strategy for transforming its reputation through culture, and it had just built the DCA [Dundee Contemporary Arts] with a lot of Scottish Lottery funding, and also Scottish Dance Theatre (which is part of Dundee Rep) which was beginning to transform itself. We argued that Dundee Rep was a tourist attraction: if we had the ensemble and if we had a state of the art theatre, that people would come to the city. And we argued that the press coverage that we attracted as the theatre was hugely powerful for the city because of the positive image that it brought the city - and also the money we were able to bring in. That we were bringing in a lot of public money which created jobs.

The boards (amazingly when we look at it now) were convinced to go with it because Hamish had been in post for about six years by then and I had been in post about four years. We had won our stripes. But we also had a £1,000,000 fund-raising target for just the revenue element and we had £90,000 sitting there underpinning it. Actually the maths don't work but actually what it gave us was confidence. So when we were approaching the trusts - a lot of the money came from trusts; we didn't try sponsorship because trusts were a lot easier to go to - but the key to going to the trusts was that the idea was unique and is exciting. The uniqueness of it in Scotland: that Dundee Rep was going to be Scotland's only ensemble, and it is Scotland's only ensemble. We got some key three-year funding from a few trusts which, again, helped on confidence. We split up the various elements of "New Ways of Working" in order to go to particular trusts for particular elements. [With] local trusts, we talked about leveraging money into Dundee creating jobs. Other trusts, about training. We went to Europe saying that we were a tourist attraction. The apprenticeship scheme

specifically attracted some funding, and then otherwise we earned through box office and through touring. And then, on the other side, the key thing really, I suppose, was that it was a three year project, but for it to continue we had to transform the revenue funding. And it was absolutely fantastic that, after the three years, both the Scottish Arts Council and Dundee City Council did increase the revenue funding. So, having started on half a million, we finished on just about one million of core revenue funding. Which means that a lot of the energy could go into running the ensemble rather than how you were going to balance the books.

On the management side, turnover in the organization more than doubled. We increased the staff by over 50%, and we moved people from seasonal contracts to permanent. But it's a very interesting side effect of bringing actors into the heart of the organization that we had fourteen people (three of whom were changing each year because they were the apprenticeships) but they were now members of staff. And, of course, a lot of actors aren't used to being members of staff. And there was a whole management side of them being members of staff and having opinions about the marketing. But, of course, that needs to be done in a particular way, and the processes and the systems that are there is a building because it is dangerous not to use them. Some of the actors I know did find it very difficult to have the day-in-day-out-ness of the job and, in fact (of the original eleven who were offered three year contracts) three of them did leave during the period of that initial contract. The management side of it was actually quite a big job. Of course, it was with the Artistic Director because the actors' line manager is the Artistic Director, and I know now that James and Dominic spend a lot of time with each actor talking to them. And the whole line-management side of things, which sounds very formal but actually it is very necessary when people are in the building. Hamish talked about the transformation of the actor and the work, and it was an incredibly exciting opportunity and exciting time. And there's no doubt that the whole building was transformed. Everybody in the building has a huge ownership, and when you're not on the artistic side... but I work in theatre because I absolutely love it, and so to have the connection between the management and the acting, the marketing and the actor, and box office as well as technicians and everybody really buying into and really feeling how important the ensemble was. So there is no question that the whole building is the ensemble. And it was extremely difficult to leave it.

Nicola Thorold: As I was thinking about what I was going to say today I went back to the Theatre Review which happened in 2000/2001 (in particular in the terms of the thinking) and it was really striking because, of course, back then the RSC was in the process of dismantling its ensemble, which we've now heard where Michael's taken it since then. Ruth and her colleagues weren't at Chichester, Dundee was (and still is) in Scotland (so they weren't part of our debate), and so the main focus on issues that we've been talking about today – and the ensemble way of working and the benefits of it - was actually around the independent sector and companies like Kneehigh, like Forced Entertainment, like Complicité, Kaos and indeed some T.I.E. [Theatre in Education] companies and other companies working in particularly specialist areas. The only director of a regional producing company to really champion the cause of Ensemble was Alan [Lyddiard] at Northern Stage at that time, and I think that's something I just want to dwell on. The agenda we were talking about then very much: it was about longer rehearsals; it was about larger casts; it was about new work. And they really were the drivers for discussion about how people wanted to use the money that the Theatre Review was bringing to them. I know many of you know what the Theatre Review was but - for those of you who don't - it was the process by which the English Arts Council set a funding framework that was intended to help revitalize theatre in England. And, if I put it crudely, what we were saying [was]: "We want to stimulate better theatre; we want to stimulate more theatre; and

we want more people and a greater range of people to go to the theatre.” And, listening to the debates today, I think the issues around better theatre (and indeed around more people going to the theatre and why they might want to go when they can experience an ensemble) have been really clearly rehearsed with great passion.

But actually, one of the key issues, looking forwards - it is a debate that we are having now today which we weren't having then - is: “Do we get more theatre?” And there are some very technical discussions about at what point it becomes cost effective to have an ensemble and how big an ensemble and what it isn't. But, actually, the more I thought about it the more I thought: “This isn't primarily about funding at this point.” Primarily, it's about the individual director, in many cases - and here I'm going back to talking about buildings - actually having the kind of passion that we've been hearing about all through today. And so the question I'm kind of grappling with is: “Why have we not had that in this country, in that way, from more than actually a handful of people, I'd say, working in the building-based sector?” There are many, many answers, and I think we'd all have our own theories. And I'm sure that an under-funded climate affects aspiration. But also I do think it's worth throwing into the mix - and John [Carnegie] said “Be provocative” - there are an awful lot of people that simply don't want to work in an ensemble. Either actors or directors. And that may be because of working patterns they've established with which actually only a seasonal ensemble is a way they would want to work; but also, on another really important note, is perhaps the culture of theatre in this country (and I don't mean the culture that Michael was describing: that sort of very negative, hostile to things foreign) but I mean the fact that we have a very diverse theatre sector in this country. I think we're actually unique in the world for the range of theatre practice, the range of experiment, the range of different voices that we support (not just through subsidy but through audiences, etc) and that that's always going to be something that we have and we're proud of in this country. And one of the issues that that leads to is: people like experimenting with ways of working. And the idea of doing similar things for a very long time is not necessarily one that people have been rushing (certainly to my door) saying that they want to do.

I want to end this by saying [that], personally, I am totally convinced by the benefits of the ensembles. I have been, as all of you have, I'm sure, in some of my best theatre moments where they are only possible because it's been an ensemble that has actually performed in the way they performed, and that the opportunities for actors, the opportunities for directors and the opportunities for audiences are very, very clear from it. But I will also chuck in at this point that we could go away from today going “It's what everyone wants; the arguments are so clear” but they're not the arguments that the whole theatre sector is making. And so I just thought I'd throw that in.

Ruth Mackenzie: Chichester Festival Theatre's first Artistic Director was Laurence Olivier. And, when he was invited to open the theatre, he went with his ensemble and his family - actually one and the same - and, when you look at the names, it's the most extraordinary, glittering group of artists you could ever dream of. We, like Hamish [Glen], firmly push the line in Chichester that: “The ensemble's the star. We're not about stars. Everyone's the star. It's the team that's the star.” But every now and then we look at the list of who was in Laurence Olivier's first ensemble at Chichester and go: “Hmm, hope no-one else is making that connection there”. When Stephen Pimlott, Martin Duncan and I went to Chichester [as joint Artistic Directors], we started by doing a consultation and asking the local community and ticket-buyers and other local artists and opinion-formers what they thought Chichester Festival Theatre should be doing, forty years on. And, of course, in the back of our minds was this wonderful ensemble that Laurence Olivier had brought to Chichester. And I should just mention his first season [in 1962]. It was *The Chances* [by John Fletcher

and also possibly by Francis Beaumont, in a version by George Villiers and Laurence Olivier] - yup, that well-known popular hit (*Laughter*) - *The Broken Heart* by John Ford, then the pot-boiler was *Uncle Vanya*. Those were the three plays. The next year he did *The Workhouse Donkey* by John Arden (this is in a fourteen-hundred seater - the premiere of a new play by John Arden who wasn't then remotely well-known), he revived *Uncle Vanya* and he did do *St Joan* by Bernard Shaw. That's quite amazing, I think. Anyway, we asked over 2,000 people what they thought Chichester should do and, in that marvellous process of debate and inter-action that you get out of these sort of consultations, they came up with a lot of the ideas that we very much hoped they would come up with. Like returning to an ensemble, working in repertoire, like rediscovering (if you like) the tradition of innovation that had been Chichester. So, with these 2,000 voices, we wrote this plan called "Back to the Future". Well, I thought it was funny. (*Laughter*) Unfortunately, at Nottingham Playhouse [where she had been Executive Director] our plan had been called "See Change", which was really good for Chichester which is only five miles from the sea, but I couldn't use it again.

And, for the last two years, we've had an ensemble working in rep at Chichester. The artists work on an eight-month contract. We start rehearsals in March. The Festival opens at the beginning of May and it goes on until the end of September. We do eight or nine shows in rep. We have a rule of two-hour changeovers. So you can come and have a choice of six plays in a weekend (we play Sundays as well) in two theatres: the Festival Theatre and the Minerva. They're big stages. We've done two musicals (one new, one revival) in each of the last two years. So the ensemble's included twelve musicians and round about fifty actors, some trainee directors, some staff directors, a dramaturg and some associate artists (Alison Chitty, Peter Mumford, Paul Arditti) who have sort of created a framework for us.

Stephen Pimlott and Martin Duncan (my fellow Artistic Directors) and I are three for the price of two. That means none of us are full-time. That's working really well (*ironic laughter*) and Stephen and Martin do the directing. If any of the three of us do less than a seventy hour week people ask us if we're ill. Martin Duncan started at Lincoln Rep and his dream of ensemble was shaped by being hired as a Stage Manager, brilliantly, by Philip Hedley, and then (because it was an ensemble, a family) he got given the chance to act, to compose, to write, to direct, as well as stage manage - and that's why, since then, he has carried this dream of offering that opportunity to everyone he works with, wherever he works. He came across Stephen Pimlott twenty years ago in the Royal Exchange [Theatre, Manchester] and then they were both Associates with Clare Venables creating one of the most exciting theatres that I think we've had in the last twenty years [Crucible Theatre, Sheffield]. Her other Associates were Stephen Daldry and Michael Boyd. Need one say more. I caught up with them [Pimlott and Duncan] at Nottingham Playhouse. So I joined their family - their ensemble - quite late in their career. And it's absolutely humbling for me to see the true benefits of shorthand; of what a family can give you; of how you get both the intensity of argument but also the security of true honesty, of true debate. And of true artistic risk. A sense that really you start years down the road in terms of relationships.

Of our ensemble, we've had a lot of first-timers coming out of college. At the other end of the family scale, the oldest so far has been eighty-six - which I think is quite Maly Theatre-ish, if I may say so. Or at least that's what he owned up to. And we also integrated the local youth theatre. That's two hundred and forty people from the age of eight upwards. But also the audience because it was their idea in the first place. And about a third of the ensemble in 2003 came back in 2004. So, whilst it isn't the dream, it isn't a permanent family, it's beginning to feel that it's a very long

summer holiday for everybody. Except, of course, for Mum and two Dads - that's Stephen, Martin and me - because we're on duty with our family for this eternally long summer. So, that's where we've got to in Chichester, and it doesn't feel like we've got very far. I've stressed the past a bit, Nicola, because I think it is important to say that the models are in our memories and, actually, are in our habits. It is part of our culture in Britain, and it's a part that we didn't aspire to for some time, but...

I had a brief interlude in my life where I worked with musicians. I worked at the South Bank Centre and I worked at Scottish Opera; and I was just thinking about, if this was a Musicians' Union conference, would we conceivably be sitting here all day going: "Do you know that when an orchestra work together they work much better than if you have a pick-up band?" (*Laughter*) And isn't it interesting how the Berlin Phil and the Vienna Phil and the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra are all really fantastic. Because all of those artists are on permanent contract and they're in charge, mostly! They're on the board. They're making decisions. They're choosing the Chief Executives. They're choosing the conductors. Now, we don't even begin to have the debate about how an orchestra that has worked together (and on permanent contracts where the musicians, the artists, are in power) does better music than if you just get a pick-up band and call it the RPO, for example. But it's weird, isn't it, that we're having that debate about actors. You're right. It should never be compulsory for a company to work in one particular way - but surely there can be no doubt that, if you truly want to be art-led, the actors should be put at the head of the power driving your theatre. I've been waiting to do it all my life and it's fantastically good fun. Thank you.

Felix Cross: It's interesting. It's this building together of relationships. And taking the music angle, even if you take the world of jazz musicians who are on short term, one night stand gig deals and who improvise a lot, they work together. They rehearse like crazy in order to be able to improvise. In order to take artistic risks, does it take a safer environment? And, if that's the case, I bring it back to the context of this nest that we are all party of using or building or hoping to create

Okay, some questions. Rules: The reason why people ask for questions is... I'm also a playwright and one of the things you learn - and all actors here around me will recognize this notion - when, in dialogue, you have a sentence or phrase or speech that just ends with a full stop and there's sort of a death at the end of it. The question mark allows for the return. So, if you have got a statement, disguise it. (*Laughter*) Give it that thing at the end. And if it a statement, it's brief. It's not a manifest - at all. We're not having any money whinges. This is not a funding whinge question. That's rule number one. And just remember we are all working in the same sector. So, good, let's go for it.

Frances Rifkin (Utopia / Equity Small Scale Theatre Committee): I'll put a question mark at the end. What strikes me very much about what we've heard today and I very much agree with a lot of what's been said, but I'm from a company that doesn't have, remotely, the kind of funding that enables the sort of work that goes on at the Maly or at Dundee. But a lot of us were hugely inspired in the seventies by the very people like Trevor Nunn and Peter Hall (who dumped later on - which we haven't really talked about - the notion of Ensemble) and we took that into small scale theatre and we took that to people, to audiences, to communities, and I'm still doing that. But, as far as I'm concerned - while I would love to run an ensemble with plenty of money - I also think Ensemble is a method of work. It's an approach of something which can take five minutes as a notion, a set of operating ideas, or it can take five years. And I and lots and lots of other practitioners go to lots and lots of audiences, community groups, work with professional actors and non-professionals

using all the notions that power Ensemble in order to subvert what Ensemble subverts in theatre - which is hierarchy, cultural domination of various kinds, and inability to challenge or debate ideas and bring up new ideas. And we use that across the board all over the place. And I just really want to say that. Do you agree with me? *(Laughter)*

Nicola Thorold: Yes.

Gail Sixsmith (Independent actor/director, member of Might and Main back in the early 1900's and now freelance director): Nobody is more passionate about ensemble theatre than me. I did it for six years and I was burnt out. Where is the infrastructure to support people like me that want to make ensemble work that is visionary, changes ideas, and really injects energy and passion into the world of theatre? Is there an infrastructure there to support people like me that want to make this work? Is there really, truly – not about ideas but about practicalities?

Ruth Mackenzie: I think that's a very important point, and I think it's a point for all of us actually, and it's something that strikes a chord with me because – I made a joke about it - Stephen and Martin and I have been reflecting on how running a theatre does involve my local taxi driver saying to me (when I get a taxi home from Chichester Festival Theatre at ten o'clock rather than eleven o'clock): "Oh, early night!" And there is something wrong with a life-work balance that consists of leaving work at ten and the local community go: "Slacking again!" It is a serious point, and it's a serious point for Stephen and Martin and I. We were told by the marketing department that we're all eligible now to have a feature in Saga magazine which obviously we're all very pleased about. *(Laughter)* But after over a hundred years between us working in theatre, you begin to wonder about the infrastructure of support. And, to talk for a moment about administrators, I begin to notice the way in which almost all of my peers have said: "No, I'm not going to run any more organizations. I'm going to be a consultant. Because the hours are great, the pay is much better, and I get a life." And I think it is an issue that all of us have to discuss – and, again, I don't think it's a funding issue, I think it's a cultural issue. I think it's about the way that we drive ourselves and treat ourselves and manage ourselves. I don't think there's a baddie that making us do it. I think it's looking into our own hearts and our own passion, and understanding better how we can help each other to enjoy life as well as enjoy our work.

Felix Cross: Can I just add: there's always a danger when a project or an idea or an infrastructure is created because of a theory, because of an infrastructure. Because you want to lead with a strategy. It's always really dangerous. Barrie Rutter said, "I had a great idea, and the rest followed." Didn't follow smoothly, perhaps, but eventually it followed. You guys, you set it up. The infrastructure didn't exist before you guys set it up. I made a note of when you *(indicating Joanna Reid)* were saying the Scottish Arts Council responded to the success of the initial process that you set together. So, if you try and lead with a strategy of saying we must create infrastructures for ensemble theatres, actually they've got to start with the ideas; they've got to start with the passion.

Gail Sixsmith: We have the passion, we have the ideology, completely. There was nobody more intrinsically Ensemble than us. But we aren't administrators. I want process. I want creative process. That's why I do it. That's my passion. The fund raising thing, the administration that was involved, was too much. I was spending all my time doing it. You need to find the family, the big ensemble that will come together to support the work. And they need to be multi-faceted.

Nicola Thorold: I just wanted to absolutely agree with you. And I see it. At the extreme, even Michael [Boyd] was saying [in] one of the best subsidized companies in the country that the danger is exhaustion. Having worked at ITC [Independent Theatre Council], I've seen extreme exhaustion at that end as well - particularly around the notion that you are trying to administrate, perform and create simultaneously. And it's not anyone's forte, that side of it. It is about the lack of people who want to produce work, I think, in the small scale sector particularly, for small scale work. It's something we're doing a bit of debate around, within the Arts Council and outside the Arts Council. But you're right: it's there. But Ruth's also right. We've got to change our culture and way of working. All of us. We've got to say it's unacceptable for Ruth to be leaving at ten o'clock every night and thinking she's shirking. Because it is.

Christopher Morahan (Freelance television and theatre director): Nicola touched on something which I think is terribly interesting. She said that we should recognize the fact that not everybody in the country actually subscribes to the ensemble idea. I wonder if we might elaborate on that and I ask the question: is it to do with money? I'm talking about an actor of thirty five or an actress of thirty two with two kids. How easy is it for them to leave their home to go and work in a company for a period of time? It's interesting that Michael Boyd mentioned for instance that the company under twenty-five enjoy it and the ones over sixty, but it's very difficult for a family to live in the theatre where they're working because it often involves two homes. I'd love to know your thoughts about that?

Joanna Reid: What had to happen at Dundee was that people had to move there to make it work. Because it isn't a question of a temporary re-location to Dundee. Inevitably that does narrow down the number of people who would be interested because (number one) they were Scottish based actors anyway - they had already made the commitment to Scotland - as opposed to moving down to London; and then (number two) they had to decide - because none of them came from Dundee initially - that, yes, they wanted to move. And one of the actors moved with her husband and her children and moved school and people bought houses. And that's probably why, as Nicola says, it's not for everybody. That's total one hundred and ten percent commitment.

Nicola Thorold: It's a question that often comes up in relation to touring obviously. And touring is for a much shorter period of time, but even touring companies will talk about the difficulties in casting, simply because of people having other commitments they don't want to leave behind for a period of time. And Ruth, you have a seasonal ensemble. You're only asking for a mere fourteen-week commitment.

Ruth Mackenzie: Oh no, it's not. It's a thirty-week commitment. It's the summer term and then the summer holidays, so that's easier than some things but, yes, for parents of school-age children, it's a major issue. The last two years it's been family in every sense. There have been an awful lot of children who have been part of the ensemble, and I wish that we had a crèche but we don't. But we are a very child and pet-friendly theatre. And we've got a large park. But you're right. In equal ops [opportunities] terms, it's is not fair. Of course, the problem is - and I have to say it - there are a awful lot of actors. We are spoilt for choice. There's an enormous amount of talent and we don't find that we can't cast people of all ages - including those that might have children. So, those with children are at a disadvantage. It's indisputable.

Joanna Reid: The other thing that happened in Dundee was [that], because these were effectively permanent jobs, many of our actors, for the first time, were able to raise mortgages. So there was that whole security that it brought in as well.

Rod Dixon (Barbican Theatre, Plymouth): I was going to ask Nicola: Alan [Lyddiard] mentioned Creative Partnerships with his ensemble work with schools in Redcar. Are Creative Partnerships a possible glimmer of hope to help this kind of work blossom?

Nicola Thorold: I was about to say “no” because Creative Partnerships doesn’t give revenue funding. But I think [that], if it stimulates schools, if it grows the market (in rather nasty terms) for theatre and for theatre practice, then that must be a good thing. The issue is how sustainable is Creative Partnerships - given how very dependent it is on government funding. But anything that encourages more schools to engage more regularly with artists of all sorts has got to be good news long term.

Stuart Bennett (ASSITEJ: The Association for Theatre for Children and Young People / Small Scale Theatre Committee, Equity): We’ve got two very clearly and very interestingly linked uses of the word Ensemble emerging from the conference. There is the artistic practice of a theatre collective: actors and directors producing clear, intense, powerful theatre through the Ensemble method of rehearsal and performance. There’s that use of the word Ensemble. But, very interestingly, the word is being used by a number of people to describe a networking, an outreach, a working together, between main house, touring companies, work in the community - like a theatre company developing a community opera. We’ve had a number of those sightings.

There are two of us here from the Equity Small Scale Theatre Committee. We have identified and are keen to make further mapping of these links. Birmingham Rep, for example, has a whole range of activities which are linking theatre into the community. They have for instance a scheme where every child born in Birmingham last year will have free theatre tickets for ten years or something like that. It’s building audiences. An ensemble where the theatre is not separated from the community. It’s like a democratization of theatre. We’ve had a number of examples on the Small Scale Theatre Committee. We’re very keen to promote this, because what’s called small scale covers an immense range of work within the British theatre scene which the Arts Council, ITC and Equity are concerned to support. And I’d be interested in again the panel saying whether they feel that they also recognize this as a very important part of the current stage of development of being inclusive and incorporating cultural minority groups - Black and Asian theatre groups and so on - in the mainstream. Ensemble in the sense of the whole area of theatre working together. Not simply a compliment.

Felix Cross: So what we are talking about here is: can the notion of the ensemble theatre do more than simply exist in a vacuum, in a non-Ensemble environment?

Ruth Mackenzie: I think that virtually everyone that you’ve heard this afternoon has put the community and artists and young people together in their description of their vision and how they’re making it happen. Ensemble only means “together” after all. The outline I’ve tried to give of our journey in Chichester has been absolutely about everyone going on the journey to explore their own creativity. Together. And, of course, for the artists working on the productions, their journey is more intense and takes longer, and they get paid for it. For the community and for the young people, the journey may not be quite so intense - although in *Dr Faustus* (where there was a cast of a hundred and fifty and most of them were not paid actors) it was equally

intense. And then, for the audience, they're running along developing their skills around the edges. I don't think you'll find anyone here who is going to stand up and go: "No, I'm not at all interested in the community or young people".

Valerie Doulton (Live Literature Company): Did the panel notice that the Eastern European companies gave a very strong emphasis to their links with training? And those people, like myself and probably other people here, who've given a lot of time to the drama schools, have helped create the next generations of performers. And it's a question also about infrastructure - because my experience is that there is a tendency to look down on directors who've done that work. We separate that work off in a way that Eastern European companies clearly do not do at all.

Ruth Mackenzie: I think it's a two-way snippiness, actually. Wherever I've worked, I've gone and tried to offer the theatre or the building as a home for drama students. And I think this is a two-way cultural problem. I think one could as well say that drama students and conservatoires tend to be rather inward-looking. They tend to be much more interested, reasonably enough, in their own creativity, their own work, their own productions, than they are in coming to see the fantastic production or a master-class or a workshop or being involved in the work of the professional arts organization down the road from them. I don't think it's simply that we're snooty gits who couldn't care less about the drama schools. My impression is that some of them are snooty gits that couldn't care less about us.

Valerie Doulton: Sorry, I wasn't talking about the students. I was talking about the directors.

Ruth Mackenzie: Same point. My point is that activity of the drama schools is insular. So that it is quite hard for some of us to begin the partnership and embrace those that are inside those institutions.

Valerie Doulton: But wouldn't you agree that it is very desirable, in the way Eastern Europeans describe, that that infrastructure happens?

Ruth Mackenzie: Yes, absolutely.

Anonymous conference participant: Can I just pick up on Christopher Morahan?

Felix Cross: Very, very briefly please.

Anonymous conference participant: My ex-student – who's currently in Michael Boyd's company, the Royal Shakespeare Company – is one of the very few young women who felt it's possible for her to have a child.

Felix Cross: Good. On which note – appropriately or not – we're going to take a break. I'd like to thank everybody. I'd like to thank Joanna, Nicola, Ruth and yourselves for making this such a wonderful discussion. (*Applause*)

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ROUND UP SESSION

Led by Philip Hedley (Director Emeritus, Theatre Royal, Stratford East) - assisted by John Carnegie (Theatre Directors' Councillor, Equity) and Sue Parrish (Chair, Theatre Committee, DGGB)

[Philip Hedley](#): Folks, yes, hello, hello, hello.

[John Carnegie](#): You need a microphone.

[Philip Hedley](#): No, I don't need a microphone, thank you.

[John Carnegie](#): Philip, it's being recorded. So it would be helpful if you were near one.

[Philip Hedley](#): It's pointing at me now. I will not be ruled by mechanics in theatre. I am in total favour of ensemble and I am a dictator.

Folks, look, I think today's been terrific and extremely heart warming for someone like me [who's been] involved in Ensemble for thirty odd years at least, and I hope to Peter Cheeseman it's been heart warming in many aspects. (*Loud applause*)

I'll just say very briefly before we get on to that that, of course, a great deal of why ensembles have not continued as they did in Rep - and wasn't it wonderful to hear someone from Russia talking about Rep, I loved that - that of course [is because of] social change. I mean when I ran this company with twenty five people in it for two and half years in Lincoln all those years ago, which Ruth [Mackenzie] kindly referred to, I swear [that] nobody in that company - and they were up to the age of fifty - had a pension scheme or a mortgage. Now, I don't mean they shouldn't have. I mean, my God, what a difference in people's concerns between that time when the Rep that we knew was at its height and now. One big social change has taken place in people's lifestyles.

And also, I think the selfishness of the eighties, the Thatcherism, it did invade. It did have an effect. Yes? Greed became moral, etcetera. Kids leaving drama school tended not to go into Rep: "No, for goodness' sake; you sit by the phone in London, and wait for the television company to phone you, and you become famous quite quickly". And we're still in that wave, just to a large extent, with young people because, unfortunately, they ain't getting messages like they would have done today about Ensemble, which I thought was terrific, in that way.

I also think that the buildings and Lottery, which put buildings and Lottery and all that so high in the agenda that artistic imperatives descended, hugely. And now, interestingly, the companies that we have here: they weren't invaded by "stabilisation" and the recovery process, where Price Waterhouse rule. There's lots of enemies around still for Ensemble but it was wonderful to hear the virtues of it spoken about so much today, and we don't need to do any more selling of that in our discussion now.

What we just want to try from this meeting - what is hugely important - is that we take from the tenor of the meeting, in order that organizations like Equity and Directors Guild, etcetera, can go forward with confidence to say what the feeling about Ensemble is from a very important slice of the profession that was here today, is "this, this and this, and this is how we feel now: the pendulum should swing back,

and how it should be encouraged, and conditions created where it can grow where it should.” Now I’ll just finish there with, of course: every company should not be an ensemble. It can’t possibly be.

Peter [Cheeseman] will remember [Rodney] Pemberton-Billing at Bolton. I was there when that company started and he came in as a dictator, who hadn’t worked in theatre before, and ordered the company...the new company got together, twenty four people put in a room and told: “Now, relax, and be creative.” (*Laughter*) “ I’ll come back in a week, and I want to see the beginnings of a new *Oh, What A Lovely War*.” A complete misunderstanding of what Ensemble is about. But there are misunderstandings at all levels of our society and in funding bodies and so on of what ensembles are about and what makes them happen. And it’s very difficult to get that across to people who haven’t been involved in it. With people like Peter, and the other people that were speaking today, the nature of Ensemble and what it stands for goes through them like Blackpool through a stick of rock. They know absolutely what they are talking about, but there is a great deal of ignorance beyond them of what it stands for. It’s thought to be some sort of wanky club and they get together and want to be artists and so on. No! And you’ve already seen today, I trust, just how much various ensemble companies, over the years, have fed into the good of all theatre. I’ll say: even commercial - certainly into the best of commercial [theatre]. It’s fed into everything, but we’ve lost a great deal of that engine room of Ensemble from our theatre. And as Peter points out constantly - I think this is true, and please just shout if it’s wrong – that there’s only one regionally, building-based theatre left now which has a permanent designer working with a company. (Designers weren’t mentioned today.) What a terrible thing!

Right, now what we’re trying to do; we’ll rattle through this. Right? There’ll be some things missing; we will not discuss exact wording, but if anyone wants to yell out and say, we’ll take the doubt and we’ll sort it out into what we think the meeting believes.

John Carnegie: Is it worth just very quickly explaining what this is? Just so you understand the context. (*Pointing to Draft Recommendations projected on a screen*) This is what the Steering Committee of this conference has prepared as thoughts for Recommendations. But it needs to become the Conference’s recommendations. We have been updating this constantly through the day – which is why we’ve kept disappearing between the sessions and not been socialising. Half of this is new. It was never even here this morning. So we’ve tried to reflect what has been said here today, but it’s important that the whole thing is this Conference’s thoughts. So Philip is going to try and bully you into doing that.

Philip Hedley: “No. 1 - Recognise the advantages of ensemble to a theatre’s reputation and development.” That’s to an individual theatre, isn’t it?

Anonymous Conference Participant: Does that mean building and company / building or company?

Philip Hedley: Yes, both. When it happens well, when you get a dictator in charge who believes in total democracy, then it works. (*Laughter*) Yes, you don’t impose it on any company.

Richard Berry (Freelance Director): Sorry but, in the confusion, is this all theatre or one theatre that we’re talking about?

Philip Hedley: That's a theatre. I think all theatre is later. That a theatre company or a building-based company. That's all right, isn't it, as it stands, from today? Peter?

Peter Cheeseman (Emeritus Director of New Vic Theatre, Newcastle Under Lyme): Can I just say a couple of words? Thank you for your kind words. It seems to me that it goes deeper than this: that there's a downward layer. I've very much enjoyed myself today, most of the time, and was delighted by every syllable of Michael Boyd's speech and Ruth [Mackenzie]'s metaphor of the orchestra – the better they knew each other, the better they played together - and that was very interesting and very positive. And it's a wonderful situation we're in, because I thought I was going to pass on without ever having got anywhere except at the bottom of a trough which I think is what regional theatre is in now. But it seems to me that one word that Michael uttered, which was continuity, is the most important thing and it's behind all this. It's always seemed to me to be absurd - now this is no reflection on Nicola [Thorold]'s regime at the Arts Council because I have every admiration for the wonderful work she did at ITC - but I've got to say [that] one of the things that is problematic is that the arts bureaucracy has never actually encouraged continuity - particularly by its practice of allowing the pressure of boards in regional theatres to have administrators or accountants as head of the theatre. Theatres should be run by artists. (*Loud applause*) Hospitals should be run by doctors and nurses and schools should be run by teachers.

As far as I'm concerned, one can never afford to have a complete ensemble, but Ensemble can occur every time a contract is extended and people are working together: just one working with another. The torch is passed on. It grows; it's an attitude, but it's an attitude that doesn't automatically come to the sort of conclusions that other media confront you with. Continuity: an organic quality of the organisation in which everybody is geared to the same end, and there's a unity of the whole staff of the theatre, including all the administrative staff. You couldn't imagine hiring new administrative, or wardrobe, or scenery staff every month, could we? Acting is the most complicated thing.

Philip Hedley: Thank you very much, Peter. (*Loud applause*)

“No. 2 – Encourage a more active two-way traffic between the theatre community and drama training in the UK” - which was said by some of the students in particular present. I just note there though the really good examples we've had today from Russia and Poland: of course they have their own drama school, those theatres, and the same directors teach/direct in both and you get the real continuity going on which we haven't had here often enough in the life of British theatre.

“No. 3 - Recognise that pay for ensemble performers must take into account reduced opportunities to 'subsidise' income from better paid media.” Yes, in the society we've created now it costs more to reward people and keep them in ensembles unfortunately. Up to a liveable level. So, I think no one would object to people being paid better, would they, to do this work.

“No. 4 – Funding bodies to facilitate at least one ensemble company in each major population centre. (Can be fringe/touring rather than repertory.)” Now, behind that statement, I think, must be the feeling that we are not saying: “You must impose it”. If the group or the person is not there for it to happen, but that is part of, and I hope it's here, that saying “Look, the pendulum is swinging back in favour of Ensemble; of

artists as a group or individually being in charge, yes, to be encouraged to apply". Fascinating that Nicola [Thorold] said that people are not knocking on her door with this. Well, I should imagine it's 'cause lots of us thought there's nobody on the other side who's going to welcome it, and people above Nicola who are going to welcome it, because I firmly believe that the artistic imperatives that drive us are not understood. Yes? The building imperatives seem to be understood, the financial imperatives are understood, but the artistic imperatives don't seem to be to me remotely [understood] higher up the scale.

Frances Rifkin (Utopia / Equity Small Scale Theatre Committee): Just terminology: "fringe" is probably not the right word. It's probably "small scale".

Philip Hedley: Yes. "No. 5 – Equity and DGGB to actively encourage ensemble practice in theatre, opera, dance and recorded media wherever appropriate." Yes, when the sign is there, when the seed is there, it's to be encouraged. It's not to be imposed.

Christopher Morahan (Freelance television and theatre director): I cannot see how it would ever be appropriate in recorded media. That's my doubt. It could be an aspiration.

John Carnegie: There have been examples in the past of rep companies in recorded media. BBC Radio for a long time had its own rep company, and there was a television rep company in the late sixties that did wonderful work.

Philip Hedley: Christopher, you're acknowledging that, aren't you?

Christopher Morahan: I'm acknowledging the radio. I'm not too sure it was ever done in television.

John Carnegie: Yes, it was definitely done. Denholm Elliott, Billie Whitelaw, people like that were in the company.

Philip Hedley: Yes, and unquestionably in BBC Radio the Rep has not been encouraged. It has been cut down and cut down to so little rehearsal that Ensemble almost becomes pointless, if you know what I mean. Even as an ensemble, they're meeting so little to rehearse that you don't get that many benefits.

Christopher Morahan: Yes, I think that you could debate that. I think the BBC used the Radio Rep in actual fact as cheap actors. I think that, now the actors in actual fact come from the market, I think the actors are getting the proper salary. I think that there's a danger in that. One's got to be just careful of other people. And I don't share your nostalgia about that [television rep] company. It was very short-lived. *Eastenders* has been mentioned. I would have thought that is not, shall we say, an ensemble?

Philip Hedley: Shall we just leave it at the fact that - whatever signs there are of Ensemble – what is certainly happening is that rehearsal time is getting cut down so much. And we are acknowledging, aren't we, [that] the people practising Ensemble all say length of rehearsal is crucial for the creation of what you want to create. So, the enemy there: cutting down on time.

Ivor Benjamin (Honorary General Secretary, DGGB): Are we saying: "Cut recorded media" then?

Philip Hedley: No, I don't think so, even so. But I think Christopher has a point: that there's very little of it. Very little sign of it at the present.

Joanna Reid (Executive Director, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry): On point 5, I think a very practical point that does have to be grasped is contracts and contract law and employment law, and that is something that Equity and DGGB can help with because, at the moment, you have protection of employment after a year. It's very likely that that's going to go down to six months with European Law, and that whole issue about how a company can offer a permanent contract to an actor without opening themselves up to the risk of unfair dismissal claims if they choose not to renew the contract or whatever. So it's very, very precarious.

Christine Payne (Assistant General Secretary, Theatre and Variety, Equity): If we are seriously going to accept ensemble theatre as a good, realistic, practical way of working, then we have to look positively at actors having employment rights, of women having maternity rights. This is good news. And I think that we have to embrace it positively. Otherwise it will not work.

Philip Hedley: Right. Can you insert that somehow please into this?

John Carnegie: We will try and do our best.

Philip Hedley: Thank you. "No. 6 – Encouragement (moral, professional, financial and administrative) given to companies wishing to set up ensembles." There's a problem there: "companies and individuals"? No?

John Carnegie: Yes

Philip Hedley: They'd need to have a track record, wouldn't they?

Bruce Payne: Who's doing the encouragement?

Philip Hedley: This is going to?

John Carnegie: This report: you will all get copies of it. This is going to go to every Artistic Director in the UK, every Board in the UK, every funding body, every trust in the UK, every major arts journalist in the UK, and probably Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all as well.

Philip Hedley: I suggest actually a major article could come out of today.

John Carnegie: That's what we're trying to encourage.

Philip Hedley: If two or three people are given to Michael Billington or whoever to go into it.

Gail Sixsmith (Freelance Director): What about if it said, radically: "Encouragement and, where possible, practical support like space, if it's available, possibly being open to people". Because, if you're not building-based, you are scuppered because rehearsal space is so expensive. If you haven't got the funding, you can't make the work.

Philip Hedley: Anybody object to "Encouragement and support"?

John Carnegie: No, we can add something about that.

Frances Rifkin: Philip, did you say something about “track record”?

Philip Hedley: Sorry, I’m being a bit ridiculous but somebody turning up who’s not been in theatre before to say they want to run a company and it’s going to be an ensemble would not necessarily be encouraged. *(Laughter)*

Ivor Benjamin: Are you wanting to put “companies and individuals”?

Philip Hedley: Yes, if you’ve got the idea. And we had somebody here [Barrie Rutter] who had the idea absolutely and was bold about saying so absolutely, then of course that’s to be encouraged. Although he did have a track record.

Sue Parrish: Philip, it might be that your point, Gail, about support and space and so on is something that we might want to elaborate a little bit. Maybe not here. Maybe it’s something we [the Steering Committee] want to discuss. It could be a separate recommendation that the Arts Council or funding bodies make available a small pot of money that is to seed, to support these particular activities. That it’s a separate arrangement of money that could be applied for, because it is a very particular problem - and I speak as a touring company although I’m funded - a particular problem of finding a rehearsal space that you can just work in when you need to. And I think that’s a really valid point in order to facilitate new, radical work...

Anonymous Conference Participant: It says “professional, financial”. It’s covered by that.

Sue Parrish: Yes.

Philip Hedley: I also think that - not just sending the letters in - but I do think that you two organizations should ask for about three or four people from today to go and talk to the top brass at the Arts Council and each regional arts board, because it needs talking about more, because they don’t understand. I don’t blame them for not understanding. They ain’t in our business, most of them. But the more we can get some understanding the better.

Bob Pearce (Freelance Director): Organisations like the Barbican or the National Theatre who are people with access to big buildings with some rehearsal rooms in them, if they are serious about supporting ensemble theatre outside of their own doors, could also actually do something. If this is going to be sent to those organisations and theatres throughout the country, perhaps we should ask them to not just lean on the Arts Council but actually suggest what they can do themselves: if they could help to make space available for smaller companies. Because we haven’t really heard much about smaller companies today. We’ve heard a lot about big theatre buildings and all these people with buildings have said they support ensemble theatre. They’ve got the resource to actually provide more support. So it would be good to put something in specifically asking them to do that where that’s appropriate or possible. I think we should take that on because there is space there. I know space is always at a premium, is always in demand.

Sue Parrish: They’re always using it.

Philip Hedley: We ain’t got space at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, but we do support small companies starting up all the time.

“No. 7 - The future health of UK theatre depends on encouraging the renewed recognition” (that’s us today, and what’s been happening, remembering that Alan Lyddiard, when he first started his company, as Nicola said, that was the only one at that time that was going back to working fully in an Ensemble way; there are a few more since; there’s definitely a trend; today’s been very good in that way) “of the virtues of ensemble practice”. Now, nobody objects to that, do they?

Anonymous Conference Participant: No, that’s a “Hear, hear” as far as I’m concerned.

Serena Robins (Freelance director): Just picking up on what we were talking about, particularly as an individual, what would be really useful is to have the arts boards regionally creating a data base that has a list of resources or support [for] companies. Things like that we can go to and follow up.

Philip Hedley: Is that an ITC [Independent Theatre Council] job?

John Carnegie: Possibly. The Arts Councils do that to a certain extent already, but not enough. So certainly they should be encouraged.

Astrid Vehstedt (Freelance director from Berlin): I would like to suggest to add limitation of contracts for about two or three years, because we had in Germany nothing but ensemble theatres and, after five or ten years, people became very lazy and the whole company got really stuck. So you need the fresh air and then put in some sort of...

Philip Hedley: Can I, I’m so sorry, can I argue completely against that, for a moment? If anyone wants to join you, fine. The point about theatre is continuity, when the thing is alive and well and thriving, and you had several examples today of people doing companies for ten, twelve years where it’s still alive and thriving. And I believe, as from what Michael [Boyd] was saying earlier, those cannot be good companies if they die so quickly. They have not founded themselves on permanent change, permanent re-examination, permanent adventurous quality to their work. So they’re not good companies, and I personally don’t mind if those companies go to the wall. If they’ve been supported and they have spaces and they have money and they go to the wall for artistic reasons. We cannot start saying companies should stop after a certain time. Apologies.

Astrid Vehstedt: Not the companies should stop, but I think you should keep an eye and make people aware that, in some ways, paradise is not good for us.

Anonymous Conference Participant: Are you saying to guard against complacency?

Astrid Vehstedt: Yes.

Philip Hedley: Well, Peter Brook: “Deadly Theatre” can creep on anywhere in a company. It can come on from the wings anytime if your artistic work is not creative enough. Sorry, I don’t think you would get that one through. It’s too much against what the feeling has been today about what is being achieved by longer running companies.

Martin Danziger (Trainee Associate Director, Dundee Rep Theatre): **Can I just say that, under employment law as it stands, you couldn’t terminate someone’s contract at the moment anyway. So it’s a really important issue.**

Antony Biggs (Trainee Director, MFA in Theatre Directing course, Birkbeck, University of London): Just like to link points 2 and 7. You've mentioned earlier about theatre companies being associated with drama schools - that the training is consistent. Do you think that is one of the reasons why some of the best ensemble work I've ever seen is in the second year at drama schools, and yet it completely disappears the minute the showcases start? How do you sustain that? Do you think there should be more connection between drama schools and theatre companies?

[Philip Hedley](#): I don't think that would solve sustaining that, because they wouldn't all go into the theatre company, unfortunately. I'm more thinking of the point that if the drama school is part of almost a living company, and that directors, designers, artists generally, interchange, and actors move about as well, that is to be the dream. But I don't think we're going to rescue that particular one you've said. But let's hope, which does not happen often, that if those young people get a smell of "Jeepers, weren't we good as an ensemble in that Gorky play", it may be a long time in their careers before they get that experience again. But I think drama schools should point that out a great deal more to their students, for them to value it and to know [that], if they want that work, they've got to really search and work hard and risk to find it. I love Michael [Boyd saying] "Life's too short not to give two or three years to an ensemble". It should be the reverse thinking. If only drama schools taught that.

We have to stop. Sorry I was so bossy. (*Applause*)

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IVOR'S FINAL THOUGHT (but hopefully not his last...):

IVOR BENJAMIN (HONORARY GENERAL SECRETARY, DGGB)

Firstly, I've a screed of thank yous that have to be said. From Equity: Louise Grainger, Virginia Wilde; their team of hardy helpers; and Patricia Doyle and John Carnegie. From the Directors Guild: Saskia van Roomen; her team of doughty aides; and Sue Parrish. For the Barbican: Toni Racklin; Steff Langley and their team and Lorna, our trusty Stage Manager. All of the speakers and chairs, too many and too wonderful to mention, but I will mention Philip [Hedley] here for summing us up so well and also to thank Agata Siwiak and Mikhaïl Stronin for travelling so far to enthuse and inspire us with their charm and expertise - and Harry Landis and Michael Boyd for getting us off to a great start and raising the bar for us all.

It's sad that our other National Theatres couldn't be represented today, but they'll be getting their conference report in the post in time. We intend there to be a publication to follow this conference up - "we" being symptomatic of another new partnership, which is Equity and the Directors Guild who have worked together for over eighteen months to create this conference. I really hope that this partnership of our two organisations will be the start of a great new ensemble for directors.

It's a rare opportunity that brings together artists and directors like this with such a clear focus on our craft. We need these occasions to publicly examine the infrastructure of our culture and where our theatre fits into it - or, as Michael Boyd put it, we have to be over serious, pious and we have to discourage mediocrity by starving the stars of their follow spots.

It remains for me to thank you all of you for coming here today and supporting this event - and to send you out, each and every one of you, as the new Ensemble fifth column.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

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Conference Conclusions

The advantages of ensemble for the theatre company

- Making the best use of rehearsal time since those involved can short circuit the “getting to know you” phase.
- Developing a long term relationship with its community.
- Giving successful productions extended life so they are seen by the widest possible audience both at the theatre’s base and on tour worldwide.
- Avoiding the pressure for star casting by creating the community’s own stars.
- Allowing better value in use of subsidy through the ability to plan long term.

The advantages of ensemble for the artists

- Long term job security that allows the sustenance of a home, relationships and a family and gives continuity, stability and support.
- The ability to concentrate on creating work rather than obtaining it.
- The opportunity to broaden their creative range rather than to continually be typecast – and to instigate “fringe” work on their own initiative to be performed at little extra cost alongside that planned by the Artistic Directorate.
- The opportunity to develop work more deeply and to take risks.
- The opportunity to continually develop their basic craft so that learning does not end with the exit from a drama school.

The advantages of ensemble for the community

- The opportunity to see better theatre through the developing quality of the work being done.
- The opportunity of “ownership” of the ensemble through an evolving relationship with its company.
- The opportunity to have theatre which energises the community through engaging in its history and agenda.
- The provision of greater and more sustained opportunities for outreach and education work.

- The economic and emotional advantages brought by the company developing worldwide recognition for the community and thus encouraging cultural tourism into the community.

The Challenges of Ensemble Theatre

- Experimentation is essential to the future health of theatre. It should be inbuilt in the policy of every ensemble that it should encourage experimentation. Indeed, experimentation is often easier in an ensemble than in an organisation whose survival depends more on the success of individual projects.
- In long running productions, there can be a tendency for actors who were originally the right ages for their parts to retain them when they have patently become too old - and for directors to collude in this through ease and familiarity. Although the increasing experience of an actor can enrich their playing of a part, there comes a time when the advantage of experience is outweighed by a lack of credibility.
- It is important to recognise that some ensembles (particularly those that are focussed on the work of a single director) have a creative "life cycle" that it can be inappropriate to artificially prolong. However, change at the top of resident ensembles can often generate a new life in the organisation. The concept of long-term job security should not be so rigid that it allows individuals to rest on their laurels. Companies should continually guard against staleness and a "civil service" mentality. There must always be civilised mechanisms through which "dead wood" can be moved on to be invigorated elsewhere.
- A rigid ensemble policy (in which casting is only done from the resident ensemble) is not always appropriate. Sometimes a new energy can be given to the company by the temporary engagement of an experienced/star performer who would not otherwise be able to consider working for an ensemble or of an actor who is "right" for a particular part. Conversely, occasional opportunity should be given to ensemble members to hone their craft in other media and in other theatre set-ups.
- Establishment of an ensemble in a community should not exclude the opportunity for that community to see work from outside. Although the company's principal commitment should be to its community, it should tour in order to "fly the flag" elsewhere and to allow other companies into its theatre.
- In a developing multi-cultural society, it is important that the ensemble represents the community as a whole so that it can reflect the plurality of its concerns.
- New writing theatres often claim that the ensemble concept is impractical for them since playwrights must be given total freedom of choice in writing for the cast of their dreams rather than be required to fashion their plays for an ensemble. However, ensemble companies can not only provide playwrights with the chance of writing for larger casts than usual but their requirements can also stimulate an author's imagination. Playwrights who are involved in an

ensemble can develop their craft practically as a result of working with theatre professionals. After all, Shakespeare's work hardly suffered as a result of the requirements of having to write for his ensemble company.

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Conference Recommendations

These recommendations - agreed by the Conference - are addressed to: Boards and Artistic Directors of subsidised theatres in the UK; all funding bodies (local, national and international); managements of drama schools in the UK; the Councils of the DGGB and Equity.

1. Recognise the advantages of ensemble to both a theatre company and a theatre building's reputation and development – and that it is important to encourage continuity of personnel.
2. Encourage a more active two-way traffic between the theatre community and drama training in the UK with schools relating to individual ensembles and the ensemble's directors working in the schools.
3. Recognise that pay for ensemble performers must take into account their reduced opportunities to “subsidise” income from better-paid media.
4. Funding bodies to facilitate theatre artists in the creation of at least one ensemble company with adequate rehearsal time in each major population centre. (This can be small scale / touring rather than repertory.)
5. Equity and DGGB to actively encourage ensemble practise and long term contracts in theatre, opera, dance and (where appropriate) mechanical media.
6. Encouragement and practical support (moral, professional, financial, administrative, provision of data and the use of rehearsal space) should be given by funding bodies and larger arts organisations to companies and individuals wishing to set up ensembles.
7. The future health of theatre in the UK depends – at least in part - on encouraging the renewed recognition of the virtues of ensemble practice.

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Biographies of conference speakers – in alphabetical order

IVOR BENJAMIN

Once, long ago, Ivor was Assistant Director at Coventry Belgrade on the ITV RTTDS bursary. He has been a freelance director, writer and teacher for 20 years, working in (amongst others) Birmingham, Bolton, Harrogate, Edinburgh, London, Toronto, Los Angeles and Tel Aviv.

Ivor has taught at Rose Bruford, Guildford, Mountview, ALRA, Middlesex University and workshopped with many other universities, schools and community theatre groups, as well as being a regular contributor to the National Student Drama Festival for over 15 years.

As a writer his adaptation of **Rashomon** was premiered in Ireland in 2004 by Storytellers Theatre, and has played in the UK, USA and Philippines. Ivor is also an arts I.T. consultant and in this role has written articles for “Wired” magazine and sundry learned journals.

At the time of the conference Ivor was the **Honorary General Secretary of the Directors’ Guild of Great Britain.**

MICHAEL BOYD

Michael became **Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company** in March 2003. During the conference his production of **Hamlet** opened at the Albery Theatre as part of the RSC’s London Season.

In his previous role as Associate Director, he has directed the following productions with the RSC: **The Broken Heart, Much Ado About Nothing, The Spanish Tragedy, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Romeo and Juliet, The Tempest, Henry VI, Parts I, II and III and Richard III** (Olivier Award for Best Director 2001).

He was Artistic Director of the Tron Theatre, Glasgow, where he directed a landmark production of **Macbeth**; an award winning adaptation of Janice Galloway’s **The Trick is to Keep Breathing** which also went to the Royal Court; **Good**, (nominated for a Critics’ Award, Edinburgh Festival); and championed the work of Quebec playwright Michel Tremblay in Scotland with **The Real World** and **The Guid Sisters**, plus premieres of **The Baby** (Chris Hannan); **Clyde Nouveau** (Iain Heggie), **Muir** and **Losing Alec** (both by Peter Arnott) and Alasdair Gray’s **McGrotty and Ludmilla**.

From 1982-1984, Michael was Associate Director at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield where notable productions included **A Midsummer Night’s Dream** and Howard Baker’s **A Passion in Six Days**. Before Sheffield, Michael was a Director at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry for four years and directed **Risky City** (Ron Hutchinson); **The Nose** (Boyd/Gogol) and the **Mystery Plays**.

His other work includes **Miss Julie** (West End); **Hedda Gabler** (Leicester Haymarket); **Othello** (Lyric, Hammersmith - nominated Best Director, Plays and Players); **The Alchemist** (Cambridge Theatre Company); **Commedia** (Lyric Hammersmith: nominated Best Play, Evening Standard) and **the Alchemist** (Cambridge Theatre Company).

Michael was a trainee director at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre in Moscow.

JOHN CARNEGIE

John is a native of Edinburgh who now lives in Glasgow. He studied Drama and Theatre Arts at Birmingham University and then trained as a director at the Drama Centre in London. A Scottish Arts Council Director's Bursary led him to work with the Traverse Theatre, Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera.

For ten years, he was the co-founder and Artistic Director of Winged Horse Touring Productions - premiering new work by writers such as John Clifford, Stewart Conn, Liz Lochhead and Alan Spence, and touring extensively throughout Scotland. He was then Special Lecturer in Drama at Hull University – followed by being Director in Residence for Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association. His production for them of Frederic Mohr's play **The Admiral Jones** won a Fringe First award at the Edinburgh Festival, as did his earlier production of the same author's **Bozzy**.

Later he originated, co-researched, and directed Dundee Rep Theatre's **On the Line – A Celebration of Timex in Dundee** by Alan Spence with music by Ricky Ross, a large scale documentary drama which won the Martini Award for the Most Outstanding Production in the 1996 TMA Theatre Awards. He was then Artistic Director of 2000 & 3 ESTAITES, which co-ordinated productions of Alan Spence's contemporary Scots version of David Lindsay's classic Scots play **The 3 Estaites** all over Scotland and which culminated in his directing a large scale production on the play's original 1552 outdoor site.

Freelance work has included directing productions for the Traverse, the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company, BBC TV and Radio, Prime Productions and the Merlin Theatre in Budapest. He has lately turned his hand to writing with **Confessions of a Justified Sinner** (loosely derived from the novel by James Hogg) for the Scottish Borders' Rowan Tree Theatre Company. At the time of the conference he was writing another new play for them.

John represents Theatre Directors on Equity's governing Council.

FELIX CROSS

Felix is a composer, playwright, lyricist and director and has been the **Artistic Director of NITRO** (formerly Black Theatre Co-operative) since 1996. NITRO produces black musical-theatre and develops emerging and established black artists to work in theatre. For NITRO he has written: the book, music and lyrics of **Passports to the Promised Land**; the book and co-directed **Slamdunk**; the music and lyrics of **Tricksters' Payback**. Also for NITRO Felix has directed **ICED** by Ray Shell and co-written the book (with Paulette Randall) of **Up Against The Wall**. He has produced four years of the annual **NITRO beat** festival (directing many of its productions) as well as **A NITRO At The Opera** with the Royal Opera House.

Away from NITRO, his work includes: **Blues For Railton** (book, music and lyrics; Albany Empire); **Glory!** (book, music and lyrics; Temba/Derby Playhouse); **Mass Carib** (book, music and lyrics; Albany Empire/South Bank); **Integration Octet** (for string quartet and steel pan quartet at Aldeburgh Festival/Royal Festival Hall); **Jekyll & Hyde** and **The Bottle Imp** (both music and lyrics; books by Graham Devlin, for Major Road); **The Panbeaters** (Director; Greenwich Theatre) He has also written music for over sixty stage and radio plays including the entire canon of Agatha Christie's plays (23 of them).

A seemingly habitual panel and board member, Felix is or has been a member of numerous panels for Arts Council England, the boards of Ocean Music Trust and Major Road Theatre Company. He has facilitated or chaired several debates and seminars and has delivered papers at numerous conferences, particularly on Cultural Diversity and the Arts.

HAMISH GLEN

Hamish began his theatre career as a stage manager with the Traverse Theatre and Paines Plough, subsequently joining Shared Experience as Assistant Director. Following this he formed the Writer's Theatre Company where he directed the British premieres of **At It** by Heathcote Williams and **More Happy Chickens** by Michael Duke. Working again with the Traverse Theatre, he directed the British premiere of Arthur Miller's **Two Way Mirror** and, as Associate Director of Tron Theatre, **The Overcoat** by Gogol, **Burning Love** by Kuse, **Gamblers** by Gogol, **Babes In The Wood** by Alan Cumming and Forbes Masson, and **The Tom and Sammy Show** by Peter Capaldi. Also **As You Like It** and **Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme** for the Royal Lyceum Theatre and **Gamblers** for the Lithuanian State Theatre. As Artistic Director of Winged Horse Touring Productions, Hamish directed **The Magic Theatre** by John Clifford (after Cervantes), **Elizabeth Gordon Quinn** by Chris Hannan, **Bailegangaire** by Tom Murphy, **The Evil Doers** by Chris Hannan and **American Buffalo** by David Mamet.

Hamish was the Artistic Director at Dundee Rep from 1992 – 2003. His work there included **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf**, **Tartuffe**, **Uncle Vanya**, **The Hypochondriak**, **American Buffalo**, **Toshie** by Stuart Brown, **Death and the Maiden**, **Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme**, **Cinderella** by Stewart Paterson, **Hyde** by Peter Arnott, **A Greater Tomorrow** by Hector MacMillan, **The Weavers** by Hauptmann, **The Mill Lavvies** by Chris Rattray and Michael Marra, **Puss in Boots** and **Hansel and Gretel** both by Stewart Paterson. Hamish also directed **Walter** by C P Taylor, adapted by Michael Wilcox for The Edinburgh International Festival.

In 1999, Hamish created a full time ensemble company of 11 actors and augmented each year by 2 apprentices – the company staying together for the following 4 years during which time he directed them in **Cabaret**, **Colquhoun and MacBryde** by John Byrne, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **A Family Affair**, **Measure for Measure** and **Nightflights** by Marcella Evaristi. Also, whilst at Dundee, he directed **The Hypochondriak** for Mikkeli Theatre, Finland, which later transferred to The Tampere International Festival, **What The Butler Saw** for Tampere T. Theatre and **A Delicate Balance** by for Helsinki City Theatre.

Hamish became **Artistic Director of the Belgrade in Coventry** in March 2003, directing **The Rink** by Kander and Ebb.

PHILIP HEDLEY

Philip has for the past twenty-five years been Artistic Director at the **Theatre Royal, Stratford East** in London. After his recent retirement from the post, the Theatre Royal has named him their **Director Emeritus**.

He has been Artistic Director of two regional repertory theatres with permanent companies: Lincoln Theatre Royal and the Midlands Arts Centre Theatre Company in Birmingham.

He was Assistant Director to Joan Littlewood for two years in the early seventies and gained some insight into the workings of one of the world's most famous ensembles – Theatre Workshop.

Philip has directed four West End shows and others in Sydney, Vancouver, Khartoum and throughout British regional theatres. He has been a champion on behalf of education, training, accessibility and cultural diversity. He has served on ten Arts Council England committees but has publicly campaigned against ACE or government policies when he felt they were damaging theatre. His campaigning has nearly always been in alliance with Equity.

At Stratford East he is particularly proud of the cultural diversity on stage and in the audience. He has produced and directed more than one hundred premieres of new work there and has championed pioneering work on the creation of new musicals. He is a producer of Stratford East's successful musical, **The Big Life** - the first black British musical ever in the West End.

HARRY LANDIS

Harry started acting at the Unity Theatre aged 15, where he learned about ensemble acting.

He later trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama and his first job was touring with the Elizabethan Theatre Company. After six months in Rep he did several national tours.

West End appearances included Wesker's **The Kitchen** at the Royal Court, John Osborne's **Time Present** at the Duke of York's and **Journey's End** at the Cambridge Theatre. Several films followed including **A Hill in Korea**, **Billy Liar**, **Bitter Victory**, **Doctor in Distress**, **Private Potter** etc.

Harry has had several hundred appearances on television. He started with **Dixon of Dock Green**, went on to a long series as one of **The Soldiers Three** in **Tales of India** adapted from Kipling's stories and worked on **Minder**, **Lovejoy**, **Bergerac** and **The Avengers**. He also spent two years playing Felix the barber in **Eastenders**.

Harry started directing in Rep and then directed national tours of **The Long, The Short and The Tall**, **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** and Priestly's **I Have Been Here Before**. Taking over as Artistic Director of the Marlow Theatre, Canterbury, he directed 36 plays before resuming acting and freelance directing. This year he has appeared in **The Bill**, **Casualty** and **My Family** as well as directing a one man show.

His involvement with Equity goes back many years and, as well as being on the Equity Council, he has been Chair of its Directors' Committee, a board member of the Equity Trust Fund and on the negotiating teams hammering out agreements with the TMA, BBC and ITV.

At the time of the conference Harry was in his second term as President of Equity.

ALAN LYDDIARD

Alan Lyddiard was **Artistic Director/Chief Executive at Northern Stage** from 1992 to 2005. During this time he transformed the company into one of the leading lights of regional theatre through his commitment to ensemble acting, to participation projects and to presenting the best in international, national and regional talent. His productions for the company include: **And a Nightingale Sang**; **Stars in the Morning Sky**; **Andorra**; **Blood Wedding**; **Twelfth Night**; **Animal Farm**; **A Clockwork Orange**; **The Ballroom of Romance**; **Edmond**; **1984**; **The Black Eyed Roses** and **Winds of Desire**.

Alan has strong links with theatres all over Europe and his work has been seen in Israel, Turkey, Romania, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium and the United States. In 2002 he directed a version of **1001 Arabian Nights** at the Betty Nansen Theatre in Copenhagen which he remade for Northern Stage in 2005. In 2004 he returned to Copenhagen to direct a new piece and in April 2005 he directed **The Black Eyed Roses** for The Hungarian State Theatre in Cluj, Romania.

RUTH MACKENZIE O.B.E.

Since 1980, Ruth has held various administrative and creative roles including co-founding the Moving Parts Theatre Company, being the Fellow in Theatre at the Theatre in the Mill in Bradford and she was Director of the Bradford Multi-Cultural Festival in 1984. This was followed by two years as Drama Officer for the Arts Council of Great Britain and from there she moved to the South Bank Centre where she was Head of Strategic Planning. In 1990, Ruth became the Executive Director at Nottingham Playhouse. Concurrently with this post, Ruth was Programming Consultant for Theatre Clywd and the Barbican and then became the General Director of Scottish Opera. From 1999-2002 she was Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. In 2002, Ruth took on two new and continuing

roles; one as Director of Time/Room Productions Ltd, and the second as the **Artistic Director of Chichester Festival Theatre**.

In addition, Ruth is a Governor of Trinity College of Music and a member of the Chancellor's Forum of the London Institute and sits on of various committees and panels. She has an MA and is an Honorary Fellow of Nottingham University. In 1995, Ruth was awarded an O.B.E. for services to theatre.

JOANNA REID

Joanna became **Executive Director of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry** in November 2003 and continues in this role.

As Executive Director of Dundee Rep Theatre from March 1995 to November 2003, Joanna worked alongside Artistic Director Hamish Glen to lead Dundee Rep in the development of *New Ways of Working*. Among her achievements at Dundee can be included the successful repositioning of Dundee Rep Theatre as one of Scotland's most exciting theatres and establishing Scotland's only permanent company of actors. She worked to double their core funding and permanent core staffing and established Scottish Dance Theatre (Dundee Rep's Dance Company) as Scotland's principal contemporary dance company under the artistic leadership of Janet Smith, with a permanent company of dancers. Further to this Joanna raised £1.1 million in matched funding and was the lead manager in a £3.2 million capital project (completed on time and on budget to required quality).

Previously Joanna had internships at Cheek By Jowl Theatre Co 1987 and at the Manhattan Theatre Club New York 1993. She was General Manager of the Actors' Touring Company (1987-1995) and served as an active Board Member of the Independent Theatre Council (1989-1995), including holding the posts of Chair and Vice Chair. From 2000-2002 Joanna served on the TMA Council whilst continuing as a Board Member and Company Secretary of The Federation of Scottish Theatres (1998-2002).

BARRIE RUTTER

Barrie Rutter started his career at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama and many years in the National Youth Theatre culminating in **The Apprentices** by Peter Terson in a role specially written for him, a practice to be repeated later in his career.

Seasons at the RSC in Stratford, London and Europe performing in **Henry IV, Henry V, Coriolanus** and **The Taming of the Shrew** completed the 1970s. In 1980 he joined the National Theatre, a formative period during which Barrie performed in all three of Tony Harrison's adaptations, all written for the Northern voice: **The Mysteries, The Orestia, and The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus**. In **Trackers**, the part of Silenus was written especially for Barrie. It was this experience of performing in the northern voice that germinated the idea for Northern Broadsides.

Trackers toured to a wool-combing shed in Salts Mill, three miles north of Bradford. This was to be Rutter's 'Damascus'. He was deeply affected by the raw emotion of speaking to a northern audience in a northern voice in a classical play.

In 1992 Barrie assembled some of the cast of **Trackers** and created Northern Broadsides Theatre Company. The company's aesthetic was "Northern voices, doing classical work in non-velvet spaces". Wherever they performed, this radical new aesthetic excited the critics.

The first production, **Richard III**, took the company to a variety of unusual venues including the Marina Boatshed in Hull, West Yorkshire Transport Museum in Bradford and Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire. Since that first production, Northern Broadsides has continued to tour to unusual spaces across the world, for example - the Rose Garden in Chandigarh, India, a Roman amphitheatre in Austria (where they performed with live bears and lions on stage!), and the Tower of London.

The company has gone from strength to strength, from surviving hand-to-mouth on a shoestring budget for years, to winning numerous awards, culminating in the country's largest and most lucrative arts prize - Creative Briton 2000 - awarded to Barrie as **Artistic Director** with a cheque for £100,000 to spend on the company.

AGATA SIWIAK

Born in 1974, Agata graduated from A. Mickiewicz University in Poznan, where her diploma work concerned the new situation of repertoire theatres in Poland. She undertook this at the faculty of Cultural Institutions Management and she also studied at the Faculty of Anthropological and Cultural Studies.

Between 1997 and 2000, she was involved with Teatr Nowy's (New Theatre) Foundation in Poznan, getting to know the first Polish attempts at adapting cultural institutions to the market economy. In 2001 she moved to Wroclaw and was hired by Teatr Wspolczesny (Contemporary Theatre) managed by Krystyna Meissner, where Agata was the Head of the Marketing and PR Unit.

She held the same role during the first Dialog (Dialogue) International Festival in Wroclaw, brought to life by Teatr Wspolczesny. The festival proved to be a big artistic and organisational success, becoming a part of European theatre festivals. In mid-2002, Pawel Miskiewicz, the Artistic Director of Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre) in Wroclaw, asked her to undertake similar roles and responsibilities as at the previous theatre, and then to change her area of work and find her biggest passion. So, she began to write her own projects and started programming artistic events.

Together with Miskiewicz, Agata invented the concept and programme of the first Wroclaw Forum of Modern Dramaturgy - EuroDrama 2002. Critics judged EuroDrama to be the most significant project promoting Polish dramaturgy. In the same year, she formulated and brought into being a new project at Teatr Polski – Wroclaw – Swiebodzki (Europejskie Centrum Wymiany Kultur – European Centre for Culture Exchange), representing a synthesis of various disciplines of art which encounter one another in theatre.

In 2004, she started work at the **Stary Teatr (Old Theatre) in Krakow**, where in liaison with Pawel Miskiewicz she brought a new project – baz@rt, Intermedia Theatre Forum - into existence, in which she is involved as the **Head of Organisation and Artistic Co-ordinator**. The project is a kind of creative laboratory for the whole season (workshops, presentations of performances) and assumes the form of a festival once a year. Baz@rt is supposed to present the most interesting theatre events in the world, and set to work on theatre trends that are not sufficiently popular in Poland: eg multimedia theatre and documentary theatre.

MIKHAÏL STRONIN

Born in 1933 in Leningrad, Mikhaïl graduated from the Institute of Foreign Languages in Leningrad, English Department, with a degree in English Philology. He then studied at the Theatre Academy in St Petersburg and became a theatre critic, and along the way he got his doctorate.

Mikhaïl has had a distinguished career and some of the highlights include his being the literary advisor from 1970 – 1975 to the Theatre for Young Audiences in Leningrad. From 1986 – 2003 he was the Literary Advisor and International Relations Manager at the Maly Drama Theatre in St. Petersburg. He came with the Maly ensemble to Britain in 1988 for their performances at the Mayfest in Glasgow and then to London with their play **Stars in the Morning Sky**, which won an Olivier Award.

Mikhail's work as dramaturg with the Maly has taken him on many tours to Britain (London, Manchester, Glasgow, Nottingham and Newcastle) and elsewhere in the world. His translation of **Molly Sweeney** by Brian Friel is IN THE Maly's repertoire and he has translated into Russian three books by Peter Brook: **The Shifting Point**, **There Are No Secrets**, and **Threads of Time**. In addition to his other work, he is currently doing some teaching at the Theatre Academy in St Petersburg.

NICOLA THOROLD

Nicola is currently the **Director of Theatre for Arts Council England**. She is responsible for the planning and delivery of the strategic policy for theatre, and the provision of a national and international overview of all aspects of drama.

Since arriving at the Arts Council in May 2000, Nicola has led the development and implementation of the current National Policy for Theatre in England (July 2000), the Theatre Review and distribution of additional funds for theatre in England (March 2001), which were made available by the Government from 2002/3.

Nicola was formerly Director of the Independent Theatre Council (ITC), where she was responsible for policy development for ITC and representing the middle and small-scale performing arts sector.

Nicola is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a former board member of the National Campaign for the Arts.

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Biographies of conference speakers – in speaker order

HARRY LANDIS

Harry started acting at the Unity Theatre aged 15, where he learned about ensemble acting.

He later trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama and his first job was touring with the Elizabethan Theatre Company. After six months in Rep he did several national tours.

West End appearances included Wesker's **The Kitchen** at the Royal Court, John Osborne's **Time Present** at the Duke of York's and **Journey's End** at the Cambridge Theatre. Several films followed including **A Hill in Korea**, **Billy Liar**, **Bitter Victory**, **Doctor in Distress**, **Private Potter** etc.

Harry has had several hundred appearances on television. He started with **Dixon of Dock Green**, went on to a long series as one of **The Soldiers Three** in **Tales of India** adapted from Kipling's stories and worked on **Minder**, **Lovejoy**, **Bergerac** and **The Avengers**. He also spent two years playing Felix the barber in **Eastenders**.

Harry started directing in Rep and then directed national tours of **The Long, The Short and The Tall**, **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** and Priestly's **I Have Been Here Before**. Taking over as Artistic Director of the Marlow Theatre, Canterbury, he directed 36 plays before resuming acting and freelance directing. This year he has appeared in **The Bill**, **Casualty** and **My Family** as well as directing a one man show.

His involvement with Equity goes back many years and, as well as being on the Equity Council, he has been Chair of its Directors' Committee, a board member of the Equity Trust Fund and on the negotiating teams hammering out agreements with the TMA, BBC and ITV.

At the time of the conference Harry was in his second term as President of Equity.

MICHAEL BOYD

Michael became **Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company** in March 2003. During the conference his production of **Hamlet** opened at the Albery Theatre as part of the RSC's London Season.

In his previous role as Associate Director, he has directed the following productions with the RSC: **The Broken Heart**, **Much Ado About Nothing**, **The Spanish Tragedy**, **Measure for Measure**, **Troilus and Cressida**, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **Romeo and Juliet**, **The Tempest**, **Henry VI, Parts I, II and III** and **Richard III** (Olivier Award for Best Director 2001).

He was Artistic Director of the Tron Theatre, Glasgow, where he directed a landmark production of **Macbeth**; an award winning adaptation of Janice Galloway's **The Trick is to Keep Breathing** which also went to the Royal Court; **Good**, (nominated for a Critics' Award, Edinburgh Festival); and championed the work of Quebec playwright Michel Tremblay in Scotland with **The Real World** and **The Guid Sisters**, plus premieres of **The Baby** (Chris Hannan); **Clyde Nouveau** (Iain Heggie), **Muir** and **Losing Alec** (both by Peter Arnott) and Alasdair Gray's **McGrotty and Ludmilla**.

From 1982-1984, Michael was Associate Director at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield where notable productions included **A Midsummer Night's Dream** and Howard Baker's **A Passion in Six Days**. Before Sheffield, Michael was a Director at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry for four years and directed **Risky City** (Ron Hutchinson); **The Nose** (Boyd/Gogol) and the **Mystery Plays**.

His other work includes **Miss Julie** (West End); **Hedda Gabler** (Leicester Haymarket); **Othello** (Lyric, Hammersmith - nominated Best Director, Plays and Players); **The Alchemist**

(Cambridge Theatre Company); **Commedia** (Lyric Hammersmith: nominated Best Play, Evening Standard) and **the Alchemist** (Cambridge Theatre Company).

Michael was a trainee director at the Malaya Bronnaya Theatre in Moscow.

FIRST PANEL SESSION

CHAIR: JOHN CARNEGIE

John is a native of Edinburgh who now lives in Glasgow. He studied Drama and Theatre Arts at Birmingham University and then trained as a director at the Drama Centre in London. A Scottish Arts Council Director's Bursary led him to work with the Traverse Theatre, Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera.

For ten years, he was the co-founder and Artistic Director of Winged Horse Touring Productions - premiering new work by writers such as John Clifford, Stewart Conn, Liz Lochhead and Alan Spence, and touring extensively throughout Scotland. He was then Special Lecturer in Drama at Hull University – followed by being Director in Residence for Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association. His production for them of Frederic Mohr's play **The Admiral Jones** won a Fringe First award at the Edinburgh Festival, as did his earlier production of the same author's **Bozzy**.

Later he originated, co-researched, and directed Dundee Rep Theatre's **On the Line – A Celebration of Timex in Dundee** by Alan Spence with music by Ricky Ross, a large scale documentary drama which won the Martini Award for the Most Outstanding Production in the 1996 TMA Theatre Awards. He was then Artistic Director of 2000 & 3 ESTAITES, which co-ordinated productions of Alan Spence's contemporary Scots version of David Lindsay's classic Scots play **The 3 Estaites** all over Scotland and which culminated in his directing a large scale production on the play's original 1552 outdoor site.

Freelance work has included directing productions for the Traverse, the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company, BBC TV and Radio, Prime Productions and the Merlin Theatre in Budapest. He has lately turned his hand to writing with **Confessions of a Justified Sinner** (loosely derived from the novel by James Hogg) for the Scottish Borders' Rowan Tree Theatre Company. At the time of the conference he was writing another new play for them.

John represents Theatre Directors on Equity's governing Council.

MIKHAÏL STRONIN

Born in 1933 in Leningrad, Mikhail graduated from the Institute of Foreign Languages in Leningrad, English Department, with a degree in English Philology. He then studied at the Theatre Academy in St Petersburg and became a theatre critic, and along the way he got his doctorate.

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AGATA SIWIAK

Born in 1974, Agata graduated from A. Mickiewicz University in Poznan, where her diploma work concerned the new situation of repertoire theatres in Poland. She undertook this at the faculty of Cultural Institutions Management and she also studied at the Faculty of Anthropological and Cultural Studies.

Between 1997 and 2000, she was involved with Teatr Nowy's (New Theatre) Foundation in Poznan, getting to know the first Polish attempts at adapting cultural institutions to the market economy. In 2001 she moved to Wroclaw and was hired by Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) managed by Krystyna Meissner, where Agata was the Head of the Marketing and PR Unit.

She held the same role during the first Dialog (Dialogue) International Festival in Wroclaw, brought to life by Teatr Współczesny. The festival proved to be a big artistic and organisational success, becoming a part of European theatre festivals. In mid-2002, Pawel Miskiewicz, the Artistic Director of Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre) in Wroclaw, asked her to undertake similar roles and responsibilities as at the previous theatre, and then to change her area of work and find her biggest passion. So, she began to write her own projects and started programming artistic events.

Together with Miskiewicz, Agata invented the concept and programme of the first Wroclaw Forum of Modern Dramaturgy - EuroDrama 2002. Critics judged EuroDrama to be the most significant project promoting Polish dramaturgy. In the same year, she formulated and brought into being a new project at Teatr Polski – Wroclaw – Swiebodzki (Europejskie Centrum Wymiany Kultur – European Centre for Culture Exchange), representing a synthesis of various disciplines of art which encounter one another in theatre.

In 2004, she started work at the **Stary Teatr (Old Theatre) in Krakow**, where in liaison with Pawel Miskiewicz she brought a new project – baz@rt, Intermedia Theatre Forum - into existence, in which she is involved as the **Head of Organisation and Artistic Co-ordinator**. The project is a kind of creative laboratory for the whole season (workshops, presentations of performances) and assumes the form of a festival once a year. Baz@rt is supposed to present the most interesting theatre events in the world, and set to work on theatre trends that are not sufficiently popular in Poland: eg multimedia theatre and documentary theatre.

SECOND PANEL SESSION

CHAIR - RUTH MACKENZIE O.B.E.

Since 1980, Ruth has held various administrative and creative roles including co-founding the Moving Parts Theatre Company, being the Fellow in Theatre at the Theatre in the Mill in Bradford and she was Director of the Bradford Multi-Cultural Festival in 1984. This was followed by two years as Drama Officer for the Arts Council of Great Britain and from there she moved to the South Bank Centre where she was Head of Strategic Planning. In 1990, Ruth became the Executive Director at Nottingham Playhouse. Concurrently with this post, Ruth was Programming Consultant for Theatre Clywd and the Barbican and then became the General Director of Scottish Opera. From 1999-2002 she was Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. In 2002, Ruth took on two new and continuing roles; one as Director of Time/Room Productions Ltd, and the second as the **Artistic Director of Chichester Festival Theatre**.

In addition, Ruth is a Governor of Trinity College of Music and a member of the Chancellor's Forum of the London Institute and sits on of various committees and panels. She has an MA and is an Honorary Fellow of Nottingham University. In 1995, Ruth was awarded an O.B.E. for services to theatre.

HAMISH GLEN

Hamish began his theatre career as a stage manager with the Traverse Theatre and Paines Plough, subsequently joining Shared Experience as Assistant Director. Following this he formed the Writer's Theatre Company where he directed the British premieres of **At It** by Heathcote Williams and **More Happy Chickens** by Michael Duke. Working again with the Traverse Theatre, he directed the British premiere of Arthur Miller's **Two Way Mirror** and, as Associate Director of Tron Theatre, **The Overcoat** by Gogol, **Burning Love** by Kuse, **Gamblers** by Gogol, **Babes In The Wood** by Alan Cumming and Forbes Masson, and **The Tom and Sammy Show** by Peter Capaldi. Also **As You Like It** and **Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme** for the Royal Lyceum Theatre and **Gamblers** for the Lithuanian State Theatre. As Artistic Director of Winged Horse Touring Productions, Hamish directed **The Magic Theatre** by John Clifford (after Cervantes), **Elizabeth Gordon Quinn** by Chris Hannan, **Bailegangaire** by Tom Murphy, **The Evil Doers** by Chris Hannan and **American Buffalo** by David Mamet.

Hamish was the Artistic Director at Dundee Rep from 1992 – 2003. His work there included **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf**, **Tartuffe**, **Uncle Vanya**, **The Hypochondriak**, **American Buffalo**, **Toshie** by Stuart Brown, **Death and the Maiden**, **Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme**, **Cinderella** by Stewart Paterson, **Hyde** by Peter Arnott, **A Greater Tomorrow** by Hector MacMillan, **The Weavers** by Hauptmann, **The Mill Lavvies** by Chris Rattray and Michael Marra, **Puss in Boots** and **Hansel and Gretel** both by Stewart Paterson. Hamish also directed **Walter** by C P Taylor, adapted by Michael Wilcox for The Edinburgh International Festival.

In 1999, Hamish created a full time ensemble company of 11 actors and augmented each year by 2 apprentices – the company staying together for the following 4 years during which time he directed them in **Cabaret**, **Colquhoun and MacBryde** by John Byrne, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **A Family Affair**, **Measure for Measure** and **Nightflights** by Marcella Evaristi. Also, whilst at Dundee, he directed **The Hypochondriak** for Mikkeli Theatre, Finland, which later transferred to The Tampere International Festival, **What The Butler Saw** for Tampere T. Theatre and **A Delicate Balance** by for Helsinki City Theatre.

Hamish became Artistic **Director of the Belgrade in Coventry** in March 2003, directing **The Rink** by Kander and Ebb.

ALAN LYDDIARD

Alan Lyddiard was Artistic **Director/Chief Executive at Northern Stage** from 1992 to 2005. During this time he transformed the company into one of the leading lights of regional theatre through his commitment to ensemble acting, to participation projects and to presenting the best in international, national and regional talent. His productions for the company include: **And a Nightingale Sang; Stars in the Morning Sky; Andorra; Blood Wedding; Twelfth Night; Animal Farm; A Clockwork Orange; The Ballroom of Romance; Edmond; 1984; The Black Eyed Roses** and **Winds of Desire**.

Alan has strong links with theatres all over Europe and his work has been seen in Israel, Turkey, Romania, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium and the United States. In 2002 he directed a version of **1001 Arabian Nights** at the Betty Nansen Theatre in Copenhagen which he remade for Northern Stage in 2005. In 2004 he returned to Copenhagen to direct a new piece and in April 2005 he directed **The Black Eyed Roses** for The Hungarian State Theatre in Cluj, Romania.

BARRIE RUTTER

Barrie Rutter started his career at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama and many years in the National Youth Theatre culminating in **The Apprentices** by Peter Terson in a role specially written for him, a practice to be repeated later in his career.

Seasons at the RSC in Stratford, London and Europe performing in **Henry IV, Henry V, Coriolanus** and **The Taming of the Shrew** completed the 1970s. In 1980 he joined the National Theatre, a formative period during which Barrie performed in all three of Tony Harrison's adaptations, all written for the Northern voice: **The Mysteries, The Orestia, and The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus**. In **Trackers**, the part of Silenus was written especially for Barrie. It was this experience of performing in the northern voice that germinated the idea for Northern Broadsides.

Trackers toured to a wool-combing shed in Salts Mill, three miles north of Bradford. This was to be Rutter's 'Damascus'. He was deeply affected by the raw emotion of speaking to a northern audience in a northern voice in a classical play.

In 1992 Barrie assembled some of the cast of **Trackers** and created Northern Broadsides Theatre Company. The company's aesthetic was "Northern voices, doing classical work in non-velvet spaces". Wherever they performed, this radical new aesthetic excited the critics.

The first production, **Richard III**, took the company to a variety of unusual venues including the Marina Boatshed in Hull, West Yorkshire Transport Museum in Bradford and Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire. Since that first production, Northern Broadsides has continued to tour to unusual spaces across the world, for example - the Rose Garden in Chandigarh, India, a Roman amphitheatre in Austria (where they performed with live bears and lions on stage!), and the Tower of London.

The company has gone from strength to strength, from surviving hand-to-mouth on a shoestring budget for years, to winning numerous awards, culminating in the country's largest and most lucrative arts prize - Creative Briton 2000 - awarded to Barrie as **Artistic Director** with a cheque for £100,000 to spend on the company.

THIRD PANEL SESSION

CHAIR - FELIX CROSS

Felix is a composer, playwright, lyricist and director and has been the **Artistic Director of NITRO** (formerly Black Theatre Co-operative) since 1996. NITRO produces black musical-theatre and develops emerging and established black artists to work in theatre. For NITRO he has written: the book, music and lyrics of **Passports to the Promised Land**; the book and co-directed **Slamdunk**; the music and lyrics of **Tricksters' Payback**. Also for NITRO Felix has directed **ICED** by Ray Shell and co-written the book (with Paulette Randall) of **Up Against The Wall**. He has produced four years of the annual **NITRO beat** festival (directing many of its productions) as well as **A NITRO At The Opera** with the Royal Opera House.

Away from NITRO, his work includes: **Blues For Railton** (book, music and lyrics; Albany Empire); **Glory!** (book, music and lyrics; Temba/Derby Playhouse); **Mass Carib** (book, music and lyrics; Albany Empire/South Bank); **Integration Octet** (for string quartet and steel pan quartet at Aldeburgh Festival/Royal Festival Hall); **Jekyll & Hyde** and **The Bottle Imp** (both music and lyrics; books by Graham Devlin, for Major Road); **The Panbeaters** (Director; Greenwich Theatre) He has also written music for over sixty stage and radio plays including the entire canon of Agatha Christie's plays (23 of them).

A seemingly habitual panel and board member, Felix is or has been a member of numerous panels for Arts Council England, the boards of Ocean Music Trust and Major Road Theatre Company. He has facilitated or chaired several debates and seminars and has delivered papers at numerous conferences, particularly on Cultural Diversity and the Arts.

RUTH MACKENZIE OBE

Since 1980, Ruth has held various administrative and creative roles including co-founding the Moving Parts Theatre Company, being the Fellow in Theatre at the Theatre in the Mill in Bradford and she was Director of the Bradford Multi-Cultural Festival in 1984. This was followed by two years as Drama Officer for the Arts Council of Great Britain and from there she moved to the South Bank Centre where she was Head of Strategic Planning. In 1990, Ruth became the Executive Director at Nottingham Playhouse. Concurrently with this post, Ruth was Programming Consultant for Theatre Clywd and the Barbican and then became the General Director of Scottish Opera. From 1999-2002 she was Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. In 2002, Ruth took on two new and continuing roles; one as Director of Time/Room Productions Ltd, and the second as the **Artistic Director of Chichester Festival Theatre**.

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JOANNA REID

Joanna became **Executive Director of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry** in November 2003 and continues in this role.

As Executive Director of Dundee Rep Theatre from March 1995 to November 2003, Joanna worked alongside Artistic Director Hamish Glen to lead Dundee Rep in the development of *New Ways of Working*. Among her achievements at Dundee can be included the successful repositioning of Dundee Rep Theatre as one of Scotland's most exciting theatres and establishing Scotland's only permanent company of actors. She worked to double their core funding and permanent core staffing and established Scottish Dance Theatre (Dundee Rep's Dance Company) as Scotland's principal contemporary dance company under the artistic leadership of Janet Smith, with a permanent company of dancers. Further to this Joanna raised £1.1 million in matched funding and was the lead manager in a £3.2 million capital project (completed on time and on budget to required quality).

Previously Joanna had internships at Cheek By Jowl Theatre Co 1987 and at the Manhattan Theatre Club New York 1993. She was General Manager of the Actors' Touring Company (1987-1995) and served as an active Board Member of the Independent Theatre Council (1989-1995), including holding the posts of Chair and Vice Chair. From 2000-2002 Joanna served on the TMA Council whilst continuing as a Board Member and Company Secretary of The Federation of Scottish Theatres (1998-2002).

NICOLA THOROLD

Nicola is currently the **Director of Theatre for Arts Council England**. She is responsible for the planning and delivery of the strategic policy for theatre, and the provision of a national and international overview of all aspects of drama.

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Nicola was formerly Director of the Independent Theatre Council (ITC), where she was responsible for policy development for ITC and representing the middle and small-scale performing arts sector.

Nicola is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a former board member of the National Campaign for the Arts.

ROUND-UP SESSION

PHILIP HEDLEY

Philip has for the past twenty-five years been Artistic Director at the **Theatre Royal, Stratford East** in London. After his recent retirement from the post, the Theatre Royal has named him their **Director Emeritus**.

He has been Artistic Director of two regional repertory theatres with permanent companies: Lincoln Theatre Royal and the Midlands Arts Centre Theatre Company in Birmingham.

He was Assistant Director to Joan Littlewood for two years in the early seventies and gained some insight into the workings of one of the world's most famous ensembles – Theatre Workshop.

Philip has directed four West End shows and others in Sydney, Vancouver, Khartoum and throughout British regional theatres. He has been a champion on behalf of education, training, accessibility and cultural diversity. He has served on ten Arts Council England committees but has publicly campaigned against ACE or government policies when he felt they were damaging theatre. His campaigning has nearly always been in alliance with Equity.

At Stratford East he is particularly proud of the cultural diversity on stage and in the audience. He has produced and directed more than one hundred premieres of new work there and has championed pioneering work on the creation of new musicals. He is a producer of Stratford East's successful musical, **The Big Life** - the first black British musical ever in the West End.

FINAL WORD

IVOR BENJAMIN

Once, long ago, Ivor was Assistant Director at Coventry Belgrade on the ITV RTTDS bursary. He has been a freelance director, writer and teacher for 20 years, working in (amongst others) Birmingham, Bolton, Harrogate, Edinburgh, London, Toronto, Los Angeles and Tel Aviv.

Ivor has taught at Rose Bruford, Guildford, Mountview, ALRA, Middlesex University and worked with many other universities, schools and community theatre groups, as well as being a regular contributor to the National Student Drama Festival for over 15 years.

As a writer his adaptation of **Rashomon** was premiered in Ireland in 2004 by Storytellers Theatre, and has played in the UK, USA and Philippines. Ivor is also an arts I.T. consultant and in this role has written articles for "Wired" magazine and sundry learned journals.

At the time of the conference Ivor was the **Honorary General Secretary of the Directors' Guild of Great Britain**.

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ENSEMBLE CONFERENCE

The Participants

Tony Allen
Michael Almaz
Clara Armand
Ross Ashcroft
Dan Ayling
Adele Bailey
Ivor Benjamin
Stuart Bennett
Mike Bernardi
Richard Berry
Antony Biggs
Theo Bosanquet
Michael Boyd
James Brining
Martin Brown
John Bruce
Simon Callow
John Carnegie
Peter Cheeseman
Hseuh-chen Chen
Di Christian
Graham Christopher
Matt Clarke
Andi Cooper
Sam Crane
Josephine Crawford
Felix Cross
Damien Cruden
Nathan Curry
Philip Curtis
Tracy-Anne Cutbush
Martin Danziger
Lyn Darnley
Rod Dixon
Vanessa Dodd
Valerie Doulton
Patricia Doyle
Paul Dubois
Richard Duployen
John Durnin
Helen Sophia Dyer
Barry Edwards
Naomi Elkin-jones
Jennifer Ellison
Femi Elufowoju
Sue Emmas
Boyd Farrow
Mijanda Filipovic
Cassandra Fleming
Greg Floy
Ruth Gillespie
Hamish Glen
Malcolm Goddard
Pedro Gonzalo Antunes
Tony Graham
David Graham-Young

Louise Grainger
Eleanor Green
Rachel Grunwald
Richard Hayhow
Jane Hazell
Philip Hedley
Janet Henfrey
Laura Hetherington
Jon Hewitt
Gemma Hicks
Jessica Higgs
Timothy Hogan
Melissa Holston
Michael Hucks
Adrian Hughes
Kerry Irvine
Carmen Jakobi
Karen Johnson
Rebecca Jones
Thea Jones
Kathy Joyce
Andrea Kantor
Ian Kellgren
Freda Kelsall
Lisa Kendall
David Kenworthy
Gemma Kerr
Trish Knight-Webb
Jonathan Kydd
Harry Landis
Leo Lawson
Kevin Livgren
Andrew Lukas
Alan Lyddiard
Rhonwen MacCormack
Ruth Mackenzie
Anna Makrzanowska
Jehan-Sam Manekshaw
David Manzi-Fe
Kitty Martin
Seymour Matthews
Marylin Maupoint
Marie McCarthy
Mary McCluskey
Ian McGarry
David McKail
Seona McKinnon
Andrew Miller
Christopher Morahan
Jonathan Morris
Gerry Mulgrew
Tina Mullinger
Maureen O'Brien
Lorenzo Pagnotta
Sue Parrish
Mike Parsons
Catherine Paskell
Alexandra Patience
Bruce Payne
Christine Payne

Bob Pearce
Daniela Pelanu
Duska Radosavljevic
Denis Rafter
Alex Ramsden
Joanna Read
Joanna Reid
James Reynolds
Anthony Richards
Frances Rifkin
Serena Robins
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Alison Sutcliffe
Rob Swain
Malgorzata Szum
Peter Talbot
Jon Tarlton
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John Topping
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Astrid Vehstedt
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