



# THEATRE MATTERS!

**UK THEATRE 2015**

Why theatre matters to the UK  
and how we can maintain our  
place as a world leader in these  
challenging times.

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Top: War Horse, photo by Birgit and Ralf Brinkhoff. Centre left: Congress Theatre, Eastbourne, photo by Rob Walker. Centre right: Participants in the Lyric Hammersmith's Future Fest project for under 26s. Bottom: The Railway Children, photo by Simon Annand

**69% of adults in England have attended an arts event in the last 12 months<sup>1</sup>**



# INTRO

Theatre in the UK in 2015. Loved by millions, of all ages and backgrounds. A UK industry that is still universally acknowledged as a world leader. A sector that has performed extremely well in challenging financial times. An industry that offers so much value but is under great pressure.

Compared to the rest of Europe, the UK requires a fraction of the subsidy used to support theatres in other nations. But national and local funding is under increasing threat. New tax breaks will make

a huge difference for the industry, but further cuts threaten the quality of work on stage, the affordability of tickets and even the future of venues and theatre companies across the land.

This document is a reminder and a celebration of all that theatre contributes to life in the UK. It also makes some practical suggestions about how the UK Government could safeguard theatre and ensure it plays an even greater cultural, economic, social and educational role.

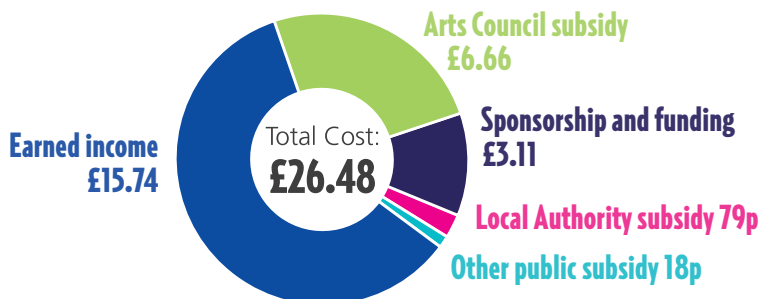


Communities need to be proud of their theatre and what it is offering or no one else will be. Imagine what a sad and dull place the world would be without the world of theatre where absolutely anything can happen. Let's keep the magic alive.

**Libby Edwards, local theatre: Theatr Colwyn**

## UK THEATRE – THE LEAST SUBSIDISED IN EUROPE

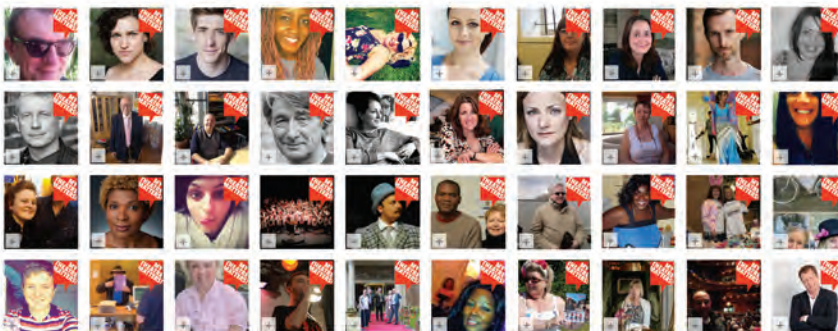
For every ticket sold at the 180 subsidised theatres, support came from:<sup>2</sup>



**63% of adults think that local government should be investing at least 50p per person per week in culture. The average figure in England is now just 16p<sup>3</sup>**



**37,000 people signed up to the My Theatre Matters! campaign**



Top left: Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre's Giselle at the Barbican, nominated for an Olivier Award 2006 for Best New Dance Production, photo by Charles Erickson. Top right: One Monkey Don't Stop No Show by Don Evans. Tricycle Theatre, Eclipse Theatre Company, Photo by Tristram Kenton. Middle right: English National Opera at the Royal Opera House, photo by Richard Haughton. Bottom: Screenshot of the My Theatre Matters! website.

# THEATRE AND THE PUBLIC

The UK has more theatre lovers than football lovers. Every year, more people go to theatres around the UK than attend all Premiership, Football League and Scottish Premiership matches combined.<sup>4</sup>

New data analysis<sup>5</sup> proves that lower ticket prices help theatres reach a

less affluent demographic and that local provision is more important for less affluent audiences.

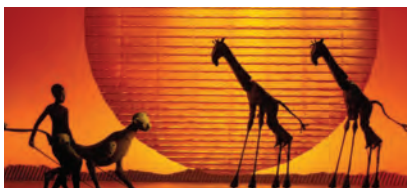
Maintaining support from national and local government to keep prices affordable and local facilities open is crucial for audiences now and in the future.



My theatre allows so much opportunity for young people to get involved, to see shows at discount prices or for free and it employs so many people who are wonderfully talented. Theatre isn't just to entertain. It promotes education and values history and achievement. Cutting funding for this theatre will be cutting opportunities, suppressing creativity, and discouraging people from supporting the industry.

**Flora Ogilvy, local theatre: York Theatre Royal**

In 2013 West End ticket sales alone contributed £97,584,409 in VAT to the national exchequer<sup>6</sup>



Arts and culture had a turnover of £12.4 billion and contributed £5.9 billion (GVA) to the UK economy in 2011<sup>7</sup>



Top left: Disney's The Lion King, photo by Catherine Ashmore. Top right: Daniel Evans' critically acclaimed production of Oliver!, photo by Mark Douet. Middle: West End Live 2014, photo by Pamela Raith. Bottom: Chris Trenfield as The Swan in Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake, photo by Helen Maybanks

# THEATRE AND THE ECONOMY

Theatres contribute a huge amount to our national and local economies.

In challenging times, theatres help local communities to thrive. They attract employers to an area, helping to retain graduate employment, and create flourishing night-time economies on local high streets. Every pound spent in a theatre is then matched by further spending in local shops, cafes and bars. Theatres attract a really wide range of people to towns and cities in the evenings, keeping the streets friendly and welcoming for all ages and all backgrounds.

Visit Britain say that our culture and heritage is vital for tourism.

It accounts for £4.5bn worth of spending by tourists each year – more than a quarter of all spending by international visitors – and underpins more than 100,000 jobs across the length and breadth of Britain. Tourists rank us as one of the most vibrant countries in the world thanks to our contemporary culture.

A new tax relief scheme was launched by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in autumn 2014 that is designed to give a further burst of growth to an already successful industry, encouraging new productions and touring, particularly outside London.



York Theatre Royal not only provides quality theatre and live entertainment but through its everlasting pantomime and events such as the *York Mystery Plays* and productions such as *The Railway Children*, it provides a boost to the city through tourism, which helps local businesses.

**David Rose, local theatre: York Theatre Royal**



Top left: The Ring Cycle Plays at The Scoop, More London, photo by davidphotos. Top right: Theatre Royal Nottingham Family Open Day 2013. Middle: Dance City, photo by Richard Kenworthy. Bottom: Mamma Mia relaxed performance, photo by Alex Rumford

**Culture and sport volunteers are more likely than average to be involved and influential in their local communities<sup>8</sup>**



**Over 1,200,000 attendances at the Family Arts Festival in the last two years<sup>9</sup>**

# THEATRE AND SOCIETY

Theatres provide opportunities to get an experience of paid work, as well as learning new skills through volunteering. They are a place where you can make friends for life or find a deeply rewarding career that offers you opportunities nationally and internationally.

For adults, theatres offer an increasingly rare chance to engage and share experiences with your local community. They provide a focal point for a community to associate with and be proud of, without the fear of relegation at the end of the season.

Public funding helps ensure theatres are a place for everyone. As well

as keeping ticket prices down and supporting outreach activities in the community, local and national support allows services like signed and audio described performances. Theatres are also increasingly supporting new access initiatives to welcome new communities to their venues.

Theatres have played a major role in the UK-wide Family Arts Campaign which is working to grow and broaden family audiences for the performing and visual arts while working with the sector to improve the quality of welcome that families receive. Over the past two years 177 theatres have put on 1,262 events as part of the Family Arts Festival.



I have spoken to other theatre goers who have been on their own in the theatre who love the atmosphere and the chance to meet new people. On a couple of occasions the people have continued on to say that they suffer from poor mental health and the theatre is welcoming and does not judge. I am grateful of this as I am a mental health practitioner who knows all too well about the stigma that my service users have to face in day to day society.

**Claire, local theatre: Liverpool Empire**

Top: International Exchange Programme 2007, Hallam Road Children's Centre, photo by Ruth Churchill Dower, Earlyarts UK. Middle: Courtesy of Creative & Cultural Skills. Tamykha Patterson, Ambassador Theatre Group Apprentice Theatre Technician, photo by Campbell Rowley. Bottom: Participants in the Lyric Hammersmith's Future Fest project for under 2Gs.

**Students from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree<sup>10</sup>**



**In 2013/14 180 ACE funded theatre organisations welcomed over 3.4 million attenders to activities for children and young people<sup>11</sup>**



# THEATRE AND EDUCATION

Theatres support the development of children and young people of all ages. They welcome toddlers and younger children for an amazing range of creative events and activities, providing educational stimulus at a vital age. They help children make sense of the world, challenge some of their preconceptions and raise their hopes and aspirations.

In teenage years they offer some truly positive activities to express themselves in ways communities genuinely applaud rather than object to.

A major DCMS study of evidence of impacts of young people's participation in the arts concluded that learning through arts and culture improves attainment across many other aspects of the school curriculum and has a wealth of other beneficial impacts on young people.

Academic research from the US showed that students from low income families who engage in the arts at school are twice as likely to volunteer and are 20% more likely to vote as young adults. Taking part in drama and library activities also improves attainment in literacy.

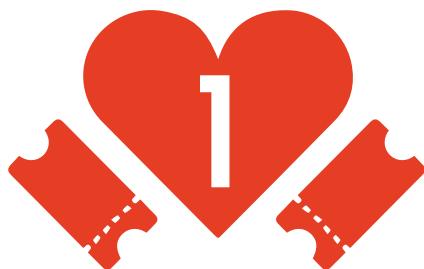


The good people at Contact have supported me from a youth right through my development as a professional artist. Before being involved in projects at Contact, I never saw how my MCing skills could be used on stage - well, now I've toured the country several times with plays I've written and performed in!

**Martin Visceral, local theatre: Contact, Manchester**

# FOUR WAYS TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF UK THEATRE

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## EXTEND GIFT AID TO TICKETS FOR CHARITABLE ARTS EVENTS

At the moment, buildings that are charities can ask customers to make a donation of 10% or more on top of the admission price and then claim gift aid on the entire of the entrance price and donation.

If this was extended to theatres and other arts organisations that are charities it would mean an additional £4 donation on top of a

£40 transaction would be worth £15 to the organisation.

We believe that if the new government extended Gift Aid to attendance at charities presenting arts events it would encourage philanthropy and support the bottom line of increasingly hard-pressed arts organisations.



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Honestly, I have high standards, and this Theatre has met every single challenge we've thrown at them. They now have a special place in our hearts. They have gone the extra mile. Our community would not be the same without this Theatre. They look after their community, especially its children and special children.

**Emma Brotherton, local theatre: Half Moon**

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## MOVE FROM STEM TO STEAM

The STEM subjects are Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and they currently enjoy additional investment in recognition of their vital role in supporting industry.

We have already seen a decline of 14% in Arts GCSE entries between 2010, when the English Baccalaureate was introduced, and 2013.

Adding the 'A' of arts to the STEM subjects will allow the arts to fulfil their role developing pupils' ability to innovate and think creatively in the sciences, technology engineering and maths and ensure that we continue to be a world leader in spotting and supporting the development of creative talent.



I'm a vocal advocate for the role theatres play in a community. Access to theatres as a child was my first real exposure to a wide range of arts including dance, drama and music and it would be a terrible tragedy to lose these venues for future generations.

**Dan Porter, local theatre: Curve Leicester**

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# FOUR WAYS TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF UK THEATRE

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## CREATE A CHALLENGE FUND FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Authorities have been the unsung heroes of arts funding for decades, providing grants to independent organisations and running their own facilities. Local authorities receive most of their funding from national government and they have been subject to a similar scale of cuts as the arts.

At the same time, they are seeing a massive growth in demand for 'statutory' services they provide like adult social care and children's services.

Local Authorities are under intense financial pressure and are on average cutting culture disproportionately. Through research for the 50p for Culture campaign it is clear that the public do think that at least moderate public funding for culture by councils is a priority.

To encourage ongoing and new local investment, we believe there should be a national fund introduced to reward local authorities of all sizes who make a sustained commitment to supporting cultural activities in their areas.



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I love my local Theatre and Arts Centre in Stamford.  
In fact it was a pretty big factor in my moving here. It really has everything and all packaged beautifully in a wonderful building.

**Val Angelattic, local theatre: Stamford Arts Centre**

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## INCREASE TREASURY FUNDING IF LOTTERY TICKET SALES FALL

Adopt a device where if lottery ticket sales fall, the arts receive an increase in treasury funding to compensate.

When the Lottery first started in 1994, all the new funding it provided for the arts was supposed to be 'additional' and would not replace core government funding. In recent years as well as vital funding for projects and capital, Lottery funding has become crucial for the ongoing sustainability of many revenue funded arts organisations, including many of the organisations touring product outside of London.

We know that Lottery sales fluctuate, and may reduce when overall public finances are more positive. It would be unfair for the arts and for audiences if as the economy improves the overall levels of funding would reduce. To ensure this doesn't happen, we believe a mechanism should be introduced to ensure that on a combined basis, treasury and lottery funding for the arts should never fall below a defined percentage of GDP.



We feel so lucky that our theatre caters well for everyone. Our daughter is visually impaired and her husband is blind so they take advantage of the Audio Described events and they love the musicals.

**Brenda Bell, local theatre: Theatre Royal Nottingham**

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Find out more at [uktheatre.org](http://uktheatre.org)

Quotes from theatregoers in this publication have been taken from postings on the [mytheatrematters.com](http://mytheatrematters.com) website, a campaign run jointly by Equity, The Stage and UK Theatre.

Sponsorship in kind from John Good



1 = DCMS Taking Part Netquest, 2012/13

2 = Arts Council England, 2012

3 = Ipsos MORI for National Campaign for the Arts, 2014

4 = Based on weekly returns, UK Theatre calculates 20 million attendances per annum at its member venues. Attendance at Society of London Theatre (SOLT) venues was just below 14 million in 2013. Added to the UK Theatre estimate, this makes 33.9 million attendances a year. This is more than the entire attendance of 31.1 million at the English Premier League (13.6 million), English Football League (15.6 million) and Scottish Premiership (1.9 million) games for the 2012/13 season combined.

5 = Affluence – A Purple Seven study, 2014

6 = Society of London Theatre, 2014

7 = Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2013

8 = Analysis of the national DCMS Taking Part dataset undertaken by TNS-BMRB, 2012/13

9 = Family Arts Campaign independent evaluation, 2015

10 = Cultural Learning Alliance, 2014

11 = Arts Council England, 2014