Directors: Organisation, Authorship, and Social Production

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Abstract

This chapter presents a history of directorial practice in the post-war British theatre to argue that directors have been able to assert their authority over the sector thanks to their operation at the intersections of art and finance, organisation and creativity. This analysis of the work of directing owes a great deal to Ric Knowles' development of 'materialist semiotics', and to Stuart Hall's readings of the politics of cultural production and reception. The chapter extends Knowles' and Hall's insights into theatre production through three parallel accounts of theatre directing in the post-war period. These focus on the managerial and administrative position of the Artistic Director (key examples include Michael Buffong, Stephen Daldry, Peter Hall, Paulette Randall); 'auteur' directors who create theatrical 'performance texts' (Joan Littlewood, Simon McBurney, Katie Mitchell, Emma Rice), and directors whose artistry is to be found in social production, the shaping of relations between people in public space (Geraldine Connor, Jenny Sealey, Lois Weaver). Through this analysis of a wide range of directorial practices, the chapter aims to concretise the multiple forces and interests that govern the theatre sector, and thereby expose the social relations that shape its creative practices, and the political interests that govern them.

Keywords

theatre directing, post-war British theatre, artistic director, auteur, social production, cultural politics, cultural policy.

In October 2016, Shakespeare's Globe made a surprise announcement. After only six months in post, the theatre's Artistic Director, Emma Rice (1967-), would leave her job following the summer season (her second) that she was part way through preparing. The company's CEO,

Neil Constable, described the Globe as 'a radical experiment to explore the conditions within which Shakespeare and his contemporaries worked' and argued that 'this should continue to be the central tenet of our work'. Rice's choice to commit to what Constable described as 'a predominant use of contemporary sound and lighting technology' would not, he argued, 'enable us to optimise further experimentation in our unique theatre spaces and the playing conditions which they offer'.[1] Two years later, Rice was succeeded at the Globe by actress Michelle Terry and had gone on to found her own company, Wise Children, which attracted both substantial funding and press interest in advance of its opening production, an adaptation of the Angela Carter novel for which the company was named.[2]

This episode reveals much about the figure of the director in the British theatre since 1945. First, it shows how much contemporary theatre in the UK is governed by the director, a pattern that can be dated back to the mid-twentieth century. In spite of the persistence of the characteristically British preference for identifying the playwright as the theatre's primary creative force, since 1945 theatre companies' principal executive functions have been overwhelmingly assumed by directors. In fact, the term 'director' emerged as a result of the combination of the roles of 'producer' of plays and administrator of a company; today, a theatre's Artistic Director is commonly either sole or joint CEO. Secondly, Rice's increasingly strained relationship with the theatre she was attempting to re-shape indicates that directors operate in dialogue with institutional priorities, funding agendas, and commercial concerns to which they are always answerable. Finally, Rice's emergence from this sequence of events leading a company that was awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by the Arts Council before it had produced any performances testifies to the capacity of the contemporary director to function as a kind of 'auteur', an artistic brand whose imprimatur alone can generate material value.

In short, while Rice's departure from the Globe may seem to have resulted from a dispute about aesthetics, it teaches us that theatre directing is not merely an aesthetic enterprise but also an industrial and commercial one: a repertoire of managerial practices by which the

social relations of theatre production are organised. In order to analyse those practices and social relations, this chapter develops a materialist account of British theatre directing since 1945. I focus frequently on the work of large, national companies and London-based English directors both because regional theatre is addressed elsewhere in this volume and because the British theatre remains dominated by national companies and profoundly centred on the (English) capital of the UK. Unavoidably, this chapter omits more than it includes. Those figures who have been included, however, have been selected for their capacity to elucidate wider patterns, and to elucidate the complex negotiations between artistic practice, public policy, and political representation with which the work of the director is always engaged. Theatre directors, I argue, are not only artists who create performances. Nor are they merely bureaucratic figures who tell the actors where to stand and make sure they get paid. They operate, rather, at the intersections of art and finance, organisation and creativity, and thus an analysis of their work brings into focus the function of theatre as a site of material and social production.

Theatre directing and materialist semiotics

Simon Shepherd's summary of the history of directing usefully clarifies its most significant trends:

> [d]irectors, from the beginning, have done all or some of the following: they run a process that makes a show, or a series of shows; they create a structure and mode of working of a theatre company; they buy and/or run a theatre building; they establish themselves as a corporate enterprise, … they engineer their own artistic profile and manage its impression.[3]

These activities all feature in the story of Emma Rice's departure from the Globe. She had both run the processes to make individual shows and created 'a structure and a mode of working' for the company and an artistic policy for the building that was distinct from her predecessors. Rice's status as a director, however, also enabled her to respond to the dispute by 'establish[ing herself] as a corporate enterprise' under the banner of Wise Children, which was shaped by her

'artistic profile and […] its impression'. We could summarise the connections between these activities by saying that a director's fundamental responsibility is to shape the social relations of theatre production.

For most of the long history of directorial activities in the British theatre, this responsibility was assumed by an actor-manager, and the significant theatre directors who were born into Edwardian Britain such as Tyrone Guthrie (1900-71) and George Devine (1910-66) came to directing through careers in acting (albeit, in Guthrie's case, a very brief one). Those born somewhat later, however, such as Peter Brook (1925-) and Peter Hall (1930-2017), were the first to assert themselves as directors from the start of their careers. As Hall recalled:

> Most of my generation became directors by having sufficient *chutzpah* to say in our early twenties, 'I'm a director'. If we kept saying it with sufficient *chutzpah* we were sometimes believed and then we directed plays. We became directors by directing.[4]

Hall's account of '*chutzpah*' here is revealingly circular: the capacity to say you're a director is the ability to become one, which proves the validity of that initial assertion. Hall implies that both '*chutzpah*' and directing are innate capacities, but history suggests an alternative reading. Directors of Hall's generation were overwhelmingly white, heterosexual men who were privately-educated before going to Oxbridge, and entering a newly publicly-funded, civic theatre sector. '*Chutzpah*', then, both represents and disavows their shared, socially constructed ability to exploit elite knowledge and a gendered and racialized class position to assert themselves meritocratically as the natural leaders of this new theatre.

This analysis of the work of directors aims to situate them clearly within such socio-political contexts by deploying a framework developed by Ric Knowles, which he calls 'materialist semiotics'. In this approach, meanings emerge from the relations between the three points of a 'hermeneutic triangle' constituted by the 'performance text', the 'conditions of [its] production', and the 'conditions of [its] reception'.[5] Knowles's model is developed from the work of Stuart Hall, who theorised the meanings of television broadcasts as shaped by two

related but distinct processes: the 'encoding' and 'decoding' of 'a message in the form of a meaningful discourse' by producers and consumers.[6] Rice's work at the Globe exemplified a widening degree of misalignment between these processes, and Hall's model allows us to read this as a question of politics. 'One of the most significant political moments', he writes, 'is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated' – or agreed – 'way begin to be given an oppositional reading'.[7] This is true of Rice's first Globe season, in which, by attempting to engage 'new audiences',[8] she signalled that, more than any other director of a leading UK theatre, she would seek to displace the assertion of white, upper middle-class, heterosexual male dominance that the figure of Shakespeare tends tacitly to reinforce.[9] This 'oppositional reading' generated openly hostile media coverage, including an article by Richard Morrison in *The Times* under the headline 'The Globe has been a success story — and Emma Rice is wrecking it', which asserted that the theatre was constructed to explore Shakespeare and his contemporaries in approximately original performance conditions.[10] Rice, on the other hand, argued that the Board's attempt to assert such a policy constituted 'a new mission […] about how theatre would be made at the Globe', responded that this 'was not what I wanted to do', and chose to leave.[11]

It is unquestionably disingenuous for Rice to ignore the tradition of 'original practices' productions at Shakespeare's Globe under Mark Rylance's (1960-) tenure from 1995 until 2005, and, to a lesser extent, Dominic Dromgoole's (1963-) from 2005 until 2016. It is true, however, that both of Rice's predecessors used electrical lighting, albeit inconspicuously, to illuminate both stage and audience, and that Dromgoole hardly ever used the theatre's stage without adapting and extending it into the theatre's yard.[12] It is therefore clear, using Knowles's framework, that what was at stake in this dispute was not so much Rice's decision to alter the theatre's conditions of production, but to challenge its accepted conditions of *reception*, namely that spectators would be encouraged to view performances as though they were historically authentic. Furthermore, the stakes of this dispute were amplified by Rice's positionality. She was criticised from the

outset for her lack of experience with Shakespeare, unlike the privately educated Cambridge graduate Dromgoole, who had also only staged (in his word, 'car-crashed') one Shakespeare play when he took the reins of the Globe.[13]

Taking their cue from this example, the subsequent three sections of this chapter seek to imbricate aesthetic interrogations of theatre directing with socio-political analysis of the work of directors. They focus, respectively, on the Artistic Director, a managerial and administrative position that has exerted tremendous influence over the development of the British theatre since 1945; the director as 'auteur', creating what Knowles calls a theatrical 'performance text'; and the director as an agent of social production, whose artistry is to be found in the shaping of relations between people in public space.

Artistic directors: directing and organisation

Directing is usually framed as a primarily artistic practice. Accounts of theatre directors invariably focus on their productions as aesthetic artefacts; publicity shots place them in rehearsal rooms, and books about directing tend to focus almost exclusively on rehearsal as the site of directorial labour, emphasizing directors' collaborations with actors, writers and scenographers. Rehearsal rooms are not, however, necessarily – as Emma Rice came to realise – 'the rooms in which decisions are taken'. She reported that there were some crucial rooms – the board room, for example – from which she had been excluded at the Globe.[14] The artistic practices of directing are thus always intertwined with managerial practices.

This combination of the artistic and managerial functions of theatre directing is encapsulated by the term 'Artistic Director', which did not exist in 1945 but has since become ubiquitous. It emerged from the nomination 'Director', used in the immediate post-War period to denote the most senior position in a theatre company, but not always occupied by what is now called a 'director' of plays (the person responsible for staging productions was then termed a 'producer'). These two roles were first brought together by Tyrone Guthrie, producer at

London's Old Vic from 1936, who took over administrative control of the company in 1939, following the death of its manager, Lilian Baylis, in 1937.[15] The war-time advent of funding from the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) then made Guthrie the first British director to have both artistic and administrative control of a subsidised theatre. When he departed the Vic in 1944, he left a draft document entitled 'Policy for Old Vic Drama', requested by his funders, which described an organisational structure that would be capable of delivering CEMA's policy of 'the best for the most'. It detailed plans for the company's premises (the Old Vic theatre had been badly damaged during the Blitz); its repertory, which would include 'a Shakespearean or Elizabethan play', a pre-twentieth-century British play, a 'classical' play in translation, 'a modern and, where possible, a new play', and its staffing under a 'Director of Drama', leading a permanent company of actors, with others engaged flexibly.[16] This policy would substantially characterise the two leading subsidised theatre companies that emerged in the 1960s – Peter Hall's Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and Laurence Olivier's National Theatre Company – and continues to underpin the work of those theatres today, who answer to Arts Council England's largely unchanged objective: 'great art and culture for everyone'.[17]

Since 1945, public policy has therefore always shaped the artistic practice of directing because of its connection to funding: keeping theatres solvent is the artistic director's primary responsibility. The scale of the challenge this represents is clear from the memoirs of directors of the National Theatre (NT), the intense effort required to sustain the organisation in creative, practical and financial terms,[18] exemplifying Shepherd's argument that 'perhaps [...] the most significant aim and impact of the […] director were that it assumed to itself the duty of organising theatrical activity', in the sense of both asserting aesthetic and managerial control.[19] In the case of the director, however, those activities cannot be disaggregated from each other because, as Dennis Kennedy has argued, developing a Marxist analysis of theatre's material base and ideological superstructure, 'trade issues like systems of finance, theatre organization, actor training and unionization [all …] establish the base on which the superstructure of

directing must operate'.[20] The recent British director who best fits this model of intervening at the level of what Kennedy calls the 'base' of theatrical production is David Lan (1952-), who ran the Young Vic from 2000 to 2018, and remains unusual among artistic directors in that he directed few productions, and hardly any in his last decade at the theatre, but chose instead to use his tenure to stage the work of other directors and create a training and development programme for young directors.

Reframing directing through the work of artistic directors like Lan enables us to focus on otherwise under-explored aspects of the role, such as building development, programming, and personnel management, which have, in fact, always been central to it. While Hall was establishing the NT at the South Bank, for example, directors across the country were also working to create new theatre buildings such as the Leeds Playhouse (opened 1970), the new Birmingham Repertory Theatre (opened 1971), the Manchester Royal Exchange (opened 1976), and the Liverpool Everyman (re-opened 1977). Inevitably, buildings required staffing, so Hall's decision to expand the NT's administrative staff, housed in what his associate director Michael Blakemore critically described as a 'suite of offices', set the pattern for the sector more widely.[21] Following the advent of National Lottery funding after 1994 and the subsequent Labour government's National Policy for the arts, which led to a £25 million increase in funding by 2003 as part of its commitment to promote UK-based creative industries, theatre management and administration was further expanded.

At the same time, artistic directors began to make large capital projects a hallmark of their tenure, leading to the remodelling of numerous buildings, such as the Young Vic under David Lan in 2006, the RSC's Stratford home under Michael Boyd (1955-) in 2010, and the Dorfman Theatre (formerly the Cottesloe) at the NT in 2014. This trend was initiated by Stephen Daldry (1960-) at the Royal Court, who used Lottery funds to convert its run-down building into a chic, contemporary home for emerging star playwrights in his bid to affirm his theatre's status as the pre-eminent producer of new writing in the UK, overshadowing the wider

network of theatres and companies (including Birmingham Rep, the Bush, Paines Plough, the Manchester Royal Exchange, the Traverse, and the West Yorkshire Playhouse) that sustained those playwright's careers. Daldry enhanced the reputations of the playwrights whose work he produced both by courting press notoriety and emphasizing the Court's tradition of producing allegedly shocking new plays that had become classics, a strategy he deployed to great effect against the outraged Daily Mail critic Jack Tinker in a joint television interview about Sarah Kane's *Blasted*.[22] In 1996, Daldry created an International Programme, under the leadership of Elyse Dodgson (1945-2018), who went on to work with playwrights in more than seventy different countries, always alongside a playwright and director from the Royal Court. By the time the Sloane Square theatre reopened in 2000, with Ian Rickson (1963-) as its new Artistic Director, Daldry had established its brand: an urbane, cosmopolitan home for young writers of daring plays with global reach that could become future classics.

Daldry's gift for public relations and management was thus essential to the creation of the Royal Court as an international brand, but – like the writers he produced – he was innovating within an established tradition of directors whose work centred on institutional leadership. The most prominent of these was Peter Hall, who, in 1961, had turned the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre into the RSC. Hall took the traditional summer season in Stratford and added a programme of modern and new plays, for which he secured a more metropolitan audience by renting the Aldwych Theatre in London's West End. This policy did not, however, generate a coherent and compelling identity for the company as a whole until Hall's programming, in 1964, of *The Wars of the Roses*, a two-part adaptation of Shakespeare's three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*. This story of realpolitik, violence, and despotism, rescued at the death by an optimistic future, told in a production that featured period costumes but abstract, metallic scenery and Shakespearean verse spoken with a new, direct clarity positioned Hall's company as both classic and modern, combining contemporary global politics and patriotic English traditionalism. *The Wars of the Roses* so successfully encapsulated the RSC's image that it was repeated and extended

by subsequent artistic directors. Adrian Noble (1950-) adapted the *Henry VI*/*Richard III* plays as *The Plantagenets* in 1988, and marked the new millenium by staging both of Shakespeare's historical tetralogies as *This England* (2000-2001).[23] Michael Boyd's *The Histories* featured all eight plays performed by a single company (2005-2008), offering them as the RSC's hallmark in the lead-up to the opening of its redesigned home in Stratford. The BBC likewise chose to adapt the first tetralogy for screen as *The Hollow Crown* for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, followed by the second tetralogy in 2016. Hall's implicit notion that, in the hands of the greatest English playwright, English history offers political parables of timeless, global significance clearly retains its appeal. It would, therefore, be inadequate to consider directors like Daldry and Hall primarily as skilled interpreters of plays, or visionary theatre artists. Their principle success, rather, has been in shaping cultural institutions into commercially viable, compelling brands that projected British (read: English) culture to global audiences and appealed to the particular constituencies they sought to engage.

Artistic directors working further from the centres of cultural power, however, have found establishing their company's brand much more difficult. The history of Talawa (the UK's foremost Black-led theatre company) is instructive in this respect. Talawa (Jamaican patois for 'strong' or 'fearless'), was founded in 1986 by Yvonne Brewster (1938-), Carmen Munroe, Mona Hammond and Inigo Espejel. It mounted two productions that year, both directed by Brewster: *The Black Jacobins* (an adaptation of C. L. R. James's account of the Haitian revolution) and Dennis Scott's *An Echo in the Bone* (in which a ninth night wake becomes a vehicle for re-enacting traumatic histories of enslavement and exposing their ongoing significance). Such explorations of Black histories gave way, however, to a more integrationist programme when Talawa entered into co-production arrangements with other companies, such as the Tyne Theatre Company for a Black-cast *Importance of Being Earnest* (1989), and the Liverpool Everyman for Ola Rotomi's adaptation of *Oedipus Rex*, *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (1989), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1991). With very few exceptions, Talawa was only able to mount Black-led plays (as opposed to Black-

cast or Black-adapted white classics) during its residency in London's Cochrane Theatre. This arrangement ended in 1994, against a wider pattern of 'decline' in Black theatre during the 1990s.[24]

The Race Relations Act of 2000 led, however, to Arts Council England's 2002 report *Eclipse: Developing Strategies to Combat Racism in the Theatre*. The following year, Paulette Randall (1961-) took over the leadership of Talawa, producing *Urban Afro-Saxons* by Kofi Agyemang and Patricia Elcock (Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2003) in a direct challenge to the Home Office's proposed introduction of 'citizenship tests'. She also began working towards establishing a permanent home for the company near Victoria Station in London. The venture was weakened, however, as Lyn Gardner reported, by 'internal wrangles', and Randall resigned in May 2005, two months before the Arts Council withdrew funding for the proposed building because it had 'lost faith in Talawa's ability to deliver either the required £1.9m matching funding, or the management skills and artistic vision necessary to run a building'.[25] Whereas Randall created a notably Black-led programme during her tenure, Talawa's current Artistic Director, Michael Buffong (1964-), has chosen to rebuild the company by programming predominantly Black-cast white plays including *Waiting for Godot*, *All My Sons*, *King Lear*, and *Guys and Dolls*, alongside readings of new Black plays under the banner 'Talawa Firsts'. This strategy has proved successful, and Talawa now has a permanent home in Croydon's redeveloped Fairfield Halls.

Talawa's recent success demonstrates the extent to which Artistic Directors must work within dominant expectations of a mainstream repertoire, which centre white plays and audiences. They also centre men. It was not until 2010, for example, that an Artistic Director of the NT directed a play by a woman there.[26] Directors leading prominent cultural institutions have succeeded by establishing a distinctive brand, but always within extremely constrained conditions; the networks of patriarchy and whiteness that sustain ruling-class power inevitably shape the social context in which directors operate, but particularly at an institutional level. Some

directors, however, have sought to resist hegemonic power, and their work is the subject of the next section.

Auteurs: directing and authorship

Reflecting on her decision to leave the Globe, Emma Rice asserted that 'my creative process wasn't really up for negotiation'.[27] This might seem uncontroversial, yet the idea of a director even having a creative process has often been considered questionable in the British theatre. In 2009, *Guardian* critic Michael Billington deprecated what he saw as a trend for directors attaining 'auteur status', offering Rice, Katie Mitchell (1964-) and Simon McBurney (1957-) as examples, and asserting his preference for the director to be 'a necessary interpreter', not 'an icon to be devoutly worshipped', unlike the author, who should be, in Billington's view, 'at the heart of the creative process'.[28] It is true that playwrights' creative contribution has commonly been assumed to be paramount in the British theatre, as the director John Dexter discovered in 1979 when he was preparing to direct Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* and was refused a share of the royalties. Dexter claimed that both the inclusion of descriptions of his staging of Shaffer's *Equus* in the printed text and his contribution to the development of *Amadeus* justified a proportion of the author's rights, but Shaffer declared that he was 'not prepared to pay for the services of the director' and Dexter was removed.[29] Billington's identification of authorial directing as a recent incursion is therefore both an accurate representation of a common ideological position and a distortion of history. Indeed, probably the most famous post-war British production, Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC, 1970), went far beyond necessary interpretation of Shakespeare's play, using improvisation and circus training in rehearsals to create an evocative, theatrical language for it.

Brook's *Dream* followed his more overtly political productions, Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (RSC, 1964) and the collectively created *US* (RSC, 1966), which sought deliberately to expose the brutality of power, and to construct the theatre as a space of political engagement. They were

shaped, in part, by Brook's collaboration with the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-99), and the directors cited by Billington as 'auteurs' were, likewise, significantly influenced by practices from mainland Europe but – like Brook and Harley Granville Barker before them – these directors also worked at the centre of the British theatre. No venue has been more influential, however, in asserting both that internationalist tradition and the importance of the director's artistry than David Lan's Young Vic, which was, avowedly, 'a director's theatre',[30] combining productions by directors of international standing such as Luc Bondy, Richard Jones, Amir Nizar-Zuabi, and Ivo Van Hove with developing the careers of numerous emerging directors in the UK through its Directors Program. The most significant example, however, of an internationalist auteur director working in Britain during this period must surely be Joan Littlewood (1914-2002).

Littlewood trained initially as an actor, before abandoning drama school and travelling to Manchester, where she worked as both an activist theatre-maker and a BBC radio producer, before becoming a founder member of Theatre Workshop in 1945, a touring ensemble that took up residence at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East in 1953. Through research and collaboration with the writer Ewan MacColl, designer John Bury, and choreographer Jean Newlove, Littlewood developed systems of training and directing with Theatre Workshop's actors which she then used to create a series of critically and commercially successful London productions, culminating with her radical anti-war musical *Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963). This production's collage form was typical of Littlewood's approach of shaping material generated collectively in rehearsal to creare a theatrical form for a play's key ideas. Thus, *Lovely War* combined an Edwardian end-of-the-pier show with political satire and social-realist snapshots of life in the trenches, threaded together with the soldiers' funny, obscene, and sentimental songs offset by brutal statistical evidence of the War's horrors. In spite of the huge success of *Lovely War*, Littlewood directed very little after it, dedicating herself instead to participatory public art projects that sought to engage communities that were excluded from the established theatre.

Nonetheless, Littlewood has been extremely influential. The political commitment of her directing influenced 7:84 (1971-2008), probably the most important of the politically-engaged touring companies of this period, whose *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973) remains a landmark of the genre. It also inspired Buzz Goodbody (1946-75), whose radical Marxist-feminist work at the RSC was instrumental in the success of its school-touring Theatregoround project and the creation of The Other Place in 1974, a crucial site for experimental theatre. Furthermore, the development of Littlewood's distinctively collaborative approach to directing with an ensemble established a pattern for directors who developed actor-led approaches to directing and adaptation. As well as McBurney and Mitchell, these include Mike Alfreds (1934-) who led Shared Experience (1975-1987), the Cambridge Theatre Company (1991-1995), and Method and Madness (1995-1999), and Declan Donnellan (1953-), who established the touring company Cheek By Jowl with his partner, the designer Nick Ormerod (1951-). Donnellan, McBurney and Mitchell have all since become mainstays of the international festival circuit that grew up after the founding in 1947 of both the Edinburgh and Avignon festivals, and in 2009 Mitchell became the first British director to be included in Berlin's prestigious Theatertreffen programme.

Mitchell's career started, like Goodbody's, as an assistant director at the RSC, and then developed along similar lines: directing major productions with national companies while also training in the Stanislavskian tradition. The approach Mitchell developed, combined with a realist aesthetic that drew heavily on Russian and European cinema and the Tanztheater of Pina Bausch, was extended by her collaboration with videographer Leo Warner to the creation of live cinema productions after their 2006 adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* (NT). The success of this form enabled Mitchell to work more in mainland Europe, where she has directed more prolifically than any other British director except Peter Brook. Her productions have increasingly sought to address both the marginalisation and abuse of women and impending ecological crisis. Her live cinema version of Strindberg's *Fräulein Julie* (Berlin, Schaubühne, 2010)

combined these themes by focusing on the usually peripheral character of the maid Kristin and replacing all of the action of which she is unaware with her dreams, represented by text from Danish poet Inger Christensen's *Alphabet*, a rumination on beauty and destruction in a post-nuclear landscape.

McBurney's career has taken a related but different form to Mitchell's: he came to directing through performing with Complicité (originally Théâtre de Complicité), which he co-founded in 1983 with Annabel Arden, Fiona Gordon and Marcello Magni to create devised works using techniques they had learned under Jacques Lecoq. After the success of their production of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* (dir. Annabel Arden [1959-], 1989), the company developed a repertory combining productions of twentieth-century classics with devised adaptations directed by McBurney in a distinctive, physically-committed style such as 1993's *Street of Crocodiles* (from Bruno Schulz's stories) and 1994's *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* (from John Berger's story). McBurney gradually took over the direction of the company's work, creating productions characterised by fluid narrative structures that blended movement sequences, video projection and complex sound design to reflect on difficult, abstract ideas, frequently returning to the theme of time and its capacity, conceptually, to unite a divided world.

This pattern of directors developing a signature style based upon lengthy collaboration, which they export to international touring markets, indicates an important material context for directing since about 1975: the political reality of neoliberal capitalism, an umbrella term, in Jeremy Gilbert's definition, for the 'programme of deliberate intervention by government in order to encourage […] entrepreneurial, competitive and commercial behaviour in its citizens', who are always represented as sovereign individuals rather than products of a relational, social process.[31] As Wendy Brown argues, the 'neoliberal rationality' that has emerged as result 'configures human beings exhaustively as market actors',[32] so that the individual is conceived of as 'financialized human capital', expected to 'to self-invest in ways that enhance its value or to attract investors'.[33] In this context, the director's style and technique become commodities in

themselves (directorial systems are, for example, commonly packaged in books), as well as ways of enhancing the market value of a director. Emma Rice's Wise Children, which achieved substantial support from the Arts Council and other funders before it had produced a single show, is a case in point. Its initial publicity materials equated the company with Rice through testimonials that characterised her as both wise and childish. Thus, she combined her artistic practice and public persona to form human capital to 'attract investors', just as Peter Hall had done when he established the Peter Hall Company on leaving the NT in 1988. In this respect, the director considered as the author of a stage production might be seen to exemplify the neoliberal subject, whose task is to extract value from complex networks of labour by identifying themselves as the defining creative vision behind a series of productions. This assertion of authorship enables directors to both maximise their future value and sell their artistic signature as a source of potential value to investors and producers. Although nothing in this process is unique to the neoliberal period, its logic has certainly accelerated and expanded in recent theatre production.

The activities that constitute the work of such auteur directors are not, however, very significantly different from those whose institutional functions were emphasised in the previous section. An individual director's brand depends upon similar processes of management for its success as does a theatre company's brand, and therefore, although many of the directors in this section set out to resist hegemonic structures of power, their success has depended to some extent upon their willingness to accept and adopt the marketized individualism of neoliberal culture. Joan Littlewood was both a forerunner of and a rebel against this tendency. When she gave up the theatre she also rejected her auteur status, committing herself instead to projects whereby, in Nadine Holdsworth's words, 'she facilitated some of the conditions and values necessary for an active citizenship culture: awareness of social, political and economic processes, engagement with the physical environment, self-scrutiny, accountability, problem-solving and,

above all, a sense of commitment to and responsibility for others'.[34] It is to this ideal of directing as the facilitation of active citizenship that I finally turn.

Theatre directing and social production

Although this chapter has developed a materialist account of theatre directing, it is also true that many of the products of directing are immaterial in nature. The rise of the director may therefore be seen as symptomatic of what political theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue has been the replacement of industrial production with 'immaterial labor' as the hegemonic structure of human labour: the dominant paradigm for understanding the nature of work and society.[35] They define immaterial labour as work 'that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response' and propose that since it is in the nature of immaterial labour 'to produce communication, social relations and cooperation',[36] it offers a basis for a 'future institutional structure of [a] new society […] embedded in the affective, co-operative, and communicative relationships of social production', exactly the 'active citizenship culture' to which Littlewood was committed.[37] Directing may, therefore, be conceived not only as an opportunity to organise and/or extract value from social networks, but as a means of generating social networks; not – in other words – a social means of production, but a means of producing the social.

When Yvonne Brewster founded Talawa, for example, she did so in an attempt to produce a new social reality for Black theatre-makers, enabling them to play characters denied to them in white theatres and tell stories and reach audiences that were excluded from white theatres. Much of the outrage at the removal of Emma Rice from the Globe was rooted in her apparent commitment to produce a new social reality for Shakespearean theatre, one notably younger and more diverse. A new culture, many felt, was being stamped out by a rear-guard action before it could establish itself. I want to conclude, therefore, with the example of three directors whose work has exemplified the formation of new social relationships both through

theatre's production and reception with the aim of engendering new cultural possibilities: Jenny Sealey (1963-), Lois Weaver (1949-), and Geraldine Connor (1952-2011).

Jenny Sealey took over the disabled-led theatre company Graeae, which had been founded in 1980 by Nabil Shaban and Richard Tomlinson, in 1997. Since then, she has directed new and classic plays in productions founded on what the company calls 'an aesthetics of access' which always places D/deaf and disabled performers at its centre and integrates fully into its theatrical langauge features that are usually considered accessibility 'extras' such as sign language interpretation, captioning and audio description. Graeae is also committed to training not only disabled people who are aspiring theatre-makers, but other arts organisations who want to improve the accessibility of their work. This approach has both exposed the ways theatre has been a deeply exclusive form, and offered a radical, imaginative alternative, exemplified by 'Enlightenment', the opening ceremony for the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, directed by Sealey, with Nicola Miles-Wildin (1978-, who uses a wheelchair) playing Miranda in a spin-off of *The Tempest*, in which she was shown a 'brave, new world' by Ian McKellen's Prospero.

McKellen's participation in 'Enlightenment' connected its celebration of people with disabilities subliminally to celebrations of LGBTQIA+ people, as McKellen was a founding member of the charity Stonewall, which was formed in 1989 to campaign against Section 28, the law banning the 'promotion' of homosexuality. In the theatre, campaigning against the oppression of homosexual people had been led by Gay Sweatshop (1974-1997), of which Lois Weaver was joint Artistic Director with James Neale-Kennerley from 1991 to 1997. At this time, this radical, queer company was required by the Arts Council to produce new, scripted plays as a condition of its funding. Both Neale-Kennerley and Weaver resisted the traditionalism of this remit, preferring to create new forms of queer performance and to invest in the development of queer artists through their 'Queer School' training sessions. Weaver has continued to explore new forms of queer performance, particularly with Peggy Shaw (and formerly Deb Margolin) as the New York-based collective Split Britches, such as solo performance/conversations,

facilitated by her character Tammy WhyNot. She has also developed the influential performance-participation form of the Long Table, in which conversations on a particular subject among audience members seated at a table are 'structured by etiquette' so that '[t]he (often-feminised) domestic realm here becomes a stage for public thought'.[38]

The director Geraldine Connor's most famous work, *The Carnival Messiah*, could hardly be less like a Long Table in form. First created as a student production at Wakefield Theatre Royal in 1994 and re-staged in Leeds (1999, 2002, 2007) and Trinidad (2003, 2004), Connor described the *Messiah* as 'a spectacular musical showcase, featuring a multi-ethnic multitude of singers, musicians, masqueraders, dancers and actors'.[39] At a time when multiculturalism was under attack from both sides of the political spectrum, Connor created a performance from her standpoint as a Caribbean 'recipient of Handel's *Messiah*' that celebrated (and made paradigmatic) her formation at the intersection of 'a western European culture and a West Indian culture' by mixing 'the genre of carnival and the genre of oratorio'.[40] Rejecting the dominant model of intercultural performance famously represented by Peter Brook's 1985 *Mahabharata*, which Rustom Bharucha termed a 'blatant […] appropriation of non-western material within an orientalist framework of thought and action',[41] Connor's work created a site for 'bringing people together of all nations and races' and thereby celebrating the multiple, interwoven strands of post-colonial British culture.[42] Like both Sealey and Weaver, Connor used this production to emphasise the social process of making, blending professional performers with community choruses, whose cultural heritages shaped its various iterations. In their different ways, therefore, all three of these artists used the work of directing to generate new reciprocities among theatre's makers and between them and their audiences, and demonstrated the radical potential of performance to function as an exemplary site of social production, rather than artistic consumption. The question of how the strategies developed by these directors may be used critically to engage and challenge systems of power so as to constitute a radical political theatre remains, of course, open. Nonetheless, they indicate that the theatre is not only political by virtue

of its capacity to represent various facets of social reality. It can also function – as Connor, Weaver and Sealey's work clearly demonstrates – as a means of generating new forms of sociality.

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This chapter has pursued a materialist analysis of the figure of the director in order both to chart some dominant trends and developments in the post-war period and to expose how this role is more than solely artistic. It has been concerned with the social and political landscape that the director both inhabits and creates in order to expose and question some ideological conventions of British theatre that are often overlooked. Positioning the director at the intersection of institutional, financial, commercial, artistic, and social dynamics demonstrates that directing is as much an industrial as an aesthetic role. This is crucial to an analysis of directing because focusing on aesthetic matters can distract from the ways that directors necessarily produce and reproduce social power. By contrast, a focus on the full range of directorial labour serves to concretise the multiple forces and interests that govern the theatre sector: commercial, industrial, institutional, cultural, and so on. The director, in this sense, is both subject to and a producer of social dynamics that are unavoidably political, and frequently reassert hegemonic power. Even when directors attempt to resist this process, their directing is frequently reduced to an exercise in branding that seeks to monetise creative processes. However, as demonstrated in my final examples, it is also possible to construct spaces in which directing can assert itself as a social and political intervention. Through this analysis of recent British theatre history, then, I hope not only to have exposed the social relations that shape the sector's creative practices, but to have contributed to a demand for a more politically-engaged conception of the role of the directors who govern it.

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