

Meeting of artistic directors to address the careers gap

CALLS FOR CULTURAL CUSTODIANS TO CLOSE GAP IN DIRECTORS' CAREER LADDER

13 years ago, a report by Christine Hamilton, looking at the lack of training and career development opportunities for theatre directors in Scotland, called for a 'Scottish Directors' Forum'.

Now, Theatre Directors Scotland (TDS) are calling on the leaders of the cultural sector in Scotland to join them to "come together and fill this gap".

In a letter sent on Tuesday 2 July, TDS invited Artistic Directors of a Regularly Funded Organisations and leaders of the cultural sector in Scotland to attend a meeting on 14 October 2019 at 6pm at Queen's Hall about the issue.

Gareth Nicholls (Traverse), Gill Robertson (Catherine Wheels), Fiona Ferguson (Imaginate), Fiona Sturgeon Shea (Playwrights' Studio), Laura Mackenzie Stuart (Creative Scotland) and Muireann Kelly (Theatre Gu Leor) have already shown determination to address the issue and confirmed their attendance for the meeting.

The meeting will look to address the gap that assisting, studio shows and touring used to fill – and how the sector can better support emerging directors moving up from the fringes to in house productions.

Many of today's leading theatre directors' careers were launched through channels such as Regional Theatres Young Directors' Scheme, National Theatre of Scotland Trainee

Directors, The Arches Award for Stage Directors, Channel 4 Theatre Directors Scheme and Scottish Arts Council funded trainee, assistant and associate director placements.

Channels that no longer exist.

Directors such as Jemima Levick (Stellar Quines), Dominic Hill (Citizens Theatre), Joe Douglas (Live Theatre), Elizabeth Newman (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), Gareth Nicholls (Traverse Theatre) and John Tiffany have all benefitted from this support, which has left the directing scene and not been replaced.

Hamilton's report, [Theatre Directing in Scotland](#) (supported by Graham Eatough and Philip Howard), recognised the problem back in 2006. At the same time the National Theatre of Scotland was established and playwrights began to be positioned at the centre of the Scottish theatre sector.

This fresh focus on playwrights followed determined and coordinated efforts from a network including the Scottish Society of Playwrights, Playwright Studio Scotland and the Traverse Theatre.

Such a network for the championing of directors in Scotland has ever existed.

In order to tackle the issue of training and development for Directors, one of the recommendations Hamilton's report called for "a self-managed forum or network of directors whose role will be to work across the theatre community in Scotland to raise issues and develop initiatives which will address the training and development Scotland's theatre directors."

13 years on, Theatre Directors Scotland, who are to hold their first ever Annual General Meeting in September, has taken the reins and is tackling this systemic issue.

Commenting, Chair of Theatre Directors Scotland, Kolbrún Björt

Sigfúsdóttir said: "It's clear the training and career development opportunities for directors in Scotland played a crucial role in so many of the careers of the respected and accomplished directors we see today.

"What's also clear is that these training and career development opportunities have been lost and nothing has been put in place to replace them.

"There's a gap in the sector that is widely recognised by the industry, but it's a gap that has been overlooked for too long.

"This won't be solved by one person, one company or one building. We need to the cultural custodians to come together and work with Theatre Directors Scotland to find solutions.

"We know that many of the Artistic Directors and leading artists in the sector fully acknowledge that this is a problem and we are very hopeful that they join us in October to find creative solutions for the future of directing in Scotland."

Chair of Theatre Directors Scotland, Kolbrún Björt Sigfúsdóttir