

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CULTURE SECRETARY
FROM BLACK, ASIAN & ETHNICALLY DIVERSE THEATRE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS AND
CULTURAL LEADERS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING REPRESENTATION IN
THE SECTOR**

Thursday 28 May 2020

The Rt Hon Olivier Dowden CBE
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1 2BQ

Dear Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Culture,

Throughout the last decade, British theatre has led the world with regard to the Black, Asian and ethnic diversity on our stages. Many of those actors are now international names: John Boyega, Idris Elba, Gemma Chan, Dev Patel, Cynthia Erivo, Daniel Kaluuya, Benedict Wong, Cush Jumbo, Letitia Wright, the list goes on.

Equally as exciting, the last few years have seen an explosion of world-leading Black, Asian and ethnically diverse artists transforming major UK theatrical organisations, from touring, to off-West End, to pioneering regional theatres and cultural institutions. Our programming choices have demonstrated that inclusivity is a major contributor to our success.

The Covid-19 crisis threatens all aspects of the theatrical ecology, but catalysed by the revelations of the racial disparity in the health crisis, this group of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse artistic leaders call on the government and the sector to ensure the progress we have collectively made does not fall by the way-side.

We insist that ethnic diversity is protected and celebrated in policy going forwards and propose that any task-force or group gathering to speak about the future of our industry seeks out consultation from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse leaders to ensure this commitment.

We are a great British success story, and will be essential to the arts returning at full strength and playing its part in our nation's recovery.

Signed,

Keith Saha - Co-Artistic Director, **20 Stories High**

Matthew Xia – Artistic Director & Joint CEO, **Actors Touring Company**

Kenneth Olumuyiwa Tharp CBE - Director, **The Africa Centre**

Farooq Chaudhry OBE - Co-founder & Executive Producer, **Akram Khan Company**

Mehmet Ergen - Artistic Director, **Arcola Theatre**

Cassa Pancho MBE - Founder, Artistic Director & CEO, **Ballet Black**

Tarek Iskander - Artistic Director & CEO, **Battersea Arts Centre**

Anisa Morridadi - Founder & CEO, **Beatfreaks**

Corey Campbell & Justine Themen - Co-Artistic Directors, **Belgrade Theatre**

Hannah Azieb Pool - Artistic Director & CEO, **Bernie Grant Arts Centre**

Alix Harris - Artistic Director, **Beyond Face**

Amit Sharma - Deputy Artistic Director, **Birmingham Repertory Theatre**

Arike Oke - Managing Director, **Black Cultural Archives**

Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy & Michael 'Mikey' Asante – Co-Artistic Directors, **Boy Blue**

Gbolahan Obisesan - Artistic Director, **Brixton House**

Naomi Sumner Chan- Artistic Director, **Brush Stroke Order**

Lynette Linton - Artistic Director, **Bush Theatre**

An-Ting Chang - Artistic Director & CEO, **Chinese Arts Now**

Vinna Law - Artistic Director, **Cognatus Theatre**

Chenine Bhatena - Creative Director, **Coventry UK City Of Culture Trust**

David Tse – Artistic Director, **East Zest Productions**

Amanda Huxtable & Shawab Iqbal - Artistic Director, CEO & Executive Producer, **Eclipse Theatre**

Iskandar Sharazuddin - Co-founder, **Ellandar Productions**

Adrian Tang - Artistic Director, **Exit Pursued By Panda**

Maria Oshodi - Artistic Director & CEO, **Extant**

Abdul Shayek – Artistic Director & CEO, **Fio Cardiff**

Lucy Sheen - Founder & Artistic Director, **Foundling Productions**

Aisha Khan - Co-Artistic Director, **Freedom Studios**

Yamin Choudury - Artistic Director, **Hackney Empire**

Dominic Garfield & Joseph Barnes-Phillips - Co-Artistic Directors, **HighRise Theatre**

Suba Das - Artistic Director & CEO, **HighTide**

Karena Johnson – Artistic Director & CEO, **Hoxton Hall**

Ben Qasim Monks - Executive Director, **Improbable**

Anj Handa - Chair of Freedom Studios & Founder of **Inspiring Women Changemakers**

Sepake Angiama - Artistic Director, **Institute of International Visual Arts**

Indhu Rubasingham - Artistic Director, **Kiln Theatre**

Zhui Ning Chang - Co-Founder, **Lazy Native**

Kully Thiarai - Creative Director, **Leeds 2023**

Stella Kanu - Chair, Eclipse Theatre & Executive Director, **LIFT Festival**

Deborah Sawyerr - Deputy Executive Director, **Mercury Theatre, Colchester**

Daniel York Loh & Jennifer Lim – Founders and Co-Artistic Directors, **Moongate Productions**

Ria Parry - Co-Director, **The North Wall**

Sharon Watson - Principal & CEO, **Northern School of Contemporary Dance**

Clarissa Widya – Artistic Director, **Papergang Theatre**

Alex Chang - Co-Founder, **Paradox House**

Michelle Yim – Artistic Director & Producer, **Red Dragonfly Theatre Productions**

Pravesh Kumar - Artistic Director & CE, **Rifco Theatre Company**

Kathy Williams - Director, **RJC Dance**

Roy Alexander Weise - Co-Artistic Director, **Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester**

Pawlet Brookes- Founder, Artistic Director & CEO, **Serendipity**

Kevin Shen - Co-Artistic Director, **Special Relationship Productions**

Prema Mehta - Lighting Designer and Founder, **Stage Sight**

Michael Buffong - Artistic Director, **Talawa Theatre Company**

Suzann McLean - Artistic Director & CEO, **Theatre Peckham**

Nadia Fall - Artistic Director, **Theatre Royal Stratford East**

Ailin Conant - Artistic Director, **Theatre Temoin**

Natalie Ibu - Artistic Director & CEO, **tiata fahodzi**

Anna Nguyen & Mingyu Lin - Co-founders, **Trikhon Theatre**

Justin Audibert - Artistic Director, **Unicorn Theatre**

Vicki Amedume - Artistic Director, **Upswing**

Tuyet Van Huynh - Co-Founder, **VanThanh Productions**

Doreen Foster - Director, **Warwick Arts Centre**

Melanie Keen - Director, **Wellcome Collection**

Kumiko Mendl - Artistic Director, **Yellow Earth Theatre**

Kwame Kwei-Amah - Artistic Director, **Young Vic**