

ADLP

Artistic Director Leadership Programme

A unique training opportunity for future theatre leaders of colour

Evaluation Report
October 2019

Lee Corner in collaboration with
Natalie Ibu and Sue Emmas

Executive Summary

The Artistic Director Leadership Programme was conceived in response to the considerable succession risks faced by theatre companies led by people of colour. At the time, all the theatre companies that were part of the inception of the programme reported challenges in recruiting people of colour into leadership positions in their organisations.

The programme was designed to have two strands:

28 Leaders of Tomorrow (LoTs)



Leaders of Tomorrow (LoTs) – a bespoke leadership training programme for 25-35 experienced theatre practitioners of colour and a peer network of future leaders

4 Trainee Artistic Directors



Trainee Artistic Directors (TADs) – paid residencies of two years for four artists of colour, based in each of the partner companies, working closely with the artistic director and leading and directing their own co-production for the company

Evaluation provided by Lee Corner over the life of the project has indicated that:

- The design of ADLP maximised the opportunity for implementing learning
- The programme’s success derived in large part not just from its initial design but from the seriousness with which its leaders took feedback and reviewed and revised accordingly

- The programme was successful in providing access to key organisations, for example, ITC, Clore Leadership, the BFI, Arts Council and individuals such as Hilary Carty and Doreen Foster
- Part of the programme revealed that some organisations fail to recognise that they need to change and support people of colour more effectively if they are to be successful and progress further in their careers
- The TADs enabled their company to both broaden and deepen significant aspects of its core purpose by providing additional capacity and focus
- Working as a TAD had a significant impact on each individual's confidence. The increase in confidence, skills, networks will enable TADs to apply for future leadership positions
- After a two year programme all sense of imposter syndrome has not vanished but with confidence increased, the sense of being an imposter diminished
- The most valuable aspect of the programme is the network they formed with each other - the extraordinary range of skills and experience of the 28 participants, and the value of being in a room where the majority were people of colour
- The programme provided some valuable learning for the creation of consortia and for the agreements which guide them
- The LoTs programme was well designed ensuring that the learning covered a range of topics and themes

- A majority of LoTs felt they had developed leadership skills and, equally importantly, they witnessed the development of leadership skills in their peers
- The consortium was not a model of distributed leadership and a more collective response to the challenges the programme faced could have been implemented
- The real-time, real-life situations which were calling upon the skills of the programme's leaders could have been used more effectively for learning
- The programme fulfilled its main objectives for each of the participating groups – TADs, host companies, LoTs – and may well be seen in the future to have played a significant part in changing theatre leadership in the UK

In thinking about 'what happens next', ADLP's main funder – the Arts Council – might usefully consider creating a resource which periodically tracks the participants over the next year, three years, five years and ten years. It would provide a fascinating and potentially valuable indication of the impact of a programme at a particular moment.

112 Applications received

A wide representation of ethnicities



Introduction - How it came about

2.1 Background to the programme

In 2016 tiata fahodzi brought together a consortium of four theatre companies led by people of colour with professional development partners, Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme (RTYDS) and ITC (Independent Theatre Council). All have a pledge to diversity, a track record in talent development and commitment to people of colour in leadership development. The companies are spread across the country: Freedom Studios (Bradford), 20 Stories High: (Liverpool) tiata fahodzi (Watford), and Talawa Theatre Company (London).

Over the next three years the four partner companies delivered a comprehensive programme of talent development for future leaders at a range of career stages and nurtured a network of theatre practitioners of colour. The aim was to equip them with

the skills, confidence and connections to successfully apply for leadership positions and take their place as leaders across the country or to develop (or continue the development of) their own companies. It grew out of a vision for the future where key arts organisations and venues across the country truly look and feel like the streets they sit on.

6 Partner organisations

- . **20 Stories High**, Liverpool
- . **Freedom Studios**, Bradford
- . **ITC**, London
- . **Regional Theatre Young Director Scheme**, Manchester
- . **Talawa Theatre Company**, London
- . **tiata fahodzi**, Watford

2.1.1 Why the project was conceived

*“The big question is:
who is curating the culture?”*

– David Oyelowo, 2015

“How can we be truly represented if we’re not allowed to make the decisions? If we’re not allowed to have the space to make work - exceptional or experimental? Not many organisations are willing to take the risk on a working class director let alone a black, working class, director who didn’t have a leading drama school on their CV.”

– Daniel Bailey,

Artistic Director New Heritage Theatre whilst on his RTYDS Resident Assistant Director placement at Birmingham Rep

The Artistic Director Leadership Programme was conceived in response to the considerable succession risks faced by theatre companies led by people of colour. At the time, all the theatre companies that were part of the inception of the programme reported challenges in recruiting people of colour into leadership positions in their organisations.

The theatre industry was not providing the right training or transition opportunities for theatre practitioners of colour that would enable them to go on to lead companies. The Taking Part survey and the *“Equality and diversity within the arts and cultural sector in England”* report in 2014 identified that whilst practitioners of colour may successfully enter the workforce, organisations fail to recognise that they need to change and support people of colour more effectively if they are to be successful and progress further in their careers.

To become a leader, you need resilience, power, a sense of entitlement. The partner companies are places where under-represented artists can feel represented, and the programme

was designed to provide an environment of recognition, shared experience and support. All four companies reach audiences who don’t often see themselves on stage and work with artists whose work is not supported or visible on mainstream stages. For once, the participants wouldn’t be the only person of colour in the room.

Traditionally professional development opportunities had been aimed at entry level or early career artists, but it is assumed it’s a fair race once you’ve set off. It is not. When this programme started, artists of colour and companies led by people of colour, were often assumed to have no track record, be associated with risk and felt forever apprentices in training.

During the programme, leadership in British theatre underwent a huge change, culminating in several appointments in 2018 and 2019 that have transformed the typical profile of artistic directorships. Kwame Kwei-Armah at the Young Vic, Mathew Xia at Actors Touring Company, Justin Audibert at The Unicorn, Lynette Linton at The Bush, Roy Alexander Weise at Royal Exchange Theatre, Suba Das at HighTide, Tarek Iskander at Battersea Arts Centre. These appointments demonstrate that there is now a good upward trajectory for participants. Finally the industry is starting to shift.

Artistic backgrounds

Individuals were from a range of artistic backgrounds including:



Design



Directing



Producing



Acting



Theatre making



Dance



Choreography



Arts administration



Community work

2.1.2 What the programme planned to do

The programme was designed to have two strands:

- **Leaders of Tomorrow (LoTs)** – a bespoke leadership training programme for 25-35 experienced theatre practitioners of colour and a peer network of future leaders

This group would be made up of directors, theatre makers, programmers, writers, producers, designers, administrators in order to acknowledge that – and prepare for - future leadership models which are

as much producer led (e.g. Soho Theatre) or artist (e.g. David Grieg at the Royal Lyceum) as director led. Formal training in areas including fundraising, governance and boards, contracts, financial management, resilience and HR would be complemented by workshops led and hosted by senior leaders of theatre companies and venues and personal development sessions.

- **Trainee Artistic Directors (TADs)** – paid residencies of two years for four artists of colour, based in each of the partner companies, working closely with the artistic director and leading and directing their own co-production for the company

The TAD would work closely with the Artistic Director, participating in the daily business of running a theatre company and gaining senior management experience as well insight and experience of fundraising, governance, arts council relationship, strategic planning, line management, artist development, audience development, recruitment, marketing and communications. They would take a leadership role in talent development within the organisation by running Introduction to Directing projects for potential directors of colour and managing a Three-Month Placement which would provide an emerging director of colour the opportunity to assist on a production. In tandem they would engage their learning practically by leading on a co-production they would direct in the final stage of their traineeship.

2.1.3 What difference the programme was intended to make

The project was intended to create a skilled leadership talent pool of theatre practitioners of colour to mitigate against the risk of a succession crisis for the partner theatres and the wider theatre industry. At least four new productions directed by artists of colour will be produced, increasing the visibility of work led by people of colour, providing new small-scale touring product for regional theatres and their audiences.

Intended Outcomes

Overall

- 25-35 theatre practitioners of colour upskilled through the training programme and with enriched CVs who will now be in a strong position to make compelling applications for senior management roles
- Four directors of colour with the necessary experience and skills to lead a theatre company as a result of being resident in a company, directing and developing a co-production and through the training programme
- Four new pieces of work directed and co-produced in partnerships across the country
- 80 new directors of colour equipped with a basic directing tool-kit and knowledge of leadership links to regional companies through Introduction to Directing projects
- Four emerging directors of colour who have assisted on a show, gained understanding

of how the company runs and led their own short R&D project on a Three-Month Placement

- Creation of an informal support network for the 100 plus participants who through engagement in one of the programme elements have created links to partner theatres, RTYDS and the wider theatre network as well as with each other

For the Individuals:

LoTs

- Development of leadership skills
- Access to decision makers
- Peer support group
- Connection to RTYDS and activities
- Enriched CV and stronger employment prospects

TADs (in addition to above)

- Significant career progression
- Skills development in artistic directorship
- Broad networks and contacts
- Ongoing mentoring relationships
- Experience of making and directing a fully resourced production
- Artistic leadership employment prospects

Participants in Introduction to Directing projects and Three-Month Placements

- Enriched CVs and stronger prospects for career development
- Increased aspiration and progression through clear role models
- Broad networks and contacts
- Sign posting to further opportunities

For the Companies:

- Growth in the capacity of the organisations and support to the artistic directors and executive directors
- Greater ability to influence talent development within the wider theatre sector
- Additional production enabling them to work with more artists and perform to more audiences
- Increased visibility through coordinated press and PR campaigns around the programme and final productions
- Stronger talent pool and succession plans
- Greater resilience and sustainability
- Peer support for the artistic directors and executive directors
- Establishing and/or strengthening of relationships with regional theatres

2.2 Evaluation methodology

The programme was subject to a number of evaluation processes.

Internally, RTYDS captured information through feedback questionnaires which covered both specific aspects of the programme (e.g. the impact of ITC training sessions) and indicative benchmarking surveys (e.g. Could you give us examples of the job titles you were applying for 12 months ago and the job titles you are applying for now?)

What became referred to as the ‘external evaluation’ was that undertaken by Lee Corner, and this report – while informed by the information referred to above – focuses on that work.

The external evaluation comprised:

- Observation at some ITC sessions
- Observation at some consortium meetings
- Telephone interviews with the TADs, host companies and selected LoTs (see below)
- Reviewing feedback questionnaires (see above)
- ‘Stock-take’ conversations on the overall programme and evaluation progress with RTYDS staff and Natalie Ibu

Attendance at meetings and events was limited by the overall time allocation for the evaluation, being some 18 days between October 2017 and October 2019.

As it evolved, the external evaluation focused on the TADs and the consortium members – the host companies. RTYDS had designed a periodic ‘feedback form’ requesting information about the activities the TADs had undertaken and the impact on the companies, but it was agreed that individual interviews were likely to elicit deeper reflections and enable statements to be tested and elaborated upon. It was also agreed that the interviews should be confidential thus allowing and encouraging feedback which might have been more difficult to deliver on forms with a wider readership.

The LoT programme was evaluated predominantly through questionnaires inviting immediate responses to sessions – e.g. ITC. Sometime into the programme it was recognised that evaluating the impact on individual LoTs required a more intense and long-term approach which had not been provided for in the initial evaluation brief or resource allocation. To try to address this and get at least an indicative sense of impact it was decided:

- a) to do a brief benchmarking exercise asking LoTs what sort of jobs they might have applied for before the programme and what they would apply for now
- b) to add a small number of LoTs to the external evaluation interview schedule

When the external evaluator attended early ITC events it became clear that participants valued talking about their learning and their views of the programme so a small number of LoTs agreed be interviewed on an individual basis

with the same regularity as the TADs, again to enable deeper reflection.

Attendance at the consortium meetings provided an opportunity to listen to the experiences and concerns of its members – not least because the agenda for each meeting included a brief report on what each company had been doing.

They also enabled the evaluator to offer some feedback from interviews and attendance at sessions. Evaluation ‘progress reports’ were presented in May and October 2018 and April 2019.

Confidentiality

As noted above, confidentiality was an important aspect of the one-to-one interviews so many of the comments below are unattributed. Where they are attributed it is because they have been taken from a written response as part of RTYDS’s periodic questionnaires which was not subject to a confidentiality agreement.

A wide geographic spread of applicants

International	3	3%	Edinburgh	1	1%
Greater Manchester	15	13%	Glasgow	1	1%
Greater London	66	59%	Huddersfield	1	1%
Birmingham	4	4%	Keighley	1	1%
Bradford	1	1%	Leeds	4	4%
Chesterfield	1	1%	Liverpool	3	3%
East Sussex	1	1%	Nantwich	1	1%
Norfolk	1	1%			
Nottingham	2	2%			
Plymouth	1	1%			
Slough	1	1%			
Stockton on Tees	1	1%			
Wakefield	1	1%			

Reflections

3.1 The programme's achievements against its objectives – in summary

The project was intended to create a skilled leadership talent pool of theatre practitioners of colour to mitigate against the risk of a succession crisis for the partner theatres and the wider theatre industry.

It grew out of a vision for the future where key arts organisations and venues across the country truly look and feel like the streets they sit on.¹

It is too early to say whether ADLP will transform the landscape in a way which will make the second of these statements a reality. But if we acknowledge that transformation starts with the individual, reflecting on the experience of the participants might enable us to form a view about its likelihood.

“Because we feel better about ourselves we’re going for different roles, we’re putting ourselves forward, we’re seeing ourselves in different spaces. And organisations seem to be opening up and looking for different types of people, saying they want a new perspective - having multiple posts to ensure diversity

or saying ‘you may not have been a Literary Manager in previous job [but that should not stop you applying]’. There’s still a lot to do but it feels like we’re on the right track.”

Context

As with any programme, the context in which it eventually takes place differs from that wherein it was conceived. This was dramatically the case with ADLP.

As has been stated in the Introduction above, appointments in the last two years alone have had a considerable impact on changing the profile of artistic directorships especially in London. But other social, cultural and political developments have changed the debates around access and exclusion, equality and diversity, influenced by (a far-from-exhaustive list of examples) Eddo-Lodge’s *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (2017); #MeToo (2017); Shukla’s *The Good Immigrant* (2017); *Black Women in Theatre* (2018/19) and innumerable conversations and fora on identity, intersectionality, privilege and entitlement.

The programme’s achievements – which are considerable – therefore need to be considered in relation to this changing context.

¹Introduction to this report page: 4

What next

And in thinking about ‘what happens next’, ADLP’s main funder – the Arts Council – might usefully consider creating a resource which periodically tracks the participants over the next year, three years, five years and ten years. This wouldn’t constitute a scientifically robust evaluation (there being no overall benchmarking of the current “*leadership talent pool of theatre practitioners of colour*” at the outset of the programme), but it would provide a fascinating and potentially valuable indication of the impact of a programme at a particular moment.

3.2 Reflections on the impact of the programme on Trainee Artistic Directors

The TADs interviews took place in May and September 2018 and March and September 2019. All the TADs responded positively to the invitations to interview. It was agreed that the two final interviews would not include Anthony Lennon. In the TAD Activity and Outcomes report the change in Anthony’s role is described as follows:

“Immediately following the press coverage regarding Anthony Lennon, he was granted compassionate leave and a return to work process was agreed and undertaken (with external advice from ITC) and a new work programme for the remainder of Anthony’s placement was agreed.”

Talawa and Anthony mutually agreed that at this time it wouldn’t be appropriate for Anthony to deliver some strands of the programme, Introduction to Directing, Three-Month Placement or to direct the production.”

The conversations with the TADs were positive and productive and their willingness to share their thoughts with honesty and consideration was impressive. It made for an extremely enjoyable as well as productive process. They were, however, promised confidentially, so the reflections which follow have been generalised or anonymised to respect that agreement.

The following four areas have been selected for reflections, not just because they dominated the conversations but because they contain potentially significant learning for future programmes:

- Confidence
- Skills and Learning
- Knowledge and Understanding
- The Network



1. Confidence

Without a doubt the recurring word in all the conversations with the TADs was ‘confidence’.

Overall, the experience of working as a TAD in a company for two years has had a significant impact on each individual’s confidence. This is seen to derive from a number of factors²:

- Gaining a position through a competitive process which is affirming and validating
- Having a title which acknowledges status because it was perceived to be part of the RTYDS suite of programmes³
- Being able to do things repeatedly and to learn from mistakes – the gradual accumulation of layers of competence
- Being part of a group which is supportive and encouraging and with which we can identify

The importance and potentially life-changing impact of ‘confidence’ cannot be underestimated. And it is confidence which is most likely to enable TADs to apply for

future positions and become those who are – in David Oyelowo’s words – “*curating the culture*”. In short, the impact on the objectives of the programme of developing people with greater self-confidence cannot be underestimated.

Equally, confidence is not a ‘state’ which, once reached, maintains: it can be damaged; it needs re-charging; it continues to build over time and further enhances self-efficacy. And it is unlikely that any programme can stop people feeling the inevitable nervousness about their futures: what’s going to happen to me; am I any good? are questions that recur for most of us.

At the end of their formal engagement with the programme some TADs reflected on how much ‘after-care’ was possible and appropriate. It is certainly the case that in times of transition it can feel as if there’s little support, but the programme had focused the final sessions with Doreen Foster on personal development planning and looking forward, and offered financial support towards a mentor.

² It’s interesting and possibly helpful to future programmes to recognise how closely this feedback resonates with Albert Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy (1977):

“Self-efficacy, or confidence as it is commonly known, is ... the optimistic self-belief in our competence or chances of successfully accomplishing a task and producing a favourable outcome.”

According to Bandura, there are four main sources of self-efficacy beliefs:

- *Mastery experiences – learning to do something successfully*
- *Vicarious experiences – seeing people we identify with (role models) doing what we want to do*
- *Verbal persuasion – being encouraged and affirmed by those we respect*
- *Emotional and physiological states – paying attention to our mental and physical well-being*

³ *The relationship between RTYDS and ADLP was not clearly understood by the participants and while this might have detracted from the independence of the programme it did have the benefit of affording it credibility by association*

The lesson from this for the programme is perhaps that the optimal position is one where the participant is ready to receive the information and the information is appropriate and well-delivered. Programme designers and managers can do a tremendous amount to ensure the second condition but little to ensure the first.

What they can do, however, is create the conditions whereby people find their own means of support and this has been a success of ADLP. At present the TADs (and the LoTs) are placing a significant amount of trust in the network they have created to support them now and in the future. They see amongst their peers those with whom they can share experiences, develop work opportunities, learn new skills, brainstorm challenges etc.

2. Skills and Learning

All the TADS recognised that they learnt a lot. And the acquisition of skills (as well as experience and increased competence) came in a number of ways:



Self-care and resilience

- The ITC sessions with defined topics in a 'learning environment' worked for some people and with some topics ('negotiation' for one; overall understanding of finances for another) but the TADs attendance at these sessions was inconsistent and partial
- Having to get on with things – write emails, make phone calls, create budgets, issue contracts – meant that learning in these areas had reason and purpose (TADs reflected with some surprise that it was often the 'little things' – like working out what the key points were in a call or email and getting the wording right – which gave them a sense of achievement)
- Being able to watch at close hand how their colleagues in the host organisations dealt with things – from managing Board meetings, to having difficult conversations with employees, to negotiating rights, to talking to funders
- From not doing it right first time but having to do it again because in a job (as opposed to a one-off project) the same tasks are repeated

As a result of all of this the TADs feel more competent in a variety of areas. For example:

- How to (properly) use excel
- How to do funding applications
- How to budget for different scales of projects
- How to 'sell' an idea to a sponsor
- How to plan (better) workshops
- How to manage people
- How to guide other artists

The design of ADLP maximised the opportunity for implementing learning. Not only were the TADs expected to work alongside the Artistic Director/CEO in planning and delivering the company's work over two years, they were expected to take the lead on three specific projects⁴:

- Running the Introduction to Directing courses enabled the TADs not only to design and organise workshops but also *"gave me the chance to test my knowledge through teaching someone else."* *"I feel confident enough to have other people looking at my work; having to talk about my work, having to justify to myself the way I work and saying it out loud – are all of real value."*



- *Managing a Three-Month Placement* meant that TADs had the opportunity to put their people skills into practice: *"I'm getting an insight into different sorts of leadership and thinking more about what kind of leader I want to be."*
- *Leading a co-production*⁵ provided TADs with the experience of taking a production through the full process – everything from determining what, to budgeting, to managing creative teams, to raising the finance, to directing, producing etc, and seeing it play out in front of audiences.



⁴ In October 2018 it was mutually agreed between ADLP, Talawa and Anthony Lennon that he wouldn't deliver these strands of the programme

⁵ At the time of writing not all TADs have produced their show.



Management of others

While they might have found the pressure challenging from time to time all three TADs recognised the value of each of these experiences.

3. Knowledge and Understanding

The TADs developed knowledge and understanding:

- i) Of the host organisations they were working in
 - ii) Of the sector including funding bodies
 - iii) Of leadership
 - iv) Of themselves
- i) Working in a company for two years (or more) means that you get to see how it works in different situations, circumstances, seasons.

The TADS came into the **host organisations** as the latter were refining their post NPO award business plans. They were involved in programmes being developed and delivered or put on hold; projects being fund-raised for (and failing as well as succeeding); staff leaving and joining; partnerships being initiated, developed or ending.

As one TAD commented. *“I can see the blood, sweat and tears of running a company – all the paddling that goes on under the surface that you don’t usually see.”*

And from another: *“My idea of the industry was quite narrow – writers and directors – now I understand what a company is and can do and how it can be an asset for the industry.”*

ii An important part of the programme was the visits to theatre venues and companies and meetings with senior colleagues in the sector. Within the ADLP programme this element was provided through the Key Leader sessions. Venues included Royal Exchange Theatre, The Old Vic, Leeds Playhouse, The Young Vic and The Lyric, Hammersmith.



Finance

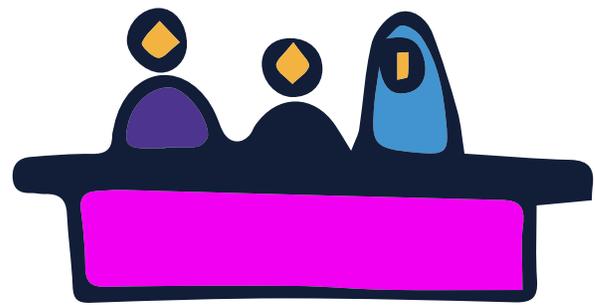
One of the first of these – the visit to the Old Vic – revealed a difference of understanding between the ADLP participants and the host venue. This resulted in what was euphemistically referred to by some as ‘a challenging conversation’, and for a number of participants (TADs and LoTs) it encapsulated some of the attitudes which are summed up in the assertion that *“organisations fail to recognise that they need to change and support people of colour more effectively if they are to be successful and progress further in their careers.”*⁶

While deeply disturbing for many participants, this event has since been identified as a seminal moment. It enabled the programme’s leaders to rethink what was needed from access to ‘key leaders’; how the sessions needed to be conducted; and how the hosts should be briefed.

The ITC sessions were hosted by companies in the north and in London therefore providing another opportunity for TADs and LoTs to meet leaders in their venues. And for the TADs the existing contacts through their host companies gave them further opportunities to widen both understanding and networks in the sector.

In addition, the programme was extremely successful in providing access to ITC, Clore, the BFI, Arts Council etc and individuals such as Hilary Carty and Doreen Foster.

Perhaps equally important in developing an understanding of the sector was talking to each other and the LoTs about their



Trustees and Governance

experiences. Twenty+ people – many of whom are freelance – can encapsulate a wealth of knowledge about a comparatively small sector.

iii) Each TAD commented on how their understanding and experience of leadership had been impacted upon not only by the exposure cited above, but also by watching the leaders in their host companies. Where there were two AD/CEOs, TADs were able to reflect on the impact of different approaches. Most importantly they were able to spend time thinking about the characteristics and styles of leadership best suited to them:

“I’m getting an insight into different sorts of leadership and thinking more about what kind of leader I want to be. I watch other people and think about how I might do things. I don’t think I’d realised before that there’s not just one approach to being a leader.”

[I’m going] “to focus more on the things that make me an effective leader. Use my natural leadership qualities more effectively rather than trying to implement unnatural methods.”

⁶ Quote from the Introduction to this report in reference to the 2014 “Equality and diversity within the arts and cultural sector in England”

The TADs also reflected that opportunities for sharing even more about the challenges of leadership had been missed during the programme. They regretted not having an insight into how the leaders of the programme decided to deal with the Old Vic and Anthony Lennon situations. They felt that at those points leadership had become invisible, and that they could have benefited from an opportunity to hear the leaders' reflections at least after the events.

The programme leaders recognise that this was something both TADs and LoTs felt, and they believe they gave considerable thought not just to managing the situation but also to making it a learning opportunity.

iv) In as much as the external context in which the programme was operating changed so too did the personal circumstances of the TADs: relocating, marriage, becoming a parent, all changed each individual's perspective and **understanding of themselves**. Anthony Lennon's experience as a result of the programme is well documented elsewhere and is not included here, but it is also important to recognise that the debate around identity impacted personally (to a greater or lesser extent) on both the TADs and the LoTs.

Each of the TADs went on a journey in terms of their understanding of what they had set out to do through ADLP: what they thought they were most interested in, and how they perceived their future professional roles.

Sometimes this was because the experience of directing or producing or leading or creating wasn't what they thought it was going to be

– or because in doing it, they didn't feel as suited to it as they thought they'd be. This was variously experienced as:

- A temporary shift or disillusionment, where a second experience (of directing or producing or leading or creating etc) rekindled the original commitment
- A sense of dislocation between 'what I thought I wanted to be and what I now feel most suited to'
- A helpful confirmation of 'what I'm good at and not good at; interested in or not interested in'
- A better understanding of 'what's right for me now and what might be revisited in the future'
- The need to work out 'what I want rather than what I think I should be'

and something which was perfectly summarised as:

"I didn't know what I didn't know, but once I realised what I didn't know and learnt it, I realised that I will always not know stuff but I know now I can learn to it..."

4. The Network

Each TAD referred repeatedly to the value of the network: to the extraordinary range of skills and experience of the twenty+ participants, and to the value of being in a room where the majority were people of colour.

This appreciation took some time to develop. In the early stages the group was not perceived by everyone as a whole. This was due in part to the pragmatic decision to run each ITC session in both the north and London. As a result, regional groups had time to get to know each other better and bond.

When they came together many noticed differences. the 'London' group was characterised as 'louder', 'angrier', 'more challenging'; the 'northern' group was characterised as 'less politically aware', 'softer', 'more laid back'. Some people in the group (not necessarily depending on their regional location) found others 'radical' and



'extreme'; while others were considered to be 'naïve' or 'inexperienced'. The group was not an unconditionally comfortable place for all participants.

But as more opportunities were created for both TADs and LoTs to talk about their practice and share their skills and experiences, so the differences began to be less important, and the shared experience of being creative practitioners and people of colour brought the wealth of talent to the surface.

"People are sharing highs and lows and achievements and they're strong and powerful people. This is the biggest thing I'll take away – people who are very good at what they do."



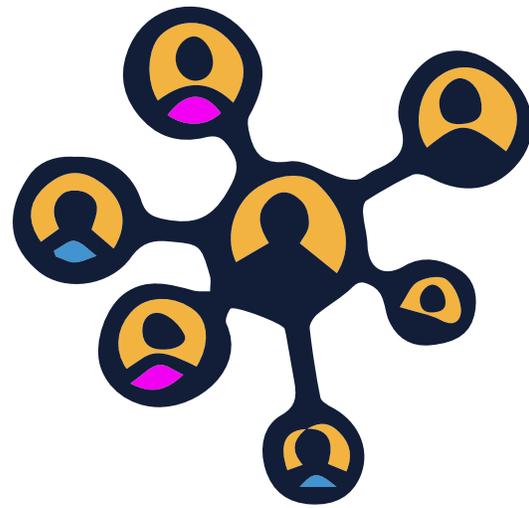
“In the last couple of sessions with the LoTs we’ve become more of a community. We did a session in Liverpool and it was great to have the time and opportunity to talk to people and learn about them as individuals.”

While the network became an extremely important part of the programme for the TADs, initially at least they had a different relationship with it from the LoTs. They were in positions of employment in the programme and therefore not so dependent on the network for building connections and making contacts. Moreover, they had full-time work responsibilities and sometimes they experienced the group activities as demanding time they couldn’t afford.

“Some of the LoT sessions felt like an imposition – spending a whole day getting to session which I didn’t get much out of.”

But – as is explored further below – the group dynamic changed after the Anthony Lennon situation and the TADs found themselves as grateful for a network of peers as the LoTs:

“Definitely a useful and important part is meeting those other people who we can reach out to – for work, advice, making contacts. They’re really important. The pure number of us is such a powerful thing – all those different skills – and confidence – all in it together. All these people are here and growing in confidence.”



In Summary

The intended outcomes for the TADs were:

- Significant career progression
- Skills development in artistic directorship
- Broad networks and contacts
- Ongoing mentoring relationships
- Experience of making and directing a fully resourced production
- Artistic leadership employment prospects

And practically:

- Participating in the daily business of running a theatre company
- Gaining senior management experience
- Insight and experience of fundraising, governance, arts council relationship, strategic planning, line management, art development, artist development, audience development, recruitment, marketing and communications

- A leadership role in talent development
- Leading on a co-production

The evidence from interviews with the TADs, and from their written responses, is that the programme has successfully delivered the intended outcomes.

It is too early to assess ‘significant career progression’ and ‘employment prospects’ but of the three TADs that completed the programme, one has been retained by the host company for a further year; another was offered a post with the host company but chose to take up an offer from another company; a third is currently seeking freelance work to broaden his experience of the sector and has been invited to join the prestigious National Theatre Studio Directors Course.

Underpinning the practical achievements and experiences are the personal changes that each participant has reflected upon in the evaluation interviews: the changes in confidence, experience and understanding that have enabled them to deepen their appreciation of the role of an artistic director.

3.3 Reflections on the impact of the programme on the host organisations

The reflections that follow are drawn from all four host companies – 20 Stories High, Freedom Studios, Talawa and tiata fahodzi.

They cover four themes which recurred in the evaluation interviews:

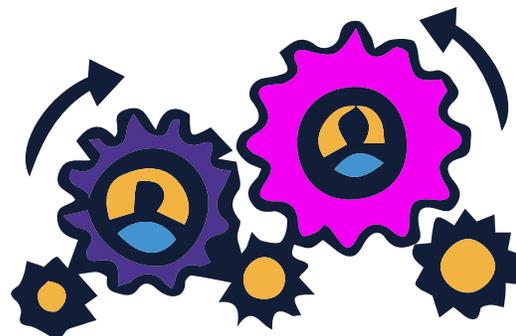
- Succession planning
- “An extra pair of hands”
- The companies’ wider purpose

1. Succession planning

As the Introduction states:

“The Artistic Director Leadership Programme was conceived in response to the considerable succession risks faced by theatre companies led by people of colour. At the time, all the theatre companies that were part of the inception of the programme reported challenges in recruiting people of colour into leadership positions in their organisations.”

For the host organisations the programme seemed as if it might enable them to address directly a concern which resonated with each of them: as companies led by people of colour, what will happen to that crucial aspect of their purpose, their identity and that leadership when they want or need to move on. Where are the leaders of colour to take their places. ‘Succession planning’ was therefore a key motivator for each of them in signing up to form the consortium.



Building support networks

In hindsight, the underlying proposition was quite simplistic: if you have a Trainee Artistic Director of colour and immerse them in the company's purpose, principles and values, you might end up with someone who can (one day) take over the company. What was missing from the proposition was a recognition that the company's learning might be as (or more) important for understanding succession planning as ending up with a successor.

As one person reflected in the final interview. *“Having a Trainee Artistic Director was really useful for us in terms of seeing how what's important to us is understood and shaped by someone coming in. Although the programme wasn't meant to be about our development as a company it did enable us to do some incredible learning about that.”*

Organisational Development theory recognises that the introduction of a new element to a system changes the system – especially in small organisations. But as the quote above suggests, while the programme expected to change the individual participants (TADs and LoTs) it didn't provide a forum to discuss the change to the host organisations.

This might explain why the host organisations feel that the 'succession planning' agenda got lost during the life of the programme. While the learning and development of the TADs and LoTs was being tracked, the same was not true for what the organisations were learning about themselves. As the same interviewee summarised.

“Succession planning was one of the initial drivers, but we didn't factor into the process spaces to explore how this was progressing or impacting, or indeed how having a TAD more generally was impacting on the organisation. Perhaps because the spaces didn't exist we missed an opportunity really to explore how change was taking place for the organisation – and the potentially rich experience of exploring this as a consortium.”

2. “An extra pair of hands”

The reflection above should in no way detract from the enormous value that the TADs brought to their host organisation in terms of 'an extra pair of hands' – not a dismissive phrase but a recognition of the real impact of additional capacity in small teams which enabled the companies to develop ideas or projects which would not have been possible otherwise.

“The main benefit has been around extra capacity provided by an extra member of the team who is committed, reliable, able and possesses a strong desire to support Freedom Studios and be part of our on-going work and the organisation's aims and ambitions. It has freed up some of the artistic director's time to focus on future development and work.”

“First time the company has had an Associate Director, and this has enabled tiata fahodzi to see more work by emerging Black artists, read more scripts, provided more mentorship for emerging artists and consequently given more opportunities to Black artists.”

“The TAD role significantly increases capacity and frees up the Co-Artistic Directors, which allows them to spend more time on creative development and longer-term planning. It is especially valuable to 20 Stories High to have a core artistic team member who provides a consistency through the whole spectrum of our programme from outreach, through our youth theatre/young actors programmes, our work for emerging artists and our full productions and associated engagement activity.”

And as the TADs themselves, and their relationships with their hosts, developed so did their contribution to the thinking of the host companies:

“It has brought conversations around contemporary thinking about race and identity politics to the forefront of what we are doing. This has ranged from discussions with our young artists around our Introduction to Directing course being specifically for people of colour, to these themes and issues being explored in the play that Nathan is writing. This makes our contribution to ACE’s Creative Case much more nuanced and forward-thinking.”

“Another perspective on the diaspora and the company’s vision, giving the vision added integrity and making tiata fahodzi feel more multiple and less personally led.”

3. The companies’ wider purpose

The host companies became part of the consortium because of their commitment to (variously) talent development; artist

development; diversity; widening the voices of those making and leading theatre in contemporary Britain – to a vision for the future where key arts organisations and venues across the country *“truly look and feel like the streets they sit on”*.

In summary:

- For tiata fahodzi: *“Art and culture offer both a mirror to see ourselves and a window to see through to worlds unlike our own. However, theatre – as with so many areas of our curated mainstream culture – still fails to see so many people, experiences and identities in this multiple world. In doing so, it fails to invite – and make space for – us all to have a conversation with ourselves, and to understand more about the world we share, the lives we lead, and what it means to be here, now.”*
- For Talawa: *“Our work is informed by the wealth and diversity of the Black British experience, and through that we create outstanding work by cultivating the best in emerging and established Black artists. We invest in talent, develop audiences and inspire dialogue.”*
- For Freedom Studios: *“To be the home for new and experienced artists in Bradford with a view to bringing together audiences and communities by creating new work and other opportunities for them to engage with the arts.”*
- *“20 Stories High make theatre that is... gritty, jumping, melodic, rebellious, contemporary, mashed-up, authentic,*

original, visual, challenging, lyrical, tender, anarchic, diverse, surprising, booming, political, funny, collaborative... and heart-felt. We make theatre with young people from excluded communities, emerging artists & world-class professionals. We bring new audiences into theatre venues and also take theatre out into their communities locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.”

From the outset it was agreed that as part of their work the TAD would take a leadership role in talent development within the organisation by running Introduction to Directing projects for potential directors of colour and managing a Three-Month Placement which would provide an opportunity emerging director of colour. In short, the TAD would enable the company to both broaden and deepen significant aspects of its core purpose by providing additional capacity and focus.

As tiata fahodzi commented; *“The company’s mission to tell stories about the developing African diaspora in contemporary Britain is communicated powerfully by three African diaspora women in the staff team at three different levels - CEO, associate level and junior entry level”.*

In Summary

The intended outcomes for the host companies were:

- Growth in the capacity of the organisations and support to the artistic directors and executive directors

- Greater ability to influence talent development within the wider theatre sector
- Additional production enabling them to work with more artists and perform to more audiences
- Increased visibility through coordinated press and PR campaigns around the programme and final productions
- Stronger talent pool and succession plans
- Greater resilience and sustainability.
- Peer support for the artistic directors and executive directors
- Establishing and/or strengthening of relationships with regional theatres

Some of these outcomes are hard to evidence at this stage: resilience and sustainability are subject to so many differing factors and can only be assessed over the long-term; the ‘talent pool’ feels as if it is becoming stronger (see comments in 3.1) but this also need a long view.

The host organisations didn’t mention in the external evaluation interviews either the impact on visibility or the strengthening of relationships with other theatres. This does not mean that these outcomes were not achieved – but that they didn’t rate significantly enough to be part of the interview conversations.

The interviews did, however, focus strongly and positively on the increased capacity, support for artistic directors, and the concomitant ability to influence talent development.

3.4 Reflections on the impact of the programme on the Leaders of Tomorrow

The feedback from the Leaders of Tomorrow programme is captured in a number of documents including:

- ITC Feedback sheet
- Job benchmarking questionnaire (October 2018)
- Doreen Foster Workshop responses (July 2019)

The document *Leaders of Tomorrow Activity Timeline* usefully provides a month by month summary of the LoT programme and – importantly – a note of when and how the programme was recalibrated to address feedback e.g.

January 2018 - Following feedback from participants, and strategic and executive reflection, the programme was re-structured. ITC sessions were brought forward to run consecutively every month. The Key Leader sessions to follow in autumn at the conclusion of the ITC sessions.

This section of the evaluation report reflects on the feedback cited above and also draws from the in depth interviews with a small number of LoTs.

The LoT interviews were introduced into the external evaluation process in March 2018 following conversations with participants in the ITC sessions who had expressed an

interest in being able to share their thoughts and experiences in more depth. The number of interviewees was increased in September 2018 to include the views of people who were known to be more critical of the programme. In all 14 hours of telephone interviews took place with six LoTs over 18 months. While every attempt has been made to reflect diverse opinions, the views here cannot be taken as reflecting those of the LoT group as a whole. The interviewees – by putting themselves forward or by making themselves available for interviews, were essentially self-selecting.

The key impacts reflected upon here are:

- Confidence
- Skills and Learning
- The Network

1. Confidence

As with the TADs, the interviewed LoT constantly refer to a recognisable increase in their confidence emanating from:

- Being part of a programme which, through association with RTYDS, is recognised and respected
- Being part of a group which is supportive and encouraging and with which they can identify
- A sense of being ‘believed in’ by the programme’s leaders and especially Natalie and Sue

- Realising what they know and that they have the capacity to learn what they don't
- Being listened to by (most of) the speakers, trainers etc they meet through the sessions

As one interviewee commented:

“At the final gathering we were all looking at each other and laughing because we're all so much more confident than we were two years ago. We were telling each other what we'd been doing and when you hear yourself you acknowledge what you've been doing. We feel inspired by other people's opportunities and achievements.”

Confidence doesn't just arrive one day, and there's no one guaranteed source:

“I don't think there's been a 'penny-dropped' moment for me. But it massively had an impact on me putting [the programme] on my CV. And I recommended [speaker] and that person was invited to speak which meant I'd be listened to – my opinion valued – and that was important. And in this [new job] I have to make decisions and my decisions are okay...”

Imposter syndrome

“We all feel like our confidence has grown massively. We've built confidence and self-belief. And self-belief has been a big issue for many people of colour.”

The external evaluation Progress Report of October 2018 recorded a growing openness to naming and discussing “imposter syndrome” in the participant group. TADs and LoTs alike shared their experience that in the early stages of the programme many felt that they were only there because this was a ‘scheme’ for people of colour.

And even when they found themselves offered opportunities, some people found it hard to hold onto the idea that they got them by merit. This was graphically illustrated by one interviewee who described arriving for a new job convinced that when s/he walked in the organisation would say: *“Oh no. We didn't mean you! We meant the other [Jo Bloggs]”*.

It would be unrealistic to assume that after a two year programme all sense of imposter syndrome has vanished – and indeed, it continues for many people throughout their career. But two important reflections arise from this:

Firstly, participants reflected that naming it and sharing it significantly reduced the sense of isolation that comes with the anxiety.

Secondly, as the training sessions, exposure to other people's journeys, and familiarity within the group enabled participants to recognise and articulate their existing experience, skills and knowledge, so their confidence increased, and the sense of being an imposter diminished.

“I’ve really grown in confidence. And it’s made me think I’m not going to do any more schemes – just focus on being a leader in the sector. It’s a great realisation.”

2. Skills and Learning

It has been acknowledged that the early ITC sessions struggled to find the right level to fulfil the needs and expectations of a group with such a range of experience. While there was often a mistaken assumption that the participants were ‘emerging leaders’ or even new to the sector, there were many amongst them who were running companies, managing large projects, employing people, juggling successful portfolio careers etc.

The early sessions were structured in a way which didn’t allow for much group work or for sharing the wealth of experience in the room. But the criticisms were heard and the session format adapted. The result was not only more positive feedback but also an enriching of the learning from hearing about the experiences of peers.

The later ITC feedback sheets reflect the changes made:

“Please continue with the practical tasks. I’m finding that by doing tasks in real time, I’m able to understand better.”

“As well as learning, this group is also proving to be a support network. Thank you.”

“... the size of the room we were in was very small and felt a little cramped at times. But I loved the size of the group, it felt right and everyone had the chance to be heard and we had the opportunity to mix with everyone easier.”

What both TADs and LoTs appreciated was when the training sessions or workshops enabled them to share their own practice – either by doing exercises in groups or through hearing of each other’s projects, companies or experiences. A highlight for many was the point at which they took over leading the sessions – like the Partner Day at 20 Stories High in February 2019:

“The programme completely changed from what was planned. It was much more rigid at first – the ITC and Key Leaders sessions. It seems to be more flexible now which is not a bad thing. We were told we’d have relationships with the [host company] partners but it never really happened until February. [They said you’ll] meet 20 Stories High and then it’s over to you to do what you want so different members of the group could run workshops. Initially it felt quite dismissive but it was absolutely amazing. The rest of the sessions had been quite passive – spending time with each other and having a laugh – but this was really lovely. [The programme] was structured at first but maybe that’s enabled appreciation of it being less structured now. And I’ve really liked the ITC sessions and wouldn’t have been able to afford them on my own.”

The programme was extremely well designed in ensuring that the learning covered a range of topics and themes. Between the ITC sessions and the Doreen Foster workshops and key leader sessions, the learnings covered both practical topics and wider subjects:

“The workshop was brilliant!! By the end, I had a real sense of the financial responsibilities whilst leading, which I didn’t think I would understand. It’s left me wanting to do more around this area of leadership.”

“I have realised that there is no one set way of being as a leader. And leader means different things to different people, and that you don’t have to be the loudest, brashest or even the most experienced to be a leader.”

“1. I am going to revisit my business plan. 2 Look at my current network and projects based on my values and business plan. 3. See all my future network and projects from a personal value based angle. In short, I am going to give myself more credit for intangible things.”

3. Network, network, network

Repeatedly and passionately the majority of LoTs found the most valuable aspect of the programme the network they formed with each other.

They found the impact of being in a room full of people of colour inspiring and reaffirming; they found the range of skills and experiences presented endless possibilities for working together; they found shared experiences of rejection and exclusion re-fired their motivation and determination.

And after October 2018 the role of group became even more important:

“The Anthony Lennon thing brought us closer together. It tarnished the programme but it brought people together.”

While there are differing views on the way the programme’s organisers handled the Anthony Lennon situation, all the interviewees were in agreement that it had an impact on the group dynamic.

“After the AL situation there was a lot of negative energy. We felt let down by the programme – didn’t feel looked after – so we had to look after ourselves. It ends on us as a group taking responsibility... But sometimes perhaps we expected too much of the programme..

“There’s a cohort of us who now believe that anything is possible if we band together. Our presence changes people’s thinking..

“Our WhatsApp group – we have created a black and brown space. It’s had an amazing impact. We are empowering each other to empower ourselves. We’re people at different stages but we understand each other and encourage each other and check-in with each other..”

In Summary

The intended outcomes for the Leaders of Tomorrow were:

- Development of leadership skills
- Access to decision makers

- Peer support group
- Connection to RTYDS and activities
- Enriched CV and stronger employment prospects

Of these the least commented upon was connection to RTYDS, although two interviewees did comment on the value of the support they have received personally from Sue Emmas and a number reflected on the status of the ADLP programme as part of RTYDS.

The benchmarking exercise on jobs - *Could you give us examples of the job titles you were applying for 12 months ago and the job titles you are applying for now?* – was too early and the sample too small to allow too many conclusions, but the anecdotal evidence from interviews was that a number of people were connecting their success in reaching more senior positions with their involvement with the programme.

From both the interviews and the written feedback it is clear that the majority of those responding felt unequivocally that they had developed leadership skills – and, equally importantly – they witnessed the development of leadership skills in their peers. The importance of this feedback cannot be underestimated: it reflects a potentially profound and lasting impact on the sector.

3.5 Reflections on the programme’s management and the role of the consortium

The October 2017 *Initial Partner Report* from tiata fahodzi captures the considerable demands that the programme was already beginning to make on those involved. It had not been unreasonable to assume that there would be less need for the time spent on the management of the programme by consortium members – and particularly the lead partner, tiata fahodzi – once recruitment and set-up tasks had been completed. And the day to day management of the programme was located in a highly experienced and respected organisation, RTYDS.

But a programme which involves some 20 participants on a complex and often ground-breaking journey of learning and self-discovery is likely to throw up some unexpected challenges. In the case of ADLP there were early concerns about the tone and content of the ITC sessions – partly in relation to the matching of the content to the widely varying knowledge and experience of the participants, and partly in relation to its specificity to the experience of people of colour. As one report put it in November 2017:

“We have some questions around how the training has been prepared specifically for people of colour. It does not feel like it is? It feels like we should explore how we can make the training as useful as possible for [participants]?”.

In addition, the Key Leaders session at the Old Vic demonstrated that even more attention needed to be given to what those sessions aimed to achieve, how the host organisations were prepared for them, and the need for time to reflect on and process the issues they raised.

Reviewing the programme

The need to review and recalibrate design and delivery in response to these experiences necessitated intense periods of rethinking in late 2017/early 2018. Moreover, the need for the programme to be led by, and seen to be led by, people of colour meant considerably more involvement by the lead partner – tiata fahodzi – and particularly its AD/CEO.

The adjustments to the ITC sessions; the introduction of the Doreen Foster workshops, the creation of opportunities for participants to hear more about each other's work – and to run workshops for each other; the redesign of the 'key leader' sessions and the focusing of those agendas on leadership, were all recognised and appreciated by the participants. Even the more critical admitted to being impressed by how seriously their feedback had been taken and what had been done to refine the programme accordingly. The programme's credibility and its commitment to

the participants – especially by Natalie and Sue – were hugely enhanced in this difficult period.

And there were consequences in finding solutions to these challenges which further increased the demands on limited resources for the management of the programme: each Leader of Tomorrow was offered a one-to-one session with Natalie or Sue. This was followed by a personalised 'action plan' and a commitment by Natalie or Sue to recommend contacts or next steps; broker connections with individuals; follow up with mentoring and advice.

The impact of this additional element to an already rich offer cannot be underestimated. It signified so much to the participants not just in terms of practical help but in the belief it gave them that they were valued – worth being invested in.

Almost twelve months later another unexpected issue arose in the press coverage of Anthony Lennon's involvement in the programme. Again, tiata fahodzi and RTYDS stepped in to address the matter and to work with Talawa both on the practical matters of the company's continuation on the programme and on suggested tactics for dealing with the media interest.

While recognising the need for swift and clear action in both of these challenging situations, they raise the question: could the programme have been more supportive of its leadership and more democratic in its decision making if the challenges it faced and the solutions arrived at had been shared with the consortium.

The Consortium

As has been recognised, the consortium was not a model of distributed leadership, and while its design might have originally been intended to protect small organisations from additional management responsibilities, it might have provided a valuable source of support at difficult moments, and manifest a greater respect for the perspectives and experience of the partners.

As to the role of the consortium, members and TADs alike have asked: what was the purpose of the consortium? What was its role other than as a collection of host organisations to the TADs?

The document Partnership Agreement between: tiata fahodzi (the lead organisation) and partner members of the Artistic Director Leadership Programme Consortium (ADLP or “the project”. addresses what the project is and what it aims to achieve. And it clearly states that “*tiata fahodzi is ultimately responsible for decision making for the project*”.

But like so many of these documents it seems to be written from the perspective of dealing with conflict within the group. With the benefit of hindsight and as a learning for future agreements there needs to be something which addresses collective responsibility for situations which might damage the credibility, purpose and reputation of the project but which emanate from without.

And although this is an omission from the Agreement there is in the final paragraph a sentence which might have been cited to trigger a more collective response to the challenges the programme faced. Of the consortium meetings it states:

*“Agenda items will include reports from artistic directors and Trainee Artistic Directors (TAD)’s on current and planned programme elements, sharing of learning and action points for the next quarter. Progress will be reviewed and plans adjusted as required. **Risks associated with the project will be assessed at these meetings.** Minutes will be circulated.” [my bold]*

Leadership in action

It’s impossible to say whether the Old Vic and Anthony Lennon situations could or should have been managed differently, but what participants have reflected upon is that at moments when leadership became so necessary it also became invisible.

Here was a leadership programme set up to demonstrate the challenges and responsibilities of leadership, and here were real-time, real-life situations which were calling upon the skills of the Programme's leaders. Could it have been possible to use these for the purpose of learning and sharing. Most people accept that decisions had to be made swiftly and behind closed doors, but once they'd been made could there have been a collective reflection on the factors which needed to be taken into account; the considerations given to impact and intention; the processes of risk analysis and reputation management; the damage limitation options?

The programme's leaders believe that opportunities were created to share how they dealt with these situations and they understand that these were not recognised as such by the participants. It could be that the sharing was too subtle or that the participants were not ready to look at what happened objectively. But the very recognition of this issue would seem to indicate that the complexities of leadership were in the forefront of both participants' and organisers' minds – an important reflection and one that acknowledges the impact of the programme.

In Summary

The programme provides some valuable learning for the creation of consortia and for the agreements which guide them.

The programme's success derived in large part not just from its initial design but from the seriousness with which its leaders took feedback, and reviewed and revised accordingly.

This was both acknowledged and appreciated by the majority of participants and contributed to their feeling of value and worth.

The impact of making these changes put the leaders under considerable pressure. This cannot be under-estimated.

Nor should it detract from a programme which fulfilled its main objectives for each of the participating groups – TADs, host companies, LoTs – and may well be seen in the future to have played a significant part in changing theatre leadership in the UK.

