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**Building the Engine Room:
A Study of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre and its
Development into the Young Writers' Programme**

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Building the Engine Room:
A Study of the Royal Court's Young Peoples' Theatre and its
Development into the Young Writers' Programme

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for a higher degree elsewhere.

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This thesis is dedicated to those who have worked in the young peoples’ initiatives at the Royal Court and to the members of Young Court, who are building on the legacies of the past in the hope of making a change for the future.

Abstract

The Royal Court Theatre has forged its reputation on its ability to source and produce some of the most important new plays of the last sixty years. Its long-standing identity as a ‘writers’ theatre’ has cemented the Court’s allure to playwrights from across the world. Indeed, it is due to the theatre’s, at times, contentious history and continuous dedication to the playwright that the Court has also received substantial academic attention, which has resulted in extensive scholarship and interrogation of the theatre’s work. However, very little consideration has been given to the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre and it is through engagement with this initiative and its development into the Young Writers’ Programme that this thesis provides a long-overdue assessment of this overlooked strand of the Court’s work.

This thesis presents an original account of the Royal Court’s history from the perspective of its work with young people and playwrights. Primary sources of material for this thesis are shared between information gathered from the archive of the Royal Court, housed within the Victoria and Albert Museum’s collections at Blythe House, and interviews conducted by the author with key figures from this part of the Royal Court Theatre’s work. This material is located alongside the changing contexts of education, politics, the Royal Court and British theatre more widely, between 1966 and 2007, and looks to assess how each of these areas came to inform and influence the policy of the Young Peoples’ Theatre (YPT).

The thesis proposes that the YPT adopted an unusual and alternative approach to working with young people that was at times both radical in its practice and fiercely political. The nature of its work often saw the Scheme ostracised from both a growing theatre-in-education movement and the Royal Court itself, where its survival is often credited to the tenacity of certain individuals. Indeed, the thesis posits that the YPT, despite its breadth of activity, was most welcomed within the theatre’s eco-system during the periods in its history when it focused its policy on young writers and therefore fed into the Court’s fundamental identity as a writers’ theatre.

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List of Abbreviations

ACGB – Arts Council of Great Britain

CAF – Charities Aid Foundation

ESC – English Stage Company

ILEA – Inner London Education Authority

JNP – Jerwood New Playwrights

PVEPF – Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund

RAA – Regional Arts Association

RBKC – Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

RC – The Royal Court Theatre

TiE – Theatre in Education

YC – Royal Court's Young Court

YPT – Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre

YPTS – Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme

YWF – Young Writers' Festival

YWP – Young Writers' Programme

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Preface

A Forgotten History

An Unexpected Study

The original intention for this PhD was to map and critique the practices of the Royal Court's Young Writers' Programme (YWP). I anticipated a thesis that would engage with almost twenty years of Royal Court history from 1998, when the Programme was founded, up until the present day. However, in the initial months of research for the project, it became clear that a much broader history of the theatre's work with young people existed that spanned far beyond the inception of the YWP. These endeavours operated out of a specific initiative for young people at the Royal Court known as the Young Peoples' Theatre (YPT) and it was out of this institution that the Young Writers' Programme had evolved. On further investigation, it became clear that the YPT had been given minimal attention in the existing scholarship on the Royal Court and it was out of a desire to rectify this exclusion from the historical record that this thesis originated. The project continued, therefore, as an opportunity to map this aspect of the theatre's history and present it alongside an existing and well-defined history of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court. In bringing attention to this under-appreciated area of the Royal Court's work, greater consideration can be given to the reason and context of the development of the Young Writers' Programme – an initiative that has garnered huge attention on the British theatre landscape in the 21st Century. Indeed, as the project expanded so too did the timeframe of investigation and the study now envelops the entire history of young peoples' work at the Royal Court from the English Stage Company's occupation of the theatre from 1956 up until 2007.

Following the model set by existing accounts of the Court's history, this thesis is organised chronologically into chapters that are framed by what I consider to be defining eras in the Young Peoples' Theatre's history.¹ This thesis was initially organised by the YPT's directors, adopting the notion expressed by Little and McLaughlin that 'the Royal Court is often defined in terms of its artistic directors.'² But, as my research progressed, it became clear that the Young Peoples' Theatre's existence has been defined and influenced by its geography as much as it has by its directors. As a result, this thesis is composed of five chapters configured around five eras that are characterised by the YPT's geographical location: at the Royal Court (1966-1976), in the Garage (1976-1980), as a nomadic scheme which came to settle at a space on Portobello Road (1981-1991), between Portobello Road and the West End (1992-1999) and into the Site as the Young Writers' Programme (2000-2007). As is outlined in the Introduction, although there are examples of engagement with young people occurring in the decade before, the beginning of a Schools' Scheme in 1966 marks the inception of the Court's formal engagement with young people which evolved to become the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme in 1972.

The starting point of this thesis, therefore, is clear but the end is less so. The decision to end the study in 2007 is aligned with a significant shift in the Royal Court's work with young people that took place under the artistic directorship of Dominic Cooke. At this point, the work of the Young Writers' Programme altered to focus on the exclusive development of young writers through the use of writers'

¹ Some of the first publications on the history of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court such as Terry Browne's *Playwrights' Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court* (Pitman: London, 1975) and Philip Roberts's *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-72* (London: Routledge, 1986) are arranged by chapters that explore specific years in the theatre's history. For example, Browne's third chapter entitled '1957 to October 1965' and Roberts's seventh chapter which charts the Court 'From April 1970 to July 1972'.

² Ruth Little and Emily McLaughlin, *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out* (London: Oberon, 2007), p. 10.

groups. As I argue in Chapter Five and the Conclusion of the thesis, it is from this period up until the inception of a new initiative known as ‘Young Court’ in 2015 that the legacy of the Young Peoples’ Theatre, which at its height incorporated community, outreach, acting and playwriting development into its remit becomes less visible and it therefore seems a fitting point for the thesis to end. Indeed, by concluding the study in 2007, there is room to develop the critique of the period 2007-2017 beyond the parameters of this thesis in an independent piece of research that can augment this history of the theatre’s work with young people.

Developing a Methodology

Given the project’s large historical scope, archival research came to be integral to the study and is regarded as the primary methodology used to conduct this research. The principal archive used to inform this work is that of the English Stage Company (ESC) at the Royal Court Theatre, which is curated by the Victoria and Albert Museum’s department of Theatre and Performance and housed at Blythe House in West Kensington, London. The collection pre-dates the ESC’s occupation of the Royal Court by just over twenty years and conserves information on the theatre from the period 1934-2007. The archive is an ongoing repository that, at the time of writing, is in possession of 3759 files relating to the ESC and the Royal Court. In order to support and promote further research in this area, Appendix C of this thesis isolates each of the files within the Royal Court’s archive that pertain to its work with young people and this provides a useful starting point for those interested in exploring this part of the theatre’s archive. Moreover, Appendix C also lists the files that relate to the YPT’s work which are preserved in the Arts Council of Great Britain’s (ACGB) archive, which is also kept at Blythe House. The ACGB archive more broadly contains material relating to nationwide young peoples’ theatre

initiatives, which provided important context and insight into the Arts Council's relationship with both the Young Peoples' Theatre and young peoples' theatre initiatives beyond the Royal Court. Other archival resources that I consulted include: the Special Collections at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, where the archive of William Gaskell is housed, as well as the Kensington and Chelsea Local Studies Collection at the Kensington Central library. Through engagement with these archives I aimed to better understand the relationship between the YPT and the Royal Court, as well as the important association between the YPT and the local borough.

Some of the most insightful and rewarding archival encounters that I have experienced during this project have come through the willingness of others to share their personal collections from this area of Royal Court history. These personal archives have been of most use when looking to piece together information that is alluded to but not often made explicit in the theatre's general archive. Paul Allain writes about a partiality that is inherent to the archive and these personal collections, together with information gleaned from original interviews, provide further consistency to what can, at times, be a fragmented archival history.³ For this thesis I have conducted thirty-one interviews with directors, playwrights and practitioners who have worked for and/or experienced the Young Peoples' Theatre and these encounters have proven fundamental to my research. I have recorded, transcribed and edited each of these interviews, the results of which have become a separate resource to this thesis, which I hope will also go on to inform and support future studies on the Royal Court, the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre, playwriting studies and playwriting as pedagogy.

³ Paul Allain, 'The Archive', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25:1 (2015), 32-35 (p. 35).

In combining archival research with oral history, one further methodology has emerged that is grounded in ideas found in hermeneutical theory. This theory is predicated on the notion, as Jean Grodin asserts, that ‘we can only understand the parts of a text, or any body of meaning, out of a general idea of its whole, yet we can only gain this understanding of the whole by understanding its parts.’⁴ It is this concept, known as the hermeneutic circle, that has come to be fundamental to this study: in bringing together archival research with the ethnographical nature of interviews, I have used and understood the parts in order to gain an understanding of the whole.

A Pre-History of the Royal Court Theatre

The acquisition of the Royal Court Theatre by the English Stage Company in the winter of 1955 heralded a new epoch for a theatre which had served as both a functioning theatrical space and, later, a cinema since its construction in 1888 as a replacement for the nearby New Chelsea Theatre. At the height of the Second World War the Court suffered bomb damage which resulted in over a decade of inactivity. It was not until 1952 that the Court re-opened and returned, once more, to the production of live theatre,⁵ housing Laurier Lister’s long running satirical, revue-style, show *Airs on a Shoestring* for two years from 1953 before it was leased to Devine and the ESC.⁶ The ESC’s first season of work on the Royal Court stage opened on the 2nd April 1956 with Angus Wilson’s *The Mulberry Bush* and continued with Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne, two plays by Ronald Duncan and *Cards of Identity* by Nigel Dennis. The ultimate

⁴ Jean Grodin ‘The Hermeneutical Circle’ in Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2016), pp. 299-305 (p. 299).

⁵ Mike Kilburn, *London’s Theatres* (London: New Holland Publishers, 2011), pp. 112-114.

⁶ Terry Browne, *Playwrights’ Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court* (Pitman: London, 1975), p.14.

success of Osborne's debut has grown to become a significant historical marker in British theatre, which often consigns 'everything that went before to a pre-Osborne dark age'⁷ and pinpoints the inception of a well-formed narrative that places 1956 and *Look Back in Anger* as a significant turning point in British theatre history.

The period of transition in the years leading up to the ESC's lease of the Royal Court theatre in the mid-1950s has been, until recently, an uncontested account. The first independent study of the ESC at the Royal Court, conducted by Terry Browne in 1975, provides a history of the early years of the ESC at the Royal Court from 1955-1972 and it is here that Browne determines the inception of the ESC as a serendipitous endeavour tracing back to the Devon Festival, conceived by three men: Ronald Duncan, James Edward Blacksell and the Earl of Harewood.⁸ Their shared interest in 'forming a management which would devote itself to producing non-commercial plays'⁹ complemented, in part, a desire voiced by George Devine to generate a renaissance of writing in England.¹⁰ As the English Stage Company was formalised and the company's Council formed, Devine was appointed as the artistic director and the ESC at the Royal Court was founded. As artistic director, Devine outlined his initial ideas for the Court as a 'writers' theatre',¹¹ one that would include 'as many new plays as possible'¹² and produce

⁷ Dan Rebellato, *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.3.

⁸ Browne, p.1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.9.

¹¹ Harriet Devine, *Looking Back: Playwrights at the Royal Court 1956-2006* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 3.

¹² Gresdna A Doty and Billy J Harbin (eds), *Inside the Royal Court Theatre, 1956 – 1981* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) p. 2.

‘hard-hitting, uncompromising writers whose works would be stimulating, provocative and exciting.’¹³

The ESC’s early life at the Royal Court is covered widely and sufficiently in works by Terry Browne, Richard Findlater, Philip Roberts, and Ruth Little and Emily McLaughlin. In the last two decades, scholarship has emerged offering new perspectives on decisive moments in post-war British theatre and also the Royal Court more specifically. These accounts, led by Dan Rebellato’s compelling counter-reading of the state of British theatre in the 1950s, which encourages readers to look beyond *Look Back in Anger* and the Royal Court in 1956 as the starting point of a revolution in British theatre, have generated new debates on deep-rooted mythologies.¹⁴ Indeed, in much the same way as Rebellato has offered a new perspective on a defining moment in British theatre history, Taryn Storey’s 2012 article suggests cause to re-evaluate the accepted genesis and series of so-called ‘coincidences’¹⁵ that surround the ESC’s occupation of the Royal Court building. Through archival analysis of letters exchanged between Devine and the Secretary General of the Arts Council of Great Britain, William Emrys Williams, across 1952 and 1953, Storey posits that Devine’s plans for the Royal Court were formed in collaboration with Arts Council members three years before the ESC took control of the Court. Storey suggests that although the professional relationship between Williams and Devine ‘did not directly deliver the Royal Court’ it had a ‘major

¹³ Ian, Rickson, ‘Looking Forward in Anger’, *Independent* [online] (14 May 2003) <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/looking-forward-in-anger-104696.html> [accessed 18 June 2015] (para 1 of 7).

¹⁴ Rebellato, p. 67.

¹⁵ Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 17.

impact on the future success of the organisation',¹⁶ which ultimately saw the ESC become the second largest recipient of Arts Council funding for drama within two years of its inception.¹⁷ Storey's analysis gives new attention to the ESC's inception and casts doubt on the company's serendipitous origins. New readings of history are vital in order to challenge the ingrained mythologies that exist within British theatre. The Royal Court is no exception, carving an unrivalled mythology that is now accepted as part of its composition.¹⁸ But the proliferation of mythology can often contribute to the erasure of some parts of the record and it is the responsibility of this thesis to ensure that the theatre's work with young people is included as part of this history, so that its influence on the Court's composition is made visible.

As the research and writing process of this thesis has evolved, two areas in particular have come to form the narrative arc of the work: The first explores the Young Peoples' Theatre's existence on the geographical and metaphorical periphery of the Royal Court in order to assess the impact that this had on the YPT's ability to influence the theatre's policy and eco-system. The second seeks to interrogate and analyse the tensions that later emerged between the Royal Court and its increasingly autonomous Young Peoples' Theatre. Each of the chapters is united by these two ideas and supported by secondary arguments that offer new insights in to the impact of the Young Peoples' Theatre on the fields of theatre and education, playwriting pedagogy, new writing in the 1990s and the role of the literary department at the Royal Court coming into the 21st Century. In doing so, the significance and visibility of the Young Peoples' Theatre within some of the most important movements in

¹⁶ Taryn Storey, 'Devine Intervention: Collaboration and Conspiracy in the History of the Royal Court', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 28 (2012), 363-378 (p. 374).

¹⁷ Rebellato, p. 67.

¹⁸ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 17 and Little and McLaughlin, p.9.

post-war British theatre is brought into sharp focus and a new interpretation of a well-established history is revealed.

A Note on Terminology

Since the English Stage Company settled at the Royal Court over sixty years ago the two entities have grown to become synonymous. It is with this in mind that, as this thesis continues, the use of the term ‘Royal Court’ or simply ‘the Court’ should be understood to denote the use of the theatre following its tenancy by the English Stage Company in 1956. For further clarity and to avoid confusion, the term Young Peoples’ Theatre or its abbreviation ‘YPT’ when capitalised should be understood to concern the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre. The field of young people’s theatre more widely is discussed at several points in the thesis to provide necessary context to the development of the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre and is referred to by its full title in lower case throughout.

Introduction

‘The Solution Lies in Schools’: Young People and the Royal Court 1956-1966

Existing Histories

The Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre began as a Schools Scheme in 1966, under the directorship of Jane Howell. In 1972, the Schools Scheme evolved into the Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme and later the Young Peoples’ Theatre before ultimately developing into the Young Writers’ Programme in 1998. In this thesis, the genealogy of these initiatives is located and contextualised alongside much of the Royal Court’s sixty-year history. It is through engagement with this history that the Court’s work with young people can be seen to function largely on the periphery of the theatre’s activities and it is perhaps for this reason that this area of the Court’s work has often escaped thorough academic scrutiny. The purpose of this introduction, therefore, is twofold: primarily, it seeks to provide a survey of the literature in existence on the Royal Court to explore how the theatre’s work with young people is represented in existing accounts of the Court’s history. Although this area of the Court’s activities is mentioned to varying extents in all the major works on the Royal Court, the content relating to young people is mostly fleeting and offered without analysis or due consideration. Indeed, only the work of Terry Browne and, almost forty years later, Graham Saunders can be regarded as genuine bids to engage with this part of the theatre’s history. The work of Browne and Saunders is supported by important essays by Gerald Chapman, the Young Peoples’ Theatre’s director between 1976 and 1980, yet these are confined to the archival record or to publications that are not easily obtainable. In highlighting the scholarship that is available on the Royal Court’s work with young people, this introduction is able to provide an overview of the material currently in existence,

while also demonstrating the ways in which this thesis augments available knowledge. Secondly, while the scholarship under discussion spans publications dating from 1975 to 2014, this introduction also aims to offer an insight into the practices with young people at the Royal Court between 1956 and 1966, prior to the inception of the Schools Scheme. By considering the ways in which young peoples' work was visible at the Royal Court during the first decade of the theatre's existence, further context can be added that explains why such endeavours materialised and how they were prioritised by the theatre at the time.

The Visits Scheme

The first monograph to be written on the Royal Court Theatre following its inhabiting by the English Stage Company in 1956 is Terry Browne's *Playwrights' Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, which documents a period in the theatre's history from its foundation up until 1972. Providing the earliest account of a theatre that he describes as having a 'measurable influence on the social climate of Britain',¹⁹ Browne's work offers an insight into a range of significant points in the ESC's history at the Royal Court from its origins to its tumultuous relationship with the Lord Chamberlain and the opening of the Theatre Upstairs.

In a chapter that looks explicitly at the period 1957 to October 1965, Browne identifies that the 'most ambitious and ultimately far-reaching audience development schemes operated at the Royal Court are its various schools' schemes.'²⁰ Through what Browne terms a 'visits scheme' that began in the autumn of 1960, the author provides a detailed account of the formalisation of what should be regarded as the first attempt by the Royal Court to engage young people with its

¹⁹ Browne, p. iii.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 39.

work. Indeed, the role that the Court could play in facilitating young peoples' engagement with the theatre had been identified as a primary objective in the English Stage Company's initial aims, which hoped to:

Encourage children to develop a genuine enthusiasm for and critical appreciation of good theatre. To achieve this our repertory will include seasons of plays intended for younger theatregoers; these will be toured wherever educational authorities and schools offer facilities.²¹

This commitment to young people lay dormant until 1960 when a programme of work for schools was developed after the theatre was approached by two English teachers from a school in Hertfordshire, who wrote to Devine at the Court 'bemoaning the general lack of extramural facilities for young visitors' to London theatres.²² Subsequently, George Devine's assistant, John Blatchley, was despatched to the school and a plan devised to accommodate a group visit to the Court.²³ That the Court's policy for schools and 'younger theatregoers' was forced into action at the request of two school teachers rather than from within the theatre itself suggests a degree of inexperience in the area of outreach and education on the part of the Court. That said, Devine, Blatchley and other members of the theatre were responsive to the appeal and in the autumn of 1960 the first group of sixteen students, aged sixteen to eighteen, made the journey from Hertfordshire to Sloane Square to participate in what can be seen as the inaugural schools visit to the Royal Court.

Arriving at the Court on a Monday morning, the young visitors would be met by John Blatchley or another of the theatre's assistant directors. From here they were given a tour of the theatre where they were introduced to the work of the Royal

²¹ Ibid.

²² Richard Findlater, 'The Young Tradition', in *25 Years of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, ed. by Richard Findlater (Derbyshire: Amber Lane Press, 1981), pp. 189-194 (p. 189).

²³ Browne, p. 40.

Court. Across the week, they saw at least one production each day, two on matinée days, at theatres throughout London, accompanied by an assistant director from the Court. The type of work visited by the groups was varied: from opera to ballet to the contemporary or more classical; sometimes it was a play which was thought of as ‘fairly ridiculous’ by those at the Court, such as Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap*.²⁴ If available, Devine himself accompanied the group to boxing or wrestling matches to ensure that a range of performance styles were experienced.²⁵ In addition to watching performances, the groups were also invited to sit in on rehearsals both at the Royal Court and productions elsewhere and would often observe students in training at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Moreover, tours would be offered behind the scenes in wardrobe, carpentry, painting or prop design and these would usually be linked to a production seen by the students during the week. The “behind the scenes” aspects of theatre were further supported by talks given by a range of Court staff, from the lighting designer to front of house and box office managers, which again looked to offer the students the opportunity to learn from a wide range of specialisms in the theatre. As the week concluded, usually on a Friday evening or Saturday morning, a final discussion was held with an actor, director or designer, again, from a piece of work seen by the students in the week, to talk about their experiences to the group.²⁶ As word spread of the scheme, its popularity grew, and the Court came to accommodate a monthly intake of groups for a week of activities. Significantly, in a week of theatre-related activities, there is no indication

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Actors noted to have taken part in these sessions for the Schools Scheme include Vanessa Redgrave and Peter Bull. This weeklong visit to the Royal Court was priced at £1. This charge covered all travel fares within London as well as the cost of all theatre tickets, which were often reduced in price to support the Court’s scheme. To keep charges down, students were asked to provide their own food and could only take part in the scheme if they lived within daily travelling distance of the theatre (Ibid).

that the groups were offered the opportunity to discuss or learn about writing for the theatre. This might be regarded as unusual given the Court's desire to promote itself as a writers' theatre, but it would not be until 1972, under the direction of Joan Mills, that the young peoples' work at the Royal Court looked to incorporate playwriting into its remit.

It is evident that the Court had introduced a programme for schools that had been carefully tailored to offer young people an insight into both the inner workings of the Royal Court and the London performance circuit more generally. By offering the visits to students with easy access to London, the scheme was not only made more affordable for all involved, but it also provided the opportunity for the Court to demonstrate a commitment to young people, in the hope that the scheme could prove to be the necessary catalyst that would ultimately attract a younger audience to its productions.

The visits scheme continued for a year but in October 1961 Devine left the Court for three months and his associate, Tony Richardson, assumed control of the theatre.²⁷ During Richardson's brief tenure, the director expressed a desire to develop the work of the Schools Scheme further and, subsequently, a programme which sought to be 'much more grandiose than the visits' was devised and headed by Blatchley, to be funded by the ESC Council, whose Chairman Neville Blond offered £1,000 to support the venture.²⁸ However, due to issues concerning space and personnel, the expansion of the Scheme failed to progress beyond the planning stages.²⁹ That the Scheme's development was not pursued even with Blond's

²⁷ Little and McLaughlin note how Devine suffered a nervous breakdown following 'an acrimonious falling out with Nigel Dennis', concerning Dennis' play *August for the People* (p. 69).

²⁸ Browne, p. 40.

²⁹ Ibid.

significant offer of investment, which equates to around £20,000 in 2018, suggests a distinct lack of enthusiasm for this area of work. Indeed, this concern regarding issues of space and personnel, coupled with an absence of interest from within the Royal Court itself, is illustrative of some of the earliest tensions between the theatre and its initiatives for young people that recur throughout its history. As was often the case in the Scheme's early existence, it took the tenacity of certain individuals to ensure that young peoples' work remained a part of the Court's activities. As a result of this perseverance, a new endeavour founded by William Gaskill and Jane Howell, known as the Schools Scheme, returned to the theatre in 1966. Browne returns to discuss the Court's work with young people in this iteration, characterising it as 'a scheme of afternoon performances and discussions' for schools.³⁰ He goes on to offer a brief overview of the 'popular and successful' Schools Scheme, highlighting some of the key events that occurred between 1966 and 1973, including the staging of a student-devised piece entitled *Revolution* and the birth of the Young Playwrights Competition in 1973, which evolved into the Young Writers Festival two years later. Interestingly, Browne cites the continued 'support from the Arts Council and Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)'³¹ as key sources in enabling the Royal Court to take positive steps towards educating the young in theatre. Indeed, the relationship between the Arts Council, the ILEA and the Young Peoples' Theatre is an area that this thesis scrutinises at various points in the study and it is interesting to note Browne's comments here given how the Arts Council in particular came to present consistent challenges to the YPT's development in its early life.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 86.

³¹ Ibid. p. 87.

By February 1969 the Royal Court had expanded and, following a desire to provide a platform for young directors, writers and actors, the Theatre Upstairs was opened. This aimed to complement the work of the main house and ‘form a bridge between traditional and experimental theatres.’³² This extension of space for the Royal Court offered new opportunities for its young peoples’ work to co-exist within the building. This is evidenced through its extensive use by the Schools Scheme, Young Peoples’ Theatre and later Young Writers’ Programme with the flexible Theatre Upstairs providing an ideal space for workshops, Young Writers’ Festivals, special projects and plays by and for young people in the subsequent years. The volume ends with Browne discussing the climate at the Court at the beginning of the 1970s, which, according to the author, represents a time of leadership struggle coming into a new era at the Royal Court. The suggestion that the 1970s was a period of decline at the Court is first discussed by Browne in *Playwrights’ Theatre* and is an idea that has since been explored in work by scholars such as Philip Roberts.³³ The first chapter of this thesis, which charts the first decade of the Schools Scheme’s existence from 1966-76, is located within the context of the 1970s Royal Court and seeks to engage with this period from the perspective of the Schools Scheme. In offering an alternative viewpoint with which to analyse what is widely accepted as a difficult period in the Court’s history, it presents a new interpretation of the idea of a theatre in decline and the impact of this on the theatre’s work with young people.

³² Ibid. p. 84.

³³ Browne, pp. 93-102, and Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-72* (London: Routledge, 1986), pp. 121 – 144.

Scholarship on the Schools Scheme

Although his is the first book to analyse the early years of the Royal Court, Browne remains one of only two scholars to offer a detailed account of its work with young people. As his project explores the seminal moments of the English Stage Company's early history, the inclusion of the Court's work with young people at several points in the work suggests that the visits scheme and, latterly, the launch of the Schools Scheme were significant events for the theatre. As subsequent publications on Royal Court history have appeared, larger events such as the theatre's battle over theatre censorship, the instability of the 1970s and the artistic directorship of Max Stafford-Clark have come to preoccupy historical accounts on the theatre. This has contributed to the young peoples' work being overlooked in the narrative. Indeed, it is not until 2014 and Graham Saunders's chapter 'Kicking Tots and Revolutionary Trots: The English Stage Company Young People's Theatre Scheme 1969-70',³⁴ that the Court's work with young people is once again analysed and discussed in significant detail. To date, Saunders's work is the sole publication to concern itself exclusively with the YPT's history and practice. Adopting a similar methodology to that of this thesis, Saunders uses archival material to offer a close analysis of a year in the Scheme's life, revealing deeper insight into the relationship between the YPT and the Arts Council. Building on the foundation of Terry Browne, Saunders's chapter brings attention to three events that occurred as part of the Schools Scheme's work between 1969 and 1970: the 'Violence in the Theatre' workshops, which accompanied the Court's Edward Bond season, the student-devised 'Revolution' project and the 1970 adapted revival of Ann Jellicoe's *The Sport of My Mad Mother* (1958). Saunders describes the directors of the YPT as

³⁴ Graham Saunders, 'Kicking Tots and Revolutionary Trots: The English Stage Company Young People's Theatre Scheme 1969-70', in *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, ed. by Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014). pp. 190-206.

‘practitioners from the counterculture’ who ‘managed to surreptitiously gain a foothold within the theatre’s hierarchy’³⁵ and introduce new ‘radical and reenergizing’³⁶ ideas to the theatre’s work. Saunders surveys the impact of these endeavours on the ESC’s reputation with the media, the Arts Council, and the government and argues that the presence of this YPT returned an element of what he terms ‘the founding ethics’ of Devine’s English Stage Company to the Royal Court.³⁷ Saunders’s contribution to scholarship on the YPT is an important starting point for discussions of ethics and radicalism in the YPT, which is pertinent to the arguments raised in chapters one to three of this thesis. These chapters look to build on the work of Saunders to further demonstrate the ways in which the theatre’s young peoples’ initiative can be regarded as radical and reenergizing within both the Royal Court and the wider theatre-in-education movement. It looks to analyse how the leaders of these endeavours aimed, with varying degrees of success, to balance their work with young people with a close regard for the Royal Court’s identity either as a political theatre, a writers’ theatre or a forward-thinking institution. Saunders’ work also opened up new avenues for research for this thesis particularly with regards to the Scheme’s association with the Arts Council of Great Britain. His work, therefore, provides a vital foundation on which a narrative between the Scheme and a major funding source such as the Arts Council can be developed. Indeed, the first chapter of this thesis looks to draw on the complexities of this relationship through several encounters that occurred within the first decade of the Scheme’s existence.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 192.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 204.

³⁷ Ibid.

Contemporaneous Accounts

Chapter Two of the thesis illustrates a time when the relationship between the Arts Council and the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme was at its most fruitful. The arrival of Gerald Chapman as director of the Young Peoples' Theatre in 1976 contributed to the success of this affiliation and heralded a new era for the YPT, which led to a time of significant development in the theatre's work with young people.

In 1978, a conference entitled 'Theatre-Education: An Exploration' sought to address the 'lack of contact between the professional theatre and those involved in drama teaching' and is evidence of Chapman's ongoing commitment to facilitating conversations around the role of theatre in education.³⁸ Organised by Chapman and his associate John Dale, the proceedings of the event are preserved in an edited collection: *Exploring Theatre & Education* (1980).³⁹ With a chapter contribution from Chapman and Dale, this publication offers a rare insight into the policy, practice and vision for the YPT that cannot otherwise be found outside of the archive. Chapman asserts how the 1966 Schools Scheme 'was central to the rationale of the Court's existence.' His words articulate the value of the Schools Scheme and its ability to connect the Royal Court with one of the ESC's original objectives to 'encourage children to develop a genuine enthusiasm for and critical appreciation of good theatre.'⁴⁰ But Chapman's description of the YPT's subsequent 'stormy history' suggests that the ESC's commitment to the young has already been overlooked in favour of other priorities. The essay provides the most comprehensive account of the YPT's first decade in operation providing substantial historical

³⁸ Ken Robinson, 'Introduction', in *Exploring Theatre & Education*, ed. by Ken Robinson (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), pp. 1-6 (p. 1).

³⁹ Gerald Chapman and John Dale 'Theatre for Young People' in *Exploring Theatre & Education*, ed. by Ken Robinson (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), pp. 105-140.

⁴⁰ Browne, p. 39.

context as well as examples of how the YPT engaged with young people through outreach and acting and playwriting groups. It is the first publication to mention the Activists - the youth theatre strand of the YPT - which remains one of the most memorable features of the YPT's work, today. Chapman's radical voice and practical approach, as well as his passion for theatre and young people, is clear through his writing and this essay has proved to be a vital resource for this period.⁴¹

Like the work of Terry Browne, Chapman's words are written as contemporaneous accounts that reveal the practice and policy of the Court's work with young people. Real-time reflections such as this bring new dimensions to a reading of history that cannot otherwise be determined from retrospective engagement. Out of each of his counterparts, Chapman's approach to the YPT is most akin to the beliefs held by George Devine; indeed, Chapman himself is acutely aware of this association and nowhere is this more visible than in his own writing. In the most direct articulation of his views, Devine wrote in 1962, that 'the way to bridge the gap between the serious theatre and the majority of the population lay in schools' through a 'radical reappraisal of the teaching of drama'.⁴² In many ways, Chapman's practice throughout his four years as director of the YPT, can be characterised by similar principles. *Exploring Theatre and Education* goes some way towards theorising these intentions. Indeed, as Chapman points out, the YPT can trace its roots back to both the Visits Scheme in 1960 and to an idea first introduced by George Devine in 1963 known as the Studio. In an idea that will be returned to in Chapter Two, it was as part of his work with the Studio that Devine

⁴¹ Following Chapman's death in September 1987 an exercise book entitled *Teaching Young Playwrights* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991) was published posthumously. Although the book is largely focussed on exercises devised during Chapman's subsequent work with New York based Playwrights' Inc. it does occasionally allude to his previous work with the YPT which suggests that the book could provide some insight into the sort of exercises and work that Chapman undertook during his time as the YPT's director.

⁴² Devine qtd. in Richard Findlater, 'The Young Tradition', p. 190.

sought to nurture the ‘development of all kinds of studio artists... especially the young’,⁴³ conducting what he terms as ‘a series of researches’ with senior school children and infants as part of the Studio’s endeavours.⁴⁴

Chapman’s contribution to *Exploring Theatre in Education*, written in collaboration with his assistant director John Dale, uses the Young Peoples’ Theatre as a case study throughout. Here, Chapman offers an account of the YPT’s history from his own perspective, characterising it as a ‘strange hybrid, yoked to many different forces that often drive it in conflicting directions.’⁴⁵ His description pinpoints an inherent challenge to the YPT’s development in that it has often struggled to maintain a clear identity amidst regular questioning of its value to a theatre such as the Royal Court. Nevertheless, writing in 1980, Chapman identifies four key strands of the YPT’s work: the Young Writers’ Festival, Community and Outreach work, Young Writers’ Workshops and the Activists. Discussing each of these elements individually, Chapman offers an insight into his creative vision as a practitioner of young peoples’ theatre. This vision sought to empower the young and educate them in the possibilities and benefits of theatre in a time of increasing social division, and was particularly concerned with exploring issues around the politics of sexuality.⁴⁶ Chapter Two centres on two seasons of work, curated by Chapman at both the beginning and the end of his tenure as director of the YPT. In providing an analysis of these events, the chapter positions Chapman as a radical and forward-thinking theatre practitioner whose visions for the scheme led to one of the most politically motivated periods in the YPT’s history.

⁴³ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 93.

⁴⁴ George Devine qtd. in Gerald Chapman and John Dale, p. 107.

⁴⁵ Chapman and Dale ‘Theatre for Young People’ in *Exploring Theatre & Education*, p. 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 139.

25th Anniversary Publications

In 1981, theatre historian Richard Findlater published his anniversary work celebrating *25 Years of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court*. Acknowledging the ‘valuable’ work of Terry Browne in the previous decade, Findlater uses accounts given by Royal Court writers, actors, designers and artistic directors to gather opinions and perspectives on the Court’s ‘forceful impression’ on the British theatrical landscape over the previous twenty-five years.⁴⁷ Photographs of productions and other moments in the theatre’s history support the personal contributions from significant figures in the theatre’s history from John Osborne to Ann Jellicoe, adding an informal, scrapbook style to the work. Findlater himself pays tribute to what he terms ‘The Young Tradition’ at the Court which is illustrated through the ‘vigorous expansion’ of the Young Peoples’ Theatre under the direction of Gerald Chapman.⁴⁸ Repeating the point raised in previous publications, Findlater emphasises the involvement of young people in the work of the Royal Court as a fact rooted in the theatre’s history.⁴⁹ The author speaks of how the young have been a ‘persistent element in the Court’s theory’ but a ‘spasmodic factor in its practice’.⁵⁰ Findlater’s account drew attention to the difficulties that existed between the Royal Court and its Young Peoples’ Theatre. As the YPT saw itself as an endeavour that was representative of the so-called ‘roots’ of the Court’s composition, a tension remained between this perception and the theatre’s ability to fully recognise the Scheme’s value within the wider institution. Findlater writes of how the YPT was regarded as a ‘disaster area’ by some yet championed as a ‘growth

⁴⁷ Findlater, ‘The Young Tradition’, in *25 Years of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, p. 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 189.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

area' by others,⁵¹ illustrating the tensions in existence over two decades after young peoples' initiatives were introduced at the theatre. Indeed, it is one of the central aims of this thesis to engage with these tensions and give reasons as to why they occurred. Findlater's insight into the formation of the YPT provides an updated version of events first covered by Browne and offers a useful overview of the YPT's early history up until 1980.⁵² His chapter also points towards several themes that were emerging in the YPT's work at this time, such as: a 'concern for making the theatre connect with contemporary social realities',⁵³ the touring of productions to schools, a focus on minority communities and a desire to nurture young writers, all of which are considered throughout this study.

Filling Gaps in the Scholarship

Theatre historian Philip Roberts can be regarded as an important Royal Court scholar with his two monographs published in 1986 and 1999 using case studies and archival research to offer two seminal readings of the changing landscapes of the Royal Court between 1965 and 1998. The first, *The Royal Court Theatre: 1965-1972*, divides seven years of the theatre's history in to four periods which are supported by four case studies of plays by male playwrights of the Royal Court: Edward Bond (*Saved* (1965)), D H Lawrence (*The Daughter-in-Law* (1967)), David

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 194.

⁵² The appendices of *25 Years...* is an invaluable resource into the production history of the Royal Court from 1956 until 1980. Significantly, the index includes production dates, writers, directors and cast lists of the Young Peoples' Theatre's work, also, which has proved vital in the formulation of my own history of Young Writers' Festival productions in support of this thesis (see Appendix D). This index is augmented in works by Ruth Little and Emily McLaughlin (*the Royal Court Theatre Inside Out* (2008)), which collates production information up to beginning of 2007 and most recently by Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas (*Royal Court: International* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015)) who have created a timeline of the Court's international work from 1989 to 2013. The value that is provided through collections of production history such as those listed above has encouraged me to use similar ideas to construct a timeline for the theatre's work with young people. This has been made available in Appendix C and it is hoped that this will bring attention to this area of the Court's history in a way that is akin to Aston and O'Thomas' contribution to the international initiatives.

⁵³ Findlater, 'The Young Tradition', in *25 Years of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, p. 194.

Storey (*The Changing Room* (1971)) and Howard Brenton (*Magnificence* (1973)). With the focus of the study overlapping the creation of the Schools Scheme, it could be expected to include some details on this endeavour. And, indeed, the Scheme is mentioned, albeit fleetingly, at several points in the study. But, as is customary in many of the publications on the Court, particularly in the last thirty years, discussions on the Schools Scheme and subsequently the Young Peoples' Theatre are confined to a sentence or two and are never fully interrogated. Nonetheless, Roberts's account in *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-72* is a useful resource, particularly when trying to understand the opinions of others towards the Schools Scheme as it was introduced at the Court. One passage specifically details the underlying concerns of members of Royal Court staff towards the ostensible integration of young peoples' work in the theatre's policy. Roberts refers to words and phrases such as 'nervous', 'concerned', 'considerable anxiety' and indicates how the 'committee was split on the issue' of directing resources and efforts towards schools and young people.⁵⁴ Roberts's scholarship on this area unearths the origins of tensions around the place of a Schools Scheme within an institution that is committed to the search and production of new plays. However, the brevity of Robert's engagement with this material, leaves room for further development and interrogation of this area of the Court's work.

Roberts's second monograph on the Court, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage* (1999), presents a historical look back at the workings of what the author describes as the 'foremost house of modern drama'.⁵⁵ Within it, Roberts offers a comparative analysis of the Court's position not only within the UK but also further afield in Europe and the rest of the world, focusing on over four decades of

⁵⁴ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-72*, p. 58.

⁵⁵ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. xiv.

the English Stage Company at the Royal Court. Implementing once again what is Roberts's most effective research methodology, the account is predominantly compiled of archival research and combined with interviews to give exceptional insight into the Court's relentless battle with arts funding and external sponsorship, a battle finally resolved in the 1990s with the theatre's refurbishment and temporary relocation to the West End.⁵⁶ Despite providing an analysis of the Royal Court's history that spans from before the English Stage Company in 1954 until 1998, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage* offers very little information about the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme with the Court's work with young people limited to a handful of pages in a book of considerable length. As in his previous study of the Court, Roberts discusses how this area of the theatre's endeavours had faced opposition from those who felt that the work either 'diverted the Court from its central purpose' or was simply 'a waste of time'.⁵⁷ Roberts does, however, credit the Young Peoples' Theatre with creating 'both a vital link with a younger generation and, on occasion, a source of new writing.'⁵⁸ This thesis seeks to explore the extent of this contribution in more detail. *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage* also provides the first published account of the directors of the YPT across its thirty-year history, citing: Jane Howell (1966-1970), Pam Brighton (1970-1972), Joan Mills (1972-1976), Gerald Chapman (1976-80), David Sulkin (1980-1988) and Dominic Tickell (1988-1997) as the YPT's directors. Frustratingly, given that this is the only public account outside of the archives, there are some inaccuracies with Roberts's reading. For example, the valuable and extensive contribution of Elyse Dodgson, who engineered a vital shift for the Young Writers' Festival and its

⁵⁶ Further information on the complexities of this move and the theatre rebuild is discussed and theorised in: Stephen Berwind, 'Reconstructing the Construction of the Royal Court', *Theatre Survey*, 44:2 (2003), pp. 221-247.

⁵⁷ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, pp. 171-172.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 172.

approach to working with young writers, which came to inform her methodology of working with international playwrights, does not feature in Roberts's account. Dodgson's tenure is instead assigned to her male predecessor and successor, David Sulkin and Dominic Tickell, respectively, and this is an error which my account corrects by identifying Dodgson as director of the YPT from 1985-1993.

The relationship between the practices of the Young Writers' Festival from 1986 to 1996, and Dodgson's method of working with international playwrights as head of the theatre's International department, is recognised by Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas in *Royal Court: International* (2015). Here Aston and O'Thomas draw attention to the extent to which Dodgson's work with international writers was modelled on her previous endeavours with the Young Peoples' Theatre and its Young Writers' Festival.⁵⁹ This thesis adds to the work of Aston and O'Thomas by tracing the process-based methodology pioneered by Dodgson to its origins with the regional work of the Young Writers' Festival. In doing so, a more comprehensive narrative is formed that allows for greater visibility of the legacy of the Young Peoples' Theatre within other working practices at the Royal Court today. Indeed, this study shares common ground with *Royal Court: International* as both projects use analysis of lesser-explored strands of the Court's work to bring attention to the theatre's broader composition and practice in order to provide a greater knowledge of the theatre's history.

Roberts's two works on the Royal Court are vital resources for readers interested in learning more about external and internal politics that have consumed the theatre's life and subsequent historical record. The politics of the Royal Court

⁵⁹ Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas, *Royal Court: International* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 13.

theatre is complex, historical and wide-ranging: from external battles with the Arts Council and the media to internal conflicts amongst the theatre's management. It is in seeking to create a detailed account of these events that Roberts's work has ultimately overlooked the theatre's engagement with young people. What is unfortunate, however, is that popular and widely available accounts such as this have also subsequently perpetuated the occlusion of a vital part of the theatre's composition. Indeed, as this thesis demonstrates, much of the politics contained within histories such as that offered by Roberts can be directly linked to the Young Peoples' Theatre, offering the potential to build on existing studies and create a wider frame of reference for future scholarship.

Building on Histories

Roberts's monographs are published either side of the collated transcripts from a 1981 conference on 'The English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre: Production, Practices and Legacies, 1956-1981' edited by Gredna. A. Doty and Billy. J. Harbin. The resulting publication, entitled *Inside the Royal Court Theatre, 1956-1981*, was published nine years after the event held at Louisiana State University and provides detailed transcripts of the conference proceedings.⁶⁰ From these transcripts, Doty and Harbin create a first-hand account of life at the Royal Court from a variety of perspectives, compiling opinions from a range of important figures in the Royal Court's history. Contributions range from discussions of the legacy of George Devine to open debates between directors, artists and managers, and the role of the Royal Court across the theatrical landscape of the time. The conference was held during a period of considerable change for the Court, with the

⁶⁰ The conference took place at Louisiana State University from the 7-10 October 1981. All of the artistic directors of the Royal Court, except George Devine (deceased) and Oscar Lewenstein (illness), up to that point including Max Stafford-Clark were present.

appointment of Max Stafford-Clark as artistic director - the first to hold the post without any previous connection to George Devine. A distinctly male occasion, as Court writer Ann Jellicoe remarks 'there are so many men here at the conference and so few women.'⁶¹ This is an observation that is particularly pertinent to the YPT, which significantly had been led by four directors between 1966 and 1981, three of whom were women, and the activities of which are alluded to only once, at the close of Doty and Harbin's record. This document, therefore, further demonstrates the ways in which female figures at the Royal Court, and their contribution to the theatre's work, are left uncredited in historical accounts. As a case in point, the success of the Young Writers' Festival, which was created by Joan Mills and originated out of the Young Peoples' Theatre in 1975 as an endeavour designed to facilitate interest in playwriting for young people, and which remained a biennial event in the Royal Court calendar until 2012, is credited to Stafford-Clark's dedication to the 'aggressive nurturing of talent'⁶² as opposed to Mills's important foresight as director of the YPT. Here, discussions of the Festival's achievements are limited to the production of Andrea Dunbar's *The Arbor*, which opened in the Young Writers' Festival in 1980 before transferring to the Court's Theatre Downstairs. Although Stafford-Clark highlights in the book's final sentence 'the importance of the youth theatre' as a potential source for new writing and an area that the 'Royal Court must keep expanding in the future,'⁶³ the value of the YPT'S work within the theatre's structures is not developed beyond this.

Chapter Four aims to use Stafford-Clark's statement regarding the significance of the Young Peoples' Theatre as a starting point for exploration by

⁶¹ Doty and Harbin, p. 160.

⁶² Ibid. p. 23.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 221.

analysing the ways in which the YPT can be seen as an important wellspring for new writing, particularly given the expansion of plays by young writers produced at the Royal Court in the 1990s. Indeed, the 1990s Royal Court under the artistic directorship of Stephen Daldry brought with it new sources of funding ranging from corporate sponsorship to independent investment. This had a direct impact on the Court's ability to produce a high number of new plays by first time writers. For the Young Peoples' Theatre, corporate donations had provided much-needed financial support for its Young Writers' Festival since 1984, with this funding also allowing for the publication of a number of collections of plays by young writers from the Young Writers' Festival between 1986 and 1995. Some of these publications are programmes for the Festival which, as has become standard, include copies of the text, while others are more formal in presentation and are brought together using collective titles such as: *First Lines: Young Writers' at the Royal Court* (1990) and *Coming on Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (1995). While these collections provide the opportunity to read the plays produced as part of the Young Writers' Festivals between 1986 and 1995, they also include prefaces and introductions that offer further insight in to the changing policies and priorities of the Young Peoples' Theatre at the time. YPT directors Elyse Dodgson and Dominic Tickell have both contributed introductions to these collections where the pioneering regional work of the YPT and the Young Writers' Festival is brought into focus. In connecting the archival material relating to this work in the regions with the information provided in these introductions, Chapter Four offers an analysis of this regional work and argues for its role as the origins of a defining and unique methodology of developing young writers at the Royal Court theatre.

While Stafford-Clark's 'aggressive nurturing of talent' is regarded as a

positive comment on his tenure in Doty and Harbin's record, the final chapter of this thesis argues that the nurturing of talent, through the Young Writers' Programme, came to have a negative effect on the relationship between the Royal Court and the Young Writers' Programme coming into the 21st Century. Indeed, one of the most recognisable features of the Young Writers' Programme is the implementation of writers' groups as the primary mode of nurturing aspiring playwrights. Doty and Harbin's work is useful again here as the notion of a writers' group at the Royal Court is a concept that can be traced back to 1958 and the inception of the first Writers' Group under George Devine. The primary functions of these groups, together with opinions regarding its value, are widely debated in Doty and Harbin's transcripts and these have provided useful context to an initiative that re-emerged through the YPT in 1979 and went on to become a central component of the Young Writers' Programme. The 'Production, Practices and Legacies' conference of 1981 represents the only time in the theatre's history when so many figures from the Royal Court's past and present publically reflect on the theatre's work. The substantial omission of the Young Peoples' Theatre from the debate is further illustrative of a perception held within the Royal Court itself that viewed the YPT as a 'waste of time', an opinion that this thesis strongly contests throughout.⁶⁴

50th Anniversary Publications

The 50th anniversary celebrations that took place at the Royal Court in 2006 to mark half a century of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court were supported by the release of two further publications that focussed on the theatre's work over this period. Using interviews with playwrights from five decades of Royal Court history, Harriet Devine's *Looking Back: Playwrights at the Royal Court Theatre 1956-2006*

⁶⁴ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 171.

(2006) presents a series of conversations with Royal Court writers including some who had experience as teachers and participants in the Young Peoples' Theatre and latterly Young Writers' Programme, such as Hanif Kureishi, Lucy Prebble, Simon Stephens, Leo Butler, April De Angelis and Joe Penhall. These personal accounts often give small details that cannot be found through any other means. They provide an insight into how playwrights began participating in activities for young people at the Royal Court as well as detailing how their early work was received and developed in this environment. The conversations collated in Devine's publication have supported the original interviews conducted as part of this study. Devine's work focusses almost exclusively on playwrights from the Royal Court, which brings a new perspective to the work that sets it apart from other publications on the theatre, where material from artistic directors and management is often given priority. Through discussions with writers such as Prebble, Penhall, Butler and Stephens, the role of the YPT and Young Writers' Programme in the development of their early careers has provided an important context that has come to inform both the content of the thesis and the interview aspect of its research. These insights have also shaped some of the research questions of the final chapter, where the formative years of the Young Writers' Programme are brought into sharp focus. It is here that the thesis seeks to question the ways in which the Programme's practices can be viewed as problematic and the source of fresh conflict between the Young Writers' Programme and the Royal Court's literary department. Although Devine's line of questioning does not explicitly engage with this notion at any point, the resulting material contains information that is useful to the discussion. Indeed, Devine's only interview with a non-playwright takes place with Graham Whybrow, the Court's literary manager from 1994-2007. It is here that Whybrow describes the Court as a

place ‘riddled with contradictions’ and indeed this thesis argues that the Young Writers’ Programme can be seen as a case in point.⁶⁵ In testing the ways in which these contradictions arise, a better understanding of the Court’s recent history and its working practices with writers can be attained.

The second book to be released in quick succession as part of the Court’s anniversary celebrations is *The Royal Court Theatre Inside Out*. Writers Ruth Little (ex-literary manager at the Royal Court) and Emily McLaughlin (former associate director) adopt a scrapbook style approach, not dissimilar to that of Richard Findlater, to offer the most comprehensive insight into the work of the Royal Court to date. But where Findlater’s book is largely made up of contributions from those who have worked at the Court, *Inside Out* draws from a range of resources, including the archive, interviews, and previous publications, to inform their work. The book clarifies some important information particularly concerning the dates of key events in the Court’s history. It offers an insight into the changes in policy, audience attitudes to the Court, subsidy issues and methodological approaches to the programming of plays, along with reflections on the rehearsal process and how these differed through changes in artistic directors. This has provided valuable context to this thesis and has allowed me to draw on any distinct similarities or differences in policy and objectives between the Young Peoples’ Theatre and its parent theatre. Information relating to young peoples’ work occurs sporadically throughout the book, although two dedicated sections on the Young Peoples’ Theatre and the Young Writers’ Programme offer further insight into this area of the Court’s activity. This includes detailing how the ‘Young Peoples’ Theatre was renamed the

⁶⁵ Harriet Devine, p.330.

Young Writers' Programme'⁶⁶ in 1998 and the tracing of the first Royal Court Young Writers' Group in 1979. Little and McLaughlin's study demonstrates how initiatives that originated within the Young Peoples' Theatre such as the Young Writers' Group and the Young Writers' Festival came to inform the Court's future work with young people through the Young Writers' Programme. Moreover, the authors talk of how 'pressure grew to bring [the young peoples'] activities back to Sloane Square' although the specifics of this go unremarked.⁶⁷ The details of the YPT's transition into the Young Writers' Programme is a central aspect of this thesis. Indeed, in providing a detailed account of this important development, this study hopes to bring light to an event that has not been given enough attention in existing publications. Exactly why the creation of the Young Writers' Programme occurred at the expense of the dissolution of the Young Peoples' Theatre has therefore become a governing enquiry to the second half of this thesis.

New Contributions

In building the Young Writers' Programme out of the foundations of the Young Peoples' Theatre, the Programme's subsequent success is well suited to the Court's historical identity as a writers' theatre, and it is perhaps for this reason that the YPT's own history has been overlooked. This thesis goes some way towards amending this oversight in an attempt to augment the existing knowledge of this area of the theatre's work. This introduction has sought to identify the key publications available in current scholarship and illustrate the ways in which this study expands on these accounts. By engaging with these publications, it has become clear the YPT has been underrepresented in the narrative. With the exception of two pieces of scholarship on the YPT's activities, those of Chapman

⁶⁶ Little and McLaughlin, p. 137.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 378.

and Saunders, the information that is presented is often left without scrutiny and interrogation especially when compared to other parts of Royal Court history. This thesis aligns itself with much of this well-documented history but in doing so the study reveals an original account that uses these events to inform and construct a new debate around the significance of the young peoples' work in the shaping of the theatre's history.

At several points, this introduction has specified the ways in which key figures and events in the theatre's history of engaging with young people has escaped proper integration within existing scholarship on the Royal Court. Until 2013 and the appointment of Vicky Featherstone, the role of Artistic Director of the Court is a post that has been occupied by men since the theatre's inception in 1956. As a result, the Court's many achievements over the last sixty years are often credited to these figures, whose names have come to dominate accounts of the theatre's history. The Young Peoples' Theatre is the anomaly in a male-dominated narrative and the significant contribution of women to this area of the Court's work is a fundamental tenet of this thesis. In demonstrating the ways in which these female figures have influenced the theatre's history both in terms of leadership and the implementation of policy that has come to shape the theatre's work more widely, this study goes some way towards recognising and attributing these significant contributions. The partial representation of the YPT in scholarship on the Royal Court has not only limited awareness of its leaders but also its practices, which were at times forward thinking and radical. Indeed, the YPT's own record provides evidence that positions this strand of the theatre as home to some of the most diverse and socially engaging work to take place at the Royal Court, and a place where some truly pioneering models were developed that are now enshrined within the

theatre's own practices today. This thesis, therefore, provides the foundation on which new investigations on the Royal Court's work can be built.

Chapter One

‘The Lunatics Have Seized Power’:

Early Tensions and Conflict in the Schools Scheme 1966-1976

A Schools Scheme

The 1960s marked a time of important development in the field of Theatre in Education (TiE). The findings of the Arts Council of Great Britain’s 1965 Young Peoples Theatre Enquiry had concluded by ‘strongly recommending support’ in this area.⁶⁸ Subsequently, a significant number of theatres around the UK began to introduce initiatives for young people with companies founded, often out of these theatres, to take work out into schools. The beginnings of what came to be known as the TiE movement is grounded in the pioneering work of the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, which was also established in 1965, and, as the decade continued, theatres and companies from areas such as Bolton (1968), Watford (1968) Edinburgh (1969) and Leeds (1970) followed the example set by the Belgrade Theatre, with new TiE endeavours that sought to connect young people with drama and theatre. London also contributed to the expanding field with Cockpit TiE (1971) and Greenwich Young Peoples’ Theatre (1971) engaging with the young in innovative ways, indicating a nationwide commitment to the cause.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the inception and progression of a Schools Scheme at the Royal Court in 1966 against the backdrop of an emerging TiE movement. In framing the chapter in this way, comparisons can be made between the policy and practice of the Schools Scheme, and its later title of the Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme (YPTS), alongside other initiatives that functioned within the TiE movement. Through this, the chapter formulates a narrative that

⁶⁸ These results were included as part of the 1966 Arts Council of Great Britain’s Annual Report (John Bull, *British Theatre Companies 1965-1979* (London: Methuen, 2017), p. 100).

begins with the Scheme closely aligned to the Royal Court, where events for young people were largely designed in conjunction with the theatre's programming, through to the Scheme's fractious encounters with the Arts Council and the government and the inception of its most well-known endeavour: The Young Writers' Festival. It concludes by demonstrating how a scheme for young people at the Court had battled through much of its first decade to forge a clear purpose both within the context of the Royal Court and also against the backdrop of a developing TiE field. This brought with it continued challenges to its position within the Royal Court itself, with the Scheme ending the period without a leader and with its future in jeopardy.

This chapter covers the tenures of three of the Scheme's directors: Jane Howell, Pam Brighton, and Joan Mills. It traces the beginning of the Scheme under its first director, Jane Howell, and explores some of the earliest workshops and projects designed for young people that evolved further under Pam Brighton. With the arrival of Joan Mills in 1972 the Scheme gained new focus and purpose as playwriting became integrated into the Scheme's remit and the inaugural Young Writers' Festival was held.

The years 1966-76 can be seen as a significant time at the Royal Court more widely with the abolition of theatre censorship in 1968, which ended the arduous and extensive battle between the Court and the Lord Chamberlain, the opening and closing of the Theatre Upstairs and the Court's frequent changes in artistic directorship. In aligning these events to the theatre's work with young people a new perspective of this decade in Royal Court history can be ascertained that brings original insights and debates to an already existing narrative of the theatre.

Jane Howell: 1966-1970

Funded by a £5000 grant from the Arts Council,⁶⁹ which is equal to around £80,000 in today's money, the Schools Scheme was introduced in the Spring of 1966 following William Gaskill's appointment of Jane Howell as an assistant director at the Royal Court with a 'particular responsibility for schools work'.⁷⁰ Howell had worked as a director, intermittently, for the Royal Court since 1960, directing productions by Ann Jellicoe (*The Sport of My Mad Mother* (1960)), John Arden (*Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1965)), David Cregan (*Transcending* and *The Dancers* (1966)) and Harley Granville Barker (*The Voyage Inheritance* (1966)). The appointment of Howell to the Schools Scheme expressed a desire of Gaskill's for his assistants to 'do more concrete production work'⁷¹ and much of Howell's professional directing work for the Court post-1966 was focussed on productions mounted and programmed as part of the Schools Scheme endeavour. It is important to note here that as Gaskill voiced his intentions to take time away from his role as artistic director in 1969, he recommended Howell to oversee the running of the Court in his absence. Although Howell was vetoed by the ESC Council in favour of two male directors, Lindsay Anderson and Anthony Page, Gaskill's endorsement of Howell affirms her reputation as 'one of the most important figures' at the Court during the second half of the 1960s.⁷² Gaskill's decision to assign the experienced Howell to the Schools Scheme suggests both Howell's ability to develop this area of the Court's work, as well as Gaskill's own level of commitment to the inclusion of young peoples' work within the Court's remit.

⁶⁹ Browne, p. 86.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 21.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 58.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 21.

The announcement of the Schools Scheme's reintroduction into the Court's range of activities, however, brought with it fresh concerns around the impact of the initiative on the Court's ability to effectively function as an eminent theatre driven by the production of new plays. Fears that the Scheme could 'divert energy from the search for new plays' dominated the debate, with anxieties around the financial and practical elements of the Scheme contributing to the general lack of enthusiasm for the endeavour.⁷³ With the overriding attitude towards the Schools Scheme one of distinct negativity, it is down to Gaskill's tenacity, coupled with Howell and later Pam Brighton's energy and commitment in the Scheme's early years, that the schools' work progressed past the planning stages.

Howell's initial ambitions for the Scheme aimed to 'encourage a younger audience'⁷⁴ to the Court. This early policy aligned with a further ambition of Gaskill's that aimed to expand the theatre's reach 'beyond the fashionable minority, to a larger and more varied audience'.⁷⁵ While the implementation of a free seats scheme by Gaskill was demonstrated to be financially unviable, the introduction of daytime performances followed by discussions offered specifically to schools proved a more effective proposal.⁷⁶ Galvanised by the 'overwhelming response by schools' to Gaskill's production of *Macbeth* (1966), Howell had sent questionnaires to schools around inner London asking for specific productions that they would like to see at the theatre, with a view of presenting a series of work as part of the Court's programme specifically designed to meet the needs of schools.⁷⁷ Responses were limited in scope with six of the ten shortlisted plays written by Shakespeare. Other

⁷³ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 58.

⁷⁴ Interview with Jane Howell, conducted by the author, 27 January 2015.

⁷⁵ Browne, p. 86.

⁷⁶ Frank Rainbow, *Schools Scheme* (1966), V&A: THM/273/4/20/1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

works that featured were Arnold Wesker's *Roots* (1959), Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948), Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (1894), and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) by Oliver Goldsmith. With Wesker's long standing affiliation to the Court, *Roots*, a G.C.E set text of the time, was chosen to inaugurate the Scheme and opened on the 23 February 1967. Directed by Howell, the production retained Jocelyn Herbert's 1959 original design and played two nights exclusively for schools before opening to the public. The decision to produce Wesker's *Roots* is significant for two reasons: first because the choosing of a play that is also featured on the curriculum suggests a genuine awareness by the Court that the work produced by the Schools' Scheme should be of some educational benefit to young people. It also demonstrates a commitment by Gaskill 'to do plays by writers who had been part of the first Writers' Group', displaying an action that Gaskill describes as 'absolutely central' to his ideas on his return to the Court as artistic director.⁷⁸ Moreover, in reproducing *Roots*, a play that debuted at the Court eight years earlier, the theatre had retained a sense of ownership over the work that can be seen to be of benefit to the theatre itself as well as to the Scheme and the broader education system.

Launched alongside *Roots* was the Royal Court Student Card. Available on application to the Court, the card made up to one hundred of the best seats in the theatre, or roughly a third of the auditorium, available, per performance, to young people for all Court productions at a cost of five shillings. Terry Browne calls the introduction of the card scheme an 'unqualified success' that enabled over 11,000 young people to access productions at the Court within two years of its

⁷⁸ Interview with William Gaskill, conducted by the author, 15 January 2015.

introduction.⁷⁹ The fact that the student card scheme allowed for many young people to occupy such a high proportion of the theatre seating is a hugely generous incentive that further illustrates Gaskill's investment in the young. The student card coupled with designated productions for schools and young people are two examples that demonstrate Howell's success in bringing younger audiences to the Court. These initiatives ensured that over 11,000 young people saw plays at the Royal Court between 1967 and 1969, a significant achievement that exhibits the Schools Scheme's immediate impact on the theatre.

However, as Philip Roberts notes, the early accomplishments of the Scheme encountered some resistance from within the Court itself. Members of the theatre's Artistic Committee were 'split' on their opinions as to the Scheme's place within the Court.⁸⁰ Writing two weeks before the opening of *Roots*, Lord Harewood, a member of this committee, states how he 'would hate the company to reach a position whereby its main energies were going into the programme for schools.'⁸¹ That concerns for the Scheme continued to be raised in the build-up to its inaugural event reveals the first signs of hostility towards the Court's schools' work. At its crux, these anxieties hinged on the fact that some believed that investment in the schools' work could 'divert energy from the search for new plays' and move the Court away from what was viewed as the 'main reason for the [ESC's] existence.'⁸² Roberts reports that the opinions that were voiced during the outlining of the Scheme's plans displayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the idea from both a practical and

⁷⁹ Browne, p. 86. This figure does not include those young people in attendance at productions put on specifically for schools. Browne also notes how the 1968 revival of *Look Back in Anger* was comprised of one hundred students each night and the matinees completely occupied by students.

⁸⁰ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 58.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

financial viewpoint.⁸³ Opposition to the Schools Scheme at the very beginning of its existence foreshadows recurring conflicts between the Court and its young peoples' initiatives. Moreover, in overlooking the value of the schools' work in favour of the pursuit of new plays, the Artistic Committee demonstrated a lack of recognition, awareness or respect for George Devine's original intentions for the Court, where young people played a central role in its composition.

Violence in the Theatre: Matinées and Workshops for the Scheme

Discussing the rise of the TiE movement in the 1960s, Roger Wooster suggests that the 'traditional theatre establishment was unable to conceive of what was happening' and as a result 'it could only see this new upstart as a way of getting children interested in theatre.'⁸⁴ And while raising young peoples' interest in the theatre is one of many objectives of TiE work, the mounting of productions with a schools' audience in mind within a traditional theatre environment, as seen in the practice of the Royal Court, strays some way from the early notions of TiE, whose work was largely concentrated in schools. That said, with no specific mention of TiE in relation to the work of the Schools' Scheme until early in the 1970s, when Pam Brighton looked to align it with more conventional TiE practices, it is likely that Howell was unconcerned but not necessarily unaware of developments happening in the field of TiE. It is important to note, therefore, that while Howell's position at the Court involved a 'particular responsibility for schools' work', her capacity as an assistant director differs considerably from that of a TiE practitioner. Indeed, a signature of Howell's tenure with the Schools Scheme is undoubtedly the fact that her work with young people 'always drew attention to the main repertoire'⁸⁵ of the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Roger Wooster, *Theatre in Education in Britain* (London: Methuen, 2017), p. 52.

⁸⁵ Saunders, p. 204.

Royal Court as opposed to being driven by other influences such as the practices visible within TiE. That said, there are a number of shared features between Howells' Schools Scheme and the work of TiE practitioners and institutions that enable comparisons to be made between the two, namely the inherent politicization of early TiE, along with the use of workshops to support the productions on offer.

Following the success of *Roots*, further productions, often special matinée performances for schools, continued to be regularly staged throughout Howells' time with the Scheme. Examples of these can be seen through productions including: Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* (1967), a double bill by Joe Orton entitled *Crimes of Passion* that featured two of his works *The Ruffian on the Stair* and *The Erpingham Camp* (1967), as well as plays by David Storey (*The Restoration of Arnold Middleton* (1967)), Donald Howarth (*OGODIVELEFTTHEGASON* (1967)), D.H. Lawrence (*The Daughter-in-Law* (1968)), and the first major revival of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1968), directed by Anthony Page, which were all staged with the Schools Scheme in mind.⁸⁶ The inclusion of plays by writers such as Joe Orton for a schools audience is unusual and illustrative of the first signs of a scheme for young people that challenged what could be deemed as appropriate for the age group for which it was intended.

The adult nature of the plays chosen for production under Howells' directorship culminated in March 1969 when a season of plays written by Edward Bond was programmed. Billed as a 'commemorative event to mark the role [the Court] had played in ending the Lord Chamberlain's powers as theatre censor',⁸⁷ *Saved*, *Early Morning*, and *Narrow Road to the Deep North* were all given full

⁸⁶ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 58. Page's production of *Look Back in Anger* transferred to the West End's Criterion Theatre on 10 December 1968.

⁸⁷ Saunders, p. 193.

performances, which included three matinée performances for schools.⁸⁸ The matinées were preceded by workshops for young people facilitated by cast members along with the season's director William Gaskill. The invitations sent out to schools addressed the nature of the material covered in the workshops with Howell suggesting that the content might be more suited to older students.⁸⁹ Entitled 'Violence in the Theatre' these workshops comprised of a series of scene studies from *Agamemnon*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Entertaining Mr Sloane* along with two of Bond's plays: *Early Morning* and *Saved*.⁹⁰ Once again, the appropriateness of the choices of plays for inclusion in a programme for schools can be brought in to question here. It is a policy that signals a clear intention to remain true to the Royal Court's distinctive identity by formulating a scheme influenced by the theatre rather than the other way around. Although violence remained the overriding theme of many of the plays offered to Schools during this time, it is a theme that is reflective of the Court's rigid anti-censorship stance of the time and suggests that the theatre's own *raison d'être* was central to Howells' vision for the Scheme.

In discussing the use of violence on the stage, Howell's workshops, as part of the Schools Scheme, demonstrate a clear engagement with a theme that could be readily witnessed on the Royal Court stage. She argued that in these plays 'violence was not glamourised, nor the morality facile' which stood in direct opposition to the 'daily television serials to which [young people] are continually subjected.'⁹¹ By

⁸⁸ These performances took place on the 20, 24 and 27 March 1969 (Ibid).

⁸⁹ Jane Howell, Letter to Participating Schools on the Edward Bond Season (28 January 1969), V and A: ACGB 34/41.

⁹⁰ Similar discussions and workshops were also offered by the Court for Frank Norman's *Insideout* (1969) and Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (1970).

⁹¹ Jane Howell, Letter to Participating Schools on the Edward Bond Season (28 January 1969), V and A: ACGB 34/41.

offering an environment in which to discuss and explore these ideas with both young people and adults within six months of the abolition of theatre censorship, an underlying political motive to Howell's intentions for the Scheme is made clear. This fact is not overlooked in a report written by schools' inspector Mary Gordon who, following her attendance at a workshop focusing on excerpts from *Saved* and Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, expressed concern for the Court's work with young people:

It seems to me that whether or not Edward Bond may be considered a good or great dramatist is a matter of opinion. It is a fact that two of these plays of his now being shown to the schools were banned by the Lord Chamberlain before he was abolished. Surely it is open to question whether it is good or even morally defensible to present living theatre in this form to adolescent pupils, and whether it is right for the Department [of Education] to support the Royal Court Theatre in this policy.⁹²

Gordon's account was forwarded to the Department of Education and then on to the Arts Council's Drama Department. Given that the Schools Scheme had been awarded a further grant of £3690 in addition to what the Court received for the financial year 1969-70, Gordon's report caused the Arts Council to intervene and investigate the matter further. Although no further action was taken on the issue, Gordon's complaint had drawn the attention of the Arts Council to the Scheme's work. This encounter opened up the Scheme's activities to further criticism from the Arts Council and came to have direct repercussions on the Scheme and the Royal Court's future.⁹³

Revolution

Driven by a desire to 'encourage an appreciation and development of understanding of theatre' for young people,⁹⁴ the Schools Scheme had also looked, sporadically, to

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Saunders, p. 194.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

further its practical work with an assorted group of young people across the London area. The first of these events occurred in 1967 when Ann Jellicoe's *The Rising Generation* was produced alongside Charles Hayward's *Dance of the Teletape*. Hayward's play was cast entirely from boys of Dulwich College, for a Sunday night production on 23 July 1967.⁹⁵ *The Rising Generation* comprised a company of one hundred and fifty young people whose ages ranged from twelve to sixteen years and was staged after an intensive two-week period of rehearsal. It was not until two years later that an event of similar size took place in the Schools Scheme again. Using the theme of revolution, which also came to be the title of the work, Howell invited students from two and a half thousand schools from in and around London to take part, with eleven schools ultimately participating.⁹⁶ As with *The Rising Generation*, the project was rehearsed over two weeks with the rehearsal venues split between a large ballroom in Victoria, a local pub, and the Portcullis Theatre on Victoria's embankment.⁹⁷ Here they were tasked with devising a series of short extracts using their own experiences as the source material. As Howell remembers: 'They worked in groups of ten, I think, and the show was theirs – they could say what they liked about whatever they liked... They talked about education; they talked about family problems, whatever they wanted they could say.'⁹⁸ *Revolution* ultimately involved a one hundred and forty strong company of twelve to seventeen year olds.⁹⁹ Howell enlisted the help of ten colleagues for the task, including stage designer Hayden Griffin and director Bill Bryden as well as members of the Lincoln Theatre Company, directors from the E.15 School of Acting and the Scheme's future director, Pam Brighton. The show was performed as a Sunday night

⁹⁵ Findlater, Appendix 1.

⁹⁶ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 125.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Interview with Jane Howell, conducted by the author, 27 January 2015.

⁹⁹ Royal Court Press Release: Royal Court Schools Scheme (22 July 1969), V&A: THM/273/4/20/1.

production at the Court on 27 July before transferring to the Roundhouse for three further performances in August. It was hailed by *The Times* as a ‘splendid vindication of the Royal Court’s Schools Scheme.’¹⁰⁰

Both *The Rising Generation* and *Revolution* projects were grounded in the creation of work that put young people at the centre of the making process. Howell recalls how *Revolution* brought together young people from a range of social backgrounds and emphasises the value of ‘experience’ through participation, as central to the project’s intentions.¹⁰¹ The collaboration between young people and the blurring of class lines, intended to allow them to be ‘just human beings’, resulted in the making of work that sought to challenge paradigmatic notions of class and further reflects the strong political undertone to much of Howell’s work with the Scheme. This awareness of the political and social issues of the time is symptomatic of a period that brought great social change to Britain. Enhanced migration in the early part of the decade heightened racial tensions in the country, leading to social conflict and widespread discrimination.¹⁰² Beyond Britain, a decade of war between the east and west saw global conflict and the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Waves of protests ensued in retaliation and frustration. The use of politically charged titles such as *Revolution* and *The Rising Generation*, therefore, are indicative of the political landscape of the time and a sign of Howells’ hope that young people can impact positively in leading future societal change. The visibility of what Howell terms as ‘good socialist principles’ within the Scheme during this time is also reflective of the political stance of the Court in this period. Philip Roberts has termed the Court ‘a socialist theatre’ between 1965 and 1969, that this

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 126.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Jane Howell, conducted by the author, 27 January 2015.

¹⁰² Steve Nicholson, *Decades of Modern British Playwriting: 1960s* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 27.

politics can be traced to the grassroots work of the Schools Scheme evidences Howell's ongoing commitment to not just the Court's productions but also its politics.

Between 1966 and 1970 Howell recorded over 20,000 visits by young people to the Royal Court.¹⁰³ Under its first director, the Scheme had progressed at a steady rate and facilitated a wide range of activities for young people. However, the development of the Theatre Upstairs, which opened in 1969, along with Howell's burgeoning career as a director, restricted the Scheme's ability to develop more fully and at the speed at which Howell and Gaskill had originally foreseen. Howell notes that the Schools Scheme 'at that time was more ad hoc and wasn't as solid as it became, it was something that I did when there was a space. I never had time to make it my prime responsibility.'¹⁰⁴ Howell left the Court in 1970 to pursue her directing career. Her decision to leave the Court and the Schools Scheme is a stark reminder that, despite good intent, the Court's work with young people remained an adjunct to even its director's ambitions. But the 'ad hoc' approach to the Schools Scheme diminished following the promotion of Howell's assistant, Pam Brighton, to the position of the Scheme's director. By this point, the TiE movement had gained momentum and Brighton, once again with Gaskill's support, aspired to introduce some of these features into the Scheme's future.

Pam Brighton: 1970-1972

The appointment of Pam Brighton as Howell's replacement came at a time of significant change and unrest at the Court. With Gaskill away on leave, Brighton was given a trial period by Lindsay Anderson and Antony Page in their capacity as

¹⁰³ Findlater, 'The Young Tradition', p. 191.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Jane Howell, conducted by the author, 27 January 2015.

co-artistic directors with Gaskill. According to Brighton, the appointment was no more considered than the fact that she ‘just happened to be there.’ When Gaskill returned, however: ‘he came back with a lot of energy and he sent me off round the country. I can remember going to Bolton, looking at all these Theatre in Education companies.’¹⁰⁵ On Gaskill’s return, Brighton’s position was made permanent. Significantly, Gaskill’s instructions for Brighton to visit some of the established TiE companies around the UK demonstrates an awareness of the leaders in an evolving field, and the importance of identifying and developing the Court’s own work with young people with that ecology in mind.

Brighton recalls how a revival of Ann Jellicoe’s *The Sport of My Mad Mother*, which originally premiered at the Court in 1958, was the ‘first big thing’ she produced with the Scheme.¹⁰⁶ In the hope of widening the play’s appeal to younger people, Brighton made the decision to update Jellicoe’s original script to reflect the changing vernacular and fashion of the time, through the inclusion of swearing and replacing Jellicoe’s Teddy Boys with Skinheads. *The Sport of My Mad Mother* opened in the Theatre Upstairs on the 4 May 1970 for a week’s run before being extended for a further week in June. Brighton’s updating, however, became the source of some debate and rekindled the controversy surrounding the Scheme that had first occurred as a result of the ‘Violence in the Theatre’ workshops in 1969. Indeed, initial concerns about Brighton’s revival of *The Sport of My Mad Mother* had been raised by a member of MP Patrick Jenkin’s constituency who, in turn, had relayed these thoughts directly to the Arts Council’s Chairman, Lord Goodman:

¹⁰⁵ Roberts, p. 126.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

The complaint is that both the set and dialogue embody the frequent use of obscene language with words such as ‘fuck’, ‘cunt’, ‘bollocks’ and ‘piss’. These words appear as graffiti on the walls of the stage set and, as I said, are repeated frequently throughout the dialogue.¹⁰⁷

As Graham Saunders has previously suggested, Jenkin’s criticisms came at a time of increasing disgruntlement by Conservative MPs towards the work of the Scheme. Citing previous visits to Lord Goodman by two other Conservative MPs, Brian Batsford and Dame Irene Ward, who had denounced the Scheme’s work on *Revolution* and the ‘Violence and the Theatre’ workshops, respectively, Saunders argues that these events ‘more than suggest that [the Court’s] work with young people was part of a carefully targeted attack by a group of opposition MPs’ seeking to make an example of the type of work for young people that was being subsidised by the Arts Council.¹⁰⁸ The results of this led to Goodman contacting the Arts Council’s Drama Director, Nelson Linklater, to state that the ‘lunatics have seized power’ at the Court.¹⁰⁹ Although the Arts Council’s Drama Officer, Jean Bullwinkle, deemed *The Sport of My Mad Mother* to be ‘right on the wavelength of those particular children’,¹¹⁰ Goodman’s concerns prompted Linklater to reprimand

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Jenkin, Letter to Lord Goodman (11 May 1970), V and A: ACGB 34/41.

¹⁰⁸ Saunders, p. 199.

¹⁰⁹ Lord Goodman, Memo to Nelson Linklater (5 May 1970), V and A: ACGB 34/41. Goodman’s memo to Linklater following his visit by Batsford and Ward is worth quoting in full here as it discusses the issue in more detail and reveals some of Goodman’s own issues with the work: ‘If what they told me was true – and I could hardly believe the evidence of my ancient ears – lunatics have seized power. Apparently, groups of children are invited to the Theatre to see demonstrations of violence. Appropriate children are invited on the stage to be taught how to kick each other. I have loved and admired the theatre for years as a means of imparting the loftiest of thoughts of humanity clothed in the most grandiloquent language. How my conception squares with instructions of kicking I need to have explained to me in some detail by the mental defectives engaged in these activities. I was told that the children, not satisfied with kicking each other... were regaled with excerpts from *Saved* and taught to hurl a handy stone at any adjacent baby. I was also told that they were instructed in revolutionary techniques: how to provoke revolution. Now, both Mr B and the Dame are Tories and on the right, but they are both honourable and decent folk and cannot have made this all up. If public money is really being used for these purposes something urgent – and violent and revolutionary- needs to be done and it is not only the children who should take instruction in kicking’ (Ibid).

¹¹⁰ Jean Bullwinkle, Memo to Nelson Linklater, English Stage Company (19 May 1970), V and A: ACGB 34/41.

the Court. Writing in a letter to William Gaskill, Linklater threatened the future subsidy of the Royal Court itself, writing that the Arts Council ‘could not contemplate complete provision of subsidy for further performances of this sort.’¹¹¹ Linklater’s inference here - that continued production of work of the kind demonstrated by the Schools Scheme would impact on the Council’s future subsidy to the Court - can be seen as a direct attempt by members of the Arts Council to censor the work of the Scheme. Recognising the potential implications of this threat in a post-censorship era, Linklater’s warning was later withdrawn, with the Arts Council stating that there would not be ‘any actions of censorship in young people’s theatre work.’¹¹²

Brighton’s contentious debut was followed in August by the results of a third summer project entitled *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, to which Howell returned to co-direct. During the devising process for this latest work, young people were asked to explore ‘through exercises and improvisation, what they have learnt from the adult world’.¹¹³ In an attempt to help those involved ‘express their ideas more clearly’,¹¹⁴ the writer Doug Livingstone was invited to fulfil what might today be termed a dramaturgical role in the process. Livingstone’s involvement here is significant as it suggests that the Schools Scheme’s employment of a writer to aid in the development of what became *Songs My Mother Taught Me* emphasised the role of the text in the theatre-making process. What this indicates, therefore, is a desire from the Scheme to align itself with the central policy of the Royal Court to source

¹¹¹ Nelson Linklater, Memo to the Chairman, English Stage Company (14 September 1970), V and A: ACGB 34/41.

¹¹² Saunders, p. 202.

¹¹³ Press Release: Schools Scheme Summer Project (1 July 1970), V&A: THM/273/4/20/1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

and produce new plays, while working with young people in the development of this ambition.

The Trouble with *Skyvers*

Brighton's first year in charge of the Schools Scheme culminated in her production of Howard Barker's *No One Was Saved* (1970) in the Theatre Upstairs, which was proving to be an important space to showcase the work of the Scheme. Brighton continued to run the Schools Scheme using many of the same methods implemented by her predecessor and this saw students attending rehearsals for Brecht's *Man is Man* (1971), the continued provision of backstage tours, as well as 'exceptionally good' bookings from schools for a production of *The Duchess of Malfi* (1971).¹¹⁵ The director also implemented the running of weekly classes for up to thirty students of between fifteen and sixteen years of age, creating a more regular interaction between the Scheme and young people. Out of this new endeavour came a production of Harold Mueller's *Big Wolf* (1971) with a cast of five schoolboys, which played on a Saturday morning in the Theatre Upstairs.¹¹⁶ *Big Wolf* was followed by a revival of Barry Reckord's 1963 play *Skyvers*,¹¹⁷ which took place in the Theatre Upstairs in the summer of 1971. In an almost routine scenario for the Scheme, *Skyvers* did not escape contention, which this time emerged from within the Court itself. This brought with it less than favourable consequences for Brighton and the Scheme, which exacerbated the tension between the Royal Court and its work with young people.

¹¹⁵ William Gaskill, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (26 March 1971), V&A: THM/273/1/2/16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ The Sunday night production of *Skyvers* took place on 7 April 1963. Roberts writes how Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* had originally been Brighton's first choice of play but this request for production was refused by Wesker due to it not being performed in the main auditorium (Roberts, p. 136).

Once again, Brighton had updated her chosen play for a contemporary and youthful audience and it was the ambiguity of these amendments that were at the root of the issue. Writing to schools with news of the upcoming production, Brighton was unspecific in her description of the changes, divulging only how the script had been ‘slightly updated’ and recommending a suggested audience of thirteen years old and above.¹¹⁸ However, on seeing an early performance of the production Oscar Lewenstein, the chairman of the Royal Court’s council, supported by two other council members, decided that Brighton’s amendments, which included some improvisation and the addition of swear words, ‘went way beyond the definition of “slightly updated”’.¹¹⁹ As a result, Brighton’s professionalism and capability to run the Schools Scheme were once again brought into question and an advisory group set up to support the director in future.¹²⁰ Given that the Court’s bitter battle with the censor had ended only three years previously, and following the Arts Council’s retraction of the threat to censor young peoples’ work in the wake of the complaints surrounding some of the Scheme’s previous endeavours, it is intriguing that the decision was taken by the Court’s own management to place such restrictions on the Scheme. That an advisory committee was implemented to monitor Brighton’s subsequent plans with the Scheme and ensure that information given to schools about the Scheme’s productions was disseminated with accuracy is indicative of a growing lack of trust in this area of the Court’s work that continued with increasing severity into the early part of the decade. One further reason for this action to be taken by the Court could be that following on from an incident in August 1969 in which the Court had attempted to ban Hilary Spurling, a critic for the *Spectator*, from attending productions at the theatre, the Arts Council had

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

threatened to withdraw the Court's grant for the following year. The ban was subsequently rescinded, and the grant awarded, but two threats to the Court's subsidy from the Arts Council in successive years, one as a direct result of the Schools Scheme's work, would have almost certainly influenced the management committee's decision to more closely monitor Brighton's work.¹²¹

Skyvers transferred from the Theatre Upstairs to the Roundhouse on 8 September 1971 and, despite its sell-out run at the Court, was 'poorly attended' during its transfer.¹²² That the Scheme continued past this point is down to Brighton's resolve and Gaskill's support but with an advisory group in place 'great care would be taken to give accurate information about schools' productions' in the future.¹²³

Arts Council Affairs

At the end of a difficult year for Brighton, the Scheme suffered a further setback following the rejection of its application for a funding increase from the Arts Council. Under Brighton's leadership the Scheme received an annual grant from the Arts Council of £3750, but the requested increase to the 'realistic budget figure' of £8373 was denied by Young People's Theatre Committee of the Arts Council, who are recorded as being 'disturbed' by the attitude of the Royal Court towards its young peoples' division.¹²⁴ For conventional TiE companies, 'the most common

¹²¹ The decision to ban critics from the Court had previously been threatened by William Gaskill in 1967 following the critical drubbing of his own production of *Macbeth*. The ban on Spurling began after the critic walked out of Peter Gill's *Over Gardens Out* in the Theatre Upstairs and consequently the Court announced that she was no longer welcome at the theatre and would not be invited to review any further productions (Little and McLaughlin, p. 128).

¹²² Pam Brighton, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (5 October 1971), V&A: THM/273/1/2/16.

¹²³ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 136.

¹²⁴ Jean Bullwinkle, Letter to Oscar Lewenstein (23 December 1971), V&A: THM/273/1/2/17. In letter correspondence between Jean Bullwinkle, of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and Oscar Lewenstein dated between 23 December 1971 and 13 January 1972, Bullwinkle informs Lewenstein of the Arts Council's decision not to increase the Schools Scheme's grant. Bullwinkle describes the

source of early funding was via a main theatre to which the companies were attached'.¹²⁵ Following an Arts Council recommendation in 1966 TiE was included within the scope of Arts Council support, which 'was a strong encouragement to theatres and Local Education Authorities to take TiE seriously.'¹²⁶ In a letter to Oscar Lewenstein on 23 December 1971, the ACGB's Drama Officer Jean Bullwinkle expresses several concerns about the Schools Scheme at the Royal Court largely due to the fact that 'young people's work carried out under the auspices of an adult theatre, which has no resident company, is never an easy operation.' Bullwinkle was alluding to the notion that without a resident company employed solely to further TiE work at the Court, the theatre was at a disadvantage from other theatres with affiliated TiE companies. This detail suggests that the presence of a permanent TiE company would be central to meeting the criteria for funding, as it would demonstrate a level of commitment to the field that the Schools Scheme was yet to exhibit. The Drama Officer's report, therefore, provides tangible evidence for the first time that the Court was struggling to contend with more prolific and focussed TiE organisations around the country and that, in spite of Brighton's substantial commitment, a lack of clear policy, permanent company or commitment from the theatre more widely held grave repercussions for the Scheme.

With a rebuff from the Arts Council and with no opportunities for an increase in financial support from the Court, Brighton continued to initiate school visits to rehearsals and performances for David Storey's *The Changing Room* (1971) as well as John Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1972) whilst also working towards a new project that she promoted as 'the most exciting development in the Schools Scheme

reasons behind the Council's refusal during which time the attitude of the Court and its support towards the Schools Scheme is brought into question.

¹²⁵ Wooster, p. 78.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

so far.’¹²⁷ ‘The Housing Show’ was a project that marks the clearest attempt to date by the Scheme to position itself more firmly within the TiE movement and address some of the weaknesses of the Scheme’s work as stipulated by Bullwinkle and the Arts Council. It was at this time also that the Schools Scheme was renamed the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme (YPTS). This can be seen as a further attempt by Brighton to both bring a sense of formality to the Court’s work with young people and illustrate a sense of dedication to this area. In continuing with the word ‘scheme’, the initiative retained some of its initial identity but in adding the term ‘young peoples’ theatre’ to its title, the YPTS promoted an identity that included not only schools but also young people out in the community. In titling itself in this way, the company immediately aligned itself with other more established initiatives in London, such as the Greenwich Young Peoples’ Theatre, in an attempt to secure its position as an important player within an increasingly populated field.

For Brighton, the ultimate aim of ‘The Housing Show’ was to create an ‘all-purpose show that could be toured round schools, youth clubs and tenants’ associations’ and culminate with a short run in the Theatre Upstairs.¹²⁸ In a methodology that predates yet is strongly akin to the ‘Joint Stock method’, the project brought a group of actors together to workshop ideas across three weeks in December. One of the group’s members, Phil Woods, coordinated the material from the workshop into a script and rehearsals for the show began in February.¹²⁹ Brighton’s use of a group of actors to create the project moved towards the idea of a resident professional company at the Court, one that would be solely concerned with

¹²⁷ Pam Brighton, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (27 January 1972), V&A: THM/273/1/2/17.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

the making of theatre for young people, and brings into focus a central ambition of the Scheme as it moved forward under Joan Mills' leadership.

By the time 'The Housing Show' premiered in the Spring of 1972 it was presented under a new title of *Show Me the Way to Go Home*. With a company of eight, the production played for three weeks opening on 16 May in the Theatre Upstairs, with special matinées for schools, and, also, for the first time in the Scheme's history, to schools and pubs around London. With what was regarded as the Scheme's 'most successful venture' to date, *Show Me the Way to Go Home* was to be Brighton's last production for the Schools Scheme at the Royal Court.¹³⁰ Throughout her tenure, Brighton had continued to build upon the work of Jane Howell, taking the work of the Royal Court Schools Scheme out of the theatre and, crucially, into schools, thus furthering its ambitions to function more effectively within the remit of theatre in education. In spite of her success with *Show Me the Way to Go Home*, the combination of the Arts Council's refusal to increase funding to the Scheme and Gaskill's imminent departure from the Court, prompted a frustrated Brighton to reconsider her position. In July, Brighton, along with many other members of the theatre's staff, followed Gaskill out of the Court and with no successor in place to take over, the future of the Scheme was left uncertain.

Joan Mills: 1972-1976

Although the departure of Pam Brighton left the Scheme without a director, the YPTS did produce one further piece of work: Jonathan Hales' *Brussels*, which opened on 6 September in the Theatre Upstairs.¹³¹ Assisting on the rehearsals for

¹³⁰ Pam Brighton, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (6 June 1972), V&A: THM/273/1/2/17.

¹³¹ *Brussels* involved twelve boys and one girl from secondary schools as well as four professional actors. The production ran for three and a half weeks in the Theatre Upstairs before transferring to the

Brussels, which included a cast of thirteen young people, was twenty-three year-old university graduate Joan Mills. Mills had been tasked to work with the younger members of the company and this had been noted by both Jonathan Hales and Gaskill's successor as the Court's artistic director, Oscar Lewenstein. With the YPTS in search of new leadership, Mills was invited to an informal meeting with Lewenstein to discuss her interests and intentions were she to be offered the position of director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme. As Mills recalls:

When Oscar first asked me 'what would you do with this scheme?' I replied that we should behave in accordance with the fact that we are the writers' theatre. The Royal Court is the writers' theatre, so our work in relation to young people should relate to that: both to encourage them to write and to get good writing for them. So that was my thought: we should be commissioning plays.¹³²

Up until this point, the Scheme had been overseen by two people for whom the Court's work with young people had made up only part of their job description. Lewenstein's appointment of a director for the YPTS elevated the position from an assistant director role to that of a director, implying that the position would entail a sole focus and responsibility for the young peoples' work at the Court. Mills's aspirations for the YPTS sought to align the Scheme with the Court's projected identity as a theatre for writers. Moreover, and as would become clearer throughout Mills's time as director, this shift in policy towards a focus on the Court as a *writers' theatre* as opposed to its identity as a *political theatre* marks a period in the YPTS's history during which its work with young people was less concerned with the pursuit of a wider political agenda. Lewenstein approved of Mills's proposals and in September 1972 she was appointed as the director of the YPTS.

Greenwich Theatre for a further two and a half weeks (Joan Mills, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (19 December 1972), V&A: THM/273/1/2/17).

¹³² Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015.

Ironically, Mills' desire to bring the YPTS more in line with the Court's historical identity signalled the beginning of what would become an increasingly autonomous existence for the Scheme. For the first time, the director of the YPTS had no other responsibilities beyond the young peoples' work and this held both positive and negative consequences. For Mills, it meant that her efforts could be solely concentrated on progressing the YPTS but, adversely, the YPTS's newfound autonomy did, over time, begin to alienate the director, who was otherwise unsupported in running the Scheme, from other Royal Court business. This led to a tumultuous period in the relationship between the YPTS and its parent theatre, which brought with it significant frustration and persistent tensions.

The First Young Playwrights Competition

Within Mills's first five months as director of the YPTS, the Scheme had re-established a series of workshops for young people over eleven, as well as workshops in partnership with the nearby Oval House Theatre for young people over fifteen. Mills had also continued to liaise with schools and teachers around London to inform them of productions at the Court, offering backstage tours and discussing future plans for the Scheme within schools.¹³³ In an attempt to expand the Court's outreach potential, Mills had taken these conversations into the schools themselves. Building on the previous work of Pam Brighton with *Show Me the Way to Go Home*, Mills' schools' visits present the YPTS as an outward looking initiative that has intentions to forge relationships with young people beyond the walls of the Royal Court. In addition, and in accordance with her ambitions to incorporate young writers into the Scheme, Mills also initiated plans for the first Young Playwrights Competition:

¹³³ Joan Mills, Report on the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme: August – December 1972 (December 1972), V&A: THM/273/4/20/2.

I informed some 200 schools of a competition for young writers under 18/19. They were asked to submit scripts of any length to the theatre where they would be read and the best of them were then to be produced in a future workshop with older students.¹³⁴

In a report to the ESC Council, Mills disclosed that although the response to the appeal for scripts for the inaugural Young Playwrights Competition at the Court had been ‘somewhat disappointing’, out of the fifteen entries received, four scripts had been chosen for presentation.¹³⁵ The winning plays were: *Liberation City* by Michael Belbin, *Split* by Brigette Bennett, ‘*old Very Tight Please* by Martin Bergmann and *Top Dog* by Patrick Murray. These were performed in May 1973 at the Oval House and for a Sunday Night performance in the Theatre Upstairs.¹³⁶



Figure 1: Joan Mills (centre) leads the warm-up in the Parish Hall, Sloane Square, at one of Mills’ first YPTS workshops for young people in 1972 (Photograph courtesy of Joan Mills).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ The Scheme’s relationship with the Oval House Theatre had developed under Jane Howell’s leadership, growing stronger with Mills and offering a free space in which the Scheme could work.

The results received positive comments from members of the Royal Court including director Derek Lister who hailed the ‘important and valuable precedent’ set by Mills’ Scheme.¹³⁷ Playwright Howard Brenton commented that the ‘Court has a vital project on its hands – a superb Young Peoples’ Theatre in the making’, asserting that the competition was a:

vindication of the way Joan Mills has been running the YPTS. The weekly workshop sessions have involved a large number of children and got their interest and enthusiasm to a remarkable height... It was young peoples’ work but not at all childish... It was real theatre... There’s nothing cosy or ‘sweet’ about Joan Mills’ work. Though there is the tremendous sense of fun.¹³⁸

Brenton’s praise testifies to Mills’ achievements during her first year as director and the YPTS enjoyed a subsequent period of rapid growth, particularly in the popularity of its workshops. This, coupled with the annual summer project and productions in the programme directed for a schools’ audience, made for a wide range of young peoples’ activity in and out of the theatre.¹³⁹ But in setting up the Young Playwrights Competition, Mills had identified an important niche for the YPTS within the field of young peoples’ theatre. For the first time, this provided an important link between the playwriting focussed Royal Court and its work with young people, which evolved to become an integral part of the visibility of young writers on the Royal Court stages in the future.

Six of the Best

Disappointed by the low number of submissions for the first Young Writers’ Competition, Mills reconsidered her approach for the following year. Looking to

¹³⁷ Derek Lister, Report on the Young Playwrights Competition (1973), V&A: THM/273/1/2/23.

¹³⁸ Howard Brenton, Memo to Oscar Lewenstein, Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme – Play Competition (29th May 1973), V&A: THM/273/1/2/23.

¹³⁹ The 1973 summer project, entitled *Alice in Blunderland* took on the theme of pollution and the environment. Devised by eighteen young people, performances were given at the Oval House, outdoors in Battersea Park, and for a Sunday Night performance in the Theatre Upstairs (Joan Mills, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (26 September 1973), V&A: THM/273/1/2/17).

widen the call for entries beyond London, Mills approached Alan Road, the Editor of the *Young Observer*, expressing a desire to launch the competition nationwide. Road agreed to assist and on 7 October 1974 an article featuring Mills was published in the *Young Observer* Sunday Supplement informing young people across the country of the opportunity to participate in the competition. Over one hundred submissions were received by the January deadline.¹⁴⁰ Under the misleading title of *Six of the Best*, a total of seven plays were chosen for production in April 1974 in the Theatre Upstairs. The plays featured as part of *Six of the Best* were: *Errand* by Jim Irving (14), *Big Business* by Mark Edwards (15), *Maggie's Fortune* by Sheila Wright (11), *The Fireman's Ball* by Stephen Frost (14), *Event* by James Clarke (15) and *The Zoological Palace* by Conrad Mullineaux (10), as well as Michael Belbin's (16) *Liberation City*, which had previously featured in the first year's competition. They were directed by Joan Mills, John Barlow and Ann Jellicoe.¹⁴¹ Mills's nationwide call had garnered responses from young people across the country of between 10 and 16 years of age. Unlike the previous year, where the winning plays were performed by members of Mills' senior workshop group, for *Six of the Best* it was decided, given that the works were made up of largely adult characters, that a professional group of actors should be employed for the productions:

[The plays] were so good and to show the best writing we had to use the best actors, so I remember thinking that it would be really good to cast a company of actors. I put this idea forward to Roger Croucher and Oscar Lewenstein and they said yes. So, it was decided that we would cast a small bunch of

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015. Archival records of entries for the 1974 Young Writers' Competition state that between one hundred and ten and one hundred and twenty-five submissions were made to the Observer in response to the article. Mills approached Road with her idea as it was in line with the supplement's policy of running creative competitions for young people. An eighth play, and the winner of the competition, Patrick Murray's (16) *The Youth Club* was performed in July owing to its cast of twenty (Joan Mills, Copy for Observer Magazine (1974), V&A: THM/273/1/2/23).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

actors and make a small company... and, much to our delight, all the usual critics came. All those people like Harold Hobson, *Time Out*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *Times* all came and they took it seriously and they wrote some really good reviews about the ingenuity of the writing and what they'd enjoyed and what a delight it was to watch and also the way we had directed it and put it together so it was a big success.¹⁴²

The favourable publicity received for the YPTS following *Six of the Best*, along with the introduction of playwriting into the Scheme's remit prompted a shift in the general support of the Scheme by the Royal Court's management. With this support, and in the wake of the recent use of professional actors to portray the characters in the 1974 Young Writers' Competition, Mills looked to revisit the idea of a permanent company which had first been proposed by Pam Brighton earlier in the decade. Mills envisaged that the company would be active annually for thirty weeks (September to April) to coincide with the academic year and would consist of six actors and a stage manager who would stage three productions across this period for two weeks at a time, in the Theatre Upstairs, before touring around schools in London with accompanying workshops. Mills argued that the rapid expansion of the YPTS had rendered the Scheme unmanageable by a single person and that the employment of a company would ease the pressure and allow for further expansion.¹⁴³ Indeed, Mills' plans for the Scheme were informed by an established TiE model whereby a group of trained practitioners work, often in schools, alongside young people to facilitate 'structured learning through drama'.¹⁴⁴ The formation of a permanent company to support the YPTS's work with young people would have brought the Scheme in line with traditional TiE methodologies. However, the initial costing of £10,000 for the development went beyond the

¹⁴² Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015.

¹⁴³ Joan Mills, Minutes of the Council Meeting of the English Stage Company (12 June 1974), V&A: THM/273/1/2/19.

¹⁴⁴ Wooster, p. 53.

Scheme's annual Arts Council grant and with no prospect of an immediate increase in funding from this source, Mills was forced to look elsewhere for financial aid.

With these ambitions in mind, a Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme Committee was founded with the primary aim of securing the necessary funding to create a permanent company. Edward Blacksell was appointed as the committee's chairman and supported by 'various people with a common interest in young peoples' theatre', with members including Caryl Churchill, Angela Fox and Lois Seiff.¹⁴⁵ The first meeting of the committee took place on 6 December 1974 where a strategy was discussed as to the best way to successfully advance the work of the Scheme. Over the months that followed, applications for funding were made to private sources as well as the Greater London Arts Association (GLAA) and the Gulbenkian Foundation. Enquiries were also made about the feasibility of the Scheme's progression to the Arts Council and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA).¹⁴⁶ The Scheme's proposal was well received in principle by both the Arts Council and the ILEA but, with neither willing to risk investment, and with unsuccessful applications from elsewhere, Mills' desire for a permanent company for the YPTS never came to fruition.

The consistent resistance to the YPTS's plans for development from, primarily, the Arts Council and now from several other funding sources featured at several points in the Scheme's early years. One reason for this opposition could be traced back to the inherent hostility towards integrating young people into the theatre from the Royal Court itself. Indeed, concerns have been raised about the implications of the Court focussing its 'energies' beyond the search and production

¹⁴⁵ Joan Mills, Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme: Council Report (14 January 1975), V&A: THM/273/4/20/2.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

of new plays from the Scheme's inception. It was perhaps the lack of enthusiasm and confidence in young peoples' work that inhibited its ability to gain traction and, significantly, financial support from outside investors. As a result, under Joan Mills' tenure, the Scheme found itself awkwardly positioned on both the periphery of Theatre in Education and of the Royal Court, with neither willing to take the necessary risks needed in order to further its impact. In spite of the Scheme's growing membership and important work with initiatives such as the Young Playwrights Competition, the implications of a lack of financial support had started to threaten the YPTS's future, and the closing of the Theatre Upstairs in 1975 presented further limitations around its potential for growth.¹⁴⁷ In a report to the Council in July of that year, Mills concedes that the 'future did not look too bright for the YPTS' and stated that a continuation of limited funds for the YPTS would result in less work and the potential ceasing of the Scheme altogether within months.¹⁴⁸

The Inaugural Young Writers' Festival

At the core of Mills' aspirations for the YPTS was an explicit desire to 'both encourage [young people] to write and to get good writing for them.'¹⁴⁹ Examples of the latter can be seen to have been achieved through the commissioning of work specifically for the YPTS with the 1975 production of John Antrobus's *Mrs Grabowski's Academy*, and a cast that included Simon Callow and Dennis Lawson, as well as a project led by Caryl Churchill, the Court's resident dramatist, which involved both Mills and Churchill visiting a junior school in Islington to devise a

¹⁴⁷ The Theatre Upstairs, apart from a brief reopening to host the first Young Writers' Festival in October 1975, remained closed until May 1976.

¹⁴⁸ Joan Mills, Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme: Council Report (22 July 1975), V&A: THM/273/4/20/2.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015.

play, later titled *Strange Days*.¹⁵⁰ The expansion of the Young Writers' Competition into a festival format, which programmed workshops and seminars for young people alongside the plays of the competition's winners, brought further focus to Mills' intentions to encourage the development of young playwrights:

I was in an atmosphere where there were literary meetings all the time, every month, and so I was in this system which was fabulous training. For me the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme was on the same level as everything else: I was part of the whole team and I was learning a lot about writing through these meetings... So I obviously thought about nurturing writers because that is what I saw the literary manager doing. After it became clear that the playwriting competition was a success it was decided that we would do another and then there came the thought – well can we do a bit more? What if we do things like allowing the writers to be more engaged? Because, also, professional writers were interested now, they would ring the Court and say how great those plays had been and so it was then easier to invite them to come and do a workshop or give some advice or have a writers' surgery. I remember talking about the writers' surgery, which we did do in 1975. Really a whole list of writers, eminent writers, were involved: Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill, David Lan, and Howard Brenton, certainly, and they took it seriously.¹⁵¹

What Mills articulates is a notion that did not fully present itself until the YPTS evolved into the Young Writers' Programme over two decades later. In its embryonic form here, the 'nurturing' of writers and specifically their engagement with professional writers, through initiatives such as the 'writers' surgery', would, during the 2000s, become a central component to the Young Writers' Programme's methodology. Furthermore, the difference in practical ambitions between Mills and her predecessors is becoming increasingly prescient from her description above, which details the ways in which she believes the YPTS could replicate the theatre's

¹⁵⁰ *Mrs Grabowski's Academy* was directed by Jonathan Hales and played in the Theatre Upstairs from 11 February – 1 March 1975 (Joan Mills, Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme: Council Report (8 April 1975), V&A: THM/273/4/20/2).

¹⁵¹ Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015. Further to the writers previously mentioned by Mills, events for young people were given by: Nicholas Barter, Ken Campbell, John Ford, Matyelok Gibbs, Christopher Hampton, Donald Howarth, Angela Rodaway, Chris Sandford, Snoo Wilson and Nicholas Wright. These writers and directors were joined by a company of seven actors to further assist in the delivery of the workshops.

own practices, particularly with writers. Where Howell and Brighton's policies were often aligned with activities concerned with Royal Court productions, their practical work with the Scheme had focussed on putting young people at the centre of the task at hand. Mills' desire to align the YPTS's work with that of the Royal Court's identity as a writers' theatre, through the introduction of initiatives such as the Young Writers' Festival, developed a Scheme that placed more emphasis on the identity of the theatre and the ways in which its work with young people could complement these concerns. These actions suggest that the only way for young peoples' work to function effectively at the Royal Court, and therefore be viewed with any value by the theatre out of which it has evolved, is through the development of a policy that can be seen to directly reflect that of the theatre itself.

As a case in point, the Young Writers' Festival can be seen to directly reflect the aspirations of Mills to source and nurture young writers and, indeed, as the Theatre Upstairs was briefly reopened to host the first Young Writers' Festival from 16 October to 8 November 1975; this suggests that the Court also viewed the Festival as a worthwhile endeavour to support. Publicised under the title *A Bunch of Five*, six new plays by young people were performed as part of the Festival. These included two short plays based on traditional children's stories: *Watercress Sandwiches* by Zoe Tamsyn (11) and Sophia Everest-Phillips (11) and *St George and his Dragon* by Tanya Meadows (14), which were programmed together as *Double Dragons*. These plays were performed alongside *Travel Sickness* by Matilda Hartwell (15), *Stepping Stone* by James Bradley (17), *Interval* by Jim Irvin (15) and

Tim Whelan (16) and *How Do You Clean a Sunflower?* created by a West Indian Drama Group from Bristol.¹⁵²



Figure 2: A performance of *How Do You Clean a Sunflower?* takes place in the Theatre Upstairs as part of the inaugural Young Writers' Festival in October 1975. It was written and performed by a West Indian Drama Group from Bristol and directed by John Ford.¹⁵³

Events for young people were offered for those between the ages of eleven and eighteen, and covered aspects of theatre making from devising to writing techniques in an attempt to encourage young writers to develop plays.¹⁵⁴ The workshops and seminars, which Mills writes were 'the most successful part of the whole Festival in breaking new ground,'¹⁵⁵ were intended to offer not only the winning playwrights but also others who had submitted scripts for the competition the opportunity to learn more about writing and working in the theatre from experienced professionals.

¹⁵² This information was provided by Joan Mills and is taken from a poster marketing the first Young Writers' Festival at the Royal Court. Directorial responsibilities for the productions was shared between John Ford and Joan Mills.

¹⁵³ Production Still, 1975 Young Writers' Festival, V & A: THM/273/6/1/589.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Joan Mills, conducted by the author, 12 March 2015.

¹⁵⁵ Joan Mills, Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme: Council Report (10 December 1975), V&A: THM/273/4/20/2).

With free matinées to the performances and evening tickets priced at fifty pence for students, young people outnumbered adults at two to one in the audience for the duration of the Festival.

The YPTS in Isolation

The Festival, which ran for over three weeks (including the brief re-opening of the Theatre Upstairs to host the productions and supporting events) had come at great financial expense to the Scheme, and this again threatened to jeopardise its future. Indeed, such was the extent of the crisis that future YPTS productions were put on hold until the Scheme regained some financial stability.¹⁵⁶ At this time, the Royal Court itself was under considerable financial pressure and this further exacerbated concerns regarding the YPTS. During the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s the Royal Court had enjoyed a period of financial security and prosperity due in part to the extra income generated from West End transfers which had been ‘habitually built in to the annual income’ of the theatre.¹⁵⁷ As opportunities in the West End dissipated, however, by 1975 the Court was faced with a deficit of £47,000. With the Arts Council unable to provide support, the theatre was forced to reconsider its priorities. The closure of the Theatre Upstairs reflected a change in these priorities and, given that this part of the Court paid for the production costs of YPTS events, this had a collateral impact on the YPTS. With tensions at the Court rising, the support for Mills’ YPTS that had occurred during a time of affluence started to dissipate, and the Scheme faced fresh animosity from the theatre. The brewing hostility between the Scheme and the Court is exemplified in a letter from Lindsay Anderson to Joan Mills following a performance of *Mrs Grabowski’s Academy* in February 1975:

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Little and McLaughlin, p. 179.

It was not a good evening... Above all, I cannot conceive why the play should be presented under the Young Peoples' Scheme [sic], and in fact it wouldn't surprise me if the Scheme suffered a severe setback because of it. (Though fortunately nobody seems to look at the work with any great attention, so it may well pass completely unremarked).¹⁵⁸

Anderson's scathing attack on the Scheme and its value within the Court evidences the absence of support and commitment demonstrated by central figures within the theatre towards the work of the YPTS. This continued to deteriorate further as the year progressed and ultimately led to Mills' resignation in the Spring of 1976.

The visibility of the YPTS in documents such as Council minutes held in the Royal Court's archive increase significantly during Mills' tenure. This suggests that the Scheme was a growing presence at the theatre during this time and this is in line with the formality of Mills' appointment as the Scheme's director, which afforded greater attention to the Scheme than had been given to its previous leaders. Mills' continuous presence at Council meetings, presenting detailed accounts of her achievements and aspirations as director of the Scheme, enabled her to gain knowledge of the Court's approach with writers, which she then applied to her work with younger playwrights. This alignment with Royal Court values had garnered a new-found appreciation for the Scheme's work, so when this was overlooked when the theatre came under financial strain it was a debilitating blow to Mills' ambitions. Distressed by the underrepresentation of the YPTS in a 'hierarchical, outdated' Royal Court, Mills resigned on 2 April 1976.¹⁵⁹ In her letter of resignation to the theatre's co-artistic directors Nicholas Wright and Robert Kidd, Mills outlines her concerns regarding a YPTS that is in danger of becoming 'isolated, out of touch with decisions, powerless to make suggestions, criticism, or to be part of the day to day work of the Court' and continues by urging Wright and Kidd to 'realise that

¹⁵⁸ Information provided in letter correspondence between the author and Joan Mills.

¹⁵⁹ Mills' resignation letter was provided by Joan Mills and is dated as the 8 March 1976.

there are problems, and to do something about involving and including the YPTS in the administrative and artistic structure of the Court'.¹⁶⁰ The sense of exclusion that Mills articulates foreshadows a continuous battle between the theatre and its YPTS that saw this area of work consistently function as an adjunct to the Court's core activities. A desire to integrate the YPTS into the administrative and artistic structure of the Court would not be fully realised until the Scheme's development into the Young Writers' Programme in 1998. Nevertheless, that Mills has outlined these strains at this point is illustrative of the fundamental issues that have plagued the YPTS's history.

Conclusion

During this period, the re-introduction of an initiative for young people at the Royal Court developed into an important Scheme that garnered significant interest and engagement with schools and young people in and around London. Its early work was grounded in a dual desire to create activities that revolved around the productions staged at the Royal Court, while also appealing to the lives and concerns of young people. The contentious nature of some of these events, such as the violence in the theatre workshops and Pam Brighton's adaptations of *The Sport of my Mad Mother* and *Skyvers*, had caught the attention of the Court, not to mention members of the Arts Council and the British government, with less than favourable consequences. It is important to recognise that the practices of the Scheme, especially in its formative years were progressive, inherently political and mounted with a knowing awareness of the theatre's roots. The work with young people that took place under the directorships of Howell and Brighton was often centred on the interests of the child and aimed to use their experience as a vehicle for social

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

change. That the Scheme was repressed in its development through consistent setbacks from the Arts Council and a distinct lack of support from the theatre out of which it emerged often saw the Scheme in turmoil and its subsequent survival may, therefore, be credited to the tenacity of certain individuals.¹⁶¹

Under Joan Mills, the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme presented itself as an endeavour that was committed to furthering young peoples' interest in writing for the theatre. In aligning the Scheme with what can be regarded as a central tenet of the Royal Court's own identity, the YPTS enjoyed a period of expansion and garnered praise from those who recognised the value of the Scheme's ambitions. The relative success of the Scheme during this time suggests that the initiative was given more regard by its parent theatre only when it attempted to replicate the Court's own principles around playwriting and the search for new plays.

As this thesis moves on to Chapter Two, the study assesses the Scheme under a new director, Gerald Chapman, and in a new home known as the Garage. Chapman's Scheme returned the initiative to its political roots, which was driven by a desire to encourage young people to use theatre as a tool to interrogate their world. It examines the effects of location on the Scheme, with much of the work presented during this time taking place outside of the Royal Court building, and draws attention to the ways in which Chapman's policies and ambitions influenced the function and reputation of the YPTS in a time of social discontent.

¹⁶¹ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-1972*, p. 58.

Chapter Two

A Garage Full of Activists: Expansion, Politics and Radicalism in the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme 1976-80

Beyond Individual Contributions

The tenth anniversary of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme at the Royal Court passed without celebration. The resignation of Joan Mills in April 1976 was followed by a three-month gap that saw the Scheme, once again, left without a director. Mills' eventual successor, Gerald Chapman, recalls the bleak state of the YPTS on his arrival:

All the many close ties she had forged with individual schools over three and a half years were lost; the youth theatre group she had run splintered; the budget had become run down; the mailing list was in a confusing mess; the YPTS committee became even more toothless than before; even the idea of the Young Writers' Festival was in danger of being lost to the National Theatre. In short, the YPTS policy quickly disintegrated as the commitment of a particular individual withdrew.¹⁶²

The rapid decline of the Scheme, within three months of the director's resignation, is indicative of Mills' individual and substantial devotion to this area of the Court's work. But as Chapman implies above, its swift decline is an unsurprising consequence of a Scheme, whose survival over the last ten years could largely be attributed to the efforts of 'particular individual[s]',¹⁶³ most notably William Gaskill, Jane Howell, Pam Brighton, and Joan Mills. That the Scheme was not 'killed off' completely during the spring of 1976 is, according to Chapman, down to the then Royal Court Co-Artistic Directors, Nicholas Wright and Robert Kidd, along

¹⁶² Chapman and Dale, p. 111.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

with a member of the theatre's Management Committee, Edward Blacksell, who all held a 'particular interest' in the YPTS.¹⁶⁴

This chapter explores the work of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme from 1976-1980, a four-year period charting a phase in the Scheme's history that saw a male director, Gerald Chapman (1976-1980), leading the YPTS for the first time. Chapman, a Cambridge graduate, had previously worked as a trainee director at the Theatre Royal, York, Leicester's Haymarket Theatre and Lincoln's Theatre Royal before running a professional community theatre company in South London. His previous experience, particularly in community theatre, saw him well positioned to take over the YPTS and Chapman's proficiency in this area resulted in some significant developments between the YPTS and the local community during his four years in charge. This chapter focusses exclusively on the directorship of Gerald Chapman and, given that this is the only chapter of the thesis to be organised in this way, is an indication of Chapman's impact on the Scheme during this time. It asserts that this period marked a return to the political roots of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme first seen under Jane Howell. A political underpinning to Chapman's work is most visible through a number of events by, for and with young people that took place across Chapman's tenure. These events explored the politics of sexuality with topics such as gay relationships and the age of consent. It is the controversial nature of these works, designed for young people, that position the director as a radical leader. But the contention that surrounded some of the YPTS's activities under Chapman's direction should not overshadow a period of significant expansion of many elements of the Scheme's remit. Indeed, this chapter seeks to draw attention to the ways in which Chapman advanced the Scheme beyond what

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Wright and Kidd became Co-Artistic Directors following Oscar Lewenstein's departure in 1975. Their partnership continued for two years when different interests caused them both to resign.

had been achieved by his predecessors. This is evidenced through his awareness of funding and the ability to secure money for the Scheme from a range of sources; the expansion of the Scheme's staff structure, which gave further weight to the YPTS's presence within the Royal Court; the reconstruction of the Scheme's Committee; the founding of the Scheme's renowned youth theatre, the Activists; the employment of the first writers' tutor and the organisation of a major conference, which brought new discussions around the relationship between theatre and education. The relative stability that the YPTS enjoyed under Chapman is made more impressive when discussed within the context of the Royal Court at this time, which was in a state of flux marked by five changes in Artistic Directorship in a period that is now regarded as one of the most volatile decades in the theatre's history. The output of professional work produced by the Scheme over the next four years would halve under Chapman's direction. This signals a clear development in the priority of the YPTS from a producer of work *for* young people, to a producer of work *by* young people. This shift in priority marks the beginning of a new focus in the Scheme's work and is one that had a lasting impact on its future developments.

The Age of Consent

One primary aim for Chapman on taking over the Scheme was to rekindle the important relationships with schools that had been lost in the aftermath of Joan Mills' resignation. Chapman immediately followed a list of twelve very good drama teachers in and around London, which had been passed to him by an ex-teacher friend.¹⁶⁵ He set about meeting those listed, re-establishing the lost links with schools and creating new connections between the YPTS and the local community. Within the first six months of his directorship, Chapman had made contact with over

¹⁶⁵ Gerald Chapman, *Education and the Royal Court* (1979), V & A: THM/273/4/20/3.

forty teachers from around London.¹⁶⁶ These connections laid the foundations for what Chapman described as the ‘resounding success’ of his inaugural season, which took place between January and March 1977.¹⁶⁷ The season, which was funded through a donation of £2000 from the Lord Sainsbury Foundation, opened with a project entitled *Everyone’s Different*, which was followed by a play entitled *Short Sleeves in the Summer* by Tunde Ikoli and a Young Writers’ Festival that closed the season in March 1977. The continuation of the Young Writers’ Festival after Mills’ resignation is indicative of its value within the constitution of the YPTS and, indeed, the Court more widely, as the event continued to be programmed and produced in the Theatre Upstairs.

The ‘resounding success’ of the season, however, did not pass without comment, and this again pointed a controversial light on the activities of the Scheme’s work with young people. The *Everyone’s Different* project focused on the theme of prejudice and presented two plays for young people aged 8-11. The productions included a performance by the London-based black British theatre company Temba and a new devised piece entitled *The Age of Consent* by Gay Sweatshop, a theatre company concerned with presenting gay political analysis through new work and of which Chapman was a founding member.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Gerald Chapman, Report on the YPTS for the Council of the English Stage Company (1976), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

¹⁶⁷ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (18 April 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

¹⁶⁸ Sara Freeman, ‘Gay Sweatshop’ in *British Theatre Companies: 1980-1994*, ed. by Graham Saunders (London: Methuen, 2015), pp. 141-164 (p. 146). Gay Sweatshop operated as both a mixed sex theatre company and as single sex divisions. *The Age of Consent* used a mixed cast that consisted of: Bob Stratton, Sara Hardy, Tony Brooks, Helen Barnaby, Keiran Montague, Ian Godfrey, and Gordon MacDonald (Unfinished Histories, ‘Gay Sweatshop’ [online] (publication date unknown) <http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/history/companies/gay-sweatshop/> [accessed 3 April 2016]). Temba was founded in 1972 by actors Alton Kumalo and Oscar James and was the first black British theatre company. The initial aims of the company were to produce new black writing from the UK and South Africa. Temba actively promoted new, established, British and international black writing as well as producing interpretations of Western classics informed by the black experience (National

In 1975, prior to joining the YPTS, Chapman had joined with other gay activists and playwrights to co-found Gay Sweatshop, a touring company with a focus on new writing.¹⁶⁹ The founding of Gay Sweatshop responded to a time when work that confronted questions of gender and sexual identity was becoming more prevalent on the alternative and studio-based British theatre stages. Examples of this can be seen at the Royal Court itself in Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Show* premiered in the Theatre Upstairs in 1973, and at the nearby Oval House Theatre, which hosted American gay cabaret troupe *Hot Peaches* in 1976. But, as Lizbeth Goodman's assessment attests, the 'public representation of lesbians and gay men had become a political issue, and one which bore a problematic relationship to the theatre',¹⁷⁰ and this led to much of the work being confined to small studio and fringe spaces. It wasn't until May 1979 when Martin Sherman's *Bent* was performed in the Court's main theatre, transferring to the West End's Criterion Theatre two months later, that 'the first step for gay theatre from fringe venues to the mainstream of subsidised theatre'¹⁷¹ was realised. Beyond these events, a wider movement in gay theatre had started to occur. The programming of a season of plays by (and for) men entitled 'Homosexual Acts' at Soho's Almost Free Theatre in the summer of 1975 brought together a group of gay theatre workers and it was out of this event

Theatre Black Plays Archive, 'Temba' [online] (publication date unknown) <http://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/explore/companies/temba-theatre-company> [accessed 3 April 2016].

¹⁶⁹ Chris Megson, *Decades of Modern British Playwriting: the 1970s. Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 54. Other co-founders of Gay Sweatshop were: Roger Baker, Drew Griffiths, Alan Pope, Norman Coates and Alan Wakeman, In their 1975 manifesto, the company declared a central policy: 'To counteract the prevailing perception in mainstream theatre of what homosexuals were like, therefore providing a more realistic image for the public and to increase the general awareness of the oppression of sexuality, both gay and straight, the impact it has on people's lives and the society that reinforces it' (Unfinished Histories, 'Gay Sweatshop' [online] (publication date unknown) <http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/history/companies/gay-sweatshop/> [accessed 3 April 2016]).

¹⁷⁰ Lizbeth Goodman, *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 71.

¹⁷¹ Chris Megson, *Decades of Modern British Playwriting: the 1970s. Voices, documents, new interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2012). p.56

that Gay Sweatshop was formed.¹⁷² Sara Freeman characterises Sweatshop's mission as one that sought to express 'gay political analysis through new work.'¹⁷³ Funded between 1976 and 1980 by the Arts Council, Sweatshop toured its work extensively during this time before a two-year closure of the company occurred in 1981. In June 1976, as a season of plays curated by Sweatshop concluded at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Gerald Chapman arrived at the Court to take up the position of Director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme. The appointment of Chapman to the YPTS at this time, however, is also significant as it came at a point when Gay Sweatshop was experiencing success within the alternative theatre landscape. With Chapman at the head of a young peoples' theatre within a major and mainstream subsidised theatre such as the Royal Court, the opportunity was provided for some of the central concerns of Sweatshop to cross over into the Court's work with young people over the next four years. Crucially, for the Royal Court, Sweatshop had also demonstrated a commitment to new writing. As Freeman outlines, the company's set of desiderata was focussed on reaching a broad audience, developing playwriting skills within repressed groups and encouraging younger playwrights,¹⁷⁴ all of which are qualities also visible within the YPTS's remit. The involvement of Sweatshop in YPTS activities at several points during Chapman's tenure, and particularly its inclusion in his first season of work, illustrates the ways in which the policies and thinking of the company came to inform some of the YPTS's own practices. Indeed, even the composition of Sweatshop – with a membership made up of gay men and women - was mimicked, for a short-time, within a subsection of the Activists – the YPTS youth theatre - known as the Youth Theatre Workshop.

¹⁷² Itzin, p. 234.

¹⁷³ Freeman, 'Gay Sweatshop', p. 146.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 147.

Directed by Kate Crutchley, *The Age of Consent* was based on a real event that centred on a consenting relationship between a twenty-year old man and a teenage schoolboy, when the legal age of consent was 21. At a time when identifying as gay was still illegal for anyone under the age of 21 – a law that remained in place until 1994 - it intended to highlight the disparity between the law and homosexuality and the effect that this had on same sex relationships.¹⁷⁵ A YPTS Committee report records concern about the programming of Gay Sweatshop, stating that a production by this company ought to be ‘handled carefully from a PR point of view.’¹⁷⁶ The Inner London Education Authority also expressed ‘serious doubts’ about the project but neither warning succeeded in deterring Chapman from producing the work.¹⁷⁷ The Committee’s concerns were well-founded and Chapman’s decision to target the event at young people between the ages of 8-11 ‘created a public scandal and furore in every newspaper and on most radio news programmes.’¹⁷⁸ The *Daily Mail* reported on what it described as a ‘row over gay play for school children’ building the article around comments made by Rhodes Boyson the Conservative MP for North Brent, a constituency which had been particularly opposed to the production. Boyson argued that the play was an example of what he termed ‘the moral decline of society’ calling for children to be in school and not ‘playing around with homosexual matters.’¹⁷⁹ Chapman is also cited in the

¹⁷⁵ Lizbeth Goodman, *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 71.

¹⁷⁶ Gerald Chapman, Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee of the YPTS (16 December 1976), V & A: THM/273/4/20/6.

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Mail* (author unknown), ‘Row Over Gay Play for School Children’, issue 25080, p. 9. *Daily Mail* Historical Archive 1896-2004 [online] (21 January 1977) <http://find.galegroup.com/dmha/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=ulh&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=EE1862147079&type=multiPage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 20 September 2017] (para 9 of 11).

¹⁷⁸ Gerald Chapman, Sexism Season Report (1979) V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

¹⁷⁹ *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mail* (author unknown), ‘Row Over Gay Play for School Children’, issue 25080, p. 9. *Daily Mail* Historical Archive 1896-2004 [online] (21 January 1977)

<http://find.galegroup.com/dmha/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=ulh>

article. Here he talks of how the production has ‘landed [him] in hot water’ over his attempts to ‘define how prejudice works.’ He speaks of the project as one that sought to ‘try and explain to young people what it feels like to be made to feel difficult and unwanted within our society’.¹⁸⁰ The media outcry following the first performances of *The Age of Consent* made an immediate and drastic impact upon attendance, with two thirds of the bookings cancelled.¹⁸¹

In a subsequent report to the ESC Council reflecting on the event, Chapman writes how ‘the outcry ironically proved the point of the exercise’,¹⁸² although he also admits that the decision to produce the work had been ‘educationally damaging’ in the sense that it had negatively impacted upon relationships between the Scheme and local schools and authorities.¹⁸³ Chapman’s reflections on the event both highlight the ways in which the media’s response can be seen to perpetuate the marginalisation of gay voices on the stage and also indicate the difficulties surrounding work that has previously been confined to alternative theatre spaces transferring to more mainstream environments such as that of the Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court. With *The Age of Consent*, Chapman demonstrated a clear desire to use the YPTS to generate debate around sexual politics with young people. The fallout that ensued illustrated the prejudice that surrounded the production of gay theatre at the time. As a case in point, for much of the decade, members of Gay Sweatshop had been regularly subjected to homophobic violence, threats and pickets. While on tour, the company had also been turned away from accommodation and one performance in Belfast had been interrupted by a torch-lit

&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=EE1862147079&type=multiPage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0 [accessed 20 September 2017] (para 7 of 11).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Gerald Chapman, Minutes of the Meeting of the YPTS Committee (8 February 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/6.

¹⁸² Gerald Chapman, Sexism Season Report (1979) V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

parade led by the Democratic Unionist Party.¹⁸⁴ The systematic prejudice against gay theatre and, in this case, Gay Sweatshop that was visible at the time, makes Chapman's decision to include this work in a programme aimed at school children all the more radical. The political and social context in which the production was presented, coupled with the public violence experienced by the company, further emphasises Chapman's embattled position and the need use the relative safety of the Royal Court to explore issues affecting the gay community. But as the media reaction to the event impeded its ability to fully succeed, Chapman looked for ways in which this topic could be more effectively managed for projects that held similar aims in the future.

New Sources of Funding

Chapman's experience with his own theatre companies and through his extensive work in theatres across the UK meant that he arrived at the YPTS with an awareness of the importance of funding to support projects and the need for a company to possess a sustainable administrative structure.¹⁸⁵ To give an example of Chapman's recent success in this area, Gay Sweatshop's Arts Council grant had multiplied by ten, from £1,950 to £17,000, in the first two years of the company's operation indicating a level of skill in the writing of applications and the securing of funding from this source.¹⁸⁶ The increased level of funding for Gay Sweatshop despite wider prejudice towards the production of Gay theatre, suggests a desire on the part of the Arts Council to provide financial support to companies who were producing important work within an already challenging political and societal landscape. Indeed, this proficiency proved transferable to the Scheme's own funding success

¹⁸⁴ Megson, p. 56.

¹⁸⁵ Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 234-235.

¹⁸⁶ Freeman, 'Notes', p. 259.

with the YPTS's Arts Council grant doubling from £6000 to £12,000 for the year 1978/79, increasing to £15,000 for 1979-80.¹⁸⁷

In Chapman's first year, the finances for the Scheme came from an annual Arts Council grant of £6000, £2,400 of which was used to cover Chapman's salary. With the Royal Court itself offering little additional monetary support to the Scheme, what the director terms as the 'appalling financial restrictions' grew to become a constant source of frustration between Chapman and the Royal Court throughout his tenure.¹⁸⁸ With funding for the Scheme a priority for Chapman, a £10,000 donation from the Gulbenkian Foundation in December 1976, paid over two years, helped to alleviate some of the incoming director's initial financial anxieties and allowed for the long-desired expansion to the YPTS staff.¹⁸⁹

In Chapman's first annual report to the English Stage Company Council, he talks of the 'peculiarly low status that young peoples' theatre throughout the country suffers', proposing that it is up to 'the professional theatre to prove that it means business in doing young peoples' theatre work'.¹⁹⁰ In his report, Chapman cites a contemporaneous article in *London Drama*, in which the author, Cecily O'Neil, discusses the role of professional theatres in promoting education within their policies:

¹⁸⁷ Gerald Chapman, Present Financial Position of the YPTS (April 1978), V & A: THM/273/4/20/6.

¹⁸⁸ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (18 April 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

¹⁸⁹ Gerald Chapman, Minutes of the Meeting of the YPTS Committee (8 February 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/6. In an earlier meeting of the Committee of the YPTS dated 16/9/1976, Chapman disclosed that he had made an application for the sum of £27,000 to the Gulbenkian Foundation. He is advised by the Committee's Chairman, Edward Blacksell that this application is amended to £10,000 as a pilot project for the Scheme. In a meeting of the Committee on 16/12/1976, Chapman revealed that a grant of £10,000 spread over two years has been awarded to the YPTS by the foundation V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Reports on the status and future plans for the YPTS were submitted to the English Stage Company Council, somewhat sporadically, by the directors of the Scheme. The archive is in possession of four separate reports, which are available in V & A: THM/273/4/20/2, written by Chapman during his tenure: The first is dated 18/4/1977; the second 25/10/1977, the third on 26/6/1978; and his final report for the Scheme dated 10/6/1980).

Some theatres try to create strong personal links with groups of young people – as, for instance, in the Royal Court’s Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme... But too often the impetus for this work is from a particular individual’s enthusiasm and commitment, rather than as a vital part of theatre policy... Without trained specialist staff able to link the worlds of education and theatre, work is unlikely to become an important part of theatre policy... It must be recognised that there is more to making theatre a valid experience for young people than merely selling them seats or getting them into the building.¹⁹¹

O’Neil was the Senior Drama Advisory Teacher of the then Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) – the government’s education body for London - and Chapman sought to establish a relationship between the YPTS and the ILEA from early on in his directorship. Chapman’s quoting of O’Neil here is significant for two reasons: First, in that it raises once again the YPTS’s previous (over) reliance on the work of ‘particular individuals’, this time articulated from an outsider’s perspective. O’Neil suggests that the employment of enthusiastic individuals as opposed to ‘trained specialist(s)’, can hamper young peoples’ work from becoming central to a theatre’s policy. The inclusion of this extract in Chapman’s report implies that he had intentions to build a team of workers to expand and professionalise the YPTS and reveals an ambition for the Scheme to become more recognisable within the theatre’s policy.¹⁹² Secondly, in quoting O’Neil, Chapman demonstrates an awareness of the need to create new relationships with funding bodies, beyond the Arts Council, to support future projects for the YPTS. In demonstrating his intention to look beyond the Arts Council, an organisation that had been notably cautious of this area of the Court’s work in its first decade, as the sole provider of funding, demonstrates Chapman’s acute awareness of the Scheme’s needs and how these could be best met by moving away from ‘the province of usual theatre funding sources’ to become more ‘relevant to the needs of local authorities’ arts and

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

education programmes.’¹⁹³ As it had also failed to win the total support of its main theatre and also the Arts Council in its first decade of existence, the standard means of funding for the YPTS had proved largely unobtainable and insubstantial. Support for the Scheme’s work from the local authorities, therefore, was a vital relationship for Chapman to forge and one that allowed for further expansion to the YPTS team, which had a lasting impact on the Scheme’s ability to engage with the community. The beginning of a new endeavour for the Scheme which aimed to connect its work more closely with local authorities, was initiated in the hope that this could help further supplement the Scheme’s income.

The Activists and The Garage

In addition to securing the Scheme’s finances, soon after Chapman’s arrival at the YPTS in the summer of 1976, two further shifts occurred in the Scheme’s work both of which furthered the YPTS’s ability to interact with the wider community. The first is the creation of a youth theatre known as the Activists and the second is the acquisition of a disused garage space at 13 Holbein Place, less than half a mile from the Royal Court, that came to house much of the YPTS’ activities in the second half of the 1970s.¹⁹⁴ The significance of the decision to launch the Activists and relocate the Scheme to a nearby but separate space is most clearly understood when it is discussed within the context of both the Royal Court and the Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme’s history.

The first suggestion of an adjunct space for the Royal Court can be traced back to the early 1960s, at a time of considerable experimentation for the theatre. As

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Gerald Chapman, Minutes of the Meeting of the YPTS Committee (28 October 1976), V & A: THM/273/4/20/6. Chapman agreed to rent the Garage from Grosvenor Estates for the sum of £40 per week.

part of this period of experimentation, George Devine expressed a desire to execute what Philip Roberts identifies as the artistic director's 'grand objective'.¹⁹⁵ Devine's studio project, or the 'Actors' Studio' as it came to be known, was born out of the desire to construct a studio extension, to be built behind the stage at the Royal Court, that would create a studio theatre with 120 seats and a space designed to 'cater for the development of all kinds of theatre artists and the nucleus of a company of actors; an arts centre; and the development of new audiences, especially the young'.¹⁹⁶ With these plans, Devine hoped that the Royal Court could be 'a day and night cultural centre in Sloane Square, take on a new lease of life and make, once more, a unique mark on British Theatre.'¹⁹⁷ While Devine's ambitious plans failed to come to fruition, what materialised instead was the Royal Court Actors' Studio. Opening in February 1963 the Studio was in operation for two years but on William Gaskell's appointment as artistic director, and with his reintroduction of a repertory system at the Court, the management of these two aspects of the theatre's work proved to be unsustainable and the Studio closed at the end of 1965.¹⁹⁸

To a certain extent, Devine's vision of a studio space at the Royal Court was made manifest in the opening of the Theatre Upstairs in 1969. However, it could be argued that it was through the art centre structures of the YPT that Devine's grand objective was, in fact, realised. Examples of these spaces are visible in the Garage; the Young Peoples' Theatre on Portobello Road and the Site at Sloane Square. After all, it is in these spaces, designed for the 'development of all kinds of studio artists'¹⁹⁹ that aspiring actors, directors, theatre-makers, and playwrights were

¹⁹⁵ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre 1965-72*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁹ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 93.

provided with the environment to progress in their craft. Further, Devine's desire for the studio to house a 'nucleus of a company of actors' was further realised in the practices of the YPT, which became the only strand of the Royal Court's work to incorporate initiatives for actors into its remit.

Historically, the Royal Court had found it difficult to implement a repertory format. In much the same way, and as has been identified in Chapter One, the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme had also seen a similar ambition to recruit a team of actors to support the Scheme's work repeatedly obstructed at several points in the decade. Chapman addressed this inherent problem for the Scheme in two ways: firstly, through the commissioning of work by Gay Sweatshop, who became a regular contributor to YPTS activities during Chapman's tenure, and, secondly, through the development of the Activists, who became the long-desired permanent group of actors for the Scheme.

The first meeting of the Activists took place on 31 August 1976.²⁰⁰ The decision to term the youth theatre section of the YPTS in this way is consistent with the political tone that underpinned Chapman's work with the YPTS. 'The Activists' suggests a group with a clear identity and purpose. It is a loaded term that is inherently political and highlights Chapman's desire to use the Scheme as a way of exploring societal and political issues. In attendance were sixty members of the newly formed company, which comprised of young people age 16-23 from areas across London. The Activists began with two initial aims:

1. To give any young person the confidence to know that their voice is worth listening to.

²⁰⁰ Gerald Chapman, Report on the YPTS for the Council of the English Stage Company (1976), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2

2. To give power and status to their voices.²⁰¹

At its pinnacle, the Activists grew to a membership of over two hundred young people, a quarter of which were involved in a season of work produced by the YPTS. Chapman's emphasis on the value of voice is a recurring theme across his directorship of the Scheme. It is a feature that is concerned with ensuring that the marginalised voice, which includes that of a young person, is not overlooked and is given equal status in society.

Not in Norwich and the YPTS Youth Theatre Workshop

In an attempt to marry the work of the Activists with the Royal Court's 'close contacts with many writers',²⁰² much of the community and Activist projects during Chapman's tenure were devised in conjunction with a professional playwright. Between May 1977 and March 1980, the YPTS produced five community shows with professional playwrights in theatres and spaces across London. In a report to the ESC Council, Chapman notes that the community youth activities 'constituted the most varied and extensive work accomplished by the YPTS' across the Summer of 1977.²⁰³ Among the work produced during this time was a play entitled *East End in Lakeland*, written by Dilip Hiro, about a group of Bengali youths from Bethnal Green on holiday in the Lake District; *Not in Norwich*, by David Lan, which looked at the experiences of gay teenagers in London, and a series of workshops at a support unit for school truants in Barking. These productions were followed by *Fuse*

²⁰¹ Chapman and Dale, p. 129. Chapman recognised that if the Activists was to be truly accessible to young people then membership subscriptions needed to be at the lowest amount possible in order to attract diverse interest while ensuring the company's financial survival. The annual fee for Activist membership was set at £4 for those in employment and £2 for those in full-time education or unemployed. By 1977 the annual subscription had increased to £4 for the unemployed and £6 for the employed and those in school. Chapman recalls how 'little publicity was needed to get the group underway. We used the programmes of the theatre together with local papers and magazines. Word of mouth quickly became the normal method of recruitment (p. 131).

²⁰² Chapman and Dale, p. 130.

²⁰³ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (10 June 1978), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

in October 1978 and *Playing the Flame* in March 1979, both of which were written by Jatinder Verma and involved young people of Indian, Pakistani and East African-Asian heritage from Tooting and Tottenham. These were followed in 1980 by *Hard Time Pressure*, written by Young Writers' Festival alumnus and Young Writers' Group member Michael McMillan. McMillan's play represented a crossover for the first time of three of the four strands of YPTS work: it was written by a young writer, following engagement with the community, and performed by the Activists. While these works all premiered in the YPTS's Garage space, *Not in Norwich*, *Fuse*, and *Hard Time Pressure*, all went on to tour other spaces, such as youth centres around London and the South West. This collaboration with writers was created to use 'the professional skills that [these writers] could offer in order to heighten a group's clarity and impact in saying what they wanted to say.'²⁰⁴ The resulting projects tackled issues such as political internment, commercial exploitation and sexual relationships between young people.

The 1977 production of David Lan's *Not in Norwich* is one example of a collaboration between the Activists and a playwright affiliated with the Royal Court that is worthy of further exploration as it is particularly revealing of Chapman's intentions for the YPTS moving forward.

In the first year of the youth theatre's inception, the Activists divided to form two separate groups: the main group worked together on the Activists' inaugural production of *Tom Paine*, while a second, smaller contingent of the company went on to form what became known as the YPTS Youth Theatre Workshop. *Not in Norwich* was devised between Lan and the Youth Theatre Workshop: a subset of the Activists that 'consisted wholly of young, gay teenagers'. The group was tasked to

²⁰⁴ Chapman and Dale, p. 130.

‘devise and perform a new play about what it was like to be a young gay person in the 1970s.’²⁰⁵ Gary James, an original cast member of *Not in Norwich* describes the process of making the play:

The group worked through a number of improvisations and the musical play that was to become known as *Not in Norwich* was devised and edited by David Lan. This bold and controversial piece of drama told the intimate stories, through a series of vignettes, of several young gay people coming to terms with their sexuality, and expressed from their own perspective. Much of the script was actually based upon the real lives of the people in the group and based upon interviews and discussions that both Gerald and David had with the cast.²⁰⁶

As it had with the production of *The Age of Consent* only months earlier, *Not in Norwich*, which included accounts of male prostitution and electric shock treatment, failed to escape the attention of the media and brought further contention to Chapman’s first year in charge. The fact that the members of the Youth Theatre Workshop were all under the legal age at the time only furthered the media attention that surrounded the production. In a further example of media sensationalism that had enveloped this area of Chapman’s work, the front page of the *Evening Standard* ran with the heading ‘London Children in Sex Play.’ James recalls how 10 years on from the decriminalisation of homosexuality, discussions around the topic, especially with young people, remained taboo.²⁰⁷ Chapman’s decision to produce *Not in Norwich* in the aftermath of the furore that surrounded *The Age of Consent* is emblematic of a continued drive to engage young people in conversation around the politics of sexuality despite challenges from the media and other sources.

The choice to form the Youth Theatre Workshop as an offshoot of the

²⁰⁵ Information taken from blog posts from the website of actor and original Activist member Gary James, ‘The Activists’ [online] (publication date unknown) http://www.bangagong.co.uk/bangagong.co.uk/The_Activists_-_Royal_Court_Theatre_1976.html [Accessed 3 April 2016]. James appeared in a number of Activists projects most notably as a cast member in *Not in Norwich* and the 1979-80 touring production of *Who Knows?*

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Activists aimed to draw further attention to the troubling reality of being a young, gay person. But isolating the Youth Theatre Workshop from the other Activist members disrupted the potential of the group to facilitate a sense of social cohesion which, as James attests, did prove detrimental to the group's overall unity.²⁰⁸

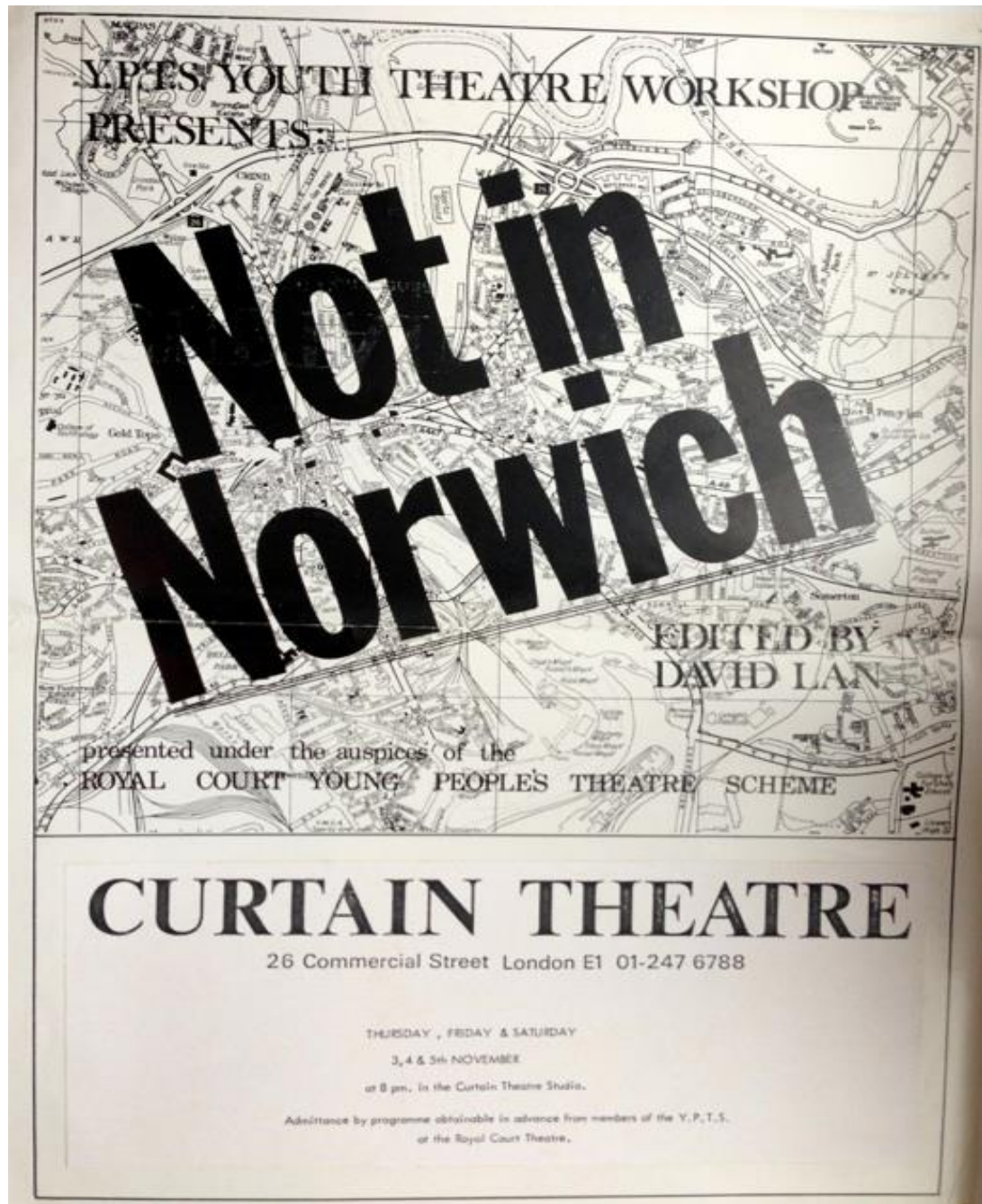


Figure 3: The Front Cover to the programme of David Lan's *Not in Norwich* directed by Gerald Chapman.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Image courtesy of Gary James, 'Not in Norwich' [online] (publication date unknown) http://www.bangagong.co.uk/the_activists_roya_court_theatre_1976 [accessed 3 April 2016].

It is perhaps in recognition of this that *Not in Norwich* was to be the only piece of work produced under the Youth Theatre Workshop moniker. There are comparisons which can be drawn between the membership of Youth Theatre Workshop and Chapman's own theatre company Gay Sweatshop. Both endeavours sought to tackle and engage with issues of gay politics, with Youth Theatre Workshop representing a new generation of theatre-makers and gay activists that can be viewed as not only a subset of the Activists but also of Gay Sweatshop itself. Indeed, members of the Youth Theatre Workshop went on to become members of Gay Sweatshop for future productions such as *Who Knows?*, which brought the theatre company back to the YPTS in 1979 for a season of work on sexism.²¹⁰

An Expanding Team

The role of director of the YPTS in its first decade of operation is a task that had been afforded, as Chapman terms, to 'one solitary whizz kid.'²¹¹ The isolation that accompanied the position caused some post holders to resign prematurely and in frustration of the onus of responsibility being placed on a sole figure. Certainly, by the end of Joan Mills' directorship, the Scheme had felt increasingly separate from the rest of the Court and this lack of connection between the YPTS and its parent theatre had ultimately prompted Mills' resignation. This discord had come through a combination of the management's lack of confidence in Mills' ideas and the absence of any clear administrative structure for the YPTS. Put simply, the employment of one person to do everything that was required in order to make the YPTS a success proved to be an impossible task. It is for this reason that it is possible to deduce that one further reason for Sweatshop's involvement in the early part of Chapman's

²¹⁰ *Who Knows?* was produced as part of a wider season on sexism as part of the YPTS in 1979 and applied a similar verbatim style that had been seen in *Not in Norwich*.

²¹¹ Chapman and Dale, p. 111.

tenure could be regarded as a form of support to the director in the formative months of his directorship. Moreover, on coming to the Court with the Scheme in its tenth year, Chapman was in the fortunate position to reflect on the problems of the past and recognise it as a recurring challenge to the successful operation of the YPTS. As a result, and using the £10,000 grant received from the Gulbenkian Foundation, Chapman quickly employed a second person to assist in the development of the YPTS.

John Dale took up the role of Assistant Director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme on 4 April 1977.²¹² Dale trained at Bretton Hall College – ‘a breeding-ground for much of the early theatre in education and community theatre work’²¹³ - as a Drama and Education Specialist before going on to work as an actor/teacher with the renowned Hull TiE and Shoreham Youth Workshop.²¹⁴ Significantly, his appointment reflects a notion conveyed by Cecily O’Neil that ‘specialist staff able to link the worlds of education and theatre’ be employed by theatres to facilitate educational relations, and this furthers Chapman’s intentions to put education at the core of the Scheme’s remit.²¹⁵ Dale’s appointment provided some much needed support to the director, allowing for more ‘in depth’ work to take place and, crucially, a YPTS staff unit that progressed beyond the work of one individual.²¹⁶ This work was spread across the whole range of YPTS activities, including community outreach work and strengthening YPTS ties with teachers, as

²¹² Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (18 April 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

²¹³ Tony Coult, *‘Constructive Work to Do’: The Challenge of the Young to the Arts Council of Great Britain 1945-1994* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 2014), p. 83.

²¹⁴ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (18 April 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

well as workshops and the directing of plays for the expanding Activists membership.

John Dale remained in his role at the YPTS for just over eighteen months. In November 1978, and following a further increase to the Scheme's annual funding, a restructuring of the YPTS staff occurred that enabled the employment of both an Administrator and a Youth Worker, bringing further stability to the structure of the YPTS. The responsibilities of the Youth Worker, Janet Goddard, centred on the management of the Activists along with the planning of activities and workshops, and continuing links between the YPTS and the local community.²¹⁷ Goddard's post was made possible through the receipt of a grant from the ILEA, which occurred as a direct result of Chapman's engagement with the local authority. The position of the Scheme's Administrator was taken on by David Thompson. Thompson's role was largely financial and required him to assume responsibility for touring, budgeting, grant applications, and fund raising as well as the day-to-day administration of monies from a range of sources. Further, Thompson acted as the Scheme's marketing manager to 'spread more widely the base of appeal for the YPTS and the theatre in general.'²¹⁸ The appointment of Goddard to the Scheme's team of staff marks a tangible attempt to link the work of the YPTS with the local community and education authorities, which would further the outreach potential for the Scheme. Moreover, the broadening of the Scheme's remit had allowed for further funding opportunities and Thompson's role enabled the financial opportunities made available to the YPTS to be maximised. With Chapman, Dale, Goddard, and Thompson working together, this new configuration gave the Scheme the ability to function with increasing autonomy from the Royal Court and

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

represents the pinnacle of an ongoing attempt by Chapman to both demonstrate its potential and secure its financial future. But with Dale's substantial workload now effectively shared by three people, the necessity for an Assistant Director within the YPTS diminished; he left the Scheme to take up a position as a writer and director for children's television at the BBC.²¹⁹

The YPTS Committee, first established to support the Scheme's work in 1974, had also recovered from the ostensibly 'toothless' state in which it had been found by Chapman. Under the continued guidance of the committee's chairman, Edward Blacksell, who had been a keen advocate in the continuation of the Scheme following the resignation of Joan Mills, the committee was made up of fifteen members and consisted of Court staff, teachers and representatives from the Scheme's youth theatre, the Activists. The committee met regularly during Chapman's tenure and discussed all matters concerning the YPTS at the Royal Court: from the Scheme's policy and methodology to the function of the Young Writers' Festival, funding, and future projects. The frequency of the meetings demonstrates a commitment from a growing number of people to support the Scheme's work, most notably in the form of Blacksell himself. Blacksell, who had worked as a Headmaster and had been involved with the English Stage Company from its inception, held aspirations for the YPTS to 'become as nationally known as the Royal Court itself rather than just [as] a local by-product'.²²⁰ In the wake of George Devine's death in 1966, the notion of preserving his original intentions for the theatre had become a central part of Blacksell's ongoing loyalty to the Court's work with young people.

²¹⁹ Ken Robinson, 'Notes on the Contributors' in *Exploring Theatre and Education*, ed. by Ken Robinson (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), pp. v-viii (p. viii).

²²⁰ Gerald Chapman, Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee of the YPTS (20 April 1977), V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

Principles and Policy

Despite the continued growth of the Scheme, Chapman's YPTS still struggled to engage consistently with local schools. Reasons for this lack of support ranged from staff cuts to exam pressure as well as the continued hostility towards the Scheme, by some, in the aftermath of *The Age of Consent* and Chapman's focus on the discussion of taboo topics. Perplexed and frustrated by educational bureaucracy, Chapman summarises these responses as 'the "resounding tinkles" of confusion, doubt and failure.'²²¹ These feelings prompted a rethink and the articulation of a clear policy and intent behind the work of the YPTS followed.

The catalyst for this reconsideration developed out of a 1978 conference at London's Riverside Studios entitled *Theatre-Education: An Exploration*, which was organised by Chapman and John Dale and funded by the Greater London Arts Association. Prompted by a concern for the 'lack of contact between the professional theatre and those involved in drama teaching' the conference sought to address the 'widening abyss between educational drama and the various aspects of the professional theatre.'²²² The conference demonstrated a new attempt by Chapman to build relationships between educational institutions and the professional theatre with the event facilitating widespread engagement and discussion between teachers and theatre practitioners. It was as part of this event, and in the subsequent edited collection of the proceedings, that Chapman outlines his clearest intentions for the Scheme to date. Here he detailed both the purpose of the YPTS and the ways in which these ambitions could be seen to manifest within the Scheme:

1. Giving young people the power to voice their concerns. Theatre has a unique capacity to achieve this.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

2. Giving young people the confidence that their voice is a) worth listening to, and b) will be heard properly. This means being a good audience by ‘sharing a common feeling with the artists’.²²³

Chapman writes how these principles are implemented through four main areas of work:

1. Encouraging young people’s writing for the theatre
2. Community youth theatre shows
3. Workshops with professional writers
4. The Royal Court Youth Theatre club, the Activists.²²⁴

The four main areas of Chapman’s vision for the YPTS illustrate a significant dedication to the area of writing for the theatre, both in the form of general encouragement and specialised pedagogy via workshops with existing playwrights. These points in particular demonstrate a commitment to Royal Court values and its identity as a theatre for playwrights, while also articulating an intention to develop previous policies of the YPTS. At this point in time, the Young Writers’ Festival was already in operation, having been founded by Joan Mills first as a competition, in 1973, and later as a Festival in 1975. Chapman’s list reinforces the significance of this strand of the Scheme’s work and, under Chapman’s tenure, this commitment was further supported through workshops on playwriting given by professional writers. Indeed, playwriting workshops had been integral to the Young Writers’ Competition’s evolution into a Festival but these opportunities were often restricted to the Festival’s three-week timeframe. In an attempt to expand this initiative beyond the confines of the Young Writers’ Festival, the workshops with playwrights became the Young Writers’ Groups, which aimed to facilitate a more regular

²²³ Chapman and Dale, p. 118.

²²⁴ Ibid.

engagement between young people interested in writing for the theatre and professional playwrights. The application of the term ‘voice’ here, as first articulated by Chapman on describing his vision for the Activists two years earlier, is applied to four different aspects of the Scheme’s work, two of which are focussed on playwriting. The notion of the playwright’s voice, and how this can be accessed and nurtured, is an idea that is particularly relatable to the concerns of the Young Writers’ Programme, which evolved out of the YPTS in 1998. Integral to the Programme were the many writers’ groups. Here, participants would take part in a series of workshops led by a professional playwright, known as the writers’ tutor. These workshops were focussed on elements of the playwrights’ craft and designed to develop new and specifically young voices. The complexities of this practice are discussed at length in Chapter Five, but the first Young Writers’ Group was launched in 1979, and this demonstrates further foresight from Chapman in to the many ways in which a young person’s voice can be presented and empowered.

The First Young Writers’ Group

The Young Writers’ Group can be seen as a new interpretation of an idea that had first been introduced at the Court in 1958. The intention to formulate what became the first Writers’ Group was articulated by George Devine in a letter to Neville Blond, the chairman of the English Stage Company, on 2 January 1958, in which Devine suggests that ‘a small group of young writers’ be invited to meet regularly with each other and with members of the Court staff.²²⁵ Initially formed as ‘a means of creating a more formal structure to which young and promising writers could be invited and where they would come to know other writers and members of the Court

²²⁵ Devine qtd. in Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 63.

staff’,²²⁶ the purpose of the Writers’ Group was less about honing writing skills and more about networking and familiarisation between writers and Court staff. The first meeting of this group took place some weeks later in an old paint shop on Flood Street, Chelsea, where the group ‘sat on boxes, creaking chairs, anything to hand, in a strict circle surrounded by debris and draughts.’²²⁷ Later, and under the guidance of William Gaskell, the Writers’ Group reconvened after a brief hiatus at 7 Lower Mall, Hammersmith, in the ‘cosy and relaxing Georgian mansion’²²⁸ home of Anne Piper, a ‘fringe member of the group’,²²⁹ which became the Writers’ Group’s base for the next two years.²³⁰

The Writers’ Group continued to run until 1960 at which point the group disbanded. Ann Jellicoe reveals the reason for the dissolution as simply ‘the need had passed.’²³¹ Indeed for writers such as Jellicoe, Wesker and Arden the need *had* passed as connections had been made with the theatre and the writers were moving forward in their careers. But this attitude reveals scant regard to preserve what could have been an invaluable opportunity for future Royal Court writers. Indeed, it was not until Chapman reintroduced this idea through the YPTS that the notion of creating an environment for young and aspiring playwrights was reinstated.²³²

As part of a policy to encourage young people’s writing for the theatre, Chapman initiated an endeavour that came to be one of his most significant

²²⁶ Ann Jellicoe, ‘The Writers’ Group’ in *25 Years of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, ed. by Richard Findlater (Derbyshire: Amber Lane Press: Derbyshire, 1981), p. 53.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 52.

²²⁸ Arnold Wesker, *As Much as I Dare* (London: Century, 1994). p. 515.

²²⁹ Doty and Harbin, p. 86.

²³⁰ The core members of the group are recognised as William Gaskell, Edward Bond, Arnold Wesker, Wole Soyinka, Anne Jellicoe, John Arden and Keith Johnstone.

²³¹ Jellicoe, p. 56.

²³² A more in-depth analysis of the first Writers’ Group and its significance in Royal Court history can be found in Nicholas Holden, “‘Making New Theatre Together’: Developing Writers and Creating Community in the First Writers Group at the Royal Court and its Legacy Within the Young Writers’ Programme”, *Theatre History Studies*, 36 (2017), pp. 126-140.

contributions to the Royal Court Theatre and its ongoing work with playwrights. The combination of a £1000 Arts Council grant together with contributions from the Adult Education Institute and the ESC allowed for the employment of the first writer's tutor for the YPTS. Nicholas Wright, who had previously worked as a casting director for the Royal Court and became the first director of the Theatre Upstairs in 1969 as well as joint artistic director with Robert Kidd from 1975-1977, was paid a salary of £4000 and took up the position in April 1979. The previous year, Wright had won the prestigious George Devine playwriting award for his play *Treetops* (1978), which premiered at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, and was in the process of writing his second play *The Gorky Brigade* for the Royal Court when he took up the appointment.²³³ His role as writers' tutor was to oversee and manage the development of a Young Writers' Group, which Chapman had set up in order to form a more enduring relationship between the Royal Court and young playwrights.²³⁴

The Young Writers' Group under Nicholas Wright ran as an ambitious year-long course, for fifteen to twenty-three year olds, and focussed on the study and practice of playwriting. Its core aims were:

- To give new playwrights encouragement.
- To provide playwrights with a social structure within which their writing [can] be appreciated, discussed and assessed.
- To help playwrights develop an analytic approach to their own writing.
- To help young playwrights develop a sense of craftsmanship, by study of plays in rehearsal and performance, and by study of the relationship between a written text and the work of directors, actors and stage designer.²³⁵

²³³ Wright's *The Gorky Brigade* was directed by William Gaskill and opened in the Court's Theatre Downstairs on 5 September 1979.

²³⁴ Nicholas Wright, Initial Policy for the Young Writers' Group (1979), V & A: THM/273/4/20/3.

²³⁵ Ibid.

The 1979 Young Writers' Group consisted of a cohort of eighteen writers, six females and twelve males, aged 15-23 who were largely from across London with a small number living in Kent.²³⁶ During the selection process almost sixty plays were read, after which those writers who were considered to demonstrate a distinct talent were invited to join the group on the condition that they could commit themselves to a regular, year-long, programme of work. Wright had composed a clear structure for the course that was separated into two parts. The first six months of the programme included:

- A series of eight classes on text-study. In each class, a professional playwright will look in detail at a scene from a play of his/her own, answering questions which arise and explaining the use of language and structure in the scene.²³⁷ In the same class the playwright will apply the same approach to a scene from a classic play – one which he particularly liked and feels, perhaps, has influenced his/her own work.
- A series of sessions to study the young writers' own completed plays. In these, the young writers will be joined by two actors who will demonstrate the ways in which they would interpret the text; discuss problems which arise; volunteer for direction by the young writers and direct them themselves.
- A series of demonstrations, using the writers' own completed texts, of the stages a play goes through in production. These will show, among other processes, those of selection of a play, budgeting, casting, design rehearsal and technical rehearsal.
- Discussion of the young writers' new work, either when complete or in draft stage. These meetings will probably be called *ad lib*. They are a central part of the group's work, and possibly the most important, but they are unlikely to take place until time has elapsed for trust to develop.

²³⁶ A register taken at a preliminary meeting of the first Young Writers Group held on 25 April 1979 lists those in attendance as: Charlie Boxer (17), Daniel Douglas (16), Hilary Dunn (18), Julia James (15), Lenka Janiurek (20), Robert Kelly (17), Paul Lister (19), Michael McMillan (18), Edward Parsons (17), Nick Phillippou (18), Jonathan Salway (17), Linda Scanlon (18), Colin Trussell (23), Danny Van Alphen (22), Fiona Wilson (17), Matthew Melles (Age Unknown), Steven Rowe (18), and Anna Wheatley (19) (*Ibid*).

²³⁷ Among the playwrights invited to lead these classes were: Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, Jennifer Carey, and Peter Hartwell (Nicholas Wright, *Initial Policy for the Young Writers' Group* (1979), V & A: THM/273/4/20/3).

- The use of a private room adjacent to the Garage with a typewriter for the use of young writers who have not the facilities to write in private.
- Possibility of production. Slots are available, both in the Garage and the Theatre Upstairs, for presentation of plays by members of the group. In addition, the Royal Court hopes to be able to bring together members of the group and other drama groups who need a young writer for a specific project.
- Regular off-site visits will be made by the group to see plays in rehearsal and performance, as well as to visit unfamiliar social institutions. The main value of these visits would lie in subsequent analysis of what has been seen.²³⁸

The activities outlined above were followed up by a series of meetings, lectures and seminars that continued throughout the latter half of the year. By the end of the year, all members of the group were expected to have completed writing a new play and it was the fundamental aim of the programme to support, encourage and facilitate each writer to complete this task.

Although significantly longer than the courses offered through the Young Writers' Programme two decades later, there are some visible similarities in the aims of both initiatives. These are most decipherable through the study of specific elements of the playwriting craft such as language and scene structure along with the discussion of work at both the draft stages and on completion of the play. Although what is most interesting here is the notion that participation in the Young Writers' Group held the possibility of production at the Royal Court itself. As the final chapter of this thesis posits, the possibility of production by the Royal Court became the ultimate focus of the Young Writers' Programme and was one of several points of contention that occurred between the Programme and the Royal Court coming into the 21st Century.

²³⁸ Ibid. These points are taken from Wright's 'Initial Policy for the Young Writers' Group' and detail plans for 'a one-year course for young playwrights on the study and practice of playwriting'.

It was Wright's responsibility as the writers' tutor to lead the meetings, monitor each of the students and offer encouragement and advice throughout the process. Over the course of the year, Wright also led playwriting workshops in schools, community centres and at the Royal Court itself for young writers between the ages of 10-18. On occasion these sessions were run over the course of a weekend, which allowed for work to take place outside of London. One example of this is illustrated below in a photograph that captures Chapman and Wright working with students as part of the 'Make a Play Weekend' held at the Bedminster Boys Club in Bristol. These initiatives provided engagement with the wider community and used workshops with a professional playwright to encourage young people to write for the theatre.



Figure 4: Participants and facilitators (Gerald Chapman and Nicholas Wright, back row, fifth and sixth from the left respectively) are photographed during a Young Writers' Group 'Make a Play Weekend' held at the Bedminster Down Boys Club, Bristol, between the 8-10 February 1980.²³⁹

²³⁹ Photograph of the YPT 'Make a Play Weekend', Bristol (1980), V & A: THM/273/4/20/13.

The development of the Young Writers' Group also came to have a significant influence on the plays and playwrights selected as part of the Young Writers' Festival. Indeed, the two proved to be of mutual benefit to each other as some previous Festival participants made up the first cohort of the Young Writers' Group and five of the group's eighteen members had their work featured as part of the 1980 Festival. There is also a sense of progression for the Young Writers' Group members as Michael McMillan, whose play *The School Leaver* received a professional production as part of the YWF in 1978, saw his second play *Hard Time Pressure*, which had been developed during his time with the group, produced for the 1980 Festival.

The work of the Young Writers' Group has developed to become the most identifiable feature of the Court's work with young people. Following the YPTS's rebranding as the Young Writers' Programme in 1998, the Writers' Group idea, that had first been implemented by Gerald Chapman and Nicholas Wright in 1979, would become even more central to this area of the Court's work. Indeed, the relationship between the Group and the Young Writers' Festival, as the main platform for producing the work of young writers at the Royal Court, is something that it discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

The Young Writers' Festival

The Young Writers' Festival (YWF) developed to become a permanent fixture in the Royal Court's programming and signifies one of the few areas of symbiosis between the YPTS and the Royal Court. The YWF continued throughout Chapman's tenure with festivals in 1977, 1978 and 1979²⁴⁰ but it was Chapman's

²⁴⁰ Specific production details of each Young Writers' Festival from 1975-2012 are available in appendix D of the thesis.

final YWF in March 1980, which included productions of *The Arbor* by Andrea Dunbar, *The Morning Show* by Daniel Goldberg and *The Personal Effects* by Lucy Anderson Jones as well as *Hard Time Pressure* by Michael McMillan, performed by members of the Activists,²⁴¹ that demonstrated the Festival's potential and cemented its position as a regular feature in the Court's programming.

In his final report to the ESC Council, Chapman writes that the 1980 YWF 'enjoyed more publicity than perhaps any other since its inception.'²⁴² This is largely due to the programming of seventeen-year old Andrea Dunbar's first play *The Arbor*, which was directed by the Court's artistic director Max Stafford-Clark and marked the first YWF production, in what Stafford-Clark calls a 'bold' move, to transfer to the theatre's main stage.²⁴³ Based on Dunbar's experiences growing up on the Brafferton Arbor within the Buttershaw Council Estate in Bradford, *The Arbor* signifies an important point in both the Young Writers' Festival and the Court's history. Stafford-Clark, who took over the artistic directorship at the Court in 1979, writes of how his involvement in the Young Writers' Festival was 'one way of becoming immediately involved in the grassroots work' at the theatre.²⁴⁴ He goes on to state how the Royal Court's most important function is arguably 'its focus on people who haven't previously considered themselves professional playwrights.'²⁴⁵ Stafford-Clark's words give further emphasis to the 'grassroots' function of the Festival within the wider eco-system of the Royal Court. The scheme provided an environment to showcase the work of young writers and the Court used the

²⁴¹ Also staged as part of the 1980 YWF was a rehearsed reading of *Waking Dreams* by Richard Boswell (Findlater, Appendix I).

²⁴² Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (10 June 1980), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

²⁴³ Philip Roberts and Max Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2009), p. 112. Originally written by a fifteen-year old Dunbar as a one-act play as part of a school exercise, the writer went on to extend *The Arbor* in to a full-length play where it was presented in the Theatre Downstairs in June 1980 (Little and McLaughlin, p. 216).

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 109.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

opportunity to trial a young writer's play.²⁴⁶ The success of the *The Arbor*, and its subsequent transferal to the Theatre Downstairs, ultimately furthered the YWF's reputation and heralded the beginning of a period of 'vital new work' for Max Stafford-Clark's Royal Court.²⁴⁷ Further, the outcome of the 1980 Festival and the realisation that the Scheme's work with young writers' could be of significant value to the Court indicates the beginning of a protracted shift in the policy of the YPTS that ultimately saw its direction move towards a sustained focus on the development of young writers.

But the success of *The Arbor* at the end of Chapman's four years in charge of the Scheme provided little consolation in an area of the YPTS's work that had become an annual cause for concern for the director. These anxieties lay in the origins and competitive element of the Festival, along with the extreme financial pressures that the event exerted on the YPTS's annual budget. Given Chapman's long-standing conflict with the media, the Festival's emergence from a collaboration between the Scheme and the Observer newspaper was especially problematic for the director. He felt that the involvement of the media fuelled a competitiveness between young people that ultimately led to the 'glamouris[ing] of the four or five young writers at the expense of the 250 others whose work had not been chosen for the production' that became an uneasy consequence of the event for the director.²⁴⁸ Indeed, the inherent competitive nature of the Festival that was problematic for Chapman reflects the beginning of a culture of elimination within the work of young writers that later intensified under the Young Writers' Programme. The instilled method of selection for the Festival, which included an extensive selection process

²⁴⁶ Dunbar went on to write two more plays for the Royal Court: *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1982) and *Shirley* (1986).

²⁴⁷ Little and McLaughlin, p. 213.

²⁴⁸ Chapman and Dale, p. 119.

and the further glamourising of ‘winners’ whose plays were given full productions, would become an increasing source of conflict as the event prospered, particularly under the auspices of the Young Writers’ Programme.

In addition to this, the significant financial impact of the Festival consumed much of the YPTS budget. As audience numbers for the Festival remained low, the box office takings offered very little return on the investment made by the Scheme towards the event. Further, the nature of the Festival, which saw the plays programmed within the financial year, meant that it was impossible for the Scheme to budget in advance for the event. As the Festival continued to employ professional actors for the productions, and with cross-casting proving an impossibility owing to the range of requirements for the work, the salaries paid often superseded the amount originally budgeted. Indeed, Chapman’s concerns for the YPTS budget had first been raised following the 1978 Festival, with his report to the ESC Council stating that the YPTS ‘is in a grave situation’ and that a revision of the budget for the year was necessary in order for the Scheme to present a programme of work within their means for the rest of the year.²⁴⁹ Moreover, in his final report to the Council in June 1980, Chapman writes that the Festival for that year:

Still went over budget and contributed to a substantial deficit for the financial year 1979-1980. I would recommend that urgent attention is given to seeking regular sponsorship for this Festival, because, at the moment, its considerable cost threatens to overwhelm the total YPTS budget.²⁵⁰

Chapman’s parting recommendation for sponsorship of future Young Writers’ Festivals outlines the need for the Scheme’s leaders to seek alternative means to fund the event. As the Scheme entered the 1980s, and a time where sponsorship in the arts was becoming more prevalent, the Festival benefitted from this in a range of

²⁴⁹ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (10 June 1980), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

ways. Chapter Three of this thesis begins to explore the impact of sponsorship on the YPTS in more detail in a decade that brought fresh challenges to the Scheme's role both at the Royal Court and in the wider community.

The Sexism Season

On coming to the Court in the summer of 1976, Chapman's inaugural season had included work and discussions on the politics of sexuality that brought with it unfortunate consequences for the Scheme. This theme returned in his final season of work with the launch of the Sexism Season in November 1979. With the benefit of hindsight, and in light of the ramifications that had followed the *Everyone's Different* season, Chapman took a more considered approach in the planning and production of the season in order to minimise potential controversy. Indeed, documentation concerning the season evidences that it was carefully planned over the course of a year. One report outlines four explicit intentions:

1. The season was to deal with sexuality and sexism as a whole, not isolating homosexuality merely as one extreme example of prejudice.
2. It was to aim at 4th and 5th years in order to challenge the cliché that such content is only fit for the "upper" school.
3. It was to be kept secret from the press.
4. Teachers were invited to take a more active part in preparation.²⁵¹

The director's objectives for the season of work suggests a direct attempt to address some of the central concerns that had proved detrimental to the Scheme's vision in the past. This includes the decision to explore notions of prejudice beyond that of issues concerning homosexuality, as well as seeking to include teachers, who had previously shown some reluctance to the Scheme's work, in the planning of the event. The decision to keep the event secret from the press was an attempt to avoid

²⁵¹ Gerald Chapman, Sexism Season Report (1979) V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

the ‘unnecessary and damaging publicity’ that the Scheme had received in the past²⁵² and illustrates a continuation of the director’s distrust of the media over their portrayal of the gay community. As he had with *The Age of Consent*, Chapman showed, once again, a desire to challenge established notions of what could be considered ‘age appropriate’ by directly aiming the season’s events at young people between the ages of 8 and 10 years old. This act could be seen to further position Chapman as a radical and progressive leader, while also raising questions as to the ethics of exposing very young people to sexually explicit material. It is a stance that is reminiscent of the work conducted under Jane Howell’s leadership of the Scheme where activities such as that of the ‘Violence in the Theatre’ workshops looked to explore both the responsibility of the theatre in a post-censorship era while presenting a challenge to societal norms and expectations around what should be discussed with young people. For Chapman, his interests lay not with violence but with sexuality and in the decade following the decriminalisation of homosexuality there remained a clear desire from the YPTS to address topical concerns with young people. The appropriate age in which to first begin discussions with young people around topics such as sex, abuse and, more recently, social media is a debate that has continued into the twenty-first century. Much of the responsibility towards educating young people on these subjects remains the responsibility of schools, which as Graeme Paton attests, can often leads to embarrassing and devaluing engagement with the issues.²⁵³ Paton’s article, written almost thirty years on from the Sexism Season, is an example of the moral outcry, perpetuated by the media, that still attends debate surrounding the optimum age for educating young people

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Graeme Paton, ‘Children Aged 5 to Get Sex Education’, *Telegraph* [online] (22 October 2008) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/primaryeducation/3242919/Children-aged-five-to-get-sex-education.html> [accessed 3/10/2017].

about sex. In using the YPTS as a place for this discussion, Chapman had recognised how events such as the Sexism Season were necessary in order to facilitate difficult debates that could then be furthered in an educational context and setting. Moreover, Chapman's progressive attitude towards potentially contentious subject matter saw the YPTS as a much-needed outlet for young people to be educated on these topics. It is an idea that is still visible in the Court's activities with young people, today, as their current initiative for young people known as 'Young Court' continues to provide events that confront topical social issues.

Beginning in February, ten months before the season's opening, the Scheme facilitated three seminars on the theme of sexism that were presented to 4th and 5th year students as a 'dummy run' for the upcoming season.²⁵⁴ The seminars hosted a talk by two teenage girls who had been suspended for wearing boys' uniform as a protest against sexism in their school. In addition to this, two plays were devised and performed by two different London school groups: *It's a Hard Life Being a Girl*, by Clissold Park's 4th year girls, and *The Equal Opportunities Game*, by 5th year girls at Highgate Wood. Attendance at the seminars saw repeat bookings for the season later in the year which began with weekly public lectures for two months starting in October and two professional productions in November. The use of lectures and seminars to facilitate learning, coupled with a development process involving the liaising between teachers and the YPTS, is reflective of a style and approach most often associated with TiE. The format employed by Chapman for the Sexism Season therefore appears more informed by conventional TiE practices than has been apparent in the Scheme's previous endeavours. It could be argued therefore that the season is the product of Chapman's long-standing engagement, interest, contribution

²⁵⁴ Gerald Chapman, Sexism Season Report (1979) V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

and exploration of the relationship between theatre and education that led to a more professional, mature and purposeful event than his previous work on *Everyone's Different*.

The season took place in the Garage between the 5-16 November 1979. Two professional productions were included in the programme and each played for a week-long run. The performances were supported by two one day events that were attended by between sixty and eighty students each day (at a cost of £1), and drew considerable and sustained interest from schools across London, with some pupils attending both days. The schedule for the day was as follows:

Slide Show and Commentary designed to illustrate basic concepts of gender identification and role play in relationships.

Plenary Discussion with 'graffiti board' to write up ideas.

Performance of *Is Dennis Really the Menace?* (Week One) or *Who Knows?* (Week Two)

Lunch break with bookstall.

Performer led group discussions.

Group Feedback.

Close.²⁵⁵

The feminist theatre troupe Beryl and the Perils presented their show *Is Dennis Really the Menace?* in week one (5-9 Nov) and this was followed by Gay Sweatshop's *Who Knows?* in the final week (12-16 Nov). The Perils took their names from the popular 1970s comic character Beryl the Peril who was a regular feature in comic *The Topper* and was likened in style and attitude to her male counterpart Dennis the Menace. The Perils had devised a 'quick-fire style of cartoon comedy that was calculatedly shocking' whereas Gay Sweatshop used some of their most junior members ('barely three or four years older than the audience') to offer a

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

more naturalistically acted play.²⁵⁶ Elyse Dodgson, who was at this time an advisory teacher to the ILEA but would later become a director of the YPTS and a central figure at the Royal Court, recalls the reaction from students and parents to the Perils' production:

I brought in my pupils – mostly girls aged 13 and 14 from the West Indian community in South London. Beryl and the Perils did a show which referred to the clitoris, and the girls all went home asking what a clitoris was. Gerald went on to talk about homosexuality and said there were many ways to have sex. Of course, I got a lot of complaints from parents.²⁵⁷

Chapman admits that the Sexism Season 'raised more questions than it answered', most notably in the group discussions following the performances which 'revealed a tangled skein of doubt, fear and misunderstanding.'²⁵⁸ But the response from teachers indicated a positive long-term impact with the events being 'exactly what youth theatre should be doing, relevant and stimulating, and educationally valuable, raising and exploring crucial topics which are hard to initiate in the classroom.'²⁵⁹ The impact of the Sexism Season, therefore, represents a significant development in Chapman's approach to the organisation of potentially contentious events. The elongated development process had ensured that media attention on the event was restricted and extensive engagement with teachers had enabled collaboration between educational institutions and the YPTS that offered further regard for the educational value of the work. Debates arising from the work had provided a foundation to inform future classroom discussions, which gave purpose to the YPTS's wider role in the community.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Little and McLaughlin, p. 135.

²⁵⁸ Gerald Chapman, Sexism Season Report (1979) V & A: THM/273/4/20/10.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

In July 1980, Chapman left the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme to oversee the inception of an organisation that sought to replicate the idea of the Young Writers' Festival in the USA. Musical theatre composer Stephen Sondheim, who had expressed aspirations to set up a similar concept in New York, had attended the 1979 Young Writers' Festival in the Theatre Upstairs. On experiencing the event, which he recalls as both 'moving and exhilarating', Sondheim found Chapman as 'the key to it all' and within a year Chapman moved to New York and set up what became known as Young Playwrights Inc., which remains active today.²⁶⁰ It is a sign of the Young Writers' Festival's success and impact in a relatively short period of time that this model transferred across the Atlantic.

In his final remarks to the ESC Council, Chapman talks of how the YPTS had 'grown in confidence and prestige' since 1976.²⁶¹ Indeed, Chapman's directorship can be distinguished from its predecessors through a demonstrable ability to attract funding from external sources and a desire to move the focus of the YPTS away from its responsibilities as a producer of professional work towards an initiative that sought to prioritise the voice of the young. The creation of the Activists coupled with the securing of the Garage as a base for the Scheme facilitated the development of some important work that furthered Chapman's ambitions and allowed the initiative's membership and remit to greatly expand. In addition, the decision to formulate and develop the first Young Writers' Group

²⁶⁰ Young Playwrights Inc. describes itself as the 'only professional theatre in the United States solely dedicated to identifying, developing, producing, and promoting playwrights aged 18 and under'. Young Playwrights Inc. 'History' [online] (publication date unknown) <http://youngplaywrights.org/history/> [accessed 8 April 2016].

²⁶¹ Gerald Chapman, Report to the Council of the English Stage Company (10 June 1980), V & A: THM/273/4/20/2.

alongside Nicholas Wright, should be regarded as one of Chapman's lasting legacies on the Royal Court today.

However, in spite of his accomplishments, Chapman was largely unsuccessful in his goal to provide the Scheme with long-term financial security and the end of Chapman's time at the Scheme returns the initiative to the familiar story of an uncertain future on the horizon. The Scheme suffered from financial cutbacks throughout Chapman's final year in charge which left 'no provision for any community youth work and the Activists budget cut, in real terms, by about 40%.'²⁶² The Scheme's staffing had also suffered, with David Thompson resigning as the Scheme's Administrator in January and the Youth Worker Janet Goddard leaving the Scheme with Chapman. Only a £10,000 grant allocated specifically to the Young Writers' Festival remained and Chapman's replacement, David Sulkin, would once again be forced to build up the Scheme in terms of its staffing and funding.

Chapter Three begins by outlining some of the questions posed to the Court by Chapman upon his resignation. It will analyse how the Court responded to Chapman's queries and discuss the Scheme's development within the context of both a new political epoch and the arrival of a new Artistic Director at the Royal Court.

²⁶² Ibid.

Chapter Three

‘A Space in the Community’: Place, sponsorship and playwriting pedagogy in The Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre 1980-1991

Departing Demands

In the last of his annual reports to the ESC Council dated 10th June 1980, Gerald Chapman urged the Council to address three questions that he felt required immediate attention:

- 1) How can the YPTS properly attract the extra funds it needs without an administrator to support the Director?
- 2) How can the Council help in seeking sponsorship for the Young Writers’ Festival on a regular basis?
- 3) How can the Council help the YPTS find a new home when the offices and ‘Garage’ in Holbein Place are re-developed early next year? ²⁶³

The report proceeds to discuss how the Scheme’s achievements with young writers combined with an ‘adventurous policy’ of visiting productions and youth theatre productions had contributed to the YPTS’s unique work with young people. He argues that the accomplishments of the Scheme should be properly acknowledged by the Court, most tangibly through the raising of the director’s wage to a level comparable to other strands of the theatre’s work such as the literary manager or the director of the Theatre Upstairs. Chapman is justified in his request. A salary increase would suggest a level of confidence in the Scheme’s work by the Court moving forward. Moreover, with Chapman’s departure imminent, a competitive salary would encourage a higher calibre of applicant to further the Scheme’s work and can be seen as another attempt by Chapman to secure the YPTS’s future. In the final paragraph, Chapman addresses the issue of salary, which had been an ongoing

²⁶³ Gerald Chapman, Report from the Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme to the English Stage Company Council (10 June 1980), THM/273/4/20/2.

source of contention for some time, through what he describes as ‘a matter of fundamental principle’:

The YPTS is a specialised branch of the Royal Court with its roots in Devine’s Studio work of 1963. If this tradition is to be honoured, and if the body of knowledge and expertise accumulated over fifteen years is to survive, then the YPTS must be acknowledged as at least as important as any other specialised department in the theatre, such as the Literary Department or the Theatre Upstairs. This means paying the Director a wage comparable with the Literary Manager or Theatre Upstairs Director. Furthermore, I would strongly recommend that it also means ensuring that the YPTS has a voice not only at Council meetings but also at Script meetings and Executive Committee meetings. In this way, with the right director, a new relationship of trust can be forged and the YPTS can continue to feed as well as take from the life-blood of the Court for many, many years to come.²⁶⁴

Chapman’s closing remarks to the Council are notable for three reasons: first, it supports the argument made in Chapter Two that a distinct link can be made between the function and purpose of the YPTS and George Devine’s early vision for the Actors’ Studio at the Royal Court. Second, it highlights, once again, concerns around the status of the YPTS within the Royal Court. The fact that the role was not financially equal to what Chapman regarded as similar posts at the theatre, presents further evidence of how the Scheme can be seen to remain on the periphery of the Court’s priorities. Finally, the outgoing artistic director’s account bears some resemblance to Joan Mills’ letter of resignation four years earlier. In that, Mills emphasised the need ‘to do something about involving and including the YPTS in the administrative and artistic structure of the Court’, and as Chapman echoes Mills’ sentiment, there is an unceasing sense that the YPTS continued to struggle in its ambitions to both ‘feed and take from the life-blood’ of the Royal Court.²⁶⁵ The fact that this had not yet been achieved demonstrates that although the YPTS had greatly

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

expanded in the last four years it had not yet been able to prove its worth to the Court.

Taking the questions and concerns outlined by Chapman above as central points of investigation, this chapter looks at an eleven-year period in the YPTS's history during which time it was overseen by two artistic directors: David Sulkin (1980-1985) and Elyse Dodgson (1985-1991). There is a sense at this point that even following four of the most prosperous years for the Scheme, the initiative is still left in a state of uncertainty by the resignation of its director and issues concerning space was to be an overriding feature of the era. The Garage, which had been a faithful home to the YPTS for almost half the decade was earmarked for imminent redevelopment, leaving the Scheme on the brink of homelessness coming into the 1980s. The demolition of the Garage, therefore in the winter of 1980, heralded the beginning of an arduous five-year search for a new home. These events brought with them new challenges and opportunities for the Scheme and the decade saw some important work with young people and writers. The nomadic nature of the Scheme during this time opened up new opportunities for collaboration, and the period can be defined by the volume of work and opportunities created as a result of the Scheme being without a permanent home. The notion of collaboration as an important part of the Scheme's policy in the 1980s is also visible through the regional work of the YPTS that occurred as part of a new approach to the Young Writers' Festival. Indeed, fundamental to this chapter is the tracing, contextualising and analysis of a discernible methodology implemented by the YPTS through its work with young playwrights as part of the Young Writers' Festival. This approach was pioneered by Elyse Dodgson and, as the chapter argues, it marks the beginning

of a process-driven methodology that remains clearly visible within the Court's work particularly with international playwrights today.

The arrival of Max Stafford-Clark as the Court's artistic director in 1979, a position that he held until 1992, brought stability to the theatre. This allowed for a number of distinct policies to be implemented that created a clear identity and vision at the Court. The regular changes in artistic directorship that had plagued the Court for over a decade during the 1970s had hindered the ability for its YPTS to associate with the ambitions of the theatre beyond its fundamental identity as a 'writers' theatre'. The long tenure of Stafford-Clark allowed for the YPTS to adapt to the new artistic director's vision and this chapter details the ways in which some of the most recognisable features of Stafford-Clark's leadership, such as his work with women playwrights, were replicated in the YPTS's own policy during this time.

A Confidential Report

The appointment of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in May 1979 heralded the beginning of a new political epoch in the UK. The cuts to government spending, which came to define Thatcher's term in office, 'began to have a social and cultural impact' that threatened the productivity of the subsidised theatre sector, including Max Stafford-Clark's Royal Court.²⁶⁶ In the summer of 1980 and as part of Stafford-Clark's first year as artistic director of the Court, the work of the YPTS was brought under new scrutiny, with a confidential internal report commissioned by the theatre which aimed to assess the 'role of the Court in the development of young peoples' theatre'.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Little and McLaughlin, p. 214.

²⁶⁷ Comments on YPTS (July 1980), THM/273/4/20/13. Despite extensive investigation, it has not been possible to identify who conducted this assessment.

The opening paragraphs of the report describe the relationship between the YPT and its parent theatre as ‘at best tolerant and at worst hostile.’²⁶⁸ It continues by comparing the YPTS to the Union Jack flag, ‘spending most of its life in a cupboard and occasionally being brought out to be unfurled in the faces of arts philistines only to be promptly packed away again.’ The imagery reveals an initiative that is often isolated from the central concerns of the theatre out of which it operates and is especially surprising given the progress that the Scheme had enjoyed under Gerald Chapman. The report credits the Scheme with attracting and securing funds from external investors, such as the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Adult Education Institute. The report recognises the significance of this during what it describes as the ‘worst time for twenty years in which to raise finance for the extension and development of the Young Peoples’ Theatre at the Royal Court.’²⁶⁹ Notwithstanding the unfavourable political and economic landscape, the report’s recommendations are in favour of a continuance of the YPTS in some form. Significantly, the report’s author highlights the development of young writers for the theatre as a feature of the Scheme that should be encouraged as this had the potential to give the Scheme’s work the much-needed credibility that it was seen to lack within the Court itself.²⁷⁰ The author cites the Court’s ‘historical literary tradition’, and recommends that the YPTS should look to echo this same premise if it is to successfully migrate from the periphery to the centre of Court policy.²⁷¹ Indeed, the suggestion to bring greater focus to the YPTS’s work with playwrights, through initiatives such as the Young Writers’ Group and Young Writers’ Festival, would connect the ‘historical literary tradition’ of the Court to its work with young people. This proposal was accepted

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

and the focus on young people and playwriting would grow exponentially in the next twenty years of the YPTS's work. The author's conclusions support a notion that the only way for a young peoples' initiative to function effectively within the remit of the Royal Court is for it to align as closely as possible to its parent theatre's central ambitions - to source and produce new plays.

David Sulkin: 1980-1985

The positive outcome of the report meant that the YPTS had once more survived a potential culling and, after a brief handover period with Chapman, David Sulkin took up the position of Director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme in September 1980. Sulkin had previously worked as a freelance director, teacher and actor and had some experience working with theatre and education projects in London.²⁷² Sulkin recalls an extensive appointment process that took place before he was offered the role:

I saw an advert in a paper, I don't remember which one, advertising for this role and I applied for it in the usual way and I met Gerald. Gerald – you could either love him in one moment or absolutely loathe him in another. He was a very overwhelming personality but full of enthusiasm and drive and very good connections, I mean working at the Royal Court does give you immense confidence, or at least it used to. And I met Gerald, I suppose he was holding preliminary interviews, and then he had to get me to see Max Stafford-Clark and I saw Max on three occasions and I thought 'I'm kind of going brain dead with this, I'm going nowhere' and I gave up. But eventually they offered me the job and I accepted it.²⁷³

Sulkin states that there was no clear job description for the position but remembers three clear aspects to his work: overseeing of the day to day running of the Scheme, the continuation of the Activists and the managing of the Young Writers' Festival. The 1980 report had also stated how the YPTS 'deserved a better outlet than a

²⁷² Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

²⁷³ Ibid.

garage next to an unsympathetic theatre'²⁷⁴ and, indeed, the leasing of the Garage on Holbein Place in 1976 was always intended to be a temporary solution to the Scheme's search for a permanent home. The Garage had been earmarked for redevelopment from the outset and when it was first acquired by the Scheme, the terms were agreed on the understanding that the YPTS would occupy the space for only a matter of months before it was reclaimed by the Grosvenor Estate for redevelopment. By the time of Sulkin's arrival, however, the YPTS had in fact resided in the Garage, along with a small adjoining building that was used as an office, for almost four years.²⁷⁵ Soon after Sulkin took charge the Grosvenor Estate gave notice to the Court that the Garage would be redeveloped early in the following year, forcing the Scheme to seek new premises elsewhere. But within a month of that notice, a partial and unexpected demolition of the property damaged the Garage beyond repair and immediately left the Scheme without a base. Sulkin recalls the immediacy and hostility of the Scheme's eviction:

We were given notice to leave and we were all very reluctant about it, and sad, but thought it might never happen and suddenly a bulldozer started to pull the building down with us in it. They knocked down a wall to make the building unusable and it was that day we had to get out and we never went back.²⁷⁶

Indeed, in a letter between the ESC's Chairman Howard Newby and the Managing Director of Grosvenor Estate Commercial Development, John Walshe, a 'developer's lorry which had irreparably damaged part of the wall of the

²⁷⁴ Comments on YPTS (July 1980), THM/273/4/20/13.

²⁷⁵ Sulkin describes the Garage space: 'In the office bit, all the furniture was rickety and second hand and cast away, the carpet was thread-bare, the windows were loose, it was chaotic. The Garage space itself was a very odd room, none of the sides were equal, but it had been a garage and it had a stable floor because it had been a stable at some point and the trains ran under it. It was cold and draughty and damp, but fun. It was where creativity happened.' Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

performance area' is identified as the culprit of the accident.²⁷⁷ The unfortunate event saw the YPTS unceremoniously and rapidly removed from their Garage home and forced to return to the dressing rooms of the Royal Court where the difficult search for a replacement venue began.

The high commercial value of property around Sloane Square proved an obstacle to the Scheme's ambition to find a base that was in close proximity to the Royal Court. An early request by the Court to the Grosvenor Estate, which appealed for a home for the YPTS to be included in the redevelopment of the site on Holbein Place, was unsuccessful. In the year that followed a number of potential spaces were explored within the vicinity of the Royal Court. These included a disused canteen next to the theatre which was owned by London Transport for its Sloane Square Station, the hall of a church on Alexandra Avenue, as well as premises on Lots Road. The Scheme went to great lengths in their attempt to secure these spaces at affordable rates, calling upon influential figures such as Edward Bond who wrote to London Transport Chief Executive, Sir Peter Masefield, describing 'the pain [he felt] that the Scheme was threatened' and asking for Masefield's help in securing the canteen for the Scheme's use.²⁷⁸ Also enlisted for assistance were established members of the Activists such as twenty-three-year-old Belinda Blanchard, whose heartfelt letter, also to Masefield, is worth quoting at length:

During [my] time I have come to realise the great importance of the work done by the YPTS [and] how much having our own space to operate in is a vital necessity to the continuation of the Scheme...

When the Garage was closed for use we went to great lengths to try and find alternative suitable accommodation... so you can imagine how hopeful we dared to feel when the possibility of using the canteen area, right next to the very theatre that allows us to exist, presented itself. The YPTS is not just a

²⁷⁷ Howard Newby, letter to John Walshe (22 October 1980), THM/273/4/20/11.

²⁷⁸ Belinda Blanchard, letter to Sir Peter Masefield (21 September 1981) THM/273/4/20/12.

youth club to keep kids of the street. Many members may only be so for one or two productions or perhaps a short series of workshops. Others stay longer for pre-drama school experience. As one of the longest serving members I can say that most of the many young people I have spoken to during 3 ½ years, have learnt and gained a great deal from being members of the YPTS.

Please let us use and operate in the canteen behind Sloane Square tube station so that we may continue to exist and provide much more than just a young peoples' theatre scheme.²⁷⁹

The YPTS's request to London Transport for the use of the canteen was unsuccessful. Eighteen years later, however, the opportunity for the Court to acquire the canteen from London Transport would arise once more. The Site, as it came to be known and which the theatre still occupies today, became the permanent home of the Young Writers' Programme.

On moving to the Garage, membership to the YPTS had increased exponentially and production opportunities for young people had flourished as the Garage had housed much of the Scheme's work since 1976. But after over a year of searching and with a location in the vicinity looking unlikely, further consideration as to the best way to secure the Scheme's future was increasingly necessary. To aid in the search for a new space, a grant application to the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) was made and accepted. Subsequently, funding was made available which allowed for the employment of Moira Eagling as the Scheme's administrator for a thirty-week period beginning in September 1981. The securing of an administrator to join Sulkin fulfils the first of Chapman's parting recommendations, bolstering the composition of the Scheme's staff at a time when support was needed. It was Eagling's prime responsibility to help secure a new home for the YPTS.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. Both Blanchard and Bond's letters to Sir Peter Masefield were sent on the 21 September 1981. Bond describes the Scheme as 'a centre of extensive youth work' and 'an exceptional, creative institution in a time of so much destruction and despondency'.

A Nomadic Scheme

It is surprising that during this turbulent year any work was produced by the YPTS at all. In fact, the Scheme made some important developments during Sulkin's first year as director. These included a new initiative aimed at Activist members that allowed them to see any production in the main house for 50p, as well as the production of some touring work that saw the YPTS operate outside of London for the first time in its history.²⁸⁰ The decision to take the work of the YPTS out of London aligns with an attempt by Stafford-Clark's Royal Court to sustain both the theatre's national and international presence, which saw Broadway transfers and co-productions with theatres and companies such as Manchester's Royal Exchange, Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre and the Women's Playhouse Trust. In a general report documenting the Scheme's output and objectives for the year 1980/81, Sulkin outlines the YPTS's work with the Activists (which was now used as an umbrella term to describe all of the Scheme's practical work with young people), the Young Writers' Group and the Young Writers' Festival and puts forward his plans to further relations with schools and maintain adequate funding to support the Scheme. The director describes the 'contrasting and demanding' first season of work from the Activists, which featured five plays performed by over ninety young people.²⁸¹ The plays produced by the Scheme included *What a Job!* by young writers Michael Belbin and Peter Watson in the Theatre Upstairs; a piece on violence against women entitled *Domestic Affair* by Gilly Fraser at the Riverside Studios; and Sulkin's directorial debut for the Scheme with *Fitness Wins* by Jamie Reid, which was performed at the Fulham Road Centre. *Domestic Affair* had been directed by the

²⁸⁰ The 50p ticket scheme was expanded in September 1981 to become 'Preview' - a notion that sought to encourage more young people to see plays produced in the Court's main auditorium outside of pre-arranged educational visits.

²⁸¹ David Sulkin, Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme General Report: September 1980 to September 1981 (November 1981), THM/273/4/20/13.

Scheme's Youth Worker, Catherine McCall, who supported Sulkin part time in the running of the YPTS throughout the year. In addition to these plays, two further productions were performed during the summer of 1981 that offered a touring component to Sulkin's inaugural season. The first, *One Long Day* by another young writer, Linda Scanlon, is described as a 'suitcase tour' involving a select number of Activists, one of whom also took on the responsibility of directing the production. The task was to make the production as 'light and portable as possible' so as to ensure that the show could travel to various locations: it was seen by over five-hundred people across ten youth clubs in Kensington and Chelsea.²⁸² The most ambitious project of Sulkin's first year of work with the Activists, however, came with *Maggie's Holiday Camp*, which involved fifteen Activists relocating to Scarborough for five weeks to rehearse and perform in the seaside town a specially commissioned street play by John Turner. The *Maggie's Holiday Camp* project allowed for a group of young people to take both themselves and the Scheme's work out of London for a significant amount of time over the summer months and experience both performing and living beyond the city. In providing opportunities such as the *One Long Day* and *Maggie's Holiday Camp* projects for young people, the YPTS offered an insight into the realities of life within a small touring company, attesting to the emergence of a Scheme looking to introduce young people to a wide range of theatrical possibilities and experience. The notion of value in collaboration is also apparent within this work as young directors, actors, and writers are all invited to work together. Indeed, the early years of Sulkin's tenure mark what can be described as a golden age of collaboration between the YPTS and a wide range of theatre spaces, disciplines and practices. The management of a homeless Scheme

²⁸² Ibid.

demanded a level of ingenuity in order to succeed in a difficult time, and it is with this in mind that the collaborative elements seen during this time became central to Sulkin's directorship. As the Scheme's practice shifts towards a focus on playwriting, the YPTS's purpose as a place designed to expose young people to a range of theatrical opportunities is significantly diminished. Sulkin's important work here, therefore, represents the apex of multi-disciplinary collaboration within the YPTS.

The Young Writers' Festival also continued its annual two-week residency in the Theatre Upstairs in March 1981.²⁸³ Since the first festival in 1975, the number of submissions received had risen annually to the point where 330 entries had been sent to the Scheme for consideration as part of the 1981 event. With Caryl Churchill among those on the selection committee, *LTD* by Nick Davies, *Perfect Pets* by Susanna Kleeman, *Start Again* by Tony Newton and *Detention* by Helen Slavin were chosen for professional productions.²⁸⁴ The age of the selected playwrights ranged from 10-21 and with home towns spanning London, Rochdale, and Burton-on-Trent, the 1981 YWF is indicative of an event garnering interest from young playwrights across the country. It is possible that the high level of interest in that year's Festival, both in terms of submissions and audience numbers, was the result of the success of Andrea Dunbar's *The Arbor* in the YWF of the previous year. Dunbar's success, coupled with her Bradford background, had revealed the true potential of the YWF for young playwrights nationwide and, crucially, demonstrated

²⁸³ The Festival took place from 11-28 March 1981.

²⁸⁴ Two readings of plays by young writers were also performed as part of the Festival. These were *Hiroshima Atkins/Orr* by Sean Brennan and *Soldiers of Destiny* by Tomas Bartlett. The 1981 YWF had also seen a significant rise in submissions from writers under the age of fourteen and a selection of these plays were given readings on the final afternoon of the Festival. These were: *The Crowd* by Dawn Scott (12), *The Launderette Play* by Edward Hansen (10), *Nuclear Alert* by Solange Barria (12), *Tom, Dick and Harriet* by Bryony Binnie (12), *The Final Warrior* by Faruk Vawda and David Barrett (13), *Why Me?* By Gillian Davidson, and *The Talking Dog* by Karen Adler.

that these opportunities were not limited to those living in London. It was Stafford-Clark who had recognised Dunbar's potential and the director's involvement in the Scheme's future playwriting initiatives suggests that the Scheme's potential as an outlet for young writers was held with some value and recognition from a senior member of Court staff.

Developing work with young(er) playwrights

By the beginning of 1982, the staffing of the YPTS had increased to the level it had first enjoyed under Gerald Chapman: with Sulkin as Director, Stephen Wakelam as the writers' tutor, Moira Eagling as the Scheme's administrator and Gill Beadle, who had replaced Catherine McCall, as the Youth Worker. The youth worker role was central to overseeing the wellbeing of the Scheme's young members and, as the position holder also worked within a London school, provided a vital link between the Scheme and educational circles.²⁸⁵ Though Sulkin remained the only full-time member of staff, these additions to the team gave valuable support to the management of an increasingly complex young peoples' theatre. The necessity of acquiring funding from beyond the Royal Court had been a priority throughout Gerald Chapman's tenure and the search for external funding sources continued under Sulkin's directorship. The Court provided an annual grant to the Scheme of £15,700 but this amount was boosted by a further £20,000 acquired from other sources, which included income from the Arts Council, the Adult Education Institute, the Inner London Education Authority, the Lord Sainsbury's Trust, and the City Parochial Foundation. It had been these outside grants that had allowed for the expansion of the Scheme's staff, but full sponsorship for the costly Young Writers' Festival was still yet to be secured.

²⁸⁵ Coincidentally, Beadle worked at Vauxhall Manor School for Girls, where Elyse Dodgson had taught prior to succeeding David Sulkin as director of the YPTS.

The cost of producing a Young Writers' Festival at the Royal Court was estimated at £10,000, which was just under a third of the Scheme's annual budget. Sulkin recalls his work on the Festival as 'the most satisfying part'²⁸⁶ of the job, and this enthusiasm coupled with the continued interest in the wake of *The Arbor*, allowed the Young Writers' Festival to thrive throughout the director's tenure and subsequent years thereafter. Submissions for the 1982 Festival were again up from 330 to 362 and the Festival was moved from its usual March date to October in order to accommodate Sulkin's ambitions plans for the event. Beginning on 18 October, *Never a Dull Moment* by Jackie Boyle and Patricia Burns, *Just Another Day* by Patricia Hilaire, *Fishing* by Paulette Randall and *Paris in the Spring* by Lesley Fox were the plays selected to receive full professional productions as part of the Festival. The all-female programme for the '82 Festival further demonstrates how the YPTS can be seen to be adopting similar principles to its parent theatre, with Stafford-Clark's Court often remembered for its 'unprecedented success' with women playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker and Charlotte Keatley.²⁸⁷ The dominance of women within the Young Writers' Festivals of Sulkin's directorship suggests a similar commitment to promoting women's voices from a grassroots level in the YPTS up to the main house of the Royal Court. Indeed, in the five YWFs produced by Sulkin between 1981 and 1985, nineteen of the twenty-five plays given professional productions were written by young women, including three women of colour. In addition, Sulkin also looked to accommodate a noted rise in submissions over the last two years from what he termed 'younger young playwrights' who were writing and entering plays for consideration as part of

²⁸⁶ Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

²⁸⁷ Little and McLaughlin, p. 213.

the Festival.²⁸⁸ It was with the inclusion of some of these works in mind that Sulkin expanded on the usual structure of the YWF to incorporate an additional aspect entitled 'Primary Sauce'. Since the Festival had first been introduced, seven years earlier, the age bracket for submissions had been regularly revised in order to try and maximise the number of plays entered for consideration as part of the event.²⁸⁹ As a result of the incremental changes to the age range from 18 to 20, younger writers had featured less regularly than they had in the Festival's early years. Primary Sauce sought to 'redress the balance and was 'intended as a guide and stimulation for younger writers thinking of writing for the theatre.'²⁹⁰ The plays included in the inaugural Primary Sauce: *Free Credits* by Marcel Bonnefin and Saoud Saeed, *Don't Leave Me Shadow* by Frances Whitton, and *I Want to be a Brain Surgeon* by Jason Clarke as well as *Just Desserts* by YWF alumnus Susanna Kleeman, were all written by writers between the ages of 11-15 and received full productions, using eleven actors from the Activists.²⁹¹

The Primary Sauce event was followed by a short tour of the plays to schools around London along with a series of workshops that continued into the following year. These involved young people between 11 and 14 years of age from two schools in London taking part in a two-day workshop on 'the idea of writing plays', which took place on the Royal Court's main stage.²⁹² The tour and workshops realised the potential for the Scheme to widen its reach and continued a model of

²⁸⁸ Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ David Sulkin, Introduction to Primary Sauce (October 1982), THM/273/4/2/151.

²⁹¹ Eleven-year old Kleeman's first play for the Young Writers' Festival, *Perfect Pets*, was performed as part of the 1981 Festival.

²⁹² The two schools involved were the George Mitchell High School in Leyton and the Chapel End High School in Walthamstow. The event was organised by David Sulkin with writer Jeff Cloves who leading the workshops. The results of Primary Sauce were also published in an edited collection that featured each of the four plays and an introduction by David Sulkin.

playwriting pedagogy that had been introduced under the formal guise of the Young Writers' Group through Gerald Chapman.



Figure 5: David Sulkin directs Activist members Alex King and Carol Bush in rehearsals for *Primary Sauce*, part of the 1982 Young Writers' Festival.²⁹³

The use of a pedagogical structure in playwriting initiatives was beginning to emerge as a central component of the YPTS's work with young people, and this focus continued to develop as the decade continued and the Scheme progressed towards a new iteration as the Young Writers' Programme.²⁹⁴

In what had by this point developed into a significant feature of Sulkin's directorship, the collaborative approach to the YPTS's work was heavily emphasised in the productions presented by the Scheme throughout 1982. Just as

²⁹³ Rehearsal Still, *Primary Sauce* (1982), THM/273/6/1/594.

²⁹⁴ Attempts to encourage 'younger young writers' to write plays and use this to facilitate outreach and learning is an idea that returned to the Court in 2013. Since Vicky Featherstone became Artistic Director a resurgence of young peoples' work has taken place through the introduction of the Young Court initiative. Indeed, an iteration of *Primary Sauce* is visible at the theatre today, in an endeavour known as 'Primetime'. Primetime was born out of the 2012 Young Writers' Festival and includes a touring element where the plays are professionally produced and accompanied by workshops designed to improve literacy and introduce young people to the craft of playwriting. In tracing this idea back to the Sulkin's YPTS thirty years prior to the launch of Primetime, elements of the Scheme's legacy are made visible within the current practices of the Court's work with young people.

members of the Activists performed the plays in Primary Sauce, a similar collaboration took place in the May of that year, five months prior to the Young Writers' Festival, when Sulkin launched the 'Women Live Season'. As part of this season of work, a series of short plays grouped under the title *Talking Black* showed plays written by young playwrights and performed by members of the Activists.²⁹⁵ *Talking Black* illustrates how Sulkin, like his predecessor, used the YPTS as a platform to explore a range of political issues surrounding gender and racial equality with young people. As part of this event, the director pursued a commitment to 'integrated casting and opportunities for black actors and writers'²⁹⁶ that ensured equal prospects for the Scheme's diverse membership. Sulkin's awareness of the underrepresentation of minority groups on the British stage and his work to address this through events such as *Talking Black* is indicative of a Scheme that continued to be both socially and politically aware. Indeed, there are several important events that followed Sulkin's vision during this time that highlight a radical, inclusive and forward-thinking YPTS.

The work presented by the Scheme through events such as the 'Women Live Season', *Talking Black* and the 1982 Young Writers Festival demonstrates a clear intention by Sulkin to use the Scheme to represent those from a diverse range of social, geographic, gender and racial backgrounds. The Black Theatre Season, a separate event, which saw a group of black British and British Asian theatre companies take over the Arts Theatre in the West End in the year that followed these YPT events, demonstrates Sulkin's alertness to broader movements aimed at

²⁹⁵ *Talking Black* saw seven plays performed in the Theatre Upstairs: *Moving Through* by Bernadine Evaristo, *Bunking Off* by Alma Christopher, *The Brick Wall* by Dawn Scott, *A Few Weeks Away* by Yasmin Judd, *And All Things Nice* by Carol Williams, *Just Another Day* by Patricia Hilaire and *Fishing* by Paulette Randall. The season also featured a discussion on the future of black women's writing for the theatre.

²⁹⁶ Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

producing writers from diverse communities.²⁹⁷ Included as part of the Black Theatre Season at the Arts Theatre was Paulette Randall's *Fishing*. Randall's play had debuted as part of the 1982 YWF and, following on from Andrea Dunbar's success two years earlier, evidences how the Festival was continuing to produce quality plays from first-time playwrights.

Sponsorship for the Young Writers Festival

In using Activists members to perform the plays featured in *Primary Sauce*, Sulkin once again created an opportunity to amalgamate the work of the Activists with that of the Scheme's young writers. This concept was returned to in November 1983 where the Hot Tip Festival replaced the Young Writers' Festival for the year. Hot Tip was similar to a Young Writers' Festival but with professional actors replaced by members of the Activists. It featured *Mercy* by Gloria Hamilton, *Role Play* by Yasmin Judd, *Hospital* by Tony Newton and *Believe It or Not, It's True* by Dawn Scott, all performed by a company of twenty-two Activists. While evidence of Sulkin bringing collaborative opportunities to the Scheme, using Activists actors instead of professionals in events such as *Talking Black* (1982), *Primary Sauce* (1982) and *Hot Tip* (1983), this can also be seen as a way of saving money at what remained an uncertain time for the YPTS. By replacing the costly Young Writers' Festival with *Hot Tip* for 1983, Sulkin had identified the need to cut costs on an expensive annual outgoing for the Scheme as the initiative was still yet to secure long-term sponsorship.

²⁹⁷ Jane Milling, *Decades of Modern British Playwriting: the 1980s. Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 67. The season of plays aimed to stimulate theatre making from these communities by presenting existing work, which had been previously confined to alternative arts venues, within a mainstream theatre setting.

As outlined in the chapter's opening, prior to his departure from the YPTS, Gerald Chapman had identified the need for regular sponsorship of the Young Writers Festival as one of three key points to aid in the Scheme's progression and financial stability.²⁹⁸ The 1980s brought with it 'increased encouragement for corporate business to become involved in the arts'²⁹⁹ and this allowed some important partnerships to form which, crucially, included a much-needed sponsorship deal for the Young Writers' Festival. This new enterprise saw the Festival join with office equipment suppliers Rank Xerox in a deal, secured by Sulkin, that offered substantial financial support to the Festival over the next four years. As has subsequently become a custom in such relationships, the Festival's title was also extended in order to accommodate the new sponsors, with the event renamed the Rank Xerox Young Writers' Festival.

March 1984 marked the first year of Rank Xerox sponsorship and saw the return, after the Hot Tip hiatus, of the Young Writers' Festival to the Theatre Upstairs. Running from 13 March to 7 April the event featured two professional productions: *Unity* by Jane Anning and *The Hitch Hiker* by Eileen Dillon, along with two rehearsed readings of *Manjit* by Lakviar Singh and *The 'S' Bend* by Maria Oshodi. The newfound sponsorship brought new benefits to the Scheme which enabled for the first time the publication of scripts from plays produced for the Festival. It also boosted the number of workshops and readings that could take place during the event, and allowed for an increased number of writers and directors to visit schools both in London and across the country. Over the next four years, the Rank Xerox sponsorship provided the finances that initiated a new methodological

²⁹⁸ Gerald Chapman, Report from the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme to the English Stage Company Council (10 June 1980), THM/273/4/20/2.

²⁹⁹ Milling, p. 51.

approach to the Scheme's work with young writers that placed young playwrights at the centre of the Scheme's policy.

The first example of corporate sponsorship at the Court had occurred a few years earlier, in the summer of 1981, when Camel Cigarettes pledged £15,000 in support of Edward Bond's *Restoration*. The Camel and Rank Xerox sponsorship together with further endorsements provided by Barclays Bank in 1989 are three examples of how the Court had started to accept additional funding from corporate sources. The impact of this reverberated through the Court jeopardising several relationships with playwrights such as Bond, Caryl Churchill and David Hare, who each expressed fierce opposition to all sponsorship of the theatre's work.³⁰⁰

A New Home

As the autumn of 1984 approached, the Scheme's attempts to secure a permanent home had so far proved unsuccessful. During this time, the YPTS had considered a number of potential places including disused factories, stores, workshops, and church halls as well as a garage on Lots Road, the latter of which had reached the planning stages but proved too costly to renovate to the necessary standards. The prospect of acquiring a property, either to lease or buy, within the vicinity of Sloane Square had proved impossible and, consequently, the search had moved further afield. But by this point the Royal Court itself was also facing its own hardship.

The re-election of Margaret Thatcher in 1983 and the subsequent reform in governmental policy for the arts that occurred under Conservative leadership in the 1980s brought with it an 'accelerated structural change within the theatre economy'

³⁰⁰ Little and McLaughlin, p. 222 and p. 264.

that saw the Court's future plunged into jeopardy.³⁰¹ The corporate sponsorship that became more prominent at the Court across the decade was a direct result of these structural changes, which had been implemented by the government to 'increase the spread of revenue sources for subsidised theatres.'³⁰² The provision of Arts Council grants was re-evaluated and the Court, which had in the same year been characterised by the Arts Council as a 'very expensive producer of new work', found itself defending its purpose as an eminent producer of new plays against other companies with similar interests such as the National and RSC.³⁰³ Pitted against both the National and RSC, the Court was the underdog and a complete withdrawal of Arts Council funding was threatened. Led by Max Stafford-Clark, a 'vociferous campaign' ensued during which time an 'astonishing display of solidarity' was shown towards the Court from theatres and companies nationwide.³⁰⁴ This 'passionate lobbying' forced an embarrassed Arts Council to back down but the significant energy given towards the Court's battle for survival took its toll on its Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme.³⁰⁵ With the Court's management battling to keep the theatre in existence 'very little help'³⁰⁶ had been offered to assist the Scheme in its search for permanent premises during this important time. This lack of support had left Sulkin on the verge of resignation.

In addition to previously raised concerns about the financial impossibilities of the YPTS remaining in close proximity to the Court, further apprehension centred on the fact that should the Scheme be forced to move outside of the Borough of

³⁰¹ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 181.

³⁰² Baz Kershaw, 'Discouraging Democracy: British Theatres and Economics', *Theatre Journal*, 51:3 (October 1999), pp. 267-283 (p. 271).

³⁰³ Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 183.

³⁰⁴ Little and McLaughlin, p. 242 and Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, p. 184.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 244.

³⁰⁶ Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

Kensington and Chelsea, this would impact on vital sources of funding and severely limit existing outreach links with schools and communities in the area that had been established by the Scheme over the years. It was therefore imperative that the Scheme secured a base that remained within the boundaries of the borough.

It can be argued that the most diverse and socially engaging aspect of the Royal Court's work takes place through its YPTS and no more so has this been the case than through Sulkin's directorship. The itinerant nature of the Scheme since 1980 had furthered the Scheme's ability to benefit and reach a range of young people who might not have otherwise connected with the YPTS's activities. The Scheme's nomadic existence had made it less reliable on its parent theatre and therefore no longer bound to the notion that the YPTS must be housed in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Court. The decision to purchase a property in Notting Hill, five miles from the Royal Court, therefore, reflects a shift in priorities that took the Scheme away from the Court to become further integrated into the community. The move also denotes the beginning of a period of autonomy in the YPTS's history, with the distance perpetuating the sense of disconnect between the Scheme and its parent theatre. As a result, although important work was undertaken by the Scheme during this time, its base was thought to be 'too far away from the Court' and this proved to be increasingly problematic in the subsequent years.³⁰⁷ These issues stemmed from what Elyse Dodgson describes as the 'practicalities'³⁰⁸ of running one organisation across two sites, which proved to be particularly detrimental to the Scheme's overall ability to fully integrate within the daily operations of the Court. As a result, the Scheme found itself becoming progressively more isolated from the main body of the theatre.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Elyse Dodgson, conducted by the author, 4 December 2015.

Situated at 309 Portobello Road, the building and therefore the Scheme remained within the borders of the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The building was run down and in need of significant repair, as Sulkin recalls:

It had been condemned by the GLC because it was falling down, so we bought it for something like £40,000: three flats, basement, and shop and we got £100,000 from the GLC to repair it. The flats were all sold and we had the shop and the basement...The basement was offices and a meeting room and the ground floor was the studio with a proper lighting rig.³⁰⁹



Figure 6: 309 Portobello Road in 1985: The newly acquired base for the Royal Court's Young Peoples' Theatre.³¹⁰

The total cost to the Scheme of the building plus renovation was £211,000. This was covered using grant money from the Greater London Council, a £10,000 grant from the City Parochial Foundation and the selling of the three flats situated above the

³⁰⁹ Interview with David Sulkin, conducted by the author, 18 February 2015.

³¹⁰ Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre, 309 Portobello Road (1985), THM/273/6/1/593.

main space. In addition, the Scheme raised over £20,000 to assist with costs to ensure that the ground floor could be transformed into a functioning black box studio.

Soon after he had secured the new Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre on Portobello Road, Sulkin was approached by English National Opera (ENO) to take up a position within their company. An agreement was made that allowed Sulkin to remain with the YPTS to oversee the move to Portobello Road but leave for the ENO soon after. The director's final year in charge was largely focused on the Portobello project, the 1985 Young Writers' Festival and a new international young playwright's festival 'Interplay' that took a select cohort of the Scheme's young writers to Sydney.³¹¹

Elyse Dodgson: 1985-1991

'Interplay '85' was Sulkin's last official responsibility as Director of the YPTS. With the Scheme's move to Portobello Road finalised, the prime focus for the incoming director was to oversee a successful transfer into the new property. Interviews for the position took place in August with the successful candidate starting work with the Scheme the following month. Elyse Dodgson accepted the role as the Scheme's new director, beginning a thirty-year career at the Court that continues today.³¹² Dodgson had first applied for the role of deputy of the Young Peoples' Theatre during Gerald Chapman's tenure. In her capacity as a teacher at the nearby Vauxhall Manor School for girls, and later as an advisor to the ILEA, Dodgson had engaged with the work of the YPTS for some years. This, coupled

³¹¹ 'Interplay' is an International festival that brings together young playwrights from across the world. Beginning in 1985 the festival takes place in Australia for two-weeks of workshops and discussions on playwriting. The Royal Court has been the UK representative for 'Interplay' since 1985.

³¹² Dodgson is Director of the International Department of the Royal Court Theatre, a position she has held since 1996.

with her ‘great admiration’ for the Royal Court, saw her well positioned to move the Scheme forward into a new era.³¹³

On 3 March 1986, six months into Dodgson’s tenure, the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre Scheme moved into its new property on Portobello Road. Two months later, the YPTS celebrated the building’s official opening. In this time of transition, the word ‘scheme’ was dropped from the title so that the building and therefore the work attached to it became known as the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre (YPT). New premises and a new name offered a larger degree of autonomy and purpose for the YPT, while still maintaining an affiliation with the main house in Sloane Square. This evolution brought an enhanced level of independence but also the much-needed recognition and repute of the Court’s name within a new community.

The small but stable staff infrastructure of the Young Peoples’ Theatre remained in place following the transfer to Portobello Road. The team consisted of Dodgson, as director, Carin Mistry as the theatre’s administrator, Colin Watkeys as the youth drama worker as well as the newly created position of Schools and Community Liason worker held by Mark Holness. With the YPT a permanent fixture in Notting Hill, it was Holness’s duty to ensure that it could position itself within existing community groups, supporting young people in the presentation of work that was reflective of the complex social, economic and racial diversity of the area. As Holness identifies, what emerged as a result of this early community engagement was a YPT that was ‘rooted in the community’, where young people who made up the Young Peoples’ Theatre’s membership came ‘from diverse backgrounds and experiences which [were then] reflected in the nature of [the]

³¹³ Interview with Elyse Dodgson, conducted by the author, 4 December 2015.

projects'.³¹⁴ Among the community work that followed was a piece of Caribbean street theatre presented by sixteen youth theatre members, to coincide with a wider community event entitled *Caribbean Focus* in June 1986, *Garvey!, Garvey!* in the following year and *Real Cool Killers* in August 1987. In addition to the YPT's work with Caribbean communities, projects were also created with young people from Moroccan, Bangladeshi, and Spanish backgrounds, demonstrating a significant investment by the Young Peoples' Theatre in community projects within its first two years on Portobello Road. In addition, Hanif Kureishi, whose play *Borderline* (1981) was produced by Stafford-Clark's company Joint Stock, was appointed as the writer-in-residence and it was Kureishi's responsibility to facilitate the weekly young writers' workshops.³¹⁵ Kureishi's appointment to the Scheme in the aftermath of his work with Joint Stock allowed further connections between Stafford-Clark's Royal Court and the YPT to form. Indeed, with Stafford-Clark settled at the Court, Dodgson's vision for the YPT can be seen to be influenced at several points by the ecology of the Court at the time.

A Record Breaking Year

Taking place between 16 October and 8 November 1986 in the Theatre Upstairs, the third year of the Young Writers' Festival under Rank Xerox sponsorship saw three plays selected for production from a record number of six hundred and five entries: Writing in the programme notes, Elyse Dodgson describes the range of ideas demonstrated in the Festival's submissions:

We had short scenes from writers of eight years old, scribbled on crumpled pieces of paper, and long carefully typed scripts from more mature writers.

³¹⁴ Mark Holness, Schools/Community Liaison Worker Report (January 1987), THM/273/4/20/13.

³¹⁵ Joint Stock was founded in 1974 by Max Stafford-Clark, David Hare and David Aukin. Kureishi began working as the writer-in-residence for the YPT on 7 October 1985 in a position funded by the Arts Council's attachment award initially for a period of six months, which was extended for a further six months in April 1986.

We received simple scenes from classes that were obviously given the task as a school exercise, and plays written with great conviction; we had animal sounds on tape, plays that were derivative, ones that were highly original, some with accompanying music, some that made us laugh and some that made us weep. We had arguments and debate; sometimes panel members agreed, sometimes they debated at length. But in the end, after agreeing a shortlist of twenty, we invited six young writers aged between fifteen and twenty to London to work with us for the whole weekend.³¹⁶

The Festival staged three plays: *The Plague Year* by nineteen-year old Theresa Heskins, *William* by sixteen-year old Shaun Duggan and *Ficky Stingers* by twenty-year old Eve Lewis produced as part of the Festival. These played alongside events that included a two-day conference called ‘A Meeting of Mother Tongues: Bilingualism and dialect in the theatre’, evenings of poetry, prose and music and, in a regeneration of the Primary Sauce initiative, a *Young Young Writers’ Festival* performed by youth theatre members, which featured two plays directed by Max Stafford-Clark. Following the Rank Xerox sponsorship in 1984, more developmental work was able to take place between the young writers and the Royal Court prior to the Festival. This had allowed for writers such as Duggan (Liverpool) Lewis (Kent), and Heskins (South East London), to visit the Court and work on their plays with other writers, directors and staff at the theatre, thereby enhancing their overall experience of the Festival. In 1988, this concept was expanded into a restructuring of the Young Writers Festival that saw specific regions targeted as a focus for the Festival’s work.

Into the Regions

During the 1980s, much of the attention and energy of the Arts Council was expended on regional theatres.³¹⁷ The publication of a document by the Arts Council in 1984, entitled *The Glory of the Garden*, aimed to outline its ‘strategy for a decade

³¹⁶ Elyse Dodgson, 1986 Young Writers’ Festival Program, 1986.

³¹⁷ Milling, p. 45.

for the Arts in England.³¹⁸ The document revealed an intention by the Arts Council to ‘address the London-centredness of the arts’ and identified the ‘need to develop better provision for the arts in the regions.’³¹⁹ As a result of this, and in an attempt to assert ‘a genuine shift of resources away from London and towards the regions’, an increase of funding was provided to Regional Arts Associations (RAA).³²⁰ The enhanced responsibilities afforded to the RAA by the Arts Council included increased budgets and the devolution of clients to the RAA’s direct control, which brought greater autonomy to the RAAs work as they sought ‘an approach to the arts [that was] uniquely regional in character.’³²¹ It was the task of the RAAs to directly fund organisations within the region and award grants to local companies and theatres. In addition to this, *Glory* also set out a development scheme that encouraged existing building-based companies to expand their work to ‘bear a much greater responsibility for enriching the theatrical experience of the wider community’ across their region. Examples of how this could be implemented were given as studio work with an emphasis on new writing, providing facilities for touring companies, touring some of their own work, providing a focus for the provision of TiE and young people’s theatre and the support of small-scale

³¹⁸ Antony Jackson, ‘From “Rep” to “Regional” – Some Reflections on the State of Regional Theatre in the 1980s’ in *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council 1984-2009*, ed. by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 15-28 (p. 16).

³¹⁹ Ibid. p. 23 and Ian Brown, ‘Guarding Against the Guardians’: Cultural Democracy and ACGB/RAA Relations in The Glory years’ in *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council 1984-2009* ed. by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 29-54 (p. 29).

³²⁰ Ros Merkin, ‘Devolve and/or Die: The Vexed Relationship Between the Centre and the Regions: 1980-2006’ in *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council 1984-2009* ed. by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 69-102 (p. 78). RAA’s provided funding and support for the arts between 1956 and 1992 in a total of twelve associations across England. These were: East Midlands, Eastern, Greater London, Lincolnshire & Humberside, Merseyside, North West, Northern, South East, South West, Southern, West Midlands, and Yorkshire. University of Reading, ‘Regional Arts Associations’ [online] (publication date unknown) https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/.../ACGB_and_the_Regional_Arts_Associations_ed.doc. [accessed 14 July 2016].

³²¹ Merkin, p. 74.

independent companies.³²² Although there is no documentation that explicitly articulates a desire on the part of the YPT to target regions supported by RAAs, the movements over the next six-years suggests an awareness of the new-found opportunities, both in terms of funding and in working with young playwrights, that could be gleaned from taking the Young Writers' Festival out into the UK.

The 'London-centredness' of the Arts in Britain was in vital need of re-evaluation. Indeed, the YPT through the work of the Young Writers' Festival had from 1973 sought to use the event as a chance to extend its reach outside of London. While the Young Writers' Festival encouraged aspiring new playwrights from around the country to submit their plays for consideration, the opportunities for production as part of the Festival ultimately remained in the capital. The London-centric nature of the opportunities presented to young writers by the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre was largely as a result of a dependency on local funding. Dodgson describes 'a big fundraising initiative' surrounding the Young Peoples' Theatre 'that was challenging and time consuming' but, as had been initiated by Gerald Chapman and developed under David Sulkin, provided the necessary finances to support the theatre's endeavours.³²³

Principal funding for the YPT came from the Royal Court, aided by an Arts Council grant, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This money covered the day-to-day running of the Portobello Road studio and paid for Dodgson's salary along with 75% of the administrator's pay. The additional 25% was covered through the Charities Aid Foundation. The Inner London Education Authority's Youth Service provided the funding for the Youth Drama Worker and

³²² Ibid, p. 70.

³²³ Interview with Elyse Dodgson, conducted by the author, 4 December 2015.

the Gulbenkian Foundation covered the post of Schools and Community Liaison worker. Further finances required for performance projects were supported using money acquired from independent fundraising by the YPT.³²⁴ The strict budget allocation allowed for little nationwide engagement with young writers outside the two-week window of the Young Writers' Festival. But with the Rank Xerox sponsorship coupled with increased regional investment and interest, Dodgson could begin to explore the possibilities of expanding the reach of the Festival further into the regions in order to accommodate the needs of young writers beyond London and for longer periods of time.

The plans for the 1988 Young Writers' Festival outlined a new structure which saw the annual nationwide call for submissions replaced by a process-based approach that focussed on specific regions across the UK. In building the Festival around a series of 'phases', a sustained engagement could be offered by the YPT to young people interested in writing for the theatre. Integral to the Festival's objectives was the targeting of 'specific regions and writers and directors from the Royal Court' who were 'brought in to offer a full programme of workshops and follow up sessions within the chosen regions.'³²⁵ The selected plays from within those areas were then given full professional productions in the Theatre Upstairs as well as a tour across the selected regions. Owing to the complexities of the new YWF structure, which had an estimated time frame of eighteen months from the first workshop to the Festival itself, the YWF shifted at this point from an annual to a biannual event. The viability of such a bold expansion of the YWF was undoubtedly inspired by enhanced opportunity for collaboration with regional companies brought

³²⁴ A YPT Budget Proposal shows a fundraising target of £8716 for the year 1986/87 (Elyse Dodgson, Young Peoples' Theatre Budget Proposal 1986/87 (1986), THM/273/8/1/33).

³²⁵ Elyse Dodgson, The Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre: An Outline of Strategies and Aims for 1991-2 (1990), THM/273/4/20/13.

about as a result of the proposals of *The Glory of the Garden*. Indeed, Dodgson and the YPT looked to align their focus for the 1988, '91, '92 and '94 YWFs with those regions supported by Regional Arts Associations, demonstrating an increased awareness of national opportunities to optimise the reach of the YPT and its work with young playwrights.³²⁶

In the eighteen months prior to the 1988 Young Writers' Festival, Dodgson or another member of the YPT staff, assisted by actors as well as directors and writers for the Royal Court, had conducted workshops in Greater London, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Humberside, and the Eastern Arts areas. These workshops were open to young people up to the age of twenty-five from within the selected regions. The initial workshops, on the subject of writing for the theatre, were typically held in five centres across each region and the process divided into five phases from first workshop to professional production. Phase One was led by a writers' tutor as well as an experienced workshop leader from the YPT and was open to participants regardless of previous experience with the aim of inspiring those in attendance to try some writing. In the second phase this process was extended with the workshop leaders joined by a director from the Court along with actors provided by the venue who would then work on the texts produced by the writers in phase one. All those who submitted work for this phase received one on one tutorials with the accompanying writers' tutor. The third phase brought all the regions previously covered in the festival cycle together and required the submission of a full script, which was then read by a panel of readers. Subsequently, a select group of young writers whose plays demonstrated the 'greatest theatrical potential' were invited to the YPT's home on Portobello Road for a weekend of script

³²⁶ Regional Arts Associations were housed across all of England except for Buckinghamshire.

workshops, again with actors and writers and directors from the Court. It was following this penultimate phase that the plays would then be selected to receive professional productions in the Theatre Upstairs and a tour of the participating regions.

The chosen plays for the 1988 event were Soraya Jintan's *Lolita's Way* and *Mohair* by Jonathan Harvey. Harvey, aged twenty, attended the workshops held at the Spring Street Theatre in Hull and Jintan, also aged twenty, had emerged through the workshops at the Young Peoples' Theatre itself. In addition to professional productions, the pinnacle of the Festival's eighteen-month process offered rehearsed readings of other plays by young writers at both the Court and in the regions. Further, the YPT continued to work with the RAAs after the Festival to create permanent writers' groups within the areas that ensured ongoing support for regional young writers.

Workshops for the first Young Writers Festival of the 1990s began in October 1989. Sponsored now by Marks and Spencer, work was undertaken in sixteen towns and cities across three RAA supported areas: West Midlands Arts, Southern Arts and South-East Arts.³²⁷ Dodgson recruited a number of professional playwrights to assist with the initial phases including Clare McIntyre, Charlotte Keatley, and Martin Crimp. Here, Dodgson records that phase 3 submissions were 'the highest [in number] since the Festival became process-based.'³²⁸ The selected plays were performed in February and March in the Theatre Upstairs as part of the

³²⁷ As part of the 1991 Young Writers' Festival workshops were held in: Canterbury, Reading, Birmingham, Warminster, Basingstoke, Leatherhead, Southampton, Portsmouth, Brighton, Worthing, Hereford, Coventry, Solihull, Oxford, Worcester, and the Black Country.

³²⁸ Elyse Dodgson, 'The Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre: An Outline of Strategies and Aims for 1991-2' (1990), THM/273/4/20/13.

1991 Young Writers' Festival.³²⁹ The process-based approach described above had moved the Festival away from the methods of the past Young Writers' Festivals, centred on an open call for submissions, to a more considered period of engagement with young writers. By elongating the process and introducing a phased approach to the Festival's work, the YPT deliberately sought to nurture young playwrights over an eighteen-month period in preparation for production in the Theatre Upstairs. The basic idea that is advocated through this approach is one that became central to the purpose of the Young Writers' Programme at the end of the decade. The notion that young and aspiring playwrights were developed over a sustained period of time by professional playwrights with a view to their work being considered as part of the Young Writers' Festival or in the main programming at the Court became an integral tenet of the Programme's composition. Dodgson's introduction of this methodology, therefore, forms the base approach to the future work with young playwrights at the Royal Court. Further, the significance of this model has had a lasting impact on the Court as Dodgson describes the formula used in the Young Writers' Festivals as 'absolutely the model' for the pioneering work that she has since undertaken with international playwrights across the world.³³⁰

A Pedagogic Turn

In November 1991, Dodgson left the YPT to take up a position at Rose Bruford College. Six months later she returned to the Court and to the post of Associate Director – Education, where she continued to work closely with the Young Peoples'

³²⁹ Ibid. Four plays received professional productions as part of the event: *Sally's Suspected* by ten year olds Jennie Ward and Jenny Langford, *Sleeping Ugly* by eleven-year old Fiona Kelcher as well as *A Pig in a Poke* by twenty-four-year-old Julie Everton and *Happy Days Are Here Again* by Paul Tucker, aged nineteen. A further three plays were given readings and the Young Peoples' Theatre's writers' group also presented some of their new work. Rehearsed readings were given to: *The Grandfather Grave* by Daragh Carville, *Mourning Still* by Afia Nkromah, and *David* by Robert Brandt.

³³⁰ Interview with Elyse Dodgson, conducted by the author, 4 December 2015 and Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas, *Royal Court: International* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 41.

Theatre. The process-based Festival model had allowed for greater interaction and sustained engagement with young writers from across the country. Over the course of five years, Dodgson had initiated connections with over half of the regional arts associations in England and provided the opportunity for young playwrights from beyond London to work with professional writers, directors and actors.

There is a case to be made that the process-driven methodology implemented by Elyse Dodgson for the Young Writers' Festival in 1988 was influenced by similar practices in play(wright) development that were visible at the Royal Court under Max Stafford-Clark. Stafford-Clark's introduction of the 'Joint Stock method' saw the use of workshops as a process for either conceiving, developing or writing a play become the accepted paradigm in the methodology of Royal Court play development in the 1980s.³³¹ This encouraged the director and the actors 'to be far more involved in the bricks and mortar of the plays'³³² but had introduced a lengthy process that had resulted in the reduction in numbers of productions seen on the theatre's stages across the decade. The emphasis on process reflected in Dodgson's own work with the Young Writers' Festival during this time also proved time consuming turning an annual event into a biennial occasion.

In addition to employing methodologies similar to that of their parent theatre, the YWF's process-led structure also had pedagogic implications, which playwrights, such as Martin Crimp were keen to avoid: as Philip Howard writes in his report following the YWF phase one workshop in Leatherhead with Martin Crimp on 27 January 1989: 'we stood by our resolution not to explain at each stage of the workshop why they were being set certain tasks, hoping they would guess –

³³¹ Little and McLaughlin, p .294.

³³² Ibid, p. 216.

thus avoiding the notion that we had come to teach.’³³³ The idea of bringing aspiring writers together in structured groups that explored writing for the theatre was beginning to emerge elsewhere, both in community contexts through organisations such as Manchester-based group North-West Playwrights and in academia with the launch of the inaugural MA in Playwriting Studies at the University of Birmingham in 1989. The latter sparked a number of similar courses within Higher Education over the next decade, a trend which continues to this day.³³⁴ This was coupled with the launching of young writers’ groups in a number of subsidised theatres across the country throughout the 1990s and 2000s. As the final two chapters of this thesis will explore in more detail, by the beginning of the 1990s, the relationship between playwriting and pedagogy had become greater and this had various implications in the decade for both the Royal Court and its Young Peoples’ Theatre.

Conclusion

The directorship of David Sulkin had started with uncertainty. The premature demolition of the Garage had left the YPT without a home and the subsequent four-year search for a replacement building in which to house the Scheme had resulted in a testing time within an already difficult period in Royal Court theatre history. The nomadic status of the YPT in the first half of the 1980s, however, generated some important work in a range of spaces and with a diverse number of young people – a strand of work which would continue into the following decade. One of the most notable features of Sulkin’s tenure was his support for young female playwrights and women of colour which brought an unprecedented number of plays written by

³³³ Philip Howard, Report from the Young Writers’ Festival Phase 1 Workshop in Leatherhead (27 January 1989), THM/273/4/20/13.

³³⁴ Further information and context around the inception of this course is available in: David Edgar, *How Plays Work* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2009), pp. xi-xiv. Playwriting courses are offered at MA level by a number of universities around the UK, including the Universities of: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Royal Holloway, and Essex.

young women to the Young Writers' Festival and events such as Talking Black. A further commitment to the production of young playwrights of all ages through events such as Primary Sauce and the Young Writers' Festival also saw this area of the YPT's work prioritised within the initiative's policy. This aligns with the recommendations of the internally commissioned report of 1980 which had advocated for a YPT that was more aware of the Court's 'historical literary tradition'³³⁵ and is part of an attempt to move the Young Peoples' Theatre from the periphery to the centre of Royal Court policy.

The radical underpinning to Gerald Chapman's work in the 1970s, which often saw contentious themes within the plays presented to young audiences, had shifted towards ideas that remained socially relevant but were more conscious of the YPT's 'responsibility to teachers and young audiences.'³³⁶ Moreover, the appointment of new staff to the team along with the role of a Community and Schools' Liaison worker allowed for a renewed professionalism that furthered the impact of the Young Peoples' Theatre upon its installation on Portobello Road. This administrative structure built on the work of Gerald Chapman in a period of continued success with grants and sponsorship from a range of sources, leaving the YPT in 'a very healthy position' in the year leading up to Dodgson's departure.³³⁷

One significant feature of the decade came through the acquisition of much-needed sponsorship for the Young Writers' Festival in 1984. First by Rank Xerox and then by Marks and Spencer, sponsorship proved the catalyst for a paradigm shift in the methodology of the Festival that saw pioneering work undertaken with young playwrights in several regions across England. Dodgson enlisted the help of a

³³⁵ Comments on YPTS (July 1980), THM/273/4/20/13.

³³⁶ David Sulkin, Introduction to Primary Sauce (October 1982), THM/273/4/2/151.

³³⁷ YPTS Budget Position (10 September 1990), THM/273/2/1/65.

number of established playwrights and directors at the Court, including the theatre's artistic director Max Stafford-Clark. Stafford-Clark's participation in these events accompanies a shift in YPT policy towards a greater engagement with the Royal Court's identity and vision. The 'healthy position' in which Dodgson left the YPT refers not only to the financial status of the initiative but also to the YPT's relationship to the Court. Dodgson recalls the 'huge support' that she received from Stafford-Clark following the YPT's move to Portobello Road, which suggests that the end of her tenure also left the YPT in relative harmony with the Royal Court's senior management.³³⁸ Dodgson's successor, Dominic Tickell, who had worked as the YPT's administrator since 1988, would moreover, offer a sense of continuity to the YPT's work that had not previously been assured, as the next chapter will discuss.

The period also heralds an era when arguably the most significant aspects of the YPT's legacy within the Royal Court were made manifest. Examples of this can be seen through the founding of a process-based methodology to the theatre's work with young writers that would continue not only in the Young Writers' Programme but more tangibly in Dodgson's work with international playwrights. Moreover, the sponsorship of the Young Writers' Festival gave financial security to what was one of the most recognisable features of the YPT and this continued until the final YWF in 2012. As the thesis moves into its penultimate chapter, it investigates how financial investment in the Royal Court's work brought new opportunities to the Young Peoples' Theatre and its work with young playwrights. It also looks at the ways in which the arrival of Stephen Daldry as artistic director in 1992 looked to integrate the YPT's work with young playwrights into the main vision of the theatre.

³³⁸ Interview with Elyse Dodgson, conducted by the author, 4 December 2015.

In what can be regarded as the closing years of the YPT's existence, the chapter seeks to bring new evidence and context to the years prior to the initiative's rebranding as the Young Writers' Programme and offer original insights into the complexities of this transition.

Chapter Four

A Period of Construction: Policy, Geography and a Focus on New Writing in the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre 1992-99

A Changing Vision

At the end of the 1980s, new writing was regarded by many in the British theatre industry as being 'in a state of crisis.'³³⁹ Indeed, writing the introduction for an edited collection of new plays in 1989, the Court's then literary manager, Kate Harwood, expresses how 'it is hard to spot any growth area for new writing.'³⁴⁰ The year had seen the closure of two major new writing stages – the Royal Court's own Theatre Upstairs and the Bristol Old Vic Studio – with box-office numbers for new plays dwindling at below 50%.³⁴¹ However, the perception that new writing was in crisis at the turn of the decade is not reflected in the productivity of the Young Peoples' Theatre during this time. Indeed, by the beginning of the 1990s, a decade of playwriting initiatives for young people in the YPT had started to produce tangible results, not least in the work of YPT stalwarts, such as Winsome Pinnock and Jonathan Harvey. Pinnock had joined the Young Writer's Group at the YPT in the mid-1980s and, in August 1991, her play *Talking in Tongues* was included in the main programming of the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs. Harvey's first play for the Royal Court, *Mohair*, programmed as part of the 1988 Young Writers' Festival, was followed by *Beautiful Thing*, which opened at the Bush in 1993 before transferring to the Donmar Warehouse and the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End. Harvey returned to the Court in 1994 with his play *Babies*, developed in conjunction with the National Theatre Studio. This debuted in the Theatre Upstairs and resulted in

³³⁹ Matthew Lloyd (ed.), *First Run 3* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1991), p. ix and Michael Billington, *One Night Stands: A Critics View of British Theatre 1971-1991* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1993) p. 360.

³⁴⁰ Kate Harwood (ed.), *First Run 2* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1990), pp. viii-ix.

³⁴¹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 21.

Harvey being awarded the prestigious George Devine Award. The award for the previous year had been given to Pinnock for her play *Leave Taking*, which signals two consecutive years of YPT alumni receiving the prominent playwriting award.³⁴² These successes demonstrate the important role played by the YPT in the formative years of these playwrights.

In direct contrast to the ‘doom and gloom’³⁴³ that had clouded new writing at the end of the ‘80s, the 1990s is remembered as a time when British theatre enjoyed a ‘playwriting boom’.³⁴⁴ The Royal Court’s own contributions to this period are largely represented by the debuts of writers such as Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill and the seminal season of new plays by first-time writers produced by the Court in 1994/95. Jacqueline Bolton provides an extensive assessment of the ‘New Writing industry’ that emerged during this decade in English subsidised theatre in her 2012 article ‘Capitalizing (on) New Writing: New play development in the 1990s’.³⁴⁵ While the work of the Royal Court’s literary department is brought into sharp focus in Bolton’s article, this chapter looks to augment Bolton’s study by focussing explicitly on the Court’s Young Peoples’ Theatre, and its own contribution to this important decade, as the primary source of debate.

After fourteen years, the longest tenure of any artistic director in the history of the English Stage Company, Max Stafford-Clark made way for his successor,

³⁴² Harvey became involved with the Young Writers’ Festival following his involvement with the YPT’s regional work in Hull. The George Devine Award is an annual prize that is still presented, today. It was launched in 1966 following the death of George Devine and is awarded to playwrights whose work demonstrates exceptional promise in writing for the theatre. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the award’s previous recipients’ work has debuted at the Royal Court including Judy Upton’s *Ashes and Sand* (1994), Roy Williams’ *Lift Off* (1999) and Penelope Skinner’s *The Village Bike* (2011).

³⁴³ Lloyd, p. ix.

³⁴⁴ Lyn Gardner, ‘Beyond *Blasted*: how the 90s changed theatre in the UK’, *Guardian* [online] (31 January 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2017/jan/31/blasted-90s-changed-theatre-uk> [accessed 9th March 2017] (para 5 of 10).

³⁴⁵ Jacqueline Bolton, ‘Capitalizing (on) New Writing: New play development in the 1990s’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32.2 (2012), 209-225.

Stephen Daldry. Daldry's vision for the Court would have a profound impact and indeed transformation on the visibility of the YPT within the Royal Court's structure. Daldry came to the Court from the Gate Theatre, Notting Hill, a theatre with a commitment to the production of new translations of international plays.³⁴⁶ His success at the Gate and also his seminal production of *An Inspector Calls* (1992) at the National Theatre is representative of the British Theatre landscape in the early years of the 1990s when 'well-produced but safe classics and revivals' were in the ascendancy and the aforementioned 'playwriting boom' was yet to explode.³⁴⁷ As Harwood points out, 'much of the fresh energy' of the time was coming through new *work* as opposed to new *writing*, with companies such as Complicité, Comunicado and GLORIA making theatre that centred on devising and adaptation, and in which text featured as only one component in the overall experience.³⁴⁸ Daldry's early programming was reflective of current trends, with his first seasons for the Court including new work from DV8's Lloyd Newson and GLORIA's Neil Bartlett, works that sat distinctly at odds with the writer-centred tradition for which the Royal Court was known.³⁴⁹ This programming, coupled with the inclusion of revivals such as John Arden's 1958 play *Live Like Pigs* and only a small number of new plays, confirmed an 'uneven to poor' start to Daldry's tenure and threatened to overshadow the Court's historical commitment to the living playwright.³⁵⁰

The arrival of Graham Whybrow as literary manager in 1994 prompted a

³⁴⁶ Wendy Lesser, *A Director Calls: Stephen Daldry and the Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 59.

³⁴⁷ John Bull, *Stage Right: Crisis and Recovery in British Contemporary Mainstream Theatre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 208.

³⁴⁸ Harwood, p. i.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

³⁵⁰ Graham Whybrow qtd. in Jacqueline Bolton, 'Demarcating Dramaturgy: Mapping Theory onto Practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011), p. 66.

‘reassessment of the theatre’s priorities’.³⁵¹ The extensive processes for developing new plays that had been introduced by Max Stafford-Clark were rejected and replaced with a ‘clear conviction that [the Court] needed to respond to and identify the most exciting new playwrights and produce their work without a process.’³⁵²

In so doing, the Court adopted a public stance that professed a commitment to expanding the programming opportunities for new playwrights at the expense of working with playwrights from the previous regime.³⁵³ A new anti-process policy stood in contrast to one of the most successful initiatives in place at the YPT and it is the concern of this chapter to interrogate how this stance impacted on the planning and delivery of the YWF. With this in mind, this chapter argues that it was the process-led methodologies of the YPT in the late 80s and 90s which enabled the Court to draw from a large pool of first-time writers and achieve the ‘rapid turnover, rapid expansion’ that came to characterise the decade.³⁵⁴ While the notion of work produced ‘without a process’ was a view often advanced by the Court during this time, the influence of writers being developed through process-led initiatives at the YPT on the theatre during this decade suggests that this is not the most accurate way to describe the methodologies in place at the Court during the 1990s. This chapter argues that Daldry looked to the YPT in order to support an ambitious turnover of plays and also analyses the ways in which the YPT responded and adapted its own practices to facilitate the theatre’s desire to focus its vision on the production of new plays by young writers. The value of the YPT’s work with young playwrights within the Court’s ambitions is made explicit and the precise contribution of the YPT to this decade of Royal Court and British theatre history is

³⁵¹ Bolton, ‘Capitalizing (on) New Writing’, p. 215.

³⁵² Little and McLaughlin, p. 294.

³⁵³ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

³⁵⁴ Little and McLaughlin, p. 294.

revealed.

The chapter is shaped by three major events that occurred at the Royal Court in the 1990s: the season of new plays by first time writers in the seminal 1994/95 programme in the Theatre Upstairs; the temporary relocation of the Royal Court to the West End between 1996 and 2000; and, finally, the ultimate decision to rebrand the YPT as the Young Writers' Programme in 1999. In what would be the final decade of the Young Peoples' Theatre, each of these elements can be regarded as factors in the ultimate development of the Young Writers' Programme out of the Young Peoples' Theatre.

Sacrificing the Old Regime

By stripping away process, Daldry and Whybrow's vision for the Court aimed to put the 'playwright back at the centre of things' and restore the Court to its playwrights' theatre roots.³⁵⁵ But the overriding ambition to 'find new plays and playwrights' for the Court to produce came at the expense of many established playwrights who had seen their work produced at the theatre in the 1980s.³⁵⁶ In order to open the doors to new writers, the 'ruthless clubbing of commissions by senior writers' ensued and old relationships were sacrificed in the pursuit of new writers:³⁵⁷

By also removing the time-consuming workshop process introduced by Stafford-Clark, under Daldry the Court's output of plays more than doubled between 1994 and 1996, from nine to nineteen.³⁵⁸ Whybrow, with Daldry's support, sought to increase the number of scripts received by the Court from first time writers and quickly implemented a new strategy that aimed to 'strategically track first time

³⁵⁵ Little and McLaughlin, p. 294.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

³⁵⁸ Bolton, 'Capitalizing (on) New Writing', p. 214.

writers in a very purposeful way':³⁵⁹

I was trying to put out the signal that I wanted to get the plays first. My vision, when I started, was to invert the pattern of aspiring playwrights sending plays to studio theatres and, if lucky, getting them on... I wanted to invert that and get the aspiring playwrights to send their play to us first, at the top. We would get first access to first plays and be better placed to access them and produce them... The biggest intervention I want[ed] to make [was] to get access to those writers, to meet them and, as a talent scout, get first dibs on the new playwrights.³⁶⁰

The 'opportunistic and entrepreneurial' Daldry quickly secured the means to implement these ambitions.³⁶¹ Writing for the *Guardian* in 1994, Daldry explains how he 'sensed a change in the new writing arena', the article concludes with a call to provide a 'structure in which these writers and their successors can flourish.'³⁶² For the Royal Court, the artistic director cites its Young Peoples' Theatre and its 'extremely successful' young writers' group along with the Young Writers' Festival as vital links in the theatre's playwriting chain.³⁶³ Indeed, in emphasising 'the role of the Young Peoples' Theatre in supporting and nurturing the careers of emerging playwrights', Daldry alludes to the value of a 'structure' that could be put in place to facilitate the development of young writers.³⁶⁴ Although the provision of a formal structure in which 'young writers and their successors could flourish' within the Royal Court did not appear at the Royal Court until five years later through the launch of the Young Writers' Programme,³⁶⁵ in the interim period the process began with the work of the Young Peoples' Theatre.³⁶⁶ The acknowledgement of a

³⁵⁹ Bolton, 'Demarcating Dramaturgy', p. 55.

³⁶⁰ Whybrow's comments are taken from an interview conducted by Jacqueline Bolton in 2007. Extracts from the interview feature in both Bolton's unpublished doctoral thesis and in a published journal article entitled 'Capitalizing [on] new writing: New play development in the 1990s', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32:2 (2012), pp. 209-225.

³⁶¹ Little and McLaughlin, p.284.

³⁶² Stephen Daldry, fax to Fiona McCall (1994), THM/273/4/20/16. This is the transcript of what would later become the piece that featured in the *Guardian*.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Little and McLaughlin, p.214.

³⁶⁵ Stephen Daldry, fax to Fiona McCall (1994), THM/273/4/20/16.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

desire for structure and succession as part of the Court's ambitions to source a new generation of playwrights, and the recognition of the role of the YPT in fulfilling this vision, is indicative of an important shift in the regard for the YPT's work by its parent theatre.

Implementing the Vision: the NT Studio and Jerwood New Playwrights

With cuts in arts subsidies continuing throughout the nineties, Daldry's aptitude for securing funding from alternative means allowed for new sources of income to support the production of new plays. Although still dependent on the Arts Council for its core funding, during this time, a significant amount of sponsorship for the Court across this period was received from American donors. Importantly, the National Theatre Studio also provided vital opportunities and space, particularly during the rehearsal period. Under Sue Higginson's leadership, the NT Studio, which was housed in the Old Vic Annexe, continued to develop new plays both at the National and through co-productions with other theatres. It was through a co-production with the NT Studio that the Royal Court was able to produce six plays by six unknown writers in the Theatre Upstairs between the Autumn of 1994 and early 1995. The studio provided the rehearsal space and covered the cost of the actors, director, and stage manager for the entirety of the rehearsal period, which effectively halved the cost of production for the Royal Court.³⁶⁷

In addition to the NT Studio collaboration, further financial aid was acquired through the establishment of a new scheme for emerging playwrights. In a partnership between the Jerwood Charitable Foundation and the Royal Court that continues today, Jerwood New Playwrights (JNP) launched in 1994 to support the

³⁶⁷ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

production of work by early career playwrights.³⁶⁸ JNP continues to contribute to the annual production of three plays produced across the Royal Court's two stages but, in its inaugural year, the scheme supported five of the six young writers programmed as part of the '94-'95 season of new plays. Joe Penhall's *Some Voices*, which opened the season in September 1994, was the first play to benefit from the JNP initiative. Other JNP beneficiaries for the 94/95 season were Judy Upton for *Ashes and Sand* along with Sarah Kane's debut play *Blasted*. Two of the plays to feature in the 1994 Young Writers' Festival were also awarded JNP funding with Nick Grosso's *Peaches* and Michael Wynne's *The Knocky* completing the inaugural cohort of JNP recipients. The collaboration between the Royal Court, NT Studio and Jerwood Foundation during this time, therefore, can be regarded as an important alliance that allowed for Daldry's ambitious plans for the Court to reach fruition.

Putting writing at the heart: Dominic Tickell: 1992-1997

The work of the NT Studio and the creation of the Jerwood New Playwright scheme offers important context to a season of plays at the Royal Court to which a number of young playwrights from the Young Peoples' Theatre provided significant contributions. However, in the build-up to that event, changes were made within the staff structure at the Royal Court, which saw Elyse Dodgson appointed as the theatre's Associate Director for Education and the YPT in need of a replacement leader.

Dodgson's successor, Dominic Tickell, began his career working as the assistant director to Pierre Audi at the Almeida Theatre. Tickell had also worked as

³⁶⁸To qualify as part of the scheme a playwright must be within the first ten years of their career. Jerwood Charitable Foundation, 'Jerwood New Playwrights', Jerwood Charitable Foundation [online] (publication date unknown) <http://www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org/projects/the-royal-court-theatre-jerwood-new-playwrights/> [accessed 10 July 2016] (para 3 of 4). A full list of playwrights and the plays that have been produced with the help of this initiative between 1994 and 2007 is available in the Appendices section (Appendix E) of this thesis.

a script reader at the Royal Court and was appointed in 1988 as the administrator for the Young Peoples' Theatre. His time working with Dodgson continued the focus on young writers that had been an important aspect of his predecessor's policy:

Writing was at the heart of what we did at the YPT at all times while I was director. We did other things, so we did youth drama workshops and so on but it struck me that that was not the point of the YPT. The point of the YPT was to be part of the Royal Court Theatre and therefore new writing was at the heart of everything.³⁶⁹

This ambition was implemented in two ways: through the Youth Theatre, made up of young actors and directors who would take part in community projects and perform in specially commissioned new plays, and the writers' group, which 'encouraged each member to realise their potential as a writer.'³⁷⁰ It is through each of these initiatives that Tickell put 'new writing in all its guises'³⁷¹ at the heart of the Young Peoples' Theatre's work. According to Tickell, the writers' group was the 'most important and ever present' feature of the Young Peoples' Theatre.³⁷² As it had been since its inception, the writers' group was led by a professional playwright, known as the Writers' Group Tutor. From 1979, this position had been held by a number of playwrights including Nicholas Wright, Caryl Churchill, April De Angelis, Andrew Alty, Tamsin Oglesby, Hanif Kureishi, David Lan, Noel Grieg, and Nicola Baldwin. As part of the group's structure, other playwrights whose plays had been produced by the Court, were invited to lead a session, with Timberlake Wertenbaker, Stephen Jefferies, and Sarah Kane among those invited to give workshops to the group's members. The role of the writer's tutor gained further prominence following the establishment of the Young Writers' Programme in 1998

³⁶⁹ Interview with Dominic Tickell, conducted by the author, 1 June 2016.

³⁷⁰ Dominic Tickell, 'Introduction' in *Coming on Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. xi.

³⁷¹ Interview with Dominic Tickell, conducted by the author, 1 June 2016.

³⁷² Interview with Dominic Tickell, conducted by the author, in 19 February 2015.

and post-holders came to be integral to the development and shaping of the programme's future.

The methodology implemented by Elyse Dodson at the end of the 1980s had transformed the Young Writers' Festival from a nationwide hunt for new plays by young writers to a regionally specific, process-based approach that allowed for more considered engagement between the YPT and its young writers. The first Young Writers' Festival of Tickell's directorship, programmed under the title of *New Voices* (1992), had looked to further enmesh the Court's place within a developing affinity for all things new.³⁷³ The Marks and Spencer sponsorship remained an important source of funding and eye-catching titles such as *Choice*, *Storming*, *Exposure*, and *Imprint* aimed to attract new audiences to the event. The *New Voices* Young Writers' Festival of 1992 included three plays by nineteen-year old writers: *The Changing Reason* by Noel MacAoidh, *Faith Over Reason* by Sarah Hunter and *Sab* by Michael Cook premiered in the Theatre Upstairs alongside a rehearsed reading of Adam Pernak's *Killers*. Tickell continued to apply the process-led festival methodology with a team that included future Royal Court artistic director Ian Rickson, with the YPT hosting workshops across the East-Midlands and the South-West. Following three weeks in the Theatre Upstairs, MacAoidh, Hunter, and Cook's plays were presented in venues throughout the regional cities in which workshops for the Festival had been held. In line with the Regional Arts Associations' ambitions of the time, which included a desire to 'support small-scale independent companies',³⁷⁴ the *New Voices* tour visited spaces in Northampton, Nottingham, Leicester, Bristol, Plymouth, and Taunton. The touring of work by

³⁷³ Rebecca D'Monte and Graham Saunders, *Cool Britannia? British Political Theatre in the 1990s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007). p. 15.

³⁷⁴ Merkin, p. 70.

young writers as part of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre and the Young Writers' Festival sought to provide a Young Writers' Festival presence in a non-Festival year.³⁷⁵ Michael Wynne's *The Knocky* (1994), Nick Grosso's *Sweetheart* (1996) and Tamara Hammerslag's *Backpay* (1996) were all produced as part of this initiative.

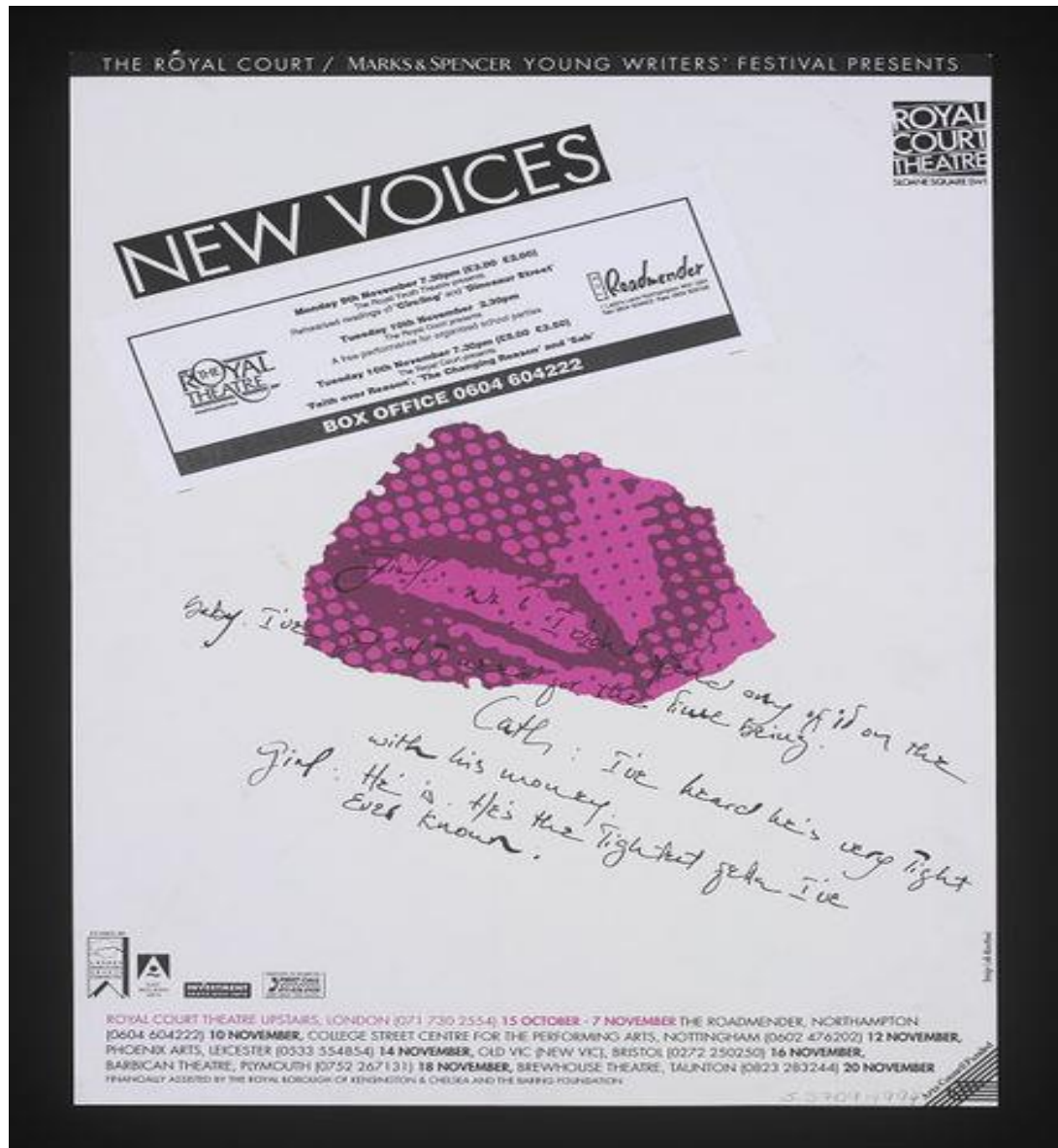


Figure 7: A poster from the Northampton leg of the 1992 Young Writers' Festival.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Interview with Dominic Tickell, conducted by the author, 1 June 2016.

³⁷⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, '1992 Young Writers' Festival Poster' [online]. (publication date unknown) <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/o164407/poster/aboutboul-lolli/> [accessed 20 August 2016].

What Tickell describes as ‘small scale touring’ began in collaboration with Eastern Touring Agency and the Royal Court in 1995.³⁷⁷ Indeed, the commissioning of a 1985 report by the Arts Council entitled *Keeping the Show on the Road: A Report on Touring in England*, indicates a wider interest in touring in the decade leading up to 1995. But although touring was, as Kate Dorney writes, ‘very much on the Arts Council’s mind’ during this time ‘it was difficult to make ends meet without commercial sponsorship or management deals.’³⁷⁸ For the YPT, the securing of a £25,000 grant, provided by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, gave a funding provision which allowed for a touring element to become part of the YPT’s work for the next three years.³⁷⁹ The initiative saw Wynne, Grosso, and Hammerslag’s work produced, alongside workshops to accompany the productions, in 1995, 1996 and 1997 after which point the initiative ceased to operate. Tickell had ambitions for this area to expand but, following his resignation in 1997, the touring scheme was cut as priorities turned towards securing the Royal Court’s return from the West End to Sloane Square. Indeed, that this area of the YPT’s work did not continue past 1997 is indicative of a wider shift in priorities at the Royal Court that occurred around this time.

In May 1997, Daldry announced his intention to leave the Royal Court and in August of that year Ian Rickson was appointed as his successor.³⁸⁰ Rickson’s arrival sparked a major review of the Royal Court’s practices in an attempt to bring a sense of cohesion to the theatre. The change in artistic directors had a significant impact on the YPT’s work particularly outside of London, which in turn affected not

³⁷⁷ Dominic Tickell, ‘Introduction’ to *Coming on Strong*, p. ix.

³⁷⁸ Kate Dorney, ‘Touring and the Regional Repertoire’ in *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council 1984-2009*, ed. by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 103-124 (p. 106).

³⁷⁹ Dominic Tickell, Report from the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre to the English Stage Company Council, 5 January 1994, THM/273/4/20/16.

³⁸⁰ Little and McLaughlin, p. 364.

only the touring element of the YPT but also its ability to secure a regional partner for the 1998 Young Writers' Festival. Indeed, Rickson's appointment and the subsequent cessation of the YPT's regional work can be regarded as the first of various catalysts that prompted the YPT's development into the Young Writers' Programme. Indeed, as the final chapter will evidence, Rickson's direct involvement with the YPT, as its special projects director from 1990-1992, was an important factor in the incoming director's aspirations to further integrate the theatre's work with young people into the artistic policy of the Court.³⁸¹

A Vital Contribution: *Coming on Strong* and a season of unknown writers in the Theatre Upstairs

New Voices in 1992 was followed two years later with *Coming on Strong* and this event proved to be the most significant in the history of the Festival so far. The Festival was programmed to run alongside a broader season of new plays by first time writers. The *Coming on Strong* event, and the season more widely, represents the beginning of a three-year period at the Court where around fifty new plays were presented in the Theatre Upstairs.³⁸² Indeed, from the perspective of the YPT, this season of new plays testifies to its centrality to the Royal Court's ambitions at this time, as all but one of the writers featured had engaged to some degree with the playwriting scheme for young people offered by the YPT.

The regional attention in the eighteen-month build-up to the 1994 Young Writers' Festival had focussed on young playwrights based in the London area and for the first time in Northern Ireland, where playwriting workshops had been conducted in Derry, Coleraine and Belfast. The decision to take the work of the Young Writers' Festival to Northern Ireland in 1993/4, at the beginning of the Peace

³⁸¹ Interview with Ian Rickson, conducted by the author, 24 August 2016.

³⁸² Little and McLaughlin, p .294.

Process which aimed to put an end to almost twenty-five years of the Troubles, presents an underlying political motivation to the Festival's work. In a report to the ESC Council, Tickell writes how he is 'particularly excited about the range of young people who have attended our workshops' and that 'a very wide range of ages, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and levels of experience' had been involved in the process. The director further states how it was the responsibility of the Young Peoples' Theatre 'to ensure that the Festival was able to accommodate and celebrate this diversity in the productions' as it prepared for performances in both the Theatre Upstairs in October and in Northern Ireland the following month.³⁸³ The emphasis on diversity here is a feature that has been inherent to the YPT's work for some time: the commitment to staging work by young writers of diverse age, race, ethnicity, class and sexuality has been carefully considered by each of the YPT's directors.

The autumn of 1994 and the spring of 1995 marks a season that brought a range of young writers to the Royal Court stage. Reflecting on the programme of work produced over this period in the 1994 Young Writers' Festival's accompanying play text, Daldry notes 'the huge success of the season' stating that 'it pays testimony to the fact that there is a growing urgency in young people to express themselves through dramatic writing and the only crisis in new writing is one of opportunity.'³⁸⁴ The Artistic Director concludes his preface to the *Coming on Strong* published play text, by crediting the important work of the Young Peoples' Theatre for their role in producing young playwrights, writing:

³⁸³ Dominic Tickell, Report from the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre to the English Stage Company Council, 5 January 1994, THM/273/4/20/16.

³⁸⁴ Stephen Daldry, 'Preface' in *Coming on Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. vii-viii (p. vii).

I am delighted that the writers who have emerged through the Young Peoples' Theatre, and in particular the Young Writers' Festival, are now being published. I sincerely hope that you share our enthusiasm for these plays and, just as importantly, appreciate the process by which they have emerged.³⁸⁵

There is a sense of irony in the fact that Daldry has chosen to highlight his appreciation for the Young Writers' Festival's *process* in his foreword. As has been alluded to throughout this chapter, the Festival's process-led methods are at direct odds with the Daldry/Whybrow mantra of producing work 'without a process'.³⁸⁶ In recognising the value of the YPT's methods in developing aspiring playwrights, the use of process can be seen as a continuing influence on the Court's ability to produce young writers. Moreover, the artistic director's contribution to a collection of plays produced as part of the Young Writers' Festival indicates that the relationship between the Royal Court and its Young Peoples' Theatre is now one that is proving to be mutually beneficial to both parties. However, there is no escaping the fact that the YWF's methodology seems to directly contradict the Court's intentions to 'identify the most exciting new playwrights and produce their work without a process' and, as this chapter progresses, it reveals the implications of this latent tension on future Young Writers' Festivals.³⁸⁷

The 1994/1995 season in the Theatre Upstairs, and its significance for British theatre, is often consumed by Sarah Kane's debut play *Blasted* and the critical response that surrounded what was the season's concluding production. The season showed work from seven unknown writers in the Theatre Upstairs between September 1994 and January 1995. It opened with Joe Penhall's *Some Voices*, the *Coming on Strong* Young Writers' Festival which featured Nick Grosso's *Peaches*,

³⁸⁵ Ibid, p. viii.

³⁸⁶ Little and McLaughlin, p .294.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Michael Wynne's *The Knocky*, Rebecca Prichard's *Essex Girls* and *Corner Boys* by Kevin Coyle, and this was followed by Judy Upton's *Ashes and Sand* before concluding with Sarah Kane's *Blasted*. Little and McLaughlin write how the inclusion of *Blasted* in the season 'drove the Court back into a genuinely oppositional stance and simultaneously propelled its current generation of playwrights into the centre of contemporary culture.'³⁸⁸ The season's impact 'reverberated throughout the industry, adrenalizing the sourcing, development, production and promotion of new writing'³⁸⁹ and this combination meant that the participants of the 1994 Young Writers Festival found themselves at the centre of a season of work that proved a catalyst for cultural shifts in attitudes towards new writing.

Before their plays were selected for production, Wynne and Prichard had been part of the London workshops, while Coyle had participated in the Festival's workshops in Derry. London-born Grosso was a member of the YPT's writers' group and his play, *Peaches*, had been developed under the tutelage of Andrew Alty. Prior to *Peaches*, Grosso's first piece, a monologue entitled *Mam Don't*, had been produced by the Young Peoples' Theatre and performed at the Commonwealth Institute in 1993. Elaine Aston characterises the four plays produced as part of *Coming on Strong*, as being linked 'by a dramatic world in which people struggle to make sense and purpose out of difficult times or empty lives.'³⁹⁰ Out of these works emerged the early signs of individual styles and original voices that, in the case of Prichard, Wynne, and Grosso, would go on to feature on both the Royal Court and

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 308.

³⁸⁹ Bolton, 'Demarcating Dramaturgy', p. 57.

³⁹⁰ Elaine Aston, *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights, 1990-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 61. In her chapter entitled 'Girl Power, the new feminism', Aston critically engages with the work of some of the most significant new women playwrights on the stage in the 1990s, including the plays of Judy Upton and Rebecca Prichard.

British stages in the future. Each of the plays expresses a ‘politics of the individual’ theme, described by Stephen Daldry as a central feature of many of the plays that emerged across the decade.³⁹¹ Evidence of this can be seen through notions of sexuality as explored through Grosso’s *Peaches* and Kevin Coyle’s *Corner Boys* and in the sharp comedy and dialogue of Prichard’s *Essex Girls*, a portrayal of teenage girls approaching adulthood. Wynne’s *The Knocky* owes a debt to Chekhovian tradition and to Daldry’s *An Inspector Calls* (1992) with its vivid perception of growing up on a council estate in England. These plays were programmed alongside other plays by young, unknown writers, which focused on mental illness, violence and the effects of war. Both Jacqueline Bolton and Aleks Sierz have previously suggested links between the 1950s and the 1990s Royal Court³⁹² and echoes of the 1950s Royal Court plays ring within these works too, as ‘sceptical, frustrated and disempowered’ voices once again occupied the theatre’s stages.³⁹³

The plays programmed as part of the seminal 1994 Young Writers’ Festival emerged as a result of an extensive process between the Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre and a select group of young playwrights from London and Northern Ireland. Reflecting on this time, Rebecca Prichard talks of the benefit of having ‘access to the writing workshops’ and how this allowed time to ‘experiment with ideas and see what was working dramatically.’³⁹⁴ Indeed, the Court’s public mantra of producing plays ‘without a process’ has already been challenged by Ruth Little and Emily McLaughlin, and affirmed by Jacqueline Bolton, who each bring attention to the fact that ‘several of the plays which came to define the success of the

³⁹¹ Stephen Daldry, fax to Fiona McCall (1994), THM/273/4/20/16.

³⁹² Bolton, ‘Capitalizing (on) New Writing’, p. 214 and Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. xi and 15.

³⁹³ Little and McLaughlin, p. 295.

³⁹⁴ Rebecca Prichard qtd in *Coming on Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 246.

mid-1990s at the Court did not originate there.³⁹⁵ The scholarship highlights Ayub Kahn-Din's *East is East* (1996) and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) as two examples of work that had undergone extensive development outside of the Court before being 'opportunistically snapped up by the theatre'.³⁹⁶ What is not recognised within these studies is the ways in which the Court's own Young Peoples' Theatre was also working with a process to develop playwrights many of whom were programmed in a 'constant stream of production' that culminated in the '94/95 season.³⁹⁷ As all writers, excepting Sarah Kane, programmed as part of this event can be traced back in some form to the Young Peoples' Theatre, the YPT's vital contribution to a 'momentous era' in British theatre history' is made evident.³⁹⁸

Joe Penhall had joined the writers' group at the Young Peoples' Theatre in the late 1980s. His short-play, *Wild Turkey*, was produced at the Old Red Lion as part of the 1993 London New Play Festival while he was still a member of the YPT:

I wrote a long play, which was *Some Voices*. I offered it to the Bush, and they didn't want it, and I offered it to the National Theatre and they didn't want it, and I offered it to Hampstead and they didn't want it, and I offered it to the Royal Court and Stephen Daldry rang me up at work and said: 'come in and talk to me.'³⁹⁹

During his involvement with the YPT, Penhall's writing had first been recognised by the writers' group's tutor April De Angelis who, in turn, forwarded a sample of his work to the literary department at the Royal Court: 'I said, "look I just think this person has really got something."⁴⁰⁰ Although the Court had initially overlooked

³⁹⁵ Little and McLaughlin, p. 286 and Bolton, 'Capitalizing (on) New Writing', p. 217.

³⁹⁶ Little and McLaughlin, pp. 357, 352, 286.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 286.

³⁹⁸ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, p. 210.

³⁹⁹ Harriet Devine, pp. 242-243. Dominic Dromgoole was artistic director at the Bush Theatre from 1990 to 1996. He recalls how the Bush liked *Some Voices* 'but not enough to produce it' and the Court 'snapped it up'; Dominic Dromgoole, *The Full Room: An A-Z of Contemporary Playwriting* (London: Methuen, 2000), p. 221.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with April De Angelis, conducted by the author, 20 June 2016.

Penhall's talent - as De Angelis recalls 'we just got a no back' - the writer's potential was recognised by Daldry who, after an initial reading of the play at Battersea Arts Centre in 1993, selected *Some Voices* to open the new season at the Royal Court.⁴⁰¹ As a young writer, Penhall's experience within the YPT and his reception at the Royal Court by two artistic directors is illustrative of wider change within the structures of the theatre. According to Whybrow, the Royal Court prior to Daldry's appointment, had been regarded by emerging writers as a 'fortress' impenetrable to new writers.⁴⁰² Penhall's initial rejection was transmuted within a matter of months to full production – an indication of the shift in attitudes taking place at the theatre. Where Penhall had emerged through the YPT writers' group, Judy Upton had been 'encouraged to write for the stage' during her participation in the workshop phases of the Young Writers' Festival held in Sussex in 1990.⁴⁰³ Like Penhall, Upton's first play, *Everlasting Rose*, premiered at the Old Red Lion in 1992, also as part of the London New Play Festival for that year. Through their involvement in the initiatives offered by the Young Peoples' Theatre both Penhall and Upton are likely to have been known by the Royal Court. Further, that their plays were produced as part of the London New Play Festival in the two years prior to their programming by the Royal Court is indicative of the 'strategic tracking' of new writers carried out by Daldry and Whybrow in the early 1990s.

The '94/'95 season sparked a period of activity at the Court, on the back of *Coming on Strong* three writers, Prichard, Grosso, and Wynne, were commissioned to write a second full-length play for the Royal Court. For Grosso, this commission materialised as *Sweetheart* (1996), but neither Wynne nor Prichard's second plays

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Graham Whybrow qtd. in Bolton, 'Capitalizing (on) New Writing', p. 215.

⁴⁰³ Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, p. 215.

were produced on a Royal Court stage. Wynne did not return to the Royal Court until 2002 when his play *The People are Friendly* was produced in the Theatre Downstairs.⁴⁰⁴ Prichard's return was more prompt, as *Fair Game* opened at the Duke of York's in October 1997. The play was deemed particularly contentious as it featured the gang rape of a thirteen-year old girl and the Court's decision to cast the play using actors all under the age of seventeen fuelled outrage from some audience members.⁴⁰⁵ Carl Miller, the director of the YPT at the time, states that in order 'to deal with the flack of putting this on with young performers [it was] produced by the Young Peoples' Theatre.'⁴⁰⁶ Although it was a professional production in which the actors were paid, *Fair Game* is regarded by Ola Animashawun, the then current YPT's youth drama worker, as the 'last public act of the youth theatre.'⁴⁰⁷

Coming on Strong represents a significant turning point in the history of the Young Peoples' Theatre, which demonstrates its own substantial contribution to a defining moment in British theatre. It is important to note here, that Jonathan Harvey's *Babies* occupied the Theatre Downstairs at the same time as Penhall's *Some Voices* opened in the Theatre Upstairs, illustrating, for the first time, two Young Peoples' Theatre playwrights on both stages of the Royal Court. What emerged at the end of 1994, therefore, was a consistent contribution by the Young Peoples' Theatre, as a result of their work with young writers, to seasons of work at the Royal Court. This outcome confirms that the process-led Young Writers'

⁴⁰⁴ Michael Wynne returned to the Court again in 2009 with *The Priory* and, in 2015, with *Who Cares*.

⁴⁰⁵ Little and McLaughlin, p. 264.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015. In the summer of 1997, Stephen Daldry announced his resignation and Ian Rickson became the theatre's new artistic director in August of that year. At the same point, Dominic Tickell resigned from the YPT and was replaced by Carl Miller. Miller had been an assistant director at the Royal Court, as part of the Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme, since the early 1990s and, as a result, much of his time prior to his appointment as the YPT's final director, had been spent working on YPT endeavors.

⁴⁰⁷ Little and McLaughlin, p. 366.

Festival, which aimed to allow for the extended support of young writers across the country, along with the YPT writers' group offered a significant contribution towards the production of a new generation of playwrights in the mid-1990s and proved to be an invaluable platform in the provision of young writers to the Court at this time.

Signs of Change in the YPT

In her 2012 article, Bolton appraises the emergence of a new writing industry in the 1990s from the perspective of the literary management practices seen within English subsidised theatres during the decade. Here, she cites the 'flashpoint' of the '94/'95 season at the Royal Court as the source of a 'new writing rebrand' and outlines three key advantages that the Royal Court held over its London rivals: the first is the influence of overseas funding acquired as a result of Daldry's entrepreneurial acumen, the second is the Court's relocation 'to the heart of London Theatreland', and the third is the strong working relationship between Stephen Daldry and his literary manager, Graham Whybrow.⁴⁰⁸ By applying Bolton's observations to a reading of the Young Peoples' Theatre work, it is possible to deduce that the 'key advantages' outlined by Bolton also had a measurable impact on the decision to rebrand the Young Peoples' Theatre as the Young Writers' Programme. These developments, framed within the landscape of a new writing revolution, provide key context moving into the final years of the Young Peoples' Theatre's history.

Following the triumph of the season of new plays by unknown writers in the Theatre Upstairs 'the signal was out' and, as Graham Whybrow explains, 'within a short time [the Court] started pushing out a lot of first time writers'.⁴⁰⁹ This tactic

⁴⁰⁸ Bolton, 'Capitalizing (on) New Writing', p. 218.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 216.

‘became a huge magnet to other playwrights who thought “the Royal Court is, once again, a place that does new plays.”’⁴¹⁰ With the Court looking to build on the successes of the 94/95 programme and with a renewed confidence in young writers, the following season, the theatre produced 26-year-old Jez Butterworth’s *Mojo* in the Theatre Downstairs. By programming Butterworth Downstairs, Daldry’s Court challenged a convention, that had grown further established during Stafford-Clark’s regime, that confined first-time writers to the Theatre Upstairs, on the expectation that they would then ‘graduate’ to the Theatre Downstairs once they had matured as a playwright.⁴¹¹

In September 1995, the Royal Court received a £15.8 million grant from the Arts Council’s share of National Lottery money to cover the costs of a complete and much-needed reconstruction of its Sloane Square home.⁴¹² The following summer, the Court relocated its Upstairs and Downstairs venues to the Ambassadors and Duke of York theatres respectively to begin their occupancy of the West End premises. The residency opened with Harold Pinter’s *Ashes to Ashes* at the Duke of York’s and Mark Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking*, in a co-production between the Court, National Theatre Studio and Out of Joint.⁴¹³

The *Coming on Strong* 1994 Young Writers’ Festival and the season as a whole had presented a ‘profile of the YPT’s work’ on the Royal Court stage.⁴¹⁴ Soon after this success, preparations for the future began and the YPT continued their

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Max Stafford Clark qtd. in *British Theatre of the 1990s: Interviews with Directors, Playwrights, Critics and Academics*, ed. by Mireia Aragay, Hildegard Kleing and Enric Monforte (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007). p. 32.

⁴¹² Berwind, p. 221.

⁴¹³ Little and McLaughlin, pp. 343-355. Following his departure from the Royal Court, Max Stafford-Clark founded Out of Joint theatre company in 1993. The company sought to produce revivals of classic plays as well as new writing. (Roberts and Stafford-Clark, pp 171-172).

⁴¹⁴ Interview with Dominic Tickell, conducted by the author, 1 June 2016.

endeavours with young people along with the preparation of workshops in anticipation for the 1996 Young Writers' Festival. In a report to the ESC Council in January 1997, Tickell reflects on a 'vibrant, exciting and busy' 1996 for the YPT. Included in the year's highlights is an event entitled *The London Project*, in which young people from around London were encouraged to produce different pieces of theatre inspired by the areas that they were from, productions included: a collaboration with interactive art company Blast Theory for the Barclay's New Stages Festival and a summer project written by Noel Grieg and performed by members of the youth theatre. Grieg had also overseen the writers' group for the year, with Tickell noting that the group had 'really developed' with 'some very interesting writing' emerging from the participants, some of which had been included as part of the 1996 Young Writers Festival.⁴¹⁵ The workshops in the build-up to the Festival had focused on Scotland and the outcome saw six plays receive productions in the Theatre Upstairs in October 1996.⁴¹⁶ One of these plays, Tamara Hammerslag's *Backpay*, was revived early in 1997 alongside Jess Walters's *Cockroach Who?*. Walters had developed *Cockroach Who?* during her time in the writers' group at the Young Peoples' Theatre and the inclusion of her work further demonstrates the group's continued contribution to the main programming at the Royal Court. *Backpay* was the last of the plays to tour, in 1997, under the small-scale touring collaboration between the YPT and the Eastern Touring Agency and, following a tour of the play to twelve venues in the East of England, the initiative ceased to operate. Tickell writes how 'the productions were just the culmination of

⁴¹⁵ Dominic Tickell, Report from the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre to the English Stage Company Council, 13 January 1997, THM/273/4/20/18.

⁴¹⁶ Included in the programme for the 1996 Young Writers' Festival were: *The Future is Betamax* by Nicholas Kelly, *Backpay* by Tamara Hammerslag, *The Call* by Lydia Prior, *Drink, Smoking and Tokeing* by Stuart Swarbrick, *The Separation* by Matty Chalk and *Business as Usual* by Michael Shaw. The Festival returned for a tour of Scotland but was 'not well attended' (Ibid).

the work' and reflects on how the whole process can be looked back on 'with a sense of satisfaction.'⁴¹⁷ In addition to the cessation of the small-scale touring collaboration, the 1996 Young Writers' Festival also signalled the end of the process-led methodology first initiated by Elyse Dodgson ten years earlier.

The Politics of Geography: Carl Miller 1997-1999

Reasons for the abrupt end to two vital strands of the YPT's work can be accounted for through contextualising this decision within wider changes taking place at the Royal Court, which came to have a significant impact on the future of young peoples' work at the theatre. In the summer of 1997, Stephen Daldry announced his resignation and Ian Rickson became the theatre's new artistic director in August of that year. At the same point, Dominic Tickell resigned from the YPT and was replaced by Carl Miller. Miller had been an assistant director at the Royal Court, as part of the Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme, since the early 1990s and, as a result, much of his time had been spent working on YPT initiatives. Following this, Miller had succeeded Roxana Silbert as special projects director where his role within the YPT became full-time. These experiences saw him well-positioned to provide a sense of stability to the initiative in a time of flux at the Royal Court.

Rickson's arrival triggered a thorough evaluation of the Court's 'strengths and weaknesses', which included the work of the YPT. As part of this re-evaluation, the decision was taken by Rickson, who had directed work for previous Young Writers' Festivals, to discontinue the YPT's regional and touring activities and return the focus of the YPT back to London. As Carl Miller explains:

I think the Royal Court didn't want to produce a Young Writers' Festival tour because if you didn't tour it you could have a more expansive set and

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

you'd get a wider pool of actors who were prepared to be in it. So, I think, that not touring helped in terms of the prestige of the Festival.⁴¹⁸

In seeking to enhance the 'prestige' of the Festival, through the use of expansive sets, a wider choice of actors, and a return to the Court as the sole producer of the work, the purpose of the Court's intentions for young writers can be seen to shift more towards the professionalisation of the plays:

The pressure was to make the Young Writers' Festival more of a talent-spotting exercise than maybe a snapshot of less well-worked but more diverse work, which maybe had been another notion of what the Young Writers' Festival was. So, you've got two ideas of what the Festival is: is it stars of the future? or is it some voices who may not be particularly accomplished playwrights but who are writing about things/telling stories that are not currently part of the Royal Court repertoire?⁴¹⁹

By articulating the ways in which the Young Writers' Festival can be seen to function within the remit of the Royal Court, Miller foreshadows some of the issues that dominated debate around the future of young peoples' work at the Royal Court more broadly. The dissolution of the regional element of the YPT's remit had further implications for the seventeenth Young Writers' Festival, held in November 1998, which also brought an end to thirty-two years of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre.

The last event marketed under the banner of the YPT was launched without a regional partner and therefore, for the first time in over ten years, the program of events was made up of writers who had not been directly involved with the process-led methodology previously offered by the Young Peoples' Theatre. Graham Whybrow reflects on the sense of 'urgency' that surrounded the search for playwrights for the '98 Festival:

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

There was no regional partner for the '98 Festival and there was no process... The problem then was that there were no plays by potential writers because there was no process. I scoured through my office and I found in the piles Simon Stephens' *Bluebird* with a rave report on it...I needed plays and the one that I absolutely opened the envelope for was Christopher Shinn's *Four* - it was anomalous because you have an American writer in the Young Writers' Festival.⁴²⁰

The omission of the YWF process in the build-up to the '98 Festival left the Court in need of plays. The solution was found through the inclusion of writers who 'never went near the Young Peoples' Theatre.'⁴²¹ Instead, among the work included for the Festival was the debut play from American playwright Christopher Shinn along with Simon Stephens's *Bluebird*. Stephens would go on to write 'some of the most significant drama of the early twenty-first century' and become a vital figure, as the writers' tutor, in the Young Writers' Programme.⁴²² The consequent success of Stephens and Shinn indicates that intentions for the Festival had veered towards the 'stars of the future' concept described by Carl Miller. Moreover, as the '98 Festival was produced without any full productions from members of the YPT, an opportunity was created to further scrutinise the function of the YWF within the Royal Court. This included a reassessment of the most effective ways in which the theatre could reach potential new writers and make the Young Writers' Festival the 'locus' for these plays.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens' in *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009*, ed. by Dan Rebellato (London: Methuen, 2013), pp. 101-124 (p. 101). Among the other plays produced as part of the *Choice* 1998 Young Writers' Festival were: *Daughters* by Jackson Sseriyango; *In the Family* by Sara Barr; *Trade* by Richard Oberg; *B22* by Ranjit Khutan; *About the Boy* by Ed Hime; *The Shining* by Leomi Walker; *The Crutch* by Ruwanthie de Chickera and *When Brains Don't Count* by Alice Wood.

⁴²³ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

YPT Rebranded: Re-evaluating the Young Peoples' Theatre and the birth of the Young Writers' Programme

The staging of the '98 Young Writers' Festival without a regional partner or process can be regarded as one of three defining factors that catalysed the YPT's rebrand as the Young Writers' Programme. As the attention moved from the Festival to the general composition of the YPT, further evaluation continued around the perceived function of the initiative. Ola Animashawun, the Young Writers' Programme's inaugural director, recalls the specifics of the appraisal:

One of the key questions was 'why are you doing what you are doing?' And so, when it came to the Young Peoples' Theatre, that was the question, what is its purpose? Why does it exist? Why does the Royal Court have a young peoples' theatre? And there was another question that was, why is it unique? What is it doing and what does it offer that no other youth theatre can offer?⁴²⁴

The answer from the YPT came back as:

The primacy of the writer, the writer being at the heart of the process. And that is where the decision came, they said 'well, why don't you just pursue that, that one thing, give a purity to the initiative.' So, hence the transition and transformation of being a youth theatre and young peoples' theatre to just concentrate on writing, solely. Hence the birth of the Young Writers' Programme.⁴²⁵

The notion of putting writers at the centre of the YPT's work, in order to replicate what the Court had aspired to do throughout its own history, is something that Joan Mills first recognised almost thirty years before. Her vision for the scheme launched the first Young Writers' Competition in 1973, which was followed by the inaugural Young Writers' Festival two years later in an event that has proved an important link between the Royal Court and the YPT. In the intervening time, the YPT has carried out a range of endeavours with and for young people but it has consistently existed on the periphery of the Royal Court's aspirations. Arguably, the times when the YPT has operated in harmony with its parent theatre is during periods when it

⁴²⁴ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

has sought to align its policy with the Court's overriding vision to attract new writers and produce new plays. That said, there is also something jarring within Animashawun's statement that jeopardised the once unique identity of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre. By the end of the 1990s, there were a number of new writing theatres in London and across the UK, such as Newcastle's Live Theatre, which had writers' groups attached to them in an attempt to nurture and develop young writers. In taking the decision to 'give a purity to the initiative' by focussing on writing, the Young Writers' Programme not only aligned the Court with a purpose already shared by other theatres across the country, but it also overlooked its distinctiveness as a new writing house with an attached young peoples' theatre. As a result, the Young Writers' Programme was created from an idea that was already in existence and risked being subsumed by a wider trend in playwriting development. As the YWP became absorbed in a narrative that is focussed on the nurturing of young playwrights, its previous identity as a Young Peoples' Theatre has been erased. The effects of this decision also limited its ability to attract young people who did not express an interest in playwriting, with this focus deterring young people from engaging with the YPT in its new iteration.

The Court's move to the West End had exacerbated the geographical divide between the theatre and the YPT on Portobello Road. The physical distance between the two buildings posed 'more disadvantages than advantages'⁴²⁶ and with Rickson looking to integrate the young peoples' work into the central remit of the Court, 'the adjunct of Portobello Road had started to feel less vital.'⁴²⁷ As a result, a search was initiated to relocate the YPT back nearer to Sloane Square. The search for an alternative home for the YPT that was closer to the Court had initially been explored

⁴²⁶ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Ian Rickson, conducted by the author, 24 August 2016.

by Dominic Tickell a few years earlier. As they had in the 1980s, property prices in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Court ruled out the prospects of a move. However, the timely release of a plot directly adjacent to the Court on Sloane Square allowed the YPT to return to the Royal Court. Known as the Site, the building had first been explored as a replacement to the YPT's first official home, the Garage, following its demolition in 1980. The former London Transport Canteen was acquired and renovations began to accommodate the future home of young peoples' work at the Royal Court.

It is well documented that the cost of the Royal Court's re-build had far exceeded expectations, with the total amount reaching £26 million by 1999,⁴²⁸ and that, as a result, the theatre was 'running out of money quite quickly' in the project's final months.⁴²⁹ With many funding sources already exhausted, it is possible to conclude that the quick sale of the YPT's home became part of much needed 'leverage for some of the fundraising on the refurbishment'.⁴³⁰ This sale coupled with the procurement of the Site, enabled the return of young peoples' activities back into the boundaries of the Royal Court, which allowed for a new vision for this area of work to manifest.

Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre and its contribution to the 1990s' new writing revolution. It has revealed that the YPT's influence on Royal Court programming particularly through seminal events such as the '94/'95 season, enmeshed the initiative within the Court's vision, becoming an important resource for the theatre's search for new playwrights. It has argued that

⁴²⁸ Little and McLaughlin, pp. 387-392.

⁴²⁹ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 17 June 2016.

⁴³⁰ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015.

much of the work generated by the YPT and produced by the Court during this time emerged from process-driven methodologies that sit in direct contrast to the anti-process discourse publically expounded by the theatre during this time. The success of the YPT throughout the decade revealed its potential to function effectively as part of the remit of its parent theatre. Indeed, this would develop further following its integration, both geographically and in terms of policy, into the main body of the Royal Court following the scheme's relocation and rebranding as the Young Writers' Programme.

This chapter has identified three factors occurring between 1998 and 1999, each of which contributed to the Young Peoples' Theatre's 'rebrand' as the Young Writers Programme. The arrival of Ian Rickson as the new artistic director led to a thorough overview of all strands of the Court's work, which aimed to restore unity to a fragmented theatre. At the same time, the 1998 Young Writers' Festival was produced without a reliance on a process-driven methodology, bringing an end to a ten-year structure that had garnered significant success for the work with young writers. Consequently, what emerged was a reconceived approach to the Court's work with young people that concentrated solely on writing. The acquisition of the Site and the end of the Royal Court's presence on Portobello Road added to a unified theatre moving in to the new century. Each of these elements can be seen to catalyse the YPT's transition into the Young Writers' Programme.

Stephen Daldry has previously referred to the Young Peoples' Theatre as 'an extraordinary success story' and, interestingly, it is Daldry also who terms the Royal Court 'an engine room for new writing'.⁴³¹ The final chapter of this thesis assesses

⁴³¹ Stephen Daldry, *Coming on Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. vii and Little and McLaughlin, back cover.

how the Young Writers' Programme, has provided the key components to the construction of the 'engine room' at the Royal Court. In considering the first eight years of the Court's work with young people in this new iteration, the chapter addresses the complexities, contradictions and implications of creating an initiative designed to facilitate young peoples' interests in playwriting within a pre-eminent new writing theatre.

Chapter Five

A Place for Playwrights: The Royal Court Young Writers Programme 1999-2007

A Model for Identifying Young Writers

In May 1999, the Royal Court was awarded the ‘New Theatrical Realities’ prize for its achievements across the decade in discovering and producing the work of young British dramatists.⁴³² The accolade marked a time during which a huge number of playwrights debuted plays on the Royal Court stages. Indeed, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, the Young Peoples’ Theatre had made an important contribution to this achievement, through initiatives such as the young writers’ groups and Young Writers Festival. In the wake of this success, and as the Court moved in to what Graham Whybrow describes as a ‘new phase’, plans were conceived that sought to bring focus and structure to the theatre’s future work with young people:

We started thinking that if producing the work of young British dramatists was our strength then should our work with young people be broadly inclusive and participatory or should it be more artistically led and focused and narrowed on writing?... So, in 1999, we were thinking what is the optimum model for working with young people? And, specifically, for identifying young writers.⁴³³

Whybrow describes above two potential models for facilitating work with young people at the Royal Court in the future. The first presents a ‘broadly inclusive and participatory’ approach closely aligned to the YPT’s long-standing open access policy enabling young people to engage with new writing as performers, directors, writers and makers. The second suggests the possibility of a more formal integration

⁴³² The New Theatrical Realities Prize was first awarded in 1990. It is presented in a ceremony alongside the Europe Theatre Prize, which was first awarded in 1987. The fifth New Theatrical Realities Prize was given to the Royal Court Theatre for showcasing and defending new, controversial playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Jez Butterworth, Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh. Europe Theatre Prize, ‘History’ [online] (publication date unknown) http://premio-europa.org/open_page.php?id=249 [accessed 8 October 2017].

⁴³³ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

of the YPT within the artistic structure of the Royal Court which, as the self-proclaimed writers' theatre, would see the YPT become entirely concentrated on playwriting. The evolution of the Young Peoples' Theatre into the Young Writers' Programme (YWP) at the end of 1998 aligns with the latter aspiration, and the Court's future work with young people in its new iteration would focus on the identification, development and sustainability of young writers.

In Chapter Four, three reasons that catalysed the decision to reconceive the Young Peoples' Theatre as the Young Writers' Programme were identified. This final chapter builds on these ideas to analyse the ways in which the Court's work with young people altered in ambition and policy following the formulation of the Young Writers' Programme. It discusses the impact of the YPT's move from Portobello Road back to Sloane Square and assesses the consequences of this action on the YPT's outreach and community achievements. It continues by exploring some of the earliest policies and structures in place during the formative years of the Young Writers' Programme in order to provide a rigorous critique of this aspect of Royal Court history. In charting the period 1999-2007, this chapter maps an active phase in the Young Writers' Programme's existence, with this timeframe illustrating the ways in which writers from the YWP came to occupy the Royal Court stages. Indeed, two factors have come to dominate the narrative of this thesis. These are visible through the ways in which the Royal Court's work with young people has been located on the periphery of the theatre's ambitions and this separation has often created an ongoing source of tension between the young peoples' work and its parent theatre. Coming into the new millennium, a reconsideration of the theatre's policy for young people, following the appointment of Ian Rickson, sought to address this division and the tensions that had often ensued. As part of this

resolution, the young peoples' work was brought back to within the vicinity of the Court and an exclusive focus on playwriting for young people looked to integrate the strand further into the Court's own remit. However, and as this chapter articulates, the tensions that have been visible throughout much of the YPT's history continued as the Young Writers' Programme expanded and gained popularity among aspiring young writers which, as this chapter argues, came to challenge the Royal Court's own policy of finding and producing new writers and plays. By locating the argument within the context of a generation overwhelmed by talent contests, the final chapter of this thesis discusses the ways in which the work of the Young Writers' Programme can also be seen to apply these ideas to its own work with young writers. In doing so, the chapter argues that a culture of elimination is visible within these practices that has come to counteract much of the Court's historical work with young people and engender, instead, what could be regarded as an elitist and inherently selective endeavour.

Ola Animashawun: The Young Writers' Programme

The decision to bring the young peoples' strand back to Sloane Square and to the Site created an opportunity for this area of the theatre's work to operate alongside the Royal Court. For the first time, the Court had an artistic director with a proven interest in working with young people and, indeed, within the Young Peoples' Theatre itself. Before working as a director, Ian Rickson had trained as a teacher and had worked extensively on projects facilitated by the YPT. These experiences had harvested an 'active interest in theatre by and for young people'⁴³⁴ and, importantly, a respect for and understanding of the YPT's work. Rickson's awareness of the YPT's ability to contribute to the theatre's core activity meant that the new scheme

⁴³⁴ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

for young people was afforded a centrality within the Court's vision that had not previously been made available.⁴³⁵

In the months prior to the relocation of the YPT back to Sloane Square, which coincided with the theatre's return from the West End in February 2000, discussions were held regarding the function of the Site. A new name to reflect the YPT's new direction was needed. With a newly defined focus on young people and playwriting, an early proposal for the Site states how the building would provide young writers with 'a place to write, a place to learn from and meet leading writers and directors, a place to try out work with actors and directors and a place to research'.⁴³⁶ The space also hosted a small performance area with the potential to support the informal presentation of work by young writers, which would also complement the existing Upstairs and Downstairs theatres. In order to support these objectives, suggestions for a title for this area of the Court's work were exchanged. The Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre is inherently suggestive of performance and a new name was sought to more accurately reflect the priorities of the Royal Court's work with young people moving forward. Several options were trialled including the 'Royal Court Young Writers' Theatre Scheme', 'The Station', 'The Royal Court Centre for New Playwrights' and 'New Playwright's Group' before the Young Writers' Programme was settled upon.⁴³⁷ The choice to include the word 'programme' in the title is interesting here, not least because its pedagogical connotations suggest that the YWP is a course designed to 'teach' playwriting – a perception which arguably came to dominate the Programme's reputation. There is also a discussion to be had around the use of the word 'young'. Graham Whybrow

⁴³⁵ Interview with Ian Rickson, conducted by the author, 24 August 2016.

⁴³⁶ Carl, Miller, 'The Royal Court Centre for New Playwrights' (March 1998), THM/273/4/20/18.

⁴³⁷ Marketing information relating to the Young Peoples' Theatre and Young Writers' Programme (1999a), THM/273/4/20/13 and THM/273/4/20/17.

reflects that in the aftermath of the 1990s deluge of new plays by young writers, it might have been ‘healthier’ to avoid the fetishization of youth by adopting the word ‘new’ instead.⁴³⁸ As Aleks Sierz, along with Jacqueline Bolton, Elaine Aston, Mark O’Thomas and others, have pointed out, in a British context, the words ‘new’ and ‘young’ are regarded as near synonyms. There is a case to be argued, however, that the latter breeds an isolating air of exclusivity; and indeed, the word ‘young’ has gone on to present many challenges to this area of the Court’s work.⁴³⁹ In the event, the inclusion of ‘young’ in the title was primarily pragmatic: as a result of its decades of work with young people in the community, the Young Peoples’ Theatre had built a strong relationship with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea whose funding of the initiative was conditional on its continued engagement of young people in the local community. The Young Writers’ Programme was deemed a fitting name for an initiative committed to young people with a clear emphasis on writing.

As the Young Writers’ Programme began initial operations, a team of three was employed to lead the Programme forward with Ola Animashawun as director, Aoife Mannix as the Programme’s administrator and Nicola Baldwin as the part-time writers’ tutor. Animashawun describes the YWP as an initiative with one clear intention from the outset:

The fundamental purpose was to inspire the next generation of writers for Britain, let alone for the Royal Court, and that was essentially it. What the Young Peoples’ Theatre always had was a writers’ group and we were going to carry on what we were doing but jettison the Young Peoples’ Theatre and put the writers’ groups at the centre of what we were doing. But in terms of

⁴³⁸ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

⁴³⁹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen), p. 47 and Aston and O’Thomas, p. 30.

what we were doing, exactly how that was going to work, it was all unknown.⁴⁴⁰

Animashawun and Baldwin remained from the YWP in its previous iteration. Since 1994 Animashawun had worked as the youth drama worker for the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre, where his primary work had centred on the running of its youth theatre. He had lost out to Carl Miller for the directorship of the YPT in 1997 before being approached by Rickson and Whybrow to run the reconceived strand of work for young people at the Royal Court. The appointment of Animashawun suggests a desire for some continuity in a time of change and, as the YWP's director implies, some of the methods put in place by the Young Peoples' Theatre, particularly initiatives such as Baldwin's writers' group and the Young Writers' Festival were retained in the new iteration. In addition, many other aspects of the YPT such as the special projects, community and outreach work are also visible in the YWP's early work, suggesting that the initial stages of the YWP revolved around existing ideas simply redesigned to suit a new context of developing young playwrights. Indeed, within the first two years of the Programme's operation, between 1999 and 2001, significant projects were undertaken with communities, people, and companies such as: Centrepoint, Graeae Theatre Company, Magic Me, Mu-Lan Theatre Company, BBC Radio and a bilingual project involving young Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian refugees.⁴⁴¹ These projects formed part of what Animashawun terms a 'policy of diversity' that aimed to encourage young people, who 'had often been denied any public voice', to write plays through a series of workshops facilitated by the Royal Court and led by a professional playwright or

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁴¹ The Royal Court Young Writers' Programme 1999 Key to Schedule (1999b), THM/273/4/20/17.

director.⁴⁴² Playwrights and directors involved with the projects included Noel Grieg, Sarah Daniels and Rufus Norris indicating an early implementation of the tutor-led methodology inherent to all playwriting pedagogy at the Court. From this work, a clearer remit for the YWP began to emerge, articulated in the following terms in the marketing information of the initiative:

‘[The YPW will offer] unique expertise in encouraging a playwriting culture amongst young people both through our work with the formal education sector and through outreach programmes. This approach focuses on the writing of plays, and in turn promotes literacy, self-expression and communication skills.’⁴⁴³

The development of a ‘playwriting culture amongst young people’ was realised through five core areas of work: the writers’ groups, the Young Writers’ Festival, playwriting in schools workshops, community and outreach work, and audience development. The document indicates a clear intention to engage young people with the Royal Court through a range of playwriting focussed initiatives. It ends by stating the role of the YWP as an important resource in ‘helping to build the next generation of playwrights.’⁴⁴⁴ This commitment to the ‘next generation of playwrights’, as outlined both above and by Animashawun in his overview of the initial intent for the Programme, represents a definitive shift in the purpose of the activities offered. As recently as June 1995, the then YPT director Dominic Tickell specifically expresses how the YPT’s work with young writers was ‘not designed to produce a generation of new playwrights’⁴⁴⁵ – a stark contrast to the YWP’s declared intentions. Following the emergence of a generation of playwrights on the British stages in the 1990s, the YWP’s aims are reflective of the Court’s ambitions

⁴⁴² Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016 and Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre Aims and Objectives 1998-1999, THM/273/4/20/13.

⁴⁴³ Royal Court Young Writers’ Programme overview of remit, November 1998, THM/273/4/20/13.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Tickell, ‘Introduction’ in *Coming on Strong*, p. x.

to ‘grow, nurture, harvest and re-grow whole generations of playwrights.’⁴⁴⁶ This shift in purpose is supported by the positioning of the writers’ groups at the centre of this ambition and the groups fulfilled an important purpose for the potential identification of undiscovered young writers for production at the Royal Court and beyond.

The Writers’ Groups

The success of the writers’ groups within the Young Writers’ Programme in the 21st century has contributed to a perception that writers’ groups made up the entirety of the Programme’s activities. This has been fuelled by the level of prestige that has come to surround particularly the 17-25 introductory and advanced writers’ groups led by Simon Stephens (2001-2005) and Leo Butler (2005-2012), and out of which some of the ‘most successful playwrights now working in Britain’ have emerged.⁴⁴⁷ As this thesis has identified, the presence of writers’ groups at the Royal Court can be traced back almost sixty years to the first writers’ group (1958-1960) before a near twenty- year break after which the idea was reintroduced by Nicholas Wright in 1979. However, not since the 1960s can the participants of the writers’ groups be seen to influence the programming of plays on the Royal Court stage to the extent that they did in the first decade of the 21st Century. It is perhaps for this reason that much of the other work achieved by the Young Writers’ Programme, particularly around community and outreach activities, is overshadowed by the accomplishments of the playwrights who emerged out of the writers’ groups of the YWP.

The YWP began with three writers’ groups designed to support young people between the ages of 13-25. These were divided to make three cohorts: 13-17,

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Ian Rickson, conducted by the author, 24 August 2016.

⁴⁴⁷ Andrew Haydon, ‘Theatre in the 2000s’ in *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009*, ed. by Dan Rebellato (London: Methuen, 2013), pp. 40-98 (p. 68).

with David Eldridge as the writers' tutor, 18-25, with Nicola Baldwin as the tutor; and, later, an advanced group, for writers who demonstrated a potential following their participation in Baldwin's classes, which was led by Hanif Kureishi. These courses operated on a first-come-first-served basis with participants largely recruited from local youth groups (where priority was given to those who lived or worked within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) some past members of the YPT writers' group and those who had submitted plays for consideration as part of the Young Writers' Festival. The initial courses were six weeks in length and came with the expectation that an original play would be submitted for the YWP to read within four weeks of completion of the course. The work was funded by the Royal Court along with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, whose grant covered the delivery of courses to the 13-17 year-old age group. For the 17-25 and advanced groups, a participation fee of £40 was required from each person, which was used to cover materials such as play texts and the cost of tuition and which was predicated on the assumption that the introduction of a fee would secure a level of regular commitment to the weekly meetings by the participants. The introduction of a considerable fee to take part in the YWP was a new policy and one that continued as the initiative expanded, doubling to £80 within five years. But the fee immediately presented access issues as the amount was unaffordable for many young people.⁴⁴⁸ This framed participation on the YWP as a luxury that could only be accessed by the privileged, which could prove isolating for many. Further, the monetary exchange positions the writers' groups as a consumer service that perpetuates an increased level of expectation that participation in the groups will

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

garner results (i.e. greater opportunity for production) that cannot be achieved through any other means.

In much the same way as the 1998 Young Writers' Festival had launched without regional partners and therefore without the process of working with young people on the development of their plays, the 2000 Young Writers' Festival (YWF) approached with 'just a nationwide call out' for submissions.⁴⁴⁹ It was during the search for plays to programme as part of the 2000 YWF, the responsibility of which had transferred from the Young Peoples' Theatre to the Young Writers' Programme, that Animashawun recognised that 'the Young Writers' Festival could potentially be a good outlet for the work' being produced by the writers involved in the YWP. The Young Writers' Festival had developed to be an important biennial fixture in the Royal Court's calendar and as a result provided a guaranteed three-week time frame for young writers to occupy the Theatre Upstairs. With this in mind, and with Animashawun searching for ways that the YWP's work could 'sit in relation to the main programme' at the Royal Court, the Young Writers' Festival provided an ideal event for the showcasing of the writers' emerging through the YWP. The YWP's director's remarks are suggestive of a developing through-line between the Young Writers' Programme and the Young Writers' Festival remarking that 'if you had been in a writers' group then you probably stood a much better chance of writing a much better play than someone who hasn't and therefore you stood a much better chance of getting your play on in the Festival.'⁴⁵⁰ In positioning the Young Writers' Festival as the ultimate end goal for the writers' groups' members, the event began to act as a target to reach. Further, the suggestion that writers from within the YWP were prioritised on the assumption that they would be 'writing a much better play

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

than someone who hadn't been part of the YWP' allows the initiative to function in the way that it was intended: as the so-called engine room for the next generation of writers. There is a nepotistic quality to this practice, however, that further limits opportunities for writers who had not been through the Programme or who had perhaps been part of another similar playwriting development scheme at other theatres such as the Soho, Stratford East or programmes run outside of London such as those at the Traverse or Northern Stage. The mentality within the Programme at this time, therefore, can be regarded as one that viewed the Young Writers' Festival as an opportunity to showcase 'home-grown' writers within the context of the Court's main programming of work. As a case in point, the 2000 *Exposure* Young Writers' Festival, the first produced under the auspices of the Young Writers' Programme, received over four hundred plays by young writers in response to the nationwide call. Of these, four were given full-scale professional production, and a further four plays were presented as part of staged readings. The full productions included twenty-five-year old Leo Butler's *Made of Stone*, fifteen-year-old Holly Baxter-Baine's *Goodbye Roy*, sixteen-year-old Emmanuel de Nascimento's *Dragon* and twenty-three-year-old Arzhang Pezhman's *Local*. All except Pezhman were 'encouraged by the Court' to enter work they wrote while participating in groups facilitated by the Young Writers' Programme.⁴⁵¹

The 2000 Young Writers' Festival for Leo Butler in particular proved to be a significant event. His recollection is worth quoting in full:

⁴⁵¹ Jasper Rees, 'Royal Court shows youthful promise', London Evening Standard [online] (18 October 2000) <http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/royal-court-shows-youthful-promise-6299244.html> [accessed 19th January 2017] (para 5 of 11). And Aleks Sierz, 'Royal Court Young Writers' Festival: Interview with Ola Animashawun [online] (November 2000) <http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/archive6.html> [accessed 19 January 2017]. Incidentally, Arzhang Pezhman had recently graduated from Birmingham University's MA Playwriting course and alumni from this course would grow to become increasingly present within the writers' groups of the Young Writers' Programme as it developed through the decade.

I got a job ushering at the Royal Court in 1999 and through that I learned about the Young Writers' Programme. I sent them a couple of my plays, and they came back saying, yes, this work is very exciting, we're very interested. So, they put me on a ten-week writing course with Nicola Baldwin tutoring, and then I did a course with Hanif Kureishi and it really inspired me. I was still ushering in the year 2000, and in the Autumn of that year it was the Young Writers' Festival. I submitted three plays and I was ushering for the final show of that Summer and Ian Rickson came to find me... So, I was ushering in the Summer and in the Autumn I had my first play on in the Young Writers' Festival. And it completely changed my life.⁴⁵²

Indeed, Baldwin credits the inclusion of Butler's *Made of Stone* in the Young Writers' Festival as a clear indicator that 'the Young Writers' Programme was coming in line with what the theatre was ready to be programming.'⁴⁵³

The framework of a tutor-led process that had evolved through a methodology originally implemented by Elyse Dodgson had re-emerged in a new structure under the Young Writers' Programme. This method saw professional playwrights take up tutoring roles with the intent of aiding aspiring playwrights in the development of their ideas through a series of workshop sessions, the ultimate goal of which was production in the Young Writers' Festival. But there are some significant differences from the YWF of Dodgson's tenure to the Festivals produced by the Young Writers' Programme. The once nationwide hunt for young writers and regional collaboration had reverted back to newspaper adverts as the primary way of attracting young playwrights. While these had garnered a large number of responses, all but one of the 2000 Young Writers' Festival playwrights had participated in the writers' groups offered by the Young Writers Programme. This emerging link

⁴⁵² Harriet Devine, p. 61. Butler went on to work extensively as a playwright and contribute significantly to the Young Writers' Programme's as the writers' tutor from 2005-2012. His time within the writers' groups of the YWP under the tutelage of Nicola Baldwin and later Hanif Kureishi, where the group 'drank pints, smoked cigarettes and talked about books and plays', left Butler inspired (Matt Trueman, 'Teach First Acts: Duncan Macmillan and Leo Butler [online] (20 August 2013) <http://matttrueman.co.uk/2013/08/teach-first-acts-duncan-macmillan-leo-butler.html> [accessed 24/1/2017] (para 4 of 13).

⁴⁵³ Interview with Nicola Baldwin, conducted by the author, 22 August 2016.

between writers from the YWP and the Young Writers' Festival is suggestive of the beginnings of a decidedly inward-looking initiative that favoured 'home-grown' talent developed through the Programme. Moreover, if, as Nicola Baldwin attests, Leo Butler's *Made of Stone* was symptomatic of the YWP moving closer to influencing the main programming of the Royal Court, it is important to remember that Butler first learned of the Young Writers' Programme while working as an usher within the theatre itself. Butler's prior association with the Court is suggestive of the YWP's diminishing reach and increasingly 'coterie' self-image.⁴⁵⁴ Through its ambitions to prove itself as an initiative concerned with developing the next generation of writers for the Royal Court, the YWP streamlined its output and monetised its writers' groups. What stands out in the first years of the YWP, therefore, is an approach that is on the periphery of developing an elitist practice far removed from the outward and inclusive achievements of past iterations for young peoples' work at the theatre. Indeed, notions of elitism within the Programme developed as awareness of the initiative's work with young writers expanded. These ideas, along with the impact of this on both the YWP and the Court, are explored further as this chapter continues.

The Writers' Tutor

Following the influence of the YWP on the 2000 Young Writers' Festival the YWP 'began to gain traction' and the role of the writers' tutor was subsequently upgraded to a permanent position.⁴⁵⁵ As Baldwin discloses, the formalisation of the post brought with it an abrupt end to her tenure:

There was a point when the job was about to become an official job and I was going to apply and Ola rang me up, slightly embarrassed, and asked me

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Nicola Baldwin, conducted by the author, 22 August 2016.

not to apply because they were going to give it to Simon Stephens. It was from that point on that the Programme became more integrated with the Royal Court.⁴⁵⁶

Since the production of Stephens's debut play *Bluebird* as part of the 1998 Young Writers' Festival, the Royal Court had worked closely with Stephens to ensure that he could give up his job as a secondary school teacher and become a professional playwright. Following *Bluebird*, Stephens had been offered a commission by the Court coupled with a year-long resident dramatist post that began in January 2000. The combination of the commission and the residency enabled Stephens to pursue playwriting full time, but by the end of the year and with the residency approaching its end, Stephens had started to consider his future. On hearing of a potential position as the writers' tutor in the YWP during a script meeting at the Royal Court, Stephens persuaded Animashawun for an interview:

I said, 'I really want that job, I'd love to be interviewed, I'd love to show you what I can do as a teacher.' I really wanted it and the pressure I was under to find something to replace the residency felt really stressful. Then, in my memory, it was the Christmas party at the Royal Court at the end of 2000 when Ola said to me 'you're going to be writers' tutor next year' and I was just like 'yes!' Because that is not a one-year job and I could have it for as long as I wanted it and it was just a foundation for me to write and to stay at the Royal Court, so I started there at the beginning of January in 2001.⁴⁵⁷

Baldwin's loss proved to be Stephens's gain. The permanency of the position is significant to the expansion of the Young Writers' Programme at this point, as it allowed for the post holder to dedicate an extended period of time to the development of the YWP's work. As a result, significant changes were made to the function of the writers' group during Stephens's tenure. Further, following *Bluebird*, his residency with the theatre and the forthcoming production of his second play

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

Hérons in the Theatre Upstairs⁴⁵⁸, Stephens's appointment as the writers' tutor also ensured that an important emerging voice in British theatre remained formally connected to the Royal Court. The choice taken by the theatre to replace Nicola Baldwin with Simon Stephens, however, sees a further dominance of men in positions of authority and leadership at the Court at a time when adjectives such as 'inaccessible, arrogant, male, posturing, shoe-gazing and exclusive' were already being used in association with the theatre.⁴⁵⁹ At the turn of the millennium and with the Court's work with young people becoming further integrated into the theatre's ambitions, the prominent positions of artistic director, literary manager, Director of the YWP and YWP writers' tutor were all occupied by men.

As Stephens's professional life up to 2000 had been as a secondary school teacher, it was perhaps inevitable that his work with young writers at the Royal Court was underpinned by a strong sense of pedagogy. Stephens acknowledges that his teaching background was 'really fundamental' to his approach with the participants of the YWP.⁴⁶⁰ Recollecting this time in 2016, Stephens is clear of his vision coming into the Programme:

For me it is like art school, it should be like art school... You know the craft and technique were admired much more in art school training much more than they were in playwriting training and I thought there was a space for correcting that and that is what I wanted to do with the Young Writers' Programme, was to run it like an art school. Where you took writers of potential, sometimes they were aware of their own potential sometimes they weren't but they had something and you were just like that's interesting, let's empower this person.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ Stephen's second play for the Royal Court, *Hérons*, opened on 18 May 2001. In a relationship between playwright and theatre that spans almost twenty years, Stephens's other plays for the Royal Court include: *Country Music* (2004), *Motortown* (2006), *Wastwater* (2011), *Birdland* (2014), and *Nuclear War* (2017).

⁴⁵⁹ Little and McLaughlin note how in a branding meeting at the Royal Court in 1998 these words were collated among a list of 'negative attributes' associated with the Court during that time (p. 371).

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Within two years of Stephens working as the writers' tutor, the YWP had expanded to a team of five with Ola Animashawun as director, Nina Lyndon as the administrator, Lucy Dunkerley as the outreach worker and Emily McLaughlin as the education officer. Lyndon describes this time within the YWP as a 'golden age when there was five of us who all came together to work quite strategically on developing the Programme'.⁴⁶² The increase in the Programme's staffing is indicative of the reach of the YWP's work with young people, which spanned beyond the Site into schools and the local community.⁴⁶³ This is an example of what Lyndon terms the 'strategic development' executed by the YPW staff during the first part of the decade:

It was the idea of casting the net really wide at an early stage to reach a wider demographic of people. But then from the same hand, tightening the net and being more restrictive in terms of who we took on to the Programme in terms of quality and identifying peoples' writing. It was an open-access programme originally and then it became more selective.⁴⁶⁴

In much the same way as the Young Peoples' Theatre had been open access to young people between the ages of 12-25, this policy was initially continued with the formation of the Young Writers' Programme. As the Programme grew in popularity, however, selection for the writers' groups became more restrictive and concerned with the quality of the plays. In 'tightening the net', the Programme displayed a clear intention to become 'an engine room for new writing'.⁴⁶⁵

The YWP team was evenly split in terms of its responsibilities as Dunkerley and McLaughlin oversaw outreach and education while Stephens and Lyndon largely worked with members of the writers' groups. Further development occurred through the redesign of the writers' groups, which were amended to a 13-17 group,

⁴⁶² Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁴⁶³ Interview with Emily McLaughlin, conducted by the author, 11 November 2016.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁴⁶⁵ Little and McLaughlin, back cover.

delivered by McLaughlin, and a 17-21 group along with a 21-25 group which were both tutored by Stephens. The outreach and community work became central to the Programme's ambitions to recruit a more varied demographic of people to the YWP, made up of local people from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, with this membership feeding primarily into the 13-17 writers' group. Despite this vision, however, a noticeable 'lack of diversity'⁴⁶⁶ within the groups became evident to members of the YWP staff. Dunkerley and Animashawun worked to address this imbalance through a series of complementary initiatives, such as Critical Mass and Unheard Voices, which aimed at creating a more inclusive Programme.

Keen to move away from the informal 'conversational' style he noted in the approach of some of his predecessors, Stephens's groups were structured more formally and gave 'robust consideration to how people learn.'⁴⁶⁷ Delivered in ten-week cycles, the introductory courses were loosely based upon the following themes:

Week 1: Introduction to playwriting

Week 2: Dramatic Action

Week 3: Writing Dialogue

Week 4: Writing Stage Imagery

Week 5: Character

Week 6: Guest Speaker

Week 7: Narrative

Week 8: Structure

Week 9: Assistant Session: directing scenes from the plays/tutorials

Week 10: Rewriting⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

As Ola Animashawun attests, this methodology was often exposed to ‘a rigorous examination and re-examination of its practices.’⁴⁶⁹ It was the close interrogation of the ‘micro details that culminated in a real in-depth change in the way that the Programme worked with writers.’⁴⁷⁰ Examples of this can be seen through the expansion of the introductory course from ten to twelve weeks, which allowed for further consolidation and familiarisation of the participants’ work, along with the creation of a supplementary ‘invitation group’. A place on the invitation group was offered to the ‘most interesting writers who were writing good full-length scripts’ and it was often from this cohort of writers that plays were selected to be heard as readings held in the Site or programmed as part of the Young Writers’ Festival.⁴⁷¹ The work of the invitation group expanded and personalised the experience of the introductory group and used some of the group’s favourite plays as case studies, with Stephens devising sessions informed by their choices:

I would identify elements that I thought were a synthesis of areas that I thought they needed to work on and things that excited me in the plays that they had chosen for us to read. So, it might be that one of them had picked up a Tennessee Williams plays, so I might pick that up and do a session around measuring emotional temperament.⁴⁷²

Through the invitation group, consideration was given to the areas of a writer’s craft that Stephens felt needed more work, which allowed for a more bespoke approach than that available in the introduction groups.

The writers’ groups that emerged through a re-examination of the Programme’s work with young playwrights throughout the first decade of the 21st century can be viewed as the YWP’s attempt to create and maintain positive working relationships with young writers. But the numerous groups in place can

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

also, arguably, be seen to systematically regulate and ‘stream’ the writers deemed ‘interesting’ by the YWP, or specifically the writers’ tutor. There is a risk here that the opportunities for young playwrights coming into the Royal Court were accordingly restricted. As this chapter continues, these ideas will be interrogated further to explore the ways in which the increasing success of the YWP and its work with young writers, created a conflict of interest between the Royal Court and its Young Writers’ Programme.

Exploring tensions in context: A culture of elimination and competition

One of the ways in which this conflict manifested itself is through the YWP’s use of process as a way of developing writers. By 2004, the writers’ groups followed a clear process of: open submissions; acceptance on the introductory writers’ group; the offer of a place on the invitation group; the possibility of programming - a method of which is fundamentally predicated on the systematic reduction of participants. As members progressed through the process and numbers inevitably diminished, the mentorship element of the writers’ groups became more prominent, with the role of the writers’ tutor acting as an important support in the nurturing of the group’s participants. The implications of this practice created new tensions between the YWP and the Royal Court as the Programme’s identified remit to ‘create the next generation of playwrights’⁴⁷³ began to encroach upon a model for working with potential playwrights that had been established by Whybrow’s literary department for over a decade. Indeed, Whybrow noted this shift in the Programme’s practice and how this stood at odds with the once inclusive historical ethos of the YPT:

⁴⁷³ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

There was a strong sense that all this process was really a talent contest and an elimination process leading up to programming, and that wasn't the original ethos of the YWP. But here is the Young Writers Programme which seems to be totally re-orientated towards process and governed more by selection and streamed through a knockout process and peoples' expectations are being lifted to the point where they start thinking that they are being considered for programming.⁴⁷⁴

As Graham Whybrow intimates, the emergence of a methodology within the YWP that is heavily weighted towards process, selection and, as a consequence, elimination is one that posed a direct challenge towards the Royal Court's original intention for the YWP. Moreover, Whybrow's description of the YWP in this form as a 'talent contest' is consistent with wider movements in popular culture. TV shows emerging at the same time such as Simon Cowell's 'The X Factor' (2004) began to further propagate the notion of elimination and competition as a central part of modern entertainment. These methods framed success as a goal that could only be achieved by advancing through a process that was grounded in knock-out stages, categorisation, mentorship and a degree of guaranteed success – all of which are shared aspects that are visible within the writers' groups of the YWP at this time. With the inception of the Young Writers' Programme and the creation of a defining objective to find the next generation of young writers, this intent directly challenged the Court's own work, located within Whybrow's Literary Department, and it is from this that tensions between the two arose.

The origins of this friction can be traced back to October 2003 with the production of 22-year old Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* as part of the main season of plays in the Theatre Upstairs. For the Young Writers' Programme, Prebble's debut provided hard evidence that the YWP was a provider of plays by

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

young writers that could be programmed by the Royal Court, as Ola Animashawun attests:

That was my ambition. The idea that you go through the Young Writers' Programme and you get your play on at the Royal Court. It is possible, there is a direct route: from the Site, from the engine room, to the Theatre Upstairs. And with Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome*, that was it.⁴⁷⁵

For Animashawun, the programming of *The Sugar Syndrome* was the realisation of an important objective that evidenced the YWP's ability to influence the theatre's programming. But it also served to fuel a sense of division between the staff of the YWP and the Royal Court itself as the implications of the decision to produce Prebble's play brought opposing reactions of 'sheer delight'⁴⁷⁶ from the perspective of the YWP and 'progressive dismay' from the literary department of the Royal Court, as the ambitious vision of the Programme became reality.⁴⁷⁷ This dismay suggests that the literary department had lost control of the monopoly of new writers, with the Young Writers' Programme inadvertently presenting new challenges to the Court's search for new writers.

The achievement of this objective enabled the YWP to establish itself further as the so-called engine room for young writers at the Royal Court. This in turn increased the repute and popularity of the YWP as more and more people were 'trying to write a play to get it programmed at the Royal Court'.⁴⁷⁸ However, for Whybrow, the YWP's ambitions – to produce a new generation of playwrights for the Royal Court, which had been hypothetical up until the production of *The Sugar Syndrome* - presented challenges to a well-established model at the Royal Court

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

whereby its literary department was first in line to receive unsolicited scripts submitted by playwrights for consideration:

Following the boom in the 1990s the number of submissions doubled and they all came to the literary department. Dismayingly, in the period 2000 to 2003 the number of submissions contracted and what was happening was that young aspiring playwrights were sending their plays to the Young Writers' Programme to try and join the group and not sending them to the literary office.⁴⁷⁹

The structure created by Whybrow and Ian Rickson to focus the Court's work with young people more directly on playwriting had inadvertently substituted the literary department as the source for scripts submitted to the theatre by young writers. Simon Stephens is quick to specify the nature of the change not as 'a policy shift whereby any writer under 25 had their plays read by the Young Writers' Programme and [Whybrow] read the plays from the over 25s' but as a move that meant 'the writer could choose where to send the plays and if the writer didn't like the idea of the group then they could definitely find another way in.'⁴⁸⁰ Although young writers were still free to submit their plays to the Royal Court instead of the YWP, it does seem a fair assumption, given the name of the initiative, that young playwrights looking to gain access to the Court were drawn to the Programme as an initial point of entry. What emerged, as a result, was a widely regarded perception 'that if you were a young writer who wanted to get your play on at the Royal Court you had to join the Young Writers' Programme',⁴⁸¹ a notion that Whybrow refutes as 'absolutely not true.'⁴⁸² The idea of the YWP as a gateway to the Royal Court was problematic for three reasons: First, it created tensions, once again, between the Court and its young peoples' division over the YWP's perceived function within the

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

wider ecology of the theatre's work. Second, a new mythology emerged that casts the YWP as central to the means by which a production was achieved. This myth had an impact on those writers already involved in the Programme as it fuelled a sense of entitlement and expectancy from participants 'that doors were being opened to people that did the course', doors that led to 'at least the Theatre Upstairs.'⁴⁸³ Thirdly, it raises concerns about the effectiveness of the group model on other young writers who might be 'solitary, arrogant, sceptical, difficult but super talented', who are put off by the prospect of being 'coerced into sitting around in a circle sharing their work'⁴⁸⁴ and who therefore looked to send their plays elsewhere. The anxieties voiced by Graham Whybrow regarding the function of the YWP suggest an acute awareness of the Programme's potential to take the monopoly of plays by young writers away from the literary department. Moreover, apprehensions around this method of working continued as the possibility that the YWP could be 'missing writers' of interest to the theatre, served to further the tension between the Programme and the literary manager.⁴⁸⁵

In contrast, the YWP felt increasingly undermined by the lack of recognition given to its work with young writers and a growing frustration that the writers that were being developed within the Programme 'weren't being read in the main building.'⁴⁸⁶ Nina Lyndon discusses how, by 2004, the YWP 'were delivering up these writers to the Court and we felt that it wasn't acknowledged - the machine that was going along, developing this work and producing and helping develop this next wave, it wasn't just happening by magic.'⁴⁸⁷ It is Lyndon, also, who speaks about

⁴⁸³ Interview with Alexandra Wood, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

what she terms a ‘culture of separateness’ that continued to exist between the Royal Court and the Young Writers’ Programme upon its return to Sloane Square:

There was a lot of tension between the Young Writers’ Programme and the more established part of the organisation and I think that was inherited by the fact that we had originally been in Notting Hill, so in a different building, doing different work with a different community.⁴⁸⁸

While the YWP was only next door, it was still situated ‘in a different building and it felt as if that building was fucking miles away on occasion.’⁴⁸⁹ Stephens articulates a sense that the YWP ‘enjoyed the entrenched notion of being oppositional’ and this only furthered tensions between the Programme and the Court. As a result, much of Stephens’s time as writers’ tutor, outside of his direct work with the groups was spent trying to facilitate ‘the communication between the main building and the Young Writers’ Programme’ to ensure that the gap between the Court and the Programme was bridged.⁴⁹⁰

Stephens acknowledges the brief redevelopment of the Site in 2004 and the YWP’s subsequent occupancy of a dressing room within the Royal Court as an important catalyst that ‘broke a lot of the frost’ between the two institutions.⁴⁹¹ Further, Ruth Little and Emily McLaughlin note how in 2004 ‘financial difficulties meant that the Royal Court could only be programmed from April to August. As a consequence, the Young Writers’ Festival was expanded to form a season of five

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid. Stephens recalls how this was largely achieved by consulting regularly with senior members of Royal Court staff. He attributes a crucial part of this consolidation to a brief redevelopment of the Site, which occurred in 2004, and during which time the YWP relocated to a dressing room within the Court, as Stephens recounts: ‘The Site was redeveloped by Mackintosh Architects and we had to move out and we moved into dressing room one. So, there was a six month or year-long period when the Young Writers’ Programme was based in dressing room one and I would do my reading in the auditorium of the Theatre Downstairs and it just meant that we were there, that we were interacting and that we were hanging out, we would be having lunch at the same time and it just broke a lot of the frost’.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

plays.⁴⁹² Stephens recalls how the YWP and the Young Writers' Festival became 'intrinsically linked' during his tenure, with this relationship culminating with the 2004 Festival:

That was a really big one for us because we had the whole season Upstairs and it really felt like, bloody hell, they listened to us. We had Ultz designing all of them, really fucking top directors: So, Joe Hill-Gibbins's production of Rob Evans's brilliant *A Girl in a Car with a Man*, and, also, four of the five plays that were produced we'd found.⁴⁹³

Stephens's recollections suggest a continuance of the Programme's dominance within what was to be a bumper year for the Young Writers' Festival. Evans's *A Girl in a Car with a Man* had come to Stephens's attention following a visit to the Interplay Festival in Australia. The four other plays: John Donnelly's *Bone*, Claire Pollard's *The Weather*, Robin French's *Bear Hug* and Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's *Fresh Kills* had all been written by playwrights who had taken part in the YWP. Nina Lyndon talks of 2004 as the 'peak' year for the Young Writers' Festival: while approximately eight hundred submissions had been received in response to the open call, 'the vast majority' of the plays that were shortlisted for the Festival 'had come through the Programme.' It is from this that Lyndon suggests that the true 'success of the Programme' became clear 'in terms of seeing the quality of the work that was coming through.'⁴⁹⁴ The 2004 Young Writers' Festival is significant within the history of the Programme as it suggests that, in times of financial difficulty, the Royal Court looked to the YWP to support the production of new plays at the theatre.

The inclusion of Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* in the Court's main programme of plays proved that the YWP could serve up plays for the theatre. The

⁴⁹² Little and McLaughlin, p. 419.

⁴⁹³ Interview with Simon Stephens, conducted by the author, 1 July 2016.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

frustration that ensued from the YWP, however, suggests that this influence failed to expand to the degree that was first envisaged in the aftermath of *The Sugar Syndrome*'s success. Indeed, it was not until March 2005 and the production of Laura Wade's *Breathing Corpses* that a play from a YWP playwright again featured in the main programming at the Royal Court. Subsequently, many of the plays and playwrights that emerged out of the writers' groups of the Young Writers' Programme between 2001 and 2005 were confined to readings in the Site and productions as part of the Young Writers' Festival. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for the predominance of YWP writers in these festivals, as it was one of the very few opportunities to showcase the results of their work.

A focus on the marginalized youth: Critical Mass and Unheard Voices

Between the period 2001-2012, the writers' tutor post was held by Simon Stephens (2001-2005) and Leo Butler (2005-2012) and, as has been suggested above, the type of writers who were emerging from the Programme replicated the demographic of the YWP tutors. The inability of the YWP's writers' groups to connect with writers who were representative of London's diverse community had been further exacerbated by its location on Sloane Square, the implementation of substantial fees and the framing of the group's work as a 'course' that could see the groups appear isolating and commensurate with privilege. As a result, the groups 'missed the link with the rougher, less formed maybe different voices' that had been more visible in the Court's past work with young people.⁴⁹⁵ As the YWP's reputation grew, so too did its appeal to university graduates, and by the mid-2000s the YWP's writers' groups had become akin to a stepping stone used by MA playwriting or English

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015.

graduates with ambitions to have their plays produced by the Royal Court.⁴⁹⁶ In an attempt to address a growing imbalance in the diversity of the YWP's participants, new initiatives were introduced that looked to further the Programme's reach. The outreach and community work conducted by Lucy Dunkerley between 2002 and 2007 is particularly significant in this regard:

We started doing a sort of buffer group to the 17-25s because you would generally find that the 17-25 group was full of white males and a lot of the people on the Programme were graduates and they spoke a different language and that was just the complete dilemma.⁴⁹⁷

The launch of Critical Mass in 2004 and, later in 2008, Unheard Voices, aimed to combat what Dunkerley terms the 'dilemma' of representation that surrounded the YWP. Formed by Animashawun, Critical Mass intended to 'create a critical mass of young black and ethnic writers as part of the next generation of playwrights so that theatre could reflect society'⁴⁹⁸ and diversify the current landscape of playwrights. The scheme's introduction came at a time when plays by black British playwrights, such as Roy Williams and Debbie Tucker Green, were produced on the stages of the Royal Court. These productions arguably increased the Court's visibility amongst diverse audiences and were often supported by workshops provided by both the YWP and the theatre's education department. Lynette Goddard writes how 'the second half of the 2000s decade was particularly significant for marking the emergence of British West African playwrights on to the British theatre new writing

⁴⁹⁶ Some examples of those coming directly from Higher Education courses and onto the Programme include: Duncan Macmillan (MA Playwriting, University of Birmingham); Alexandra Wood (MA Playwriting, University of Birmingham) and Mike Bartlett (BA Text and Performance, University of Leeds).

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Lucy Dunkerley, conducted by the author, 21 September 2016.

⁴⁹⁸ Liz Thomas, 'Royal Court Seeks out Ethnic Playwrights', *the Stage* [online] (19 October 2004) available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2004/royal-court-seeks-out-ethnic-playwrights/> [accessed 2/2/2017] (para 6 of 6).

scene'⁴⁹⁹ and the development of Critical Mass went some way towards supporting this advancement. Indeed, the almost immediate impact of Critical Mass is visible from the inclusion of debut work by black playwrights such as Levi David Addai with *92.3FM* (Theatre Upstairs 2005 and 2006) and *Oxford Street* (Theatre Upstairs, 2008), as well as Bola Agbaje's *Gone Too Far* (2007 YWP, Theatre Downstairs, 2008), and later *Off the Endz* (Theatre Downstairs, 2010) and *Belong* (Theatre Upstairs, 2012) on the Royal Court stages. Critical Mass followed the same format as the writers' groups and included figures such as Ola Animashawun, Tanika Gupta, Lennie James and Kwame Kwei-Armah as the course leaders. While the structure of the initiative remained akin to the usual YWP practices, Critical Mass had no upper age limit with writers accepted from 18 and above. This maximised the potential to reach a greater number of people, but the need to enforce the endeavour suggests that the effects of returning the young peoples' work to Sloane Square – a notoriously white middle-class part of London - had limited its ability to engage with young people from non-white backgrounds. While Critical Mass can be seen as an attempt to address this imbalance, the allocation of ethnic playwrights to specific groups can be seen to further isolate, rather than directly address the issue of diversity within participants of the Young Writers' Programme. It is interesting to note how attitudes to diversity have shifted over the history of the Young Peoples' Theatre and the Young Writers' Programme. These have been visible in a range of iterations that have looked to address diversity through class, sexuality, gender and region-based work. There is an increasing sense that much of this has been lost through the creation of the Young Writers' Programme, with the Critical Mass endeavour representing the first attempts of the Programme to re-engage with its

⁴⁹⁹ Lynette Goddard, *Contemporary Black British Playwrights: Margins to Mainstream* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 184.

diverse heritage. In neglecting this area of work in the early part of the Programme's existence, an elitist practice had been allowed to form that limited the YWP's ability to appeal to a diverse range of participants.

It was in the aftermath of the London bombings on 7th July 2005 that the YWP's outreach work turned to focus on young men and women from the Muslim community in a pilot endeavour for what would, in 2008, evolve into the Unheard Voices scheme – an extension of the work of Critical Mass. In October 2006, the government launched the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund (PVEPF) which aimed to 'support priority local authorities in developing programmes of activity to tackle violent extremism at a local level.'⁵⁰⁰ The Court's work with young people had seen it build an important affiliation with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) with the borough providing a significant amount of the YWP's income in return for its continued outreach and community work. In Dunkerley's position as the YWP's outreach worker 'RBKC paid for quite a lot of that role and almost saw [Dunkerley] as a member of their staff.'⁵⁰¹ When additional funding was made available by the government as part of the PVEPF, Dunkerley worked closely with the Borough to capitalise on the opportunity:

I started to notice that a lot of young Muslim youths were becoming very disaffected and the local mosque were very keen for me to run a group for young men who were Muslim and not attending school... I realised there was a massive need to work with young Muslim writers and so the Unheard Voices programme was born and we put in a bid and pretty much overnight were offered all of this funding – it was pretty much the biggest funding pots I'd ever got because the work just seemed to be needed.⁵⁰²

Dunkerley received a £25,000 grant to pursue the YWP's work with young Muslims, which went on to fund ten projects across the Borough working with

⁵⁰⁰ Karen Kellard, Leighton Mitchell and David Godfrey, *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of Project Activities 2007/08*, 2008, p. 5.

⁵⁰¹ Interview with Lucy Dunkerley, conducted by the author, 21 September 2016.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

mosques, welfare groups, the Muslim youth helpline and the Bangladeshi centre. In a method shared by the YWP's playwriting in schools projects, Dunkerley took playwrights, including Michael Bhim and Debbie Tucker Green, to work with the participants where the aim was for them to write short plays. Following the workshops, at least two writers from each project were selected to return to the Royal Court for a ten-week course. As was customary at the end of each writers' group cycle, participants were then encouraged to submit plays with some of these works selected for readings on the main stage before being presented in the community contexts from where they originated to 'try and widen the audience'.⁵⁰³ Dunkerley speaks of how the work produced through these projects and later through the Unheard Voices scheme responded more directly 'to the political and community times'.⁵⁰⁴ In terms of professional productions, the results of Dunkerley's endeavours went unrewarded during her five years at the YWP. Upon Dominic Cooke taking up the artistic directorship at the Court it was decided that the RBKC funding, which was subject to a quota of young people from the Borough participating in the YWP activities, 'was becoming too much of a box ticking exercise' and as a result Dunkerley was made redundant.⁵⁰⁵ Unheard Voices continued however and enjoyed success with Alia Bano's debut play *Shades*, which had been developed through Dunkerley's work with Muslim women and was programmed as part of the 2009 Young Writers' Festival. Valuable work with women in the Muslim community was sustained in the years that followed and this

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

saw the success of plays by Rachel De-lahey (*The Westbridge*, 2011, *Routes*, 2013), whose work featured in the Court's programming under Dominic Cooke.⁵⁰⁶

As Goddard points out, the programming of plays by black writers such as Roy Williams and Bola Agbaje in the Theatre Downstairs 'is a marker of a major shift in the perceived significance of black British playwriting in the new millennium',⁵⁰⁷ and a move away from the confinement of plays by young and minority playwrights to the Theatre Upstairs. Indeed, the population of the YWP's writers' groups by largely university-educated white males presented a further criticism of the YWP through its ostensible inability to attract diverse participants. Although the inception of initiatives such as Critical Mass and Unheard Voices went some way to addressing this imbalance they can also be perceived to propagate the marginalisation of minority groups by ghettoising their participation to groups designed for specific communities. The conclusion of this thesis engages with some of the ways in which the Court has come to recognise the inequities of their writers' groups in the past to encourage and facilitate representation.

The Young Writers' Programme on the Royal Court stage: A season of plays by Young Writers' Programme playwrights

During Ian Rickson's tenure as artistic director, the Young Writers' Programme had operated with a consistent sense of frustration that its work with young writers was largely 'ignored and not appreciated' by the artistic team at the Royal Court.⁵⁰⁸ This aggravation was borne out of the sporadic production of plays by YWP writers programmed by the Court outside of the Young Writers' Festival. In a feat that had only been achieved by three writers, Lucy Prebble (*The Sugar Syndrome*, 2003),

⁵⁰⁶ The initiative has expanded to include work with Chinese, east and south-east Asian playwrights, Romany travellers, and writers of Somali and Eritrean descent.

⁵⁰⁷ Goddard, p. 185.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

Laura Wade (*Breathing Corpses*, 2005), and Levi David Addai (*93.2 FM*, 2005 and 2006), in the YWP's six-year history, it was a change in artistic directorship at the Court that ultimately proved to be the catalyst for an increased visibility of YWP writers on the Royal Court stages.

The appointment of Dominic Cooke in 2006 initiated change at the Royal Court, which renewed attention to the YWP's work with young writers. The ambiguities surrounding the Programme's role were controlled in part by streamlining its remit. Graham Whybrow, who remained for a brief period as the Court's literary manager following Rickson's departure, speaks of how Cooke 'was less than happy with the structures' in place, believing 'that the YWP should be more geared to the Royal Court programming.'⁵⁰⁹ Cooke's decision to integrate the writers of the YWP more directly into the theatre's main programming began with immediate effect, as Whybrow discusses:

My vision for this was that it was copying the template of 1994 with the season of new playwrights. I think we achieved that but, on my part, it was a slight avenging of the inertia and the sameness of the recent work that had been coming through the YWP and it was very important to crack that open.⁵¹⁰

In a method that had garnered considerable success and recognition for the Royal Court in the mid 1990s, the 2006/07 season looked to mirror that technique by presenting a series of new plays by first time playwrights on the stages of the Royal Court. As it had been in '94/95, the season was built around the Young Writers' Festival and was complemented by the inclusion of debut plays by young writers in the Court's main programme. Animashawun describes the season as a 'cataclysmic

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with Graham Whybrow, conducted by the author, 15 December 2016.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

breakthrough'⁵¹¹ for the YWP; for Nina Lyndon, the season proved to be the 'tipping point where the YWP spilled over in to the programme' revealing 'the fruits of our labour' in the climax of a near decade-long process.⁵¹² The substantial impact of the YWP on this season of work sits in contrast with an initiative that, since it began, had struggled to feature consistently within the Court's main programming. This decision is interesting particularly when paired with Whybrow's description of the event as a response to the 'inertia and sameness' that he felt the Programme had been guilty of in the past. This change in attitude towards the programming of work by YWP playwrights indicates that the type of work that was being produced within the YWP had become more varied than it once had been. As a result, work by playwrights who had been tutored by Simon Stephens (Mike Bartlett) and others who had been tutored by Leo Butler (Polly Stenham), along with playwrights who had emerged through the Programme's other initiatives such as Critical Mass (Bola Agbaje) had created a wider range of work that the Court were interested in producing.

Starting with the launch of the Young Writers' Festival in February 2007 Bola Agbaje's *Gone Too Far* and Alexandra Wood's *The Eleventh Capital* both received full productions in the Theatre Upstairs alongside seven other young playwrights who were each given readings.⁵¹³ By 2007, the YWF was described as the Young Writers' Programme's 'flagship project' which sought to 'introduce vibrant world premières of plays written by a new generation of young writers.'⁵¹⁴ Indeed, all of the young writers who had their work produced as part of this Festival

⁵¹¹ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16 June 2016.

⁵¹² Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁵¹³ These were: *Neither Have I Wings to Fly* by Elinor Cook, *Beyond the Neck* by Tom Holloway, *Blossom* by Hannah Davies, *Concrete Fairground* by Suzanne Heathcote, *Can't Stand Me Now* by Natalie Mitchell, *Early Bird* by Daniel Barker and *Satellite* by Duncan Macmillan.

⁵¹⁴ Young Writers' Festival Education pack, Royal Court Theatre, 2007.

had emerged through the writers' groups of the Young Writers' Programme at various points between 2005 and 2006. Following the conclusion of the Festival, two further debut plays from YWP alumni were produced concurrently in the Court's Downstairs and Upstairs Theatres, Mike Bartlett's *My Child* (2007) and Polly Stenham's *That Face* (2007). Bartlett's play, in particular, cemented Dominic Cooke's commitment to first time writers. In programming Bartlett's debut in the Theatre Downstairs, in a dramatically reconfigured space that saw director Sacha Wares transform the main stage in to a tube carriage/coffee bar, the new artistic director's faith in the young writers who had been developed by the YWP was made clear. The visibility of YWP writers within the Court's main programming continued as DC Moore's *Alaska* followed *That Face* in the Theatre Upstairs. Moreover, the dominance of YWP writers continued across the Royal Court's stages for much of Cooke's tenure, with the West End transfer of Stenham's debut in May 2008, providing further recognition of the YWP's work beyond the confines of the Royal Court. YWP alumnus DC Moore states how 'everything changed'⁵¹⁵ on Cooke's arrival and certainly this is the case from the perspective of the Young Writers' Programme, with many of the new generation of playwrights such as Agbaje, Stenham, Moore and Bartlett receiving multiple productions at the Court over the course of Cooke's seven-year directorship. Cooke had used the Young Writers' Programme as a way of finding and nurturing new talent in a way that Rickson never did. Indeed, there is an irony that many of the writers who came to define Cooke's reign, such as Mike Bartlett, Laura Wade and Polly Stenham were developed under Rickson's directorship and, more specifically, by the Young Writers' Programme. But, as this chapter has articulated, the road to success for the

⁵¹⁵ Interview with DC Moore, conducted by the author, 2 August 2016.

Young Writers' Programme had been almost a decade in the making, with much of its early life and practices functioning at odds with the Court's original intentions for the initiative. The YWP had ultimately succeeded in its intentions to find and develop a new generation of playwrights and Cooke's vision for the Royal Court had allowed this ambition to flourish.

Conclusion

The tensions that existed between the Court and the YWP are often overlooked in favour of its considerable success in the aftermath of the 2007 season. But it is nevertheless important to recognise and debate what had continued to be a contentious relationship even in the scheme's iteration as the Young Writers' Programme. The millennium had opened with a renewed attempt to unite the Royal Court Theatre on its return to Sloane Square. By relocating the YWP to the Site, the Court and its young peoples' division operated under the same postcode in what can be regarded as a tangible attempt to align and integrate the young peoples' work within the central policy of the Royal Court. In choosing to focus the vision in this way and focus the theatre's work with young people exclusively on playwriting, the Young Writers' Programme forged new ways of engaging the young with writing for the theatre. However, in doing so, and on the back of some considerable success with young writers in the 1990s, the Programme became concerned with an overriding ambition to source and develop a new generation of writers for the Royal Court and beyond. This stood in contrast to its long-standing aims as a young peoples' theatre, which had prided itself on its appeal to a diverse community of young people. Further shifts in policy occurred and stringent selection processes for the Programme's writers' groups have led to accusations of elitism towards the initiative's practice. Indeed, while the YWP's position in the heart of affluent

Chelsea can be seen to strengthen the ostensible association between the Programme and its parent theatre, it also saw the young peoples' work contained within a community that is emblematic of wealth and prosperity. This new environment presented new challenges to an endeavour with strong historical affiliations with Notting Hill and other areas of London in the '80s and '90s. This changing geography can also be seen as a factor in the YWP's ongoing struggle to connect with young writers from diverse communities, which forced the Programme to source these writers through alternative means.

The many elements of the YWP's composition are often overshadowed by the achievements of its writers' groups, which were led during this period primarily by Simon Stephens. Stephens himself has emerged as one of the country's most celebrated playwrights, and his influence as writers' tutor on the YWP is counted by many of his contemporaries as a defining period in their early careers. But it is the writers' groups in particular that have been the focus of much of the criticism and tension that occurred between the YWP and the Royal Court during this time. Indeed, it is the presence of a strong pedagogical frame, brought about in part by Stephens's professional experience as a teacher and coupled with the etymological implications of the word 'programme', that fostered a quasi-educational initiative which provided a course-like structure to fee-paying participants. The rigid structures of 'streaming' playwrights created a process of elimination that saw the YWP and the Young Writers' Festival evolve into 'much more of a talent-spotting set-up' than had been intended.⁵¹⁶ This initiated a shift from the highly participatory and inclusive practice of the Court's work with young people in the 1990s, to an exclusive and isolating Programme dominated by university graduates and young

⁵¹⁶ Interview with Carl Miller, conducted by the author, 2 March 2015.

people from similar backgrounds. The five-year tenure of Simon Stephens as the writers' tutor, or indeed any extended period by someone in this post, could be seen to negatively impact on the YWP's ability to function effectively as a place where playwrights could be developed. Indeed, current practice within the writers' groups at the Royal Court has addressed this issue, and today the role of the writers' tutor, now known as the group leader, changes with every cohort. As Chris Campbell, the Court's current literary manager confirms:

The feeling was that we weren't going to advance unless we changed the structure. Vicky [Featherstone]'s arrival led to the system that we have now, which is there is no one person in charge. So, you avoid the possible, unintended, guru-effect that was definitely happening before. And you also get greater diversity of people involved because the criteria for selection is different for each group. And, as a result, every time you do it is different because you've got a different person leading it.⁵¹⁷

What this method avoids is the potential for group leaders to remain in the role indefinitely, in the way that the writers' tutors of the YWP have done in the past.

Although the intention expressed by Ian Rickson that returning the young peoples' work to Sloane Square would bring unity to an increasingly dispersed Royal Court, it was not until the arrival of Dominic Cooke that this sense of unity was fully realised.⁵¹⁸ The 2006/07 season of new plays by first time writers saw the Programme's work with young writers become truly visible within the Royal Court's programming, a move which illustrated Cooke's intentions 'to renew the theatre's original commitment to first time writers.'⁵¹⁹ Indeed, Nina Lyndon recalls how Cooke's ambitions were directly concerned with the writers 'who were coming out of the Programme' and his seven year tenure saw many of the young writers

⁵¹⁷ Interview with Chris Campbell, conducted by the author, 8 November 2016. Vicky Featherstone is the current Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre. Her arrival at the Court in April 2013 signalled the appointment of the first female Artistic Director in Royal Court history.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with Ian Rickson, conducted by the author, 24 August 2016.

⁵¹⁹ Little and McLaughlin, p. 448.

who had started their careers as part of the Programme - such as Mike Bartlett, Polly Stenham, Bola Agbaje and DC Moore consistently appear on the Royal Court stage. It was under Cooke's artistic directorship that the impact of the YWP's ambitions were realised. A subsequent generation of YWP writers emerged under the tutelage of Leo Butler in the years 2007-2013, with writers such as Anya Reiss, Penelope Skinner, Rachel Delahay, EV Crowe and Nick Payne testifying to the so-called engine room in action in the years following. Cooke's commitment to first-time writers is further demonstrated through the establishment of what became known as the Studio, in what was a further attempt to integrate the Programme further into the artistic mission:⁵²⁰

When Dominic came on board it was decided to merge the Programme and the literary department and call it the Studio. All play development came under one department and the Young Writers' Programme lost its sense of being a department and it became just about groups. So, we'd gone from being ignored and not appreciated and not noticed for the work that we were doing to the work finally being honoured as being core and intrinsic to the play development work that took place.⁵²¹

The founding of the Studio in 2007 brought with it significant change for the YWP. A focus on the groups saw the community and outreach work removed from the YWP's remit and made Lucy Dunkerley's position redundant. Animashawun moved from the director of the YWP to take up the post of Diversity Associate at the Court, Lyndon's resignation also occurred around this time and her post was replaced by Claire McQuillan in a new role known as the Studio Manager. 2007, therefore, marks the end of the Young Writers' Programme in the way that it had operated for almost a decade.⁵²² In creating an absolute focus on writers' groups, the Court's long history of community outreach work, both as the Young Peoples' Theatre and later

⁵²⁰ Interview with Emily McLaughlin, conducted by the author, 11 November 2016.

⁵²¹ Interview with Nina Lyndon, conducted by the author, 2 November 2016.

⁵²² Ibid.

as part of the Young Writers' Programme was relegated to the confines of memory and archives. The term Young Writers' Programme has been phased out of usage by the theatre, which was keen to move away from the notion that the Royal Court Young Writers' Programme had been a place where playwriting was taught. It is a term, however, that has accrued a degree of credibility over time and, as a result, remains proudly displayed in the biographies and CVs of many of its notable participants. As Nina Lyndon puts it, the YWP 'was a beast that had an identity and a spirit that lived on. So, you can change the roles and change what you called it and put peoples' desks in different places but the spirit of it never left and it's still there, today.'⁵²³

⁵²³ Ibid.

Conclusion

A Recovered History

A Resurgence of the Young

In the year that this PhD began, the Royal Court announced the (re)launch of its initiatives for young people.⁵²⁴ In an endeavour known as ‘Young Court’, the theatre looked to use this new initiative to create an ‘inclusive programme of activities by, for and with young people up to the age of 25.’⁵²⁵ As part of this 2015 programme, Young Court offered workshops and discussions that focused on Royal Court productions, theatre skills and processes, a writing project for Primary School children known as *Primetime*, and tours of work to both secondary and primary schools.

In 2013, an event known as ‘Open Court’, where playwrights were ‘given the keys to the theatre’ and offered free reign to produce a festival of work that included live-streaming, six plays produced in weekly repertory over the festival’s six weeks and well-known playwrights reading their work in the Royal Court bar, marked a new era of the theatre under the incoming artistic director Vicky Featherstone.⁵²⁶ In the summer of 2016, Open Court returned, but this time with members of the Young Court in control of the three-week long event. Through this, Featherstone’s Royal Court put young people at the centre of the action and, for the first time in almost twenty years, the theatre’s work with the next generation began once again to operate beyond playwriting-focussed initiatives. In the last twelve months alone, the Young Court has continued to expand its opportunities for young

⁵²⁴ Matthew Hemley, ‘The Royal Court launches series of youth initiatives’, *the Stage* [online] (15 October 2015) <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2015/royal-court-launches-series-of-youth-initiatives/> [accessed 7 August 2017].

⁵²⁵ Royal Court Theatre, ‘Young Court’ [online] (publication date unknown) <https://royalcourttheatre.com/what-else/young-court/> [accessed 7 August 2017].

⁵²⁶ Vicky Angelaki, ‘(Up)Setting the Scene: Open Court as Staging and Spectating Intervention’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25:4 (2015), pp. 472-487 (p. 475).

people through the formation of a youth board, a young script panel, the creation of a youth theatre and a group of actors, writers and producers known collectively as the Young Agitators. The presence of the young in Royal Court policy today, and particularly the initiatives that make up the Young Court's work, bear a resemblance to the practices of the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre. Indeed, the increasing visibility of the young within the theatre since Young Court was launched, and the regularity with which young peoples' events are integrated into the theatre's general activities, indicates a level of commitment to this area from the Court's management that young peoples' work has struggled to attain in the past. And yet, in the same way that the YPT's history has been overlooked following the successes of the Young Writers' Programme, the legacies of the YPT within the current work with young people of the Royal Court have also gone without observation and comment.

A Unique Contribution

It has been the purpose of this thesis to present an original history of the Royal Court Theatre from the perspective of its work with young people and playwrights. As the introduction to this thesis identified, much of the extensive literature that has been written on the Royal Court in the last sixty years has failed to successfully integrate the theatre's long-standing work with young people into the historical record. This work, therefore, occupies a distinct gap in existing scholarship and brings new knowledge about this area of the Court's work. Moreover, with the inception of Young Court and a renewed focus on the young at the Royal Court, this study also represents a timely reflection which seeks to support, historicize and give context to this strand of the theatre's work. In its composition, the thesis has sought to answer a series of questions that were first asked by Ian Rickson's Royal Court in

1998, and re-iterated by the Young Writers' Programme's first director Ola Animashawun during an interview conducted in June 2016:

What is its purpose? Why does it exist? Why does the Royal Court have a young peoples' theatre? Why is it unique? What is it doing, and what does it offer that no other youth theatre can offer?⁵²⁷

By applying these questions to the narrative of the thesis, the role of a young peoples' theatre at the Royal Court is brought in to sharp focus. Indeed, how this role has fluctuated and adapted through attempts to promote political agendas, integrate more effectively within the local community and align itself with Royal Court's enduring identity as a writers' theatre, is demonstrated through each chapter across over fifty years of work and nine directors.⁵²⁸

In support of this analysis, this study has employed a range of data-collection methodologies that has included archival research and the conducting of original interviews. Given the sparsity of existing scholarship on the topic, the use of interviews with key personnel relating to the Young Peoples' Theatre, Young Writers' Programme and the Royal Court itself, created the foundations on which the study was built. In support of this, extensive archival material, the breakdown of which is available in Appendix C, unearthed a wealth of documentation, which was used in conjunction with the interview transcripts to formulate a comprehensive history of the Court's work with young people. This thesis has identified two areas of concern that could be recognised as recurring features in the narrative. The first has positioned the YPT on the metaphorical and geographical periphery of its parent theatre and sought to assess the impact that this had on the YPT's ability to both influence and engage successfully with the Royal Court's policy and ambitions. The

⁵²⁷ Interview with Ola Animashawun, conducted by the author, 16th June 2016.

⁵²⁸ In this context, the term 'directors' refers to directors of the Young Peoples' Theatre and Young Writers' Programme. At the Royal Court, the period has seen ten changes in artistic directorships of the theatre between 1956 and 2007.

second has explored the tensions that developed as a result of this marginalisation and provided an analysis of the ways in which these conflicts presented themselves. In support of the arguments made, the thesis has drawn upon key events in the YPT's history and located them within appropriate contextual and theoretical frames such as the development of the TiE movement in the 1960s, sexuality, gender and race politics of the 1970s and 80s, and the new writing landscape of the 1990s. This approach offers new perspectives and insights into the role of the YPT and later the Young Writers' Programme within the Royal Court and in British theatre more widely and illustrated the significant contributions of the YPT and YWP at a range of junctures in the fifty-year time frame.

Born out of a Schools Scheme, created with the original aim of introducing a younger audience to the Royal Court theatre, the YPT evolved within an emerging TiE movement with a desire to forge an initiative for young people that was aligned to the Royal Court's identity as a theatre dedicated to writers and new plays. The thesis has identified a considerable amount of resistance towards this strand of work from members of the Royal Court staff, the Arts Council and at times the sitting British government, that has often impeded the YPT from achieving its ambitions from the very beginning of its history. These conflicts positioned the YPT on the periphery of the Royal Court but also on the edge of other practices for young people such as TiE. Indeed, the implications of the YPT's peripheral existence have been made explicit at several points in the thesis and discussed within the contexts of funding, policy and geography, following its move to Portobello Road in 1985. The new location of the YPT allowed important relationships with the local borough to flourish and represents a time in the YPT's life where its impact and engagement with a diverse range of young people was at its highest. A desire to expand the

YPT's reach is further expressed through the vital regional work that took place between 1986 and 1996. Given that this aligned with a larger initiative led by the Arts Council to focus its attention beyond London, it is suggestive of a YPT that is both responsive and adaptive to wider shifts in policy and intent. As this thesis demonstrates, it was this regional work that provided the foundation for a breakthrough moment of the YPT on the Royal Court stage and its contribution to a significant time in British theatre history through the 1994/95 season of new plays. Furthermore, this thesis has argued that the enhanced presence of the YPT within the Royal Court during the 1990s proved to be the catalyst for its own demise. The subsequent rebranding of the Young Peoples' Theatre as the Young Writers' Programme challenged the once unique appeal of the YPT and instead brought it in line with many other initiatives for young writers. It is my contention that the success of the Young Writers' Programme in providing a new generation of playwrights for the theatre has contributed to the erasure of a vital part of Royal Court theatre history. This thesis reveals, however, how the success of the Young Writers' Programme, and the dominance of its writers on the Royal Court stage, is in direct contrast to the Royal Court's original intentions for working with young people. In analysing the impact of the Programme's work with young writers on the Court's literary department, a final conflict between the two institutions is revealed that for much of the early part of the century inhibited young British writers from being produced by the Royal Court and instead paved the way for new international playwrights.

The introduction of this thesis explained how the leaders of the young peoples' initiatives of the Royal Court have often been occluded from scholarship and debate not just on the Court but in wider scholarship on theatre by and for

young people and audiences. While the contribution of women to this strand of the theatre's work is particularly significant, these omissions also encompass all leaders of these initiatives at the Court including that of directors such as Gerald Chapman and David Sulkin, who also advanced the scheme greatly during their tenures. Further, it is important to note here, that the extent to which the contributions of leaders have been overlooked is not limited to the YPT. Indeed, this has continued into the development of the Young Writers' Programme with the efforts of figures such as Ola Animashawun, Lucy Dunkerley and Nina Lyndon overshadowed by discourse on the success of the writer's tutor with young writers in the 2000s.

Opportunities for Expansion

Beyond these conclusions, this thesis has aimed to accurately respond to each of the questions posited by Animashawun above. Although the answers concerning its purpose and *raison d'être* can be seen to fluctuate with each director, this study has also revealed the ways in which the YPT and its staff have also striven, in one form or another, to abide by the fundamental principles of the Royal Court and its aspirations as a 'writers' theatre'. Evidence of this ambition can be recognised throughout the YPT's history; through the workshops that accompanied Royal Court productions, the inception of the Young Writers' Festival, the dedication to young women playwrights, the implementation of a process to support writers and ultimately the provision of a tangible structure that aimed to offer a sustainable approach to developing playwrights for the Royal Court stage.

The Royal Court had a young peoples' theatre because it aided in the theatre's ability to present itself as an outward looking institution. It is without doubt that the YPT enabled an engagement with the community and young people that the Royal Court would have otherwise struggled to maintain. Through the YPT the

Royal Court could move beyond the limitations that a Sloane Square location brought, and its multi-faceted approach coupled with the Court's established reputation allowed for its endeavours with young people to thrive. With the establishment of the Young Writers' Programme in 1998, the unique edge of the YPT was lost as a focus on young people and playwriting superseded the once varied programme of work that the YPT had previously supported. That is not to denigrate the important work that took place with young people at the Court coming into the twenty-first century but the YWP's commitment to producing the next generation of playwrights inhibited its ability to reach a wide and numerous demographic of young people. The renewed emphasis on young peoples' initiatives at the Royal Court in the last few years, through endeavours such as Young Court, suggests that this is an area that the theatre is looking to redress in the years to come.

This thesis has presented the first account of the Royal Court's work with young people. In choosing to provide a focussed piece of research, there are strands of the YPT's work that have gone without full interrogation. More specifically, there is a sociological element to the YPT's practices, particularly the community and outreach work that took place within the Young Writers' Programme and the impact of the Young Writers' Festival's regional work on the development of regional writers' initiatives that I feel are worthy of further investigation. Of course, there is the matter of how the Court's work with young people and playwrights developed post-2007 and although some of these outcomes have been touched on in the closing remarks of the thesis, there are some interesting developments to be explored in this area. The thesis invites further contributions of original scholarship on this part of the Court's work and it is my hope that what has been written here will encourage further debate and discussion on what is a significant and much-neglected history.

Appendix A – List of Interviewees

Below is an alphabetised list of individuals who I conducted interviews with between January 2015 and December 2016 as part of the research for this PhD. The appendix lists their names, their job titles at the time of interview, along with the location and date(s) that the interview(s) took place.

Animashawun, Ola, Artistic Associate at the Royal Court, the Royal Court Theatre, London, 16 June 2016.

Baldwin, Nicola, Playwright, by telephone, 22 August 2016.

Bartlett, Mike, Playwright, by telephone, 24 November 2016.

Birch, Brad, Playwright, by telephone, 23 November 2016.

Campbell, Chris, Literary Manager at the Royal Court Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, London, 8 November 2016.

Cook, Elinor, Playwright, by telephone, 15 December 2016.

De Angelis, April, Playwright, by telephone, 20 June 2016.

Dodgson, Elyse, International Director at the Royal Court, by telephone, 4 December 2015.

Dunkerley, Lucy, Associate Director at Border Crossings, by telephone, 21 September 2016

Gaskill, William, Director and Former Artistic Director of the Royal Court, Kentish Town, London, 15 January 2015.

Howell, Jane, Director, by telephone, 27 January 2015.

King, Dawn, Playwright, by telephone, 1 November 2016.

Kenyon, Mel – Head of Theatre Department at Casarotto Ramsey and Associates Limited, by telephone, 13 July 2016.

Lynn, Islay, Playwright, via email, 14 November 2016.

Lyndon, Nina, Co-director of Hackney Showrooms, by telephone, 2 November 2016.

Macmillan, Duncan, Playwright, by telephone, 12 September 2016.

McLaughlin, Emily, Head of New Work at the National Theatre, by telephone, 11 November 2016.

Miller, Carl, Playwright and Literary Manager of the Unicorn Theatre, by telephone, 2 March 2015

Mills, Joan, Voice Director at the Centre for Performance Research, Llanrhystud, Wales, 12 March 2015.

Mitchell, Natalie, Playwright, the National Theatre, London, 25 October 2016.

Moore, DC, Playwright, via email, 2 August 2016.

Moss, Chloe, Playwright, by telephone, 23 September 2016.

Prebble, Lucy, Playwright, via email, 2 August 2016.

Rickson, Ian, Director, by telephone, 24 August 2016.

Stephens, Louise, Deputy Literary Manager at the Royal Court Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, London, 8 November 2016.

Stephens, Simon, Playwright and Associate Playwright at the Royal Court Theatre, Shoreditch House, London, 1 July 2016.

Sulkin, David, Executive Director of Help Musicians UK, Kings Cross, London, 18 February 2015.

Tickell, Dominic, Executive Director at The Charterhouse, by telephone, 19 February 2015 and 1 June 2016.

Wade, Laura, Playwright, by telephone, 21 September 2016.

Whybrow, Graham, Artistic Associate at the Royal Court Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, London, 17 June 2016 and 15 December 2016.

Wood, Alexandra, Playwright, by telephone, 2 November 2016.

Appendix B – Timeline: The Royal Court’s Work with Young People 1960-2007

- 1960:** A group of sixteen students from a school in Hertfordshire make a week-long visit to the Court. Led by George Devine’s assistant, John Blatchley, what became known as the ‘Visits Scheme’ marked the first initiative for schools offered by the theatre.
- 1961:** £1000 is offered by ESC Chairman Neville Blond to help develop the Court’s work with schools. This never comes to fruition and this area of work is left dormant until 1966.
- 1966:** Using an Arts Council grant of £5000, the first official Schools Scheme is launched by William Gaskill and Jane Howell, an assistant director of the Court. Howell is given responsibility for this and becomes the Scheme’s first director. The Scheme aimed to provide afternoon performances for schools and discussions with young people on the Royal Court’s plays and work. The first play to be programmed for the Scheme was Arnold Wesker’s *Roots* followed by Brendan Behan’s *The Hostage*.
- 1967:** Ann Jellicoe’s *The Rising Generation* is produced alongside Charles Hayward’s *Dance of the Teletapes*, with the latter cast entirely with boys from Dulwich College. *The Rising Generation* included a cast of one hundred and fifty young people and was produced following a two-week rehearsal period.
- 1969:** February: The Royal Court opens a second space within the theatre known as the Theatre Upstairs.
- March: A season of plays by Edward Bond is programmed by the Court. As part of the this, the Schools Scheme offers a series of workshops on the topic of ‘Violence in the Theatre’.
- 27th July: In a concept first explored in *The Rising Generation* two years earlier, Howell produced *Revolution* – a devised summer project that brought pupils from eleven schools around London

together. It was performed as a Sunday Night Production at the Court before transferring to the Roundhouse in August for a further three performances.

1970: Pam Brighton takes over the directorship of the Scheme, which, at this time, becomes known as the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme.

4th May: Brighton directs a revival of Ann Jellicoe's 1958 play *The Sport of My Mad Mother* for the Schools Scheme in the Theatre Upstairs. The production's content raises concerns by a local MP which in turn draws attention to the Court's work with young people from the Arts Council.

August: A third summer project entitled *Songs My Mother Taught Me* is produced by the YPTS – Jane Howell returns to the Scheme to co-direct with Brighton.

1971: A production of Harold Mueller's *Big Wolf* is performed by five schoolboys. It played on a Saturday morning in the Theatre Upstairs. The production is followed by a revival of Barry Reckord's *Skyvers* for the YPTS – an audience of thirteen years of age is recommended for the performance. An advisory group is set up following *Skyvers* to support Brighton's future work with the Scheme. *Skyvers* transfers from the Theatre Upstairs to the Roundhouse.

A request to the Arts Council for an increase in funding for the Scheme is rejected.

1972: 16 May: Brighton's final show for the Scheme, *Show Me the Way to Go Home*, plays for three-weeks in the Theatre Upstairs.

6th September: Jonathan Hales' *Brussels* opens in the Theatre Upstairs. Joan Mills, who had been working as Hales' assistant on the production had caught the attention of the Court's artistic director Oscar Lewenstein. She is offered and accepts the directorship of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme

1973: The first Young Writers' Competition is launched in collaboration with the Observer newspaper. Fifteen entries are received out of which four are chosen for presentation: The winning plays were: *Liberation City* by Michael Belbin, *Split* by Brigette Bennett, *'old Very Tight Please* by Martin Bergmann and *Top Dog* by Patrick Murray. These were performed in May 1973 at the Oval House and for a Sunday Night performance in the Theatre Upstairs.

1974: Alongside Alan Read, the Editor of the Young Observer, a nationwide call for play submissions is published in preparation for the 1974 Young Writers' Competition. Between one hundred and ten and one hundred and twenty-five submissions are received, and seven plays are selected for production.

2nd April: Six of the Best, the title given to the second Young Writers' Competition, opens in the Theatre Upstairs. The plays featured as part of *Six of the Best* were: *Errand* by Jim Irving (14), *Big Business* by Mark Edwards (15), *Maggie's Fortune* by Sheila Wright (11), *Fireman's Ball* by Stephen Frost (14), *Event* by James Clarke (15) and *The Zoological Palace* by Conrad Mullineaux (10), as well as Michael Belbin's (16) *Liberation City*, which had previously featured in the first year's competition. The plays were directed by Joan Mills, John Barlow and Ann Jellicoe.

1974: A Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme Committee is launched to support Mills in her ambitions to expand the Scheme in the future and enhance funding opportunities.

1975: February: In a special commission for the YPTS, a production of *Mrs Grabowski's Academy* played in the Theatre Upstairs. It is followed by a project involving Caryl Churchill, the Court's resident dramatist, Joan Mills, and a local junior school, entitled *Strange Days*.

16th October: The Young Writers' Competition is developed into the first Young Writers' Festival, which opened in the Theatre Upstairs.

- 1976:** 2nd April: Joan Mills resigns as director of the YPTS.
- June: Gerald Chapman becomes the new director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme and starts the Activists, a youth theatre company. The Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme takes up residence in the Garage, a disused building just off Sloane Square at 13 Holbein Place.
- December: A £10,000 grant is awarded from the Gulbenkian Foundation to be given to the YPTS over two-years.
- 1977:** January: A £2000 grant from the Lord Sainsbury's Foundation funds a season of work entitled *Everyone's Different* and a play entitled *Short Sleeves in the Summer*.
- March: Young Writers' Festival.
- 4th April: John Dale is appointed to the role of Assistant Director of the YPTS.
- Not in Norwich* by David Lan is performed by the YPTS Youth Theatre Workshop.
- 1978:** Gerald Chapman and John Dale organise a conference called 'Theatre-Education: An Exploration', which aimed to address the 'lack of contact between the professional theatre and those involved in drama teaching'. The conference took place at London's Riverside Studios.
- May: Young Writers' Festival.
- 1979:** Using a grant from the ILEA, Janet Goddard is appointed as the Scheme's Youth Worker. David Thompson is appointed to the role of Administrator for the Scheme. John Dale leaves the YPTS to work for the BBC.
- March: Young Writers' Festival.

April: Gerald Chapman introduces the Young Writers' Group. Nicholas Wright is appointed as the group's first Writers' Tutor.

5-16 November: The Sexism Season takes place in the Theatre Upstairs showing work by companies such as Gay Sweatshop and Beryl and the Perils.

1980: 'Make a Play' weekend, hosted by Gerald Chapman and Nicholas Wright, takes place at the Bedminster Boys Club in Bristol.

March: Young Writers' Festival.

June: Andrea Dunbar's *The Arbor*, which was first produced in the 1980 Young Writers' Festival, opens in the Theatre Downstairs. It is the first production in the Festival's history to feature as part of the Royal Court's main programming.

July: Chapman resigns as director of the YPTS and moves to New York where he works with Stephen Sondheim to create the Young Playwrights Inc.

September: After a brief handover period, David Sulkin succeeds Gerald Chapman as the director of the Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme.

Catherine McCall replaces Janet Goddard as the Scheme's Youth Worker (part-time).

An accident involving a lorry sees the Garage damaged beyond repair and the YPTS is left without a home.

1981: March: Young Writers' Festival

The Activists perform *Maggie's Holiday Camp* by John Turner in Scarborough.

1982: Stephen Wakelam replaces Nicholas Wright as the Writers' Tutor, Moira Eagling becomes the Scheme's administrator and Gill Beadle

succeeds Catherine McCall as the youth worker. All of these roles are part-time posts.

May: 'Women Live Season' held in the Theatre Upstairs, a series of five short plays performed under the collective title of 'Talking Black' are produced as part of this season.

October: Young Writers' Festival (a record 362 submissions are received following the call for plays).

The Festival includes the inaugural *Primary Sauce* event, with those plays also touring to London schools.

1983: November: 'Hot Tip' Festival replaces the year's Young Writers' Festival.

1984: March: Young Writers' Festival returns with sponsorship, for the first time in the Scheme's history, from Rank Xerox.

1985: At a total cost of £211,000 Sulkin acquires a small studio space at 309 Portobello Road that would come to be known as the Royal Court Young Peoples' Theatre. Elyse Dodgson becomes the new director of the YPT – it would be Dodgson's primary responsibility to oversee the move for the YPT into their new home. The Young Peoples' Theatre Scheme drops the word 'Scheme' from its title to become known simply as the Young Peoples' Theatre.

1986: 6th March: The YPT officially opens on Portobello Road. By this point Carin Mistry worked as the YPT's administrator, Colin Watkeys as the Youth Drama Worker and Mark Holness in the newly created post of Schools and Community liaison worker.

June: The first of two community projects focussing on the Caribbean community is produced – *Garvey! Garvey!* plays as part of a wider community event entitled 'Caribbean Focus'.

Hanif Kureishi is appointed as writer-in-residence at the Royal Court. This role would bring with it an expectation that the post-holder would work closely with the YPT.

16th October: Young Writers' Festival (a record six hundred and five entries are received).

1987: January: Preparations begin for the 1988 Young Writers' Festival. The methodology has changed to incorporate a process-led focus to the YPT's work with young writers. In the eighteen months that followed the YPT would travel to Greater London, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Humberside, and Eastern Arts to work closely with young writers who would show their work as part of the '89 Young Writers' Festival

August: *Real Cool Killers* is the second community project with Caribbean young people. Work with young people from Moroccan, Bangladeshi, and Spanish backgrounds follows.

1988: June: Young Writers' Festival (Selected Regions: Greater London, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Humberside and Eastern Arts).

1989: October: Preparation begin for the 1991 Young Writers' Festival

1991: February: Young Writers' Festival (Selected Regions: West Midlands Arts, Southern Arts, and South East Arts). Marks and Spencer replace Rank Xerox as the Festival's sponsors.

Preparations for the 1992 YWF begin.

November: Dodgson leaves the YPT and the Court for Rose Bruford – she would return six-months later in May 1992 to take on the role of Associate Director – Education at the Royal Court.

1992: February: Dominic Tickell, who had worked as the YPT's administrator since 1988, is formally appointed as Dodgson's successor.

October: Young Writers' Festival entitled *New Voices* (Selected Regions: East Midlands and the South-West). Followed by tour to Northampton, Nottingham, Leicester, Bristol, Plymouth, and Taunton.

Preparations for the 1994 YWF begin.

1994: October: Young Writers' Festival entitled *Coming on Strong* (Selected regions: London and Northern Ireland (Derry, Coleraine, Belfast)).

1995: Funded by a £25,000 grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, small-scale touring of the YPT's work begins in collaboration with Eastern Arts Agency. Michael Wynne's *The Knocky* is the first play to tour under this initiative.

Preparations begin for the 1996 YWF.

1996: Nick Grosso's *Sweetheart* becomes the second play to tour as part of the Eastern Arts collaboration.

YPT collaborates with Blast Theory on *The London Project*, which is performed as part of that year's Barclays New Stages Festival.

October: Young Writers' Festival entitled *Storming* (Selected Region: Scotland). As a result of the refurbishment of the theatre in Sloane Square, the Festival for this year took place in the Ambassadors Theatre in London's West End. Followed by a tour of venues in Scotland.

Aoife Mannix joins the YPT as the scheme's administrator. Mannix went on to become the general manager of the Young Writers' Programme in 1998.

1997: Tamara Hammerslag's *Backpay* is the last play to tour as part of the collaboration with Eastern Arts.

Carl Miller replaces Dominic Tickell as the director of the Young Peoples' Theatre.

October: Rebecca Prichard's third play *Fair Game* is produced in the Court's makeshift Theatre Downstairs at the Duke of York's. It featured actors all of whom were under-17 and some members of the YPT's youth theatre. The production is regarded as 'the last public act of the youth theatre' and signifies the beginning of the YPT transition to become the Young Writers' Programme.

1998: November: Young Writers' Festival entitled *Choice*. This year's Festival was produced without the processes of the previous decade marking the end of the process-led methods that had informed the YWF since 1988.

Class – a mini festival produced to complement the '98 YWF - saw plays written by young people from twelve schools and colleges across London presented in the West-End. Over seventy scripts were submitted out of which twenty-six plays from writers between the ages of 11 and 19 were selected for production.

Nicola Baldwin is appointed as the Writers' Tutor alongside David Eldridge (writers aged 13-17) and Hanif Kureishi (advanced group).

Young Peoples' Theatre is re-branded as the Young Writers' Programme.

1999: May: Royal Court staff travel to Taormina to receive the 'New Theatrical Realities' prize for their work with 'young British dramatists' in the 1990s.

Carl Miller resigns as director of the YPT and is replaced by Ola Animashawun, who becomes the first director of the Young Writers' Programme.

309 Portobello Road is sold and the London Transport Café adjacent to the Royal Court on Sloane Square is secured to house the Young Writers' Programme. This space is known as the Site.

- 2000:** October: Young Writers' Festival entitled *Exposure* includes the debut play of future Young Writers' Programme writers' tutor Leo Butler.
- 2001:** Simon Stephens replaces Nicola Baldwin as the Young Writers' Programme's writers' tutor.
- 2002:** Alongside Stephens and Animashawun, the Young Writers' Programme teams expands to include Nina Lyndon as the administrator, Lucy Dunkerley as the outreach worker and Emily McLaughlin as the education officer.
- October: Young Writers' Festival entitled *Imprint*.
- 2003:** October: Lucy Prebble's debut play *The Sugar Syndrome* is programmed as part of the main season of work in the Theatre Upstairs. Prebble becomes the first Young Writers' Programme participant to accomplish this achievement.
- 2004:** Spearheaded by Animashawun and Lucy Dunkerley, 'Critical Mass' is introduced.
- September: Young Writers' Festival. In what is described as a 'peak' year for the Festival – the YWP receives over eight-hundred submissions.
- 2005:** Simon Stephens is replaced by Leo Butler as the writers' tutor - a post in which Butler remained until 2012.
- 2007:** February: Young Writers' Festival. In an event reminiscent of the 1994/95 season of debut plays by young writers, the 2007 Young Writers' Festival is made up of plays by playwrights who have emerged through the Young Writers' Programme. Two other writers who have come through the programme: Mike Bartlett (*My Child*) and Polly Stenham (*That Face*) see their plays debuted as part of the Royal Court's main season in both the Theatre Downstairs and Upstairs respectively. *That Face* went on to transfer to the West End.

Appendix C – Archive Information relating to Royal Court Young Peoples’ Theatre, Young Writers’ Festival and Young Writers’ Programme

Each of these documents contain information that relates to the Royal Court’s work with young people between 1956 and 2007. They can be sourced from the English Stage Company/Royal Court Theatre archive, which is housed at Blythe House, West Kensington, London, UK. Files cited directly in the thesis can be found in the Bibliography.

Royal Court Archive

Council Minutes:

THM/273/1/2/11

THM/273/1/2/12

THM/273/1/2/13

THM/273/1/2/14

THM/273/1/2/15

THM/273/1/2/16

THM/273/1/2/17

THM/273/1/2/18

THM/273/1/2/19

THM/273/1/2/20

THM/273/1/2/21

THM/273/1/2/22

THM/273/1/2/23

THM/273/1/2/24

THM/273/1/2/25

THM/273/1/2/26

THM/273/1/2/27

THM/273/1/2/28

YPTS Budget

THM/273/2/1/65

THM/273/2/1/110

YPTS Production Management

THM/273/4/2/28

THM/273/4/2/34

THM/273/4/2/45

THM/273/4/2/66

THM/273/4/2/69

THM/273/4/2/71

THM/273/4/2/81

THM/273/4/2/84

THM/273/4/2/296 (YWF '75)

THM/273/4/2/101 (YWF '77)

THM/273/4/2/325 (Young Peoples Jubilee Theatre Festival)

THM/273/4/2/81

THM/273/4/2/123 (YWF '79)

THM/273/4/2/132 (YWF '80)

THM/273/4/2/297 (YWF '81)

THM/273/4/2/151 (YWF '82 and Primary Sauce)

THM/273/4/2/155

THM/273/4/2/160 (Hot Tip Festival)

THM/273/4/2/163 (YWF '84)

THM/273/4/2/173 (YWF '85)

THM/273/4/2/181

THM/273/4/2/182 (YWF '86)

(THM/273/4/2/191)

THM/273/4/2/195 (YWF '88)

THM/273/4/2/199

THM/273/4/2/209 (YWF '91)

THM/273/4/2/220 (YWF 'New Voices' '92)

THM/273/4/2/238 (YWF 'Coming on Strong' '94)

THM/273/4/2/256 (YWF 'Storming' '96 in the theatre upstairs ambassadors)

THM/273/4/2/267

THM/273/4/2/276 (*Class* a festival of plays written by London School Students)

THM/273/4/1/283 (*Fair Game* by Rebecca Pritchard)

THM/273/4/2/279 (YWF 'Choice' '98)

THM/273/4/2/294 (YWF 2000)

General Correspondence

Gerald Chapman and Max Stafford Clark THM/273/4/15/42

Stephen Daldry on International Young Writers' Festival THM/273/4/16/10

Files Specifically Relating to YPTS and Schools Scheme

THM/273/4/20/1

THM/273/4/20/2

THM/273/4/20/3

THM/273/4/20/4

THM/273/4/20/5

THM/273/4/20/6

THM/273/4/20/7

THM/273/4/20/8

THM/273/4/20/9

THM/273/4/20/10

THM/273/4/20/11

THM/273/4/20/12

THM/273/4/20/13

THM/273/4/20/14

THM/273/4/20/15

THM/273/4/20/16

THM/273/4/20/17

THM/273/4/20/18

THM/273/4/20/19

Young Writers' Festival Plans and Drawings

THM/273/4/23/163

THM/273/4/23/164

THM/273/4/23/165

THM/273/4/23/166

THM/273/4/23/167

THM/273/4/23/168

THM/273/4/23/169

THM/273/4/23/170

Photographs Relating to YPT

THM/273/6/1/5

THM/273/6/1/648

THM/273/6/1/638

THM/273/6/1/589

THM/273/6/1/590

THM/273/6/1/649

THM/273/6/1/591

THM/273/6/1/592

THM/273/6/1/593

THM/273/6/1/594

THM/273/6/1/595

THM/273/6/1/596

THM/273/6/1/637

THM/273/6/1/613

THM/273/6/1/618

THM/273/6/3/30

Posters relating to YPT

THM/273/7/7/35

THM/273/7/7/47

THM/273/7/7/51

Press Cuttings Relating to YPT

THM/273/7/2/394

THM/273/7/2/422

THM/273/7/2/874

THM/273/7/2/472

THM/273/7/2/481

THM/273/7/2/512

THM/273/7/2/528

THM/273/7/2/550

THM/273/7/2/584

THM/273/7/2/851

THM/273/7/2/852

THM/273/7/2/612

THM/273/7/2/637

THM/273/7/2/665

THM/273/7/2/712

THM/273/7/2/935

THM/273/7/2/762

THM/273/7/2/796

THM/273/7/2/816

THM/273/7/2/949

THM/273/7/2/912

Hanif Kureishi's Residency with the YPT

THM/273/8/1/33

YPT on Portobello Road

THM/273/9/4/1

THM/273/9/4/2

THM/273/9/4/3

THM/273/9/4/4

THM/273/9/4/5

THM/273/9/4/6

Appendix D – Young Writers’ Festival List of Production 1975-2007

1975: Opened on 16 October

Travel Sickness by Matilda Hartwell

Stepping Stone by James Bradley

Watercress Sandwiches by Zoe Tamsyn and Sophia Everest-Phillips

St George and his Dragon by Tanya Meadows

Interval by Jim Irvin and Tim Whelan

How do You Clean a Sunflower by the West Indian Drama Group

1977: Opened on 17 March

Walking by Lenka Janiurek

To Err is Human by Liz Bellamy

West Side Bover by Shirley McKay and Christina Martin

Fishing by Alexander Matthews

1978: Opened on 17 May

From Cockneys to Toffs by Joanne Caffell

Artificial Living by Stephen Rowe

The School Leaver by Michael McMillan

Covehithe by Anna Wheatley

1979: Opened on 23 March

Miracles Do Happen by Douglas Parkin

Island by Paul Lister

Me, I'd Like to Catch Miss Kerry by Julia James

I'm Just Trying to Convince Myself That Vampires Don't Exist by Mark Power

Humbug by 'A Group of Thirteen Children'

1980: Opened on 11 March

The Arbor by Andrea Dunbar

The Morning Show by Daniel Goldberg

The Personal Effects by Lucy Anderson Jones

Waking Dreams (rehearsed reading) by Richard Boswell

1981: Opened on 11 March

LTD by Nick Davies

Perfect Pets by Susanna Kleeman

Start Again by Tony Newton

Detention by Helen Slavin

1982: Opened on 18 October

Never a Dull Moment by Jackie Boyle and Patricia Burns

Just Another Day by Patricia Hilaire

Fishing by Paulette Randall

Paris in the Spring by Lesley Fox

1984: Opened on 15 March (Rank Xerox Young Writers' Festival)

Unity by Jane Anning

The Hitch Hiker by Eileen Dillon

Manjit by Lakviar Singh

The 'S' Bend by Maria Oshodi

1985: Opened on 28 June (Rank Xerox Young Writers' Festival)

Who Knew McKenzie by Brian Hilton

Stalemate by Emily Fuller

Gone by Elizabeth Krechowiecka

Half Return by Elizabeth Swain

Facing Up by Brian Parsons

The Arcade Boy by Laura Jones

Consequences by Kate Bryer

Dear Aunt Agony by Sophie Bates, Karen Boyce and Joanne Hinton

A Hard Life by Marie Bartlett

1986: Opened on 21 October (Rank Xerox Young Writers' Festival)

The Plague Year by Theresa Heskins

William by Shaun Duggan

Ficky Stingers by Eve Lewis

1988: Opened on 7 June (Rank Xerox Young Writers' Festival)

Lolita's Way by Soraya Jintan

Mohair by Jonathan Harvey

1991: Opened on 5 February (Marks and Spencer's Young Writers' Festival)

Happy Days Are Here Again by Paul Tucker

Pig in a Poke by Julie Everton

Claire by Andrew Bradstreet

Sleeping Ugly by Fiona Kelcher

Sally Suspected by Jenni Langford and Jenny Warde

1992: *New Voices*. Opened on 20 October – 7 November (Marks and Spencer's Young Writers' Festival)

The Changing Reason by Noel MacAoidh

Faith Over Reason by Sarah Hunter

SAB by Michael Cook

Killers by Adam Pernak

1994: *Coming on Strong*. Opened on 18 October (Marks and Spencer's Young Writers' Festival)

Peaches by Nick Grosso

The Knocky by Michael Wynne

Essex Girls by Rebecca Prichard later *Yard Gal*

Looking for Home by Hayley Daniel

Corner Boys by Kevin Coyle

1996: *Storming*. Opened on 30 October (at the Ambassadors Theatre) (Marks and Spencer's Young Writers' Festival)

The Future is Betamax by Nicholas Kelly

Backpay by Tammy Hammersclag

The Call by Lydia Prior

Drink, Smoking and Tokeing by Stuart Swarbrick

The Separation by Matty Chalk

Business as Unusual by Michael Shaw

1998: *Choice: New Plays by New Writers*. Ran from 26 November – 19 December (at the Ambassadors Theatre) (Marks and Spencer's Young Writers' Festival)

About the Boy by Ed Hime

Bluebird by Simon Stephens

Four by Christopher Shinn later

Trade by Richard Oberg

Daughters by Jackson Sseriyango

In the Family by Sara Barr

B22 by Ranjit Khutan

The Shining by Leomi Walker

The Crutch by Ruwanthie de Chickera

When Brains Don't Count by Alice Wood.

2000: *Exposure*. Ran from 13 October-11 November

Goodbye Roy by Holly Baxter Baine

Made of Stone by Leo Butler

Drag On by Emmanuel de Nascimento

Local by Arzhang Pezhman

2002: *Imprint*. Ran from 18 October – 23 November

A Day in Dull Armour by Chloe Moss

Graffiti by Richard Leighton

Just A Bloke by David Watson

The One with The Oven by Emma Rosoman

Night Owls by Will Evans

Parallel Lines by Miranda Howard-Williams

Mother's Ruin by David Varela

The Little Ark by Sean Buckley

Arrival with Baggage by Dawn King

Black Snot by Louise Ramsden

2004: Ran from 14 September – 30 October

Bone by John Donnelly

The Weather by Claire Pollard

Bear Hug by Robin French

2007: Ran from 2 February – 10 March

Gone Too Far by Bola Agbaje

The Eleventh Capital by Alexandra Wood

Alaska by DC Moore

Neither Have I Wings to Fly by Elinor Cook

Beyond the Neck by Tom Holloway

Blossom by Hannah Davies

Concrete Fairground by Suzanne Heathcote

Can't Stand Me Now by Natalie Mitchell

Early Bird by Daniel Barker

Satellite by Duncan Macmillan

Unless otherwise stated, the Young Writers' Festivals took place in the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs.

Appendix E – Jerwood New Playwrights Scheme: List of Recipients and Productions 1994 – 2007

The Jerwood New Playwrights scheme has enabled the Royal Court to stage the plays of over sixty playwrights, who are all within the first ten years of their careers. The inclusion of these award winners here is important as it supports the argument made in Chapter Four that financial aid offered by this scheme since 1994 has been instrumental to the production of young playwrights, many of whom have emerged directly out of the writers' groups of the YPT and later the YWP.

Joe Penhall - *Some Voices* (1994)

Nick Grosso – *Peaches* (1994)

Judy Upton – *Ashes and Sand* (1994)

Sarah Kane – *Blasted* (1995)

Michael Wynne – *The Knocky* (1995)

Judith Johnson – *Uganda* (1995)

Sebastian Barry – *The Steward of Christendom* (1995)

Jez Butterworth – *Mojo* (1995)

Mark Ravenhill – *Shopping and Fucking* (1996)

Ayub Khan Din – *East is East* (1996)

Martin McDonagh – *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996)

Jess Walters – *Cockroach, who?* (1997)

Tamantha Hammerschlag – *Backpay* (1997)

Conor McPherson – *The Weir* (1997)

Meredith Oakes – *Faith* (1997)

Rebecca Prichard – *Fair Game* (1997)

Roy Williams – *Lift Off* (1999)

Richard Bean – *Toast* (1999)

Gary Mitchell – *Trust* (1999)

Mick Mahoney – *Sacred Heart* (1999)

Marina Carr – *On Raftery's Hill* (2000)

David Eldridge – *Under the Blue Sky* (2000)

David Harrower – *Presence* (2001)

Simon Stephens – *Hérons* (2001)

Leo Butler – *Redundant* (2001)

Enda Walsh – *Bedbound* (2001)

David Greig – *Outlying Islands* (2002)

Zinnie Harris – *Nightingale and Chase* (2001)

Grae Cleugh – *Fucking Games* (2001)

Rona Munro – *Iron* (2002)

Ché Walker – *Flesh Wound* (2003)

Laura Wade – *Breathing Corpses* (2005)

debbie tucker green – *Stoning Mary* (2005)

Gregory Burke – *On Tour* (2005)

Stella Feehily – *O Go My Man* (2006)

Simon Faquhar – *Rainbow Kiss* (2006)

April De Angelis – *Catch* (2006)

Tanika Gupta – *Catch* (2006)

Chloe Moss – *Catch* (2006)

Polly Stenham – *That Face* (2007)

Mike Bartlett – *My Child* (2007)

Fiona Evans – *Scarborough* (2007)

Levi David Addai – *Oxford Street* (2007)

Bola Agbaje – *Gone Too Far* (2007)

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