



## **Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation research into the pipeline of BAME talent finds barriers to achieving representative diversity on stage – and suggests solutions**

The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation today, Thursday 1 December, published *Centre Stage*, a report examining issues surrounding the pipeline of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic trained talent into musical theatre. The qualitative research, carried out by Danuta Kean and Mel Larsen, found that the failure of drama schools to take in enough BAME talent has led to a shortage of actors for specific roles in musicals such as *Dream Girls* and *Motown the Musical* as well as making it impossible to cast a range of diverse actors across the board in theatre. The report looks at what can be done to improve the supply chain to productions and how lasting cultural change can be brought to the stage so that Black and Asian talent is no longer missed or marginalised.

Kean and Larsen interviewed over 60 theatrical professionals from drama students to teachers to actors and theatre directors. They found that:

- Early training and exposure to theatre is vital, but drama teaching, theatre visits and resources in state schools are under threat
- Youth drama groups and outreach initiatives run by arts organisations can play a vital role, but often those who need them most don't access or even hear about them
- Lack of representation on stage leads to a vicious cycle of BAME students feeling that the stage is 'not for them'. The research found that this is the primary reason that parents discourage their children from a career in theatre
- One of the most crucial barriers to pursuing training for BAME students (and those from under-represented groups) is financial
- Diversity needs to be addressed on and off-stage and at all levels – from commissioning of writers, to production staff to those in leadership roles
- There is a disparity between the desire of the theatre sector for change and the lack of practical implementation to make the change happen

*Centre Stage* makes a series of strong recommendations to those who can take leadership and action to bring about effective change:

- **Arts sector bodies** (including the Arts Council and UK Theatre) should take a key role in setting up a resource so that best practice can be shared and young people and schools can find out about all the relevant initiatives that can help them progress in the industry

- **Drama schools** should set a self-imposed target of 50% of places being subsidised to take away financial barriers
- **Producers, directors and creatives** should take a lead on making their workforce more culturally diverse – specifically on committing to colour-blind casting, commissioning more works from BAME authors and ensuring lighting and make-up technicians are trained to work with BAME actors
- **Philanthropists** should follow the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation’s lead and make cultural diversity one of their criteria for funding

Andrew Lloyd Webber comments,

‘I passionately believe that the stage needs to reflect the diversity of the UK population or it risks becoming side-lined. The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation funds a range of projects that help to make a difference – from drama school scholarships to theatre outreach programmes. It will take action from everyone to effect significant change. We are asking arts sector bodies, drama schools, theatre producers, actors, creative teams and philanthropists to take responsibility and specific action. I urge you all to read the recommendations and get involved.’

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**Notes to editors**

- Copies of the report in PDF and hard copy format are available from Four Colman Getty
- Please contact Four Colman Getty to request interviews with the authors of the report or those who were interviewed for it

**About The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation**

- The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation was set up by Andrew in 1992 to promote the arts, culture and heritage for the public benefit; since inception Andrew has been the principal provider of funding for all its charitable activities.
- In 2010, the Foundation embarked on an active grant giving programme and has now awarded grants of over £14m to support high quality training and personal development as well as other projects that make a real difference to enrich the quality of life both for individuals and within local communities. Significant grants include £3.5m to Arts Educational Schools, London to create a state of the art professional theatre, £2.4m to The Music in Secondary Schools Trust, £1m to The Architectural Heritage Fund, \$1.3m to the American Theatre Wing and over £350,000 annually to fund 30 performing arts scholarships for talented students in financial need. [www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com](http://www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com)