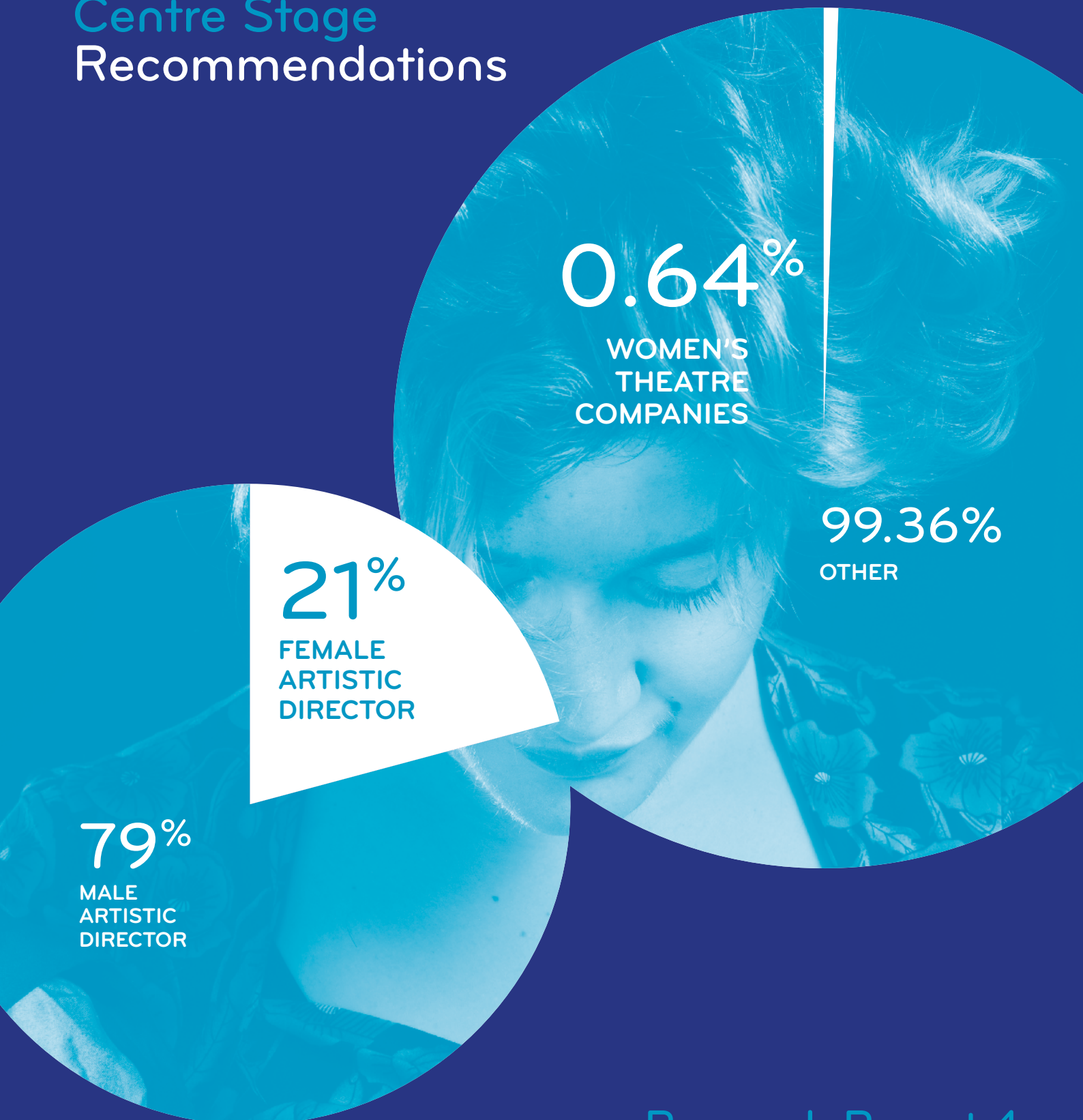


# Women Centre Stage Recommendations



# Women Centre Stage Recommendations

## Contents

Introduction	1
Recommendations	2
Conclusion	3
Acknowledgments	4

1

# INTRODUCTION

# From 2018 - 2019, Sphinx Theatre Company has been researching gender parity and equality in UK theatre. This has included:

- **Research Report One:** What Share of the Cake? 2019 – a quantitative research report which brings together the most recent data on gender parity and equality in UK theatre, considering the impact of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements and updating previous research such as Elizabeth Freestone and Charlotte Higgins's data and Purple Seven's data
- **Research Report Two:** Women Centre Stage – a qualitative report on the key challenges and solutions for women theatre practitioners in the UK emerging from the Women Centre Stage symposium at the Hampstead Theatre in 2019
- **Research Report Three:** Women Centre Stage: Interviews – a qualitative report emerging from interviews conducted by Sphinx Theatre Company with ten Artistic Directors of NPO theatres in 2019.

This research project has used mixed methods as its methodology and explanatory sequential design, where the quantitative phase is followed by a qualitative phase which emerges from the quantitative phase sample.

As is best practice for mixed methods research, this final research report discusses what insight the qualitative reports provide on the quantitative report and provides recommendations for policymakers, funding organisations and the theatre industry based on the findings from this year long research project.

This report is the fourth and final report in a series of new research reports from Sphinx Theatre Company. The aim of these research reports is to provide new data on gender parity and equality in UK theatre in order to encourage awareness of current issues around gender parity and equality.

Founded as The Women's Theatre Group in 1973 Sphinx Theatre Company, renamed in 1990, has been in the vanguard of promoting, advocating and inspiring women in the arts through productions, conferences and research for more than 40 years. Previous work includes the premiere of April de Angelis' modern classic Playhouse Creatures, Pam Gems' The Snow Palace and Bryony Lavery's Goliath, plus the Glass Ceiling and Vamps, Vixens and Feminists conferences with the National Theatre, Young Vic, Southbank Centre and West Yorkshire Playhouse. In 2015 Sphinx produced Women Centre Stage Heroines Festival at the National Theatre, and in 2016 Power Play at Hampstead Theatre, each year showcasing 25 exciting new theatre pieces with women at their centre.

This research project was commissioned by Sphinx Theatre Company and the researcher and author of these reports is Jennifer Tuckett. Jennifer is a researcher, writer, producer, consultant and academic, currently based at the University of Cambridge.

**“The aim of these research reports is to provide new data on gender parity and equality in UK theatre in order to encourage awareness of current issues around gender parity and equality”**

# 2

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.

## The need to increase the amount of work produced which is written by women.

This report's first recommendation is for policymakers, funding organisations, and theatres to take measures to increase the amount of work written by women in UK theatre. This is supported by both this year long research project's quantitative and qualitative reports. Findings supporting this recommendation include:

- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake** – statistics on new writing support this recommendation, for example a sample of 50% of NPO theatres in 2015 found 38% of plays produced at these theatre were written by women and, in terms of repertoire, our audit of theatre websites found, in terms of the two most subsidized NPO theatres, 25% of productions in the National Theatre's November 2018 – April 2019 season were written by women (3 productions out of 12) and 0% of RSC Productions from December 2018 – September 2019 were written by women (0 productions out of 16).
- This recommendation is also supported by **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** in terms of the types of work women see/do being important and that seeing or not seeing work by women and women onstage leads women to feel theatre is a possible career for them or not, which was highlighted as a key theme in terms of potential solutions by symposium speakers.
- This is also supported by **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews**, our third research report which interviewed ten Artistic Directors of NPO theatres and which found a key theme to be commissioning problems, where work by women is seen as more of a risk. This report highlighted the need for ring-fenced funding to address this issue, and this recommendation of the need for more work by women is further supported by this report's finding that all Artistic Directors interviewed stated their theatre's mission and vision is to include all members of society.
- The lack of funding going to women's theatre companies and solo female performances in **What Share of the Cake** also supports this recommendation.

## 2.

# The need for Arts Council England measures in terms of gender equality and parity.

Based on the findings from this research project, this report also recommends that Arts Council England increase their support of and the visibility of their support of gender. This is supported by:

- **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage:** Interviews in which Artistic Directors repeatedly highlighted that more emphasis seemed to be placed by the Arts Council on other protected characteristics, such as race, for example in The Creative Case, than gender. Many Artistic Directors said they were not as aware of gender featuring in The Creative Case and that gender did not seem a priority for the Arts Council. All 10 of the NPO Artistic Directors interviewed raised the lack of attention given to gender by the Arts Council as an issue.
- This is also supported by **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake**, our quantitative report which found gender disparity in terms of both NPO and Grants for the Arts funding, for example 31% of theatre NPO Artistic Directors are female and that 31% of female Artistic Directors control only 21% of theatre NPO funding.
- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake** also found less funding going to women's theatre companies (whose primary aim is to work with women) compared to BAME and Disabled led theatre companies - this was the case for both NPO and Grants for the Arts funding. This suggests gender may be being under considered.
- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** - the need for progress, and the current lack of progress, was highlighted as a key theme by the symposium speakers with speakers highlighting that the same conversations had been had many times with no concrete progress from these conversations.

### 3.

## The need for specific initiatives and funding for women in UK theatre.

This report recommends that policymakers, funding organisations and the theatre industry consider specific initiatives both in terms of development and in terms of funding for women working in all roles in UK theatre.

This recommendation is supported by:

- Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews – interviews with Artistic Directors highlighted the need for ring-fenced funding for women, as, with financial restrictions, many Artistic Directors spoke of how women are often seen as a risk, with the majority of Artistic Directors interviewed highlighting this issue in some way
- This recommendation is also supported by Research Report One: What Share of the Cake, which found less funding going to women at both NPO and Grants for the Arts level
- The lack of funding going to women's theatre companies, which offer a pathway specifically for supporting women, and solo female performances in What Share of the Cake also supports this finding
- Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage also supports this finding via a key theme of women feeling they can work in the theatre when they see other work by women and via a key theme of a lack progress, suggesting specific concrete initiatives are needed in order to achieve progress (see final recommendation for more on this).



## 4.

# The need for mentoring for women wanting to work in and working in theatre..

This report's recommendation of the need for mentoring for women wanting to work in the arts and working in the arts is supported by:

- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake?** – this report includes research from University Women in the Arts at the University of Cambridge which found that lack of discussion of gender issues is a key issue being experienced by female arts students on courses.
- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** – this report found a key theme in terms of possible solutions is champions, with playwrights such as Winsome Pinnock speaking of the importance of being championed by theatres and producers such as Jude Kelly speaking of the importance of mentoring.
- **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews** – this recommendation is also supported by Artistic Director's recommendation of the need for specific initiatives for women

## 5.

# The need for training for those working in theatres, particularly in gatekeeper roles.

This recommendation of the need for training for those working in theatres, particularly in gatekeeper roles, is supported by:

- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake** – this report found gender issues at course level, during the job search/interviews and whilst working in the creative industries are being experienced, including negative perceptions of women's work
- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** – this report found the issue of being silenced is a key challenge, with playwrights speaking of being given permission by the industry/gatekeepers in terms of having their work produced and then having that permission withdrawn by theatres/being silenced as a key challenge experienced.
- **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews** – this report found that work by women is viewed as a risk. As such, training would also potentially change women's work from being viewed as a risk.

## 6.

# The need for more awards for women.

This recommendation of the need for more awards for women is supported by:

- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake** – this report found women are not being awarded as many awards as men, for example 0% of WhatsOnStage Awards in 2018 in the non gendered categories were awarded to women.
- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** – this report supports the need for awards by highlighting the issue of the work women see/do being important. Being given awards would help create greater visibility for women in theatre.
- **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews** – this report supports the need for awards by highlighting the need for specific initiatives for women.

## 7.

# The need for concrete progress.

Finally, this recommendation of the need for concrete and measurable progress (whether this takes place in the form of initiatives, funding, awards, training, mentoring or policy changes) is supported by:

- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** – a key theme highlighted by speakers at the symposium was the lack of progress/that gender conversations don't progress
- This is also supported by **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake** statistics, for example that there has been no change in terms of gender and Grants for the Arts funding across all art forms, with this remaining at 43% from 2015 – 2018.
- This is supported by **Research Report Three: What Share of the Cake: Interviews**, with Artistic Directors suggesting financial restrictions impede progress without these specific initiatives and funding to create concrete change.

# 3

## CONCLUSION

# This report is the conclusion of a year- long research project by Sphinx Theatre Company. This project is made up of 4 reports:

- **Research Report One: What Share of the Cake 2019** - a quantitative report updating statistics on gender parity and equality in UK theatre.
- **Research Report Two: Women Centre Stage** - a qualitative report identifying key themes in terms of challenges and potential solutions emerging from the Women Centre Stage symposium which took place in February 2019
- **Research Report Three: Women Centre Stage: Interviews** - a qualitative report based on interviews conducted by Sphinx Theatre Company with ten Artistic Directors of NPO theatres in 2019
- This fourth and final report makes recommendations for policymakers, funding organisations and the theatre industry based on findings from this year long research project to help improve gender parity and equality in UK theatre.

# 4

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This research project was commissioned by Sphinx Theatre Company and funded by Arts Council England.

Jennifer Tuckett is the researcher and author of these reports, which aim to improve awareness of gender parity and equality issues in UK theatre.

Jennifer is a researcher, writer, producer, consultant and academic, currently based at the University of Cambridge.