

Dr Darren Henley OBE
Chief Executive, Arts Council England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

By Hand

14 November 2022

Dear Darren,

I am writing this letter in response to the Arts Council England's (ACE) recent announcement of the 2022-2026 Investment Program, with specific reference to the impact this will have on the funding of arts and culture in London. On behalf of our members engaged by The Donmar Warehouse and Hampstead Theatre as Stage Management, Actors, and Creative Team members, we are writing to formally ask the Arts Council to reverse your decision to remove these theatres as National Portfolio Organisations with effect from April 2023.

This decision is a poorly conceived assault on the workforce. It takes no account of the devastating impact on the freelancers nor on the permanent staff members who will bear the brunt of this decision at a time when the precarity of arts workers has never been more acute. Since the pandemic alone, these two organisations have delivered approximately 1000 paid actor and stage management weeks each including Blindness, which made Donmar the first theatre to open in the UK post-lockdown.

In addition, the Donmar employs two Resident Assistant Directors on fixed-term salaried roles each year. They have recently started the Catalyst scheme: up to 27 weeks' engagement per production for Assistant Designers in Sound, Lighting and Set. Hampstead Theatre also engage Assistant Directors on all its main house and sometimes their studio shows. Both organisations provide important job opportunities for emerging creative team members paid at union minimums, supporting the Arts Council's own National Council terms of reference which aim to, 'Increase accessibility of the arts to the public in England.'

Whilst Equity can only speak on behalf of Equity members, we are conscious also that the withdrawal of funding will equally affect the technical back stage staff whose skills, along with those of our members, are vital in creating the quality of production that Donmar and Hampstead have rightly become renowned for.

As you will know, arts investment returns £8+ for every £1 spent- but that's higher if it's produced work, not just received. The Arts Council also do not appear to have taken into

consideration any of the important work Hampstead and Donmar have undertaken to produce challenging, thought-provoking theatre with diverse casting at its heart. It seems as though the reward for compliance with all that the Arts Council have required over the previous years has been a devastating withdrawal of all guaranteed funding.

Nor would it seem that the Arts Council have allowed any time for Hampstead or Donmar Warehouse to build back from the pandemic. We would also seek to correct the misleading levelling up narrative perpetuated as the logic behind the cuts to London-based organisations; 70% of 100% cuts are out of London.

We call you to revoke this decision and protect this vital workforce in order to safeguard London's cultural landscape for future generations.

We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul W Fleming', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul W Fleming
General Secretary

CC: Sir Nicholas Serota, CH – Chair, Arts Council England