

STAGE DIRECTORS UK

The new professional organisation for theatre and opera directors

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PRESS RELEASE

In September 2014 Stage Directors UK was launched, and within three months 850 directors had joined. On joining, members were asked to complete a detailed Fee Survey so that SDUK could ascertain the true state of UK theatre directors' earnings. The attached Report is the result of that survey, and makes a large number of points about the situation, and how it might be improved.

SDUK Fees Survey:

- **There were 812 responses from SDUK members.**
- **Information on 1091 productions was gathered.**
- **The mean average annual wage for a stage director in 2013-2014 was £10,759/year, and the median was only £5000/year.**
- **The average fee for a director in subsidised theatre ranged from £670 to just under £7000 (apart from the NT and RSC, which have been separated from the results, along with the ROH and ENO).**

The detailed findings of the Fee Survey are illustrated with graphs and charts in an Appendix at the back of the Report.

Action

SDUK makes 10 detailed Points for Action at the end of the Report and in 2015 will be actively working with theatres, agents, industry bodies and unions to improve pay and conditions for UK stage directors.

Finances

SDUK has received generous donations from US sister society the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society New York, and major London agencies United Agents, International Talent Group and The Agency. These have been matched by Directors UK, who are offering the new body support. The generosity of our colleagues has allowed us to appoint a part time administrator, Liz Holmes, and to charge members no subscription until the start of the new financial year in April.

Up and Coming events

Following on from the results of our Fee Survey we plan extensive meetings and discussions in the New Year to move our agenda forward as rapidly as possible. There will be events to involve the membership in shaping Stage Directors UK, including an Open Space event on Sunday 15th February 2015 at the Jerwood Space, and our first Annual General Meeting on July 12th at the NT's Dorfman Theatre.

THE SDUK REPORT ON THEATRE DIRECTORS' PAY

January 2015

UK theatre is admired all over the world, winning awards and bringing crowds into the West End, and revenue to theatres, producers and the nation at large. Theatres in our regional cities are centres of cultural life, and a focal point of civic energy. Theatre is embedded deep in British society.

The director is the leader and figurehead of the theatrical creative team, bringing the concept or text to life on stage, orchestrating emotion, meaning, performance, movement, design and sound into an illuminating whole. We believe that senior and established creators of theatrical productions should be able to enjoy at least a minimal professional standard of living. Many do not.

Launched only three months ago, on September 25th, **Stage Directors UK** already has 850 members. This upsurge of support is due to the historic low levels of theatre directors' fees, anger that established organisations have done so little for directors, and determination to seek immediate improvements in the director's lot. SDUK also represents directors in opera, and will be pursuing a wide range of artistic, authorial, contractual and diversity issues in both disciplines.

However fee rises, especially in the subsidised theatre, are our immediate target. Most theatre directors have deep social sympathies: they will hesitate to ask for more when there are so many other calls on public funds. But now, after many years of static or rock bottom earnings, directors are saying 'enough is enough'.

The arrival this year of the tax credit on production costs offers an opportunity to set things straight.

THE SDUK FEE SURVEY

SDUK conducted a Survey this autumn to establish the facts on freelance directors' fees, royalties and annual income. We received 812 responses on 1091 productions: they paint a bleak picture overall. When time spent is counted, it is clear that directors are often paid less than any other freelance artist working on a show. (Our findings are illustrated in the Appendix at the back.)

THE FREELANCE LIFE

Freelance directors, like actors and other creative team members, but unlike Artistic Directors or Heads of Department, suffer irregular employment, with periods out of work. They also receive no paid holidays or pension rights. This is a reality that all accept, but it affects every single aspect of their life - and their earnings.

ANNUAL EARNINGS

We asked members the personal question: 'What were your total earnings from freelance stage directing in the Tax Year 2013-14?' A total of 346, nearly half of the participants, agreed to answer. The range of their earnings was extremely wide, but the mean average was **£10,759/year**, and the median was only **£5000/year**.

The A.S.H.E. recognized UK median gross annual earnings for full time employees in 2013 was £27,000/year, between 2¹/₂ and 5 times higher than our members' annual earnings.

THE CONTRACT

Of the time spent doing a production, about half is essentially unpaid.

It usually takes about three months for a director to prepare, rehearse and open a production in a major theatre. The **director's contract** does not really reflect this: it specifies a start date for rehearsals, a rehearsal period, often 4-6 weeks, and the Press Night, but it rarely acknowledges, or begins to recompense, the enormous amount of work that a director will do before rehearsals start. This can include....

Working with writer, if a new play

Can take weeks, months, and sometimes years, of part time commitment.

Working with designer and other members of creative team

Many hours and days, over months.

Casting, with casting director Sometimes several weeks, plus odd days.

Personal creative preparation Weeks of intensive study, research and thought.

There may be a need for the director to mount a workshop, which could take several weeks, though this is sometimes paid - albeit minimally. Then after the opening he/she will visit the show several times during the run to give notes - for no extra fee.

Standard SOLT or UK Theatre contracts do not reflect this level of input. The ITC contract does specify a 'Weekly Services Payment' which, if paid, can partly cover this issue: however ITC rates are even lower than SOLT/UK Theatre ones.

HOURLY RATES

We asked members to spell out precisely how many days and hours they actually spent on productions, apart from rehearsal: it often added up to as much as the rehearsal itself, and occasionally more. If preparation time is included, the director's pro rata weekly or hourly rate can be extremely low.

Example:

Gaps in employment are normal for directors, but if one did manage to fill up the year with four productions, one each at, say, the Royal Court, Donmar, Young Vic and Hampstead Theatres, at 2014 rates they would have earned **£22-£23,000**, this for an established director of acknowledged talent working in major London companies.

This is less than the UK median annual earnings of £27,000/year. And, depending on hours worked, it could be less than the National Minimum Wage.

FREELANCE COLLEAGUES

Most freelancers will complain of low pay and irregular work, but when you factor in the time that's needed to do the job properly, directors are frequently paid less than any other freelance artist working on the production.

Set designers, and lighting or sound designers work much shorter periods of exclusivity and so can do many more jobs across a year. Actors and stage management are paid weekly wages for contracted time, the latter receiving holiday pay and often overtime too.

(See Appendix: Directors' and Stage Managers' earnings compared)

THEATRE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT EARN MORE

The senior Heads of Department in major theatres around the country where our members work, for instance Heads of Production or Marketing, tend to earn between £32,000 and £44,000 a year according to our enquiries. These are staff jobs with pension rights and paid holidays.

Of the 346 directors who answered the annual income question for 2013/14:

- **only 13 (3.5%) earned £32,000/year or more.**
- **only 9 (2.6%) earned £44,000/year or more.**

CONTINENTAL DIRECTORS EARN MORE

We enquired about directors' fees from colleagues in some major European companies, and were given the following figures:

		<u>Production fee</u>
AMSTERDAM (Toneelgroep)		
Well known directors	€38,000	£29,900
Emerging directors	€10,500	£8,265
WARSAW (Instytut Adama Mickiewicz)		
Well known directors	200,000 Pln	£37,260
Average mid-career director	70,000 Pln	£13,040
Emerging directors	30,000 Pln	£5,590

GERMANY (nationwide)		
Theatres in big cities	Average €40,000	£32,600
Small theatres in smaller towns	€5-10,000	£4-£8,000

The lowest figures here are comparable to standard rates for established directors in most of the UK subsidised sector. Of course national subsidy levels vary, but only commercial rates, or those in the big opera companies or the National Theatre even begin to approach these figures.

DIRECTORS IN THE U.S. EARN MORE

Our sister society **The SDC** (Stage Directors and Choreographers Society) has a set of mandatory contracts for Broadway, Off Broadway and Not for Profit theatres. Their minimum fees are as follows:

<u>BROADWAY MINIMUM</u>		Fee incl advance	Royalties
Musical	\$66,755	£42,720	Gross 0.75% Net 2.5 %
Play	\$57,475	£36,780	Gross 1.25% Net 3.5%

<u>OFF-BROADWAY MINIMUM</u>		Fee incl advance	Royalties
Musical or play	\$10-\$17,800	£6,360-£11,325	Gross 2% Net % varies
(In 4 bands by theatre size: under 199, 299, 399 and 499 seats)			

L.O.R.T. MINIMUM (Not for profit sector)

Fees vary widely across seven bands, the top 2 similar to UK repertory companies. The top 2 bands pay **£12,800 - £16,000 for a contract of 5 x 6 day weeks**. Substantial pro rata payments are due if the contract runs over 5 weeks. 'Recognition payments' are made in lieu of royalties on a successful show.

All of these contracts also carry **Pension Entitlements**. SDUK will be investigating the possibility of setting up an earnings related pension scheme for its members.

UK TV DIRECTORS EARN MORE

The lowest rate for directing a fiction strand in TV is currently about £1125 per week for Doctors, which would equate to £14,625 for a three month contract. This is well over double the current average fee at most London subsidised theatres.

A FEW UK THEATRES DO PAY WELL

Last year the National Theatre put its top rate up to £25,000 in main houses and the RSC has been paying around £18,000 in the main theatre, or £13,000 at The Swan. In opera there is also proper recognition of the director's contribution, with fees at ROH and ENO in the £20,000 - £25,000 range. We have grouped these together in one chart, as an example of the rates that directors ought to be paid. (See Appendix)

One of the London subsidised companies, the Young Vic, has in fact already started to adjust its fees upwards a little, aware that they were inadequate. Now other companies in both London and the regions should follow suit. It's time for a major culture shift.

PARTICIPATION - A BASIC RIGHT

Directors in subsidised theatre have no participation in the success of their productions except via a subsequent commercial tour or transfer, which is where some directors finally manage to make some money. However West End royalties have been eroded over the last few years and are no longer gross, but dependent on recoupment, and held down in a royalty pool at levels unthinkable ten years ago.

Writers receive royalties in both commercial and subsidised theatres, usually of 8%-10%, even when the director has made substantial contributions to the script. A regional tour of subsidised theatres, or a long run at the Olivier can, for example, reach large audiences, earning the writer a lot of money, and the director nothing.

In SDUK's view the director, who has shaped everything that happens on stage, should in principle always participate in some degree in the success of his or her production, as writers do, and directors in film and television. This is particularly appropriate with a long run or tour.

Another royalty issue arises with opera productions which are reproduced abroad or restaged at home without any additional copyright payment to the director. And in both opera and theatre there are now issues with digital rights and payments on live or recorded TV transmissions. All of these matters will be addressed by SDUK in due course.

DIVERSITY AND FAIRNESS

Some kinds of director suffer especially from low fees: parents with young children who cannot pay for the child care that would make a directing career possible, and those from disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds who cannot afford to work for nothing or live away from home while learning their craft.

We have shown that fees at many established subsidised theatres do not permit a reasonable standard of living. At entry level and on the fringe matters are even worse. £1500 is common (for several months' work), £200 is not unheard of, and many productions pay nothing at all, or sacrifice the director's fee the moment funding runs short. It is not surprising, then, that some talented people without alternative sources of income are forced to leave the profession at all stages.

With ACE now monitoring the diversity of NPOs, SDUK believes that fair pay for directors will become ever more important over the next three years.

HOW DID IT GET SO BAD?

Equity claims that it represent directors. Officially, it negotiates 'minimum rates' for directors and other creative grades every few years with employer bodies SOLT, UK Theatre and ITC. Unfortunately the minimum rates that Equity negotiates for directors with UK Theatre, for example, are around 50% of the 'going rates' that we have quoted as inadequate! Equity/SOLT rates are a little better but 'going rates' are in any case much higher in the commercial sector.

Though Equity's importance for actors is clear, we have come across virtually no working theatre director who considers it now capable of negotiating for directors, or dealing properly with their issues and concerns.

TIME FOR ACTION

With 850 working members from all over the country, Stage Directors UK is now the only body with the remit and moral authority to negotiate on behalf of British theatre and opera directors.

SDUK realises that many subsidised companies are facing difficulties in the current funding situation, but so are directors - and they have been for years. Action is needed, even in difficult times.

WHAT SDUK PROPOSES

- 1) In principle, the director should normally be the best paid member of the creative team, not the worst. SDUK is seeking substantial annual increases in directors' fees over the next few years in the majority of theatre companies, so that rates more truly reflect time taken and the importance of the director's input.**
- 2) At the same time SDUK would like to propose a new type of director's contract which, as in film, would define periods of 'exclusive' availability (rehearsal and opening) and 'non exclusive' availability (preparation, design, casting, etc) so that all of the director's labour is acknowledged - and paid for.**
- 3) SDUK is also seeking adequate pay for young directors and assistants so that they can support themselves as they build a career. Theatre must not be the preserve of a well off, white, metropolitan elite.**
- 4) We urge all our members - and their agents - to take the strongest possible negotiating line from January 2015 by refusing unreasonable fees, and referring bad contracts to SDUK. As one senior Artistic Director admitted to us, "We pay what we can get away with". We mustn't let employers get away with blatantly inadequate fees.**

- 5) We call on companies and theatres to sit down with SDUK and discuss open mindedly what can be done to improve fees and contracts. The new Government Tax Credit on theatre production offers a golden opportunity to do this.
- 6) Participation is a basic artistic right, recognised all over the world. SDUK will begin to seek royalty payments for directors on productions in the subsidised sector, along the lines of those paid to writers, starting with long runs and tours.
- 7) In the commercial sector SDUK will be working with agents to negotiate better contracts, higher minimums and fairer royalties. We will also work towards setting up a freelance contributory pension.
- 8) We call upon ACE, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Wales and all funding bodies and institutions to acknowledge that theatre directors' pay in the subsidised sector needs to increase to make up for years of decline. Increases for directors now will help to create a more diverse industry by 2018, when new diversity requirements for NPO's come into force.
- 9) We call upon the next Government to ease the squeeze on Arts and Local Council spending to ensure the survival of theatrical culture in the United Kingdom as something to which everyone with the necessary gifts can make a contribution, and which everyone with the inclination can enjoy.

Stage Directors UK January 2015

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THE BOARD OF STAGE DIRECTORS UK

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The Board would like to thank **Directors UK** for its moral and financial support.

APPENDIX THE SDUK 2014 FEE SURVEY

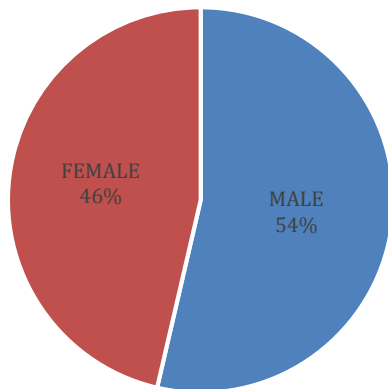
The SDUK survey gives a rich and detailed picture of the fee situation for UK directors over the last two years, with 810 members returning data on 1087 productions undertaken in 2013 and 2014. Our information is, however, not complete in some areas: the graphs and charts that follow simply describe what our members told us.

As might be expected the figures show great differences between fee levels earned by members, but they demonstrate two important facts:

- a) average earnings are very low indeed, well below national averages, and
- b) many directors, even in reputable theatres, earned less than the National Minimum Wage.

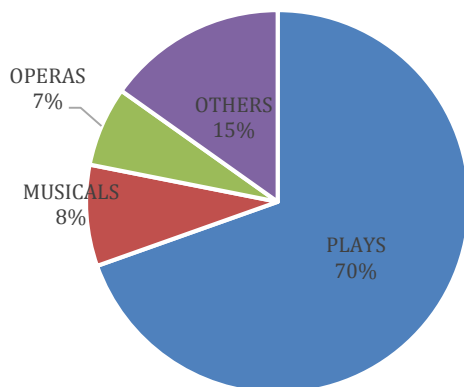
GENDER BREAKDOWN

We had nearly as many female respondents as male ones.



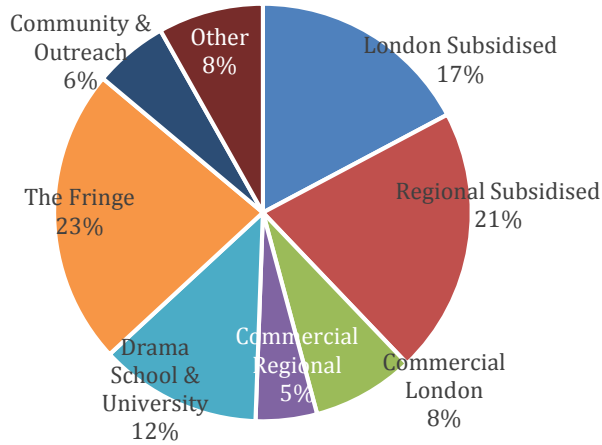
PRODUCTIONS BY TYPE

We gathered far more data on plays than any other genre.



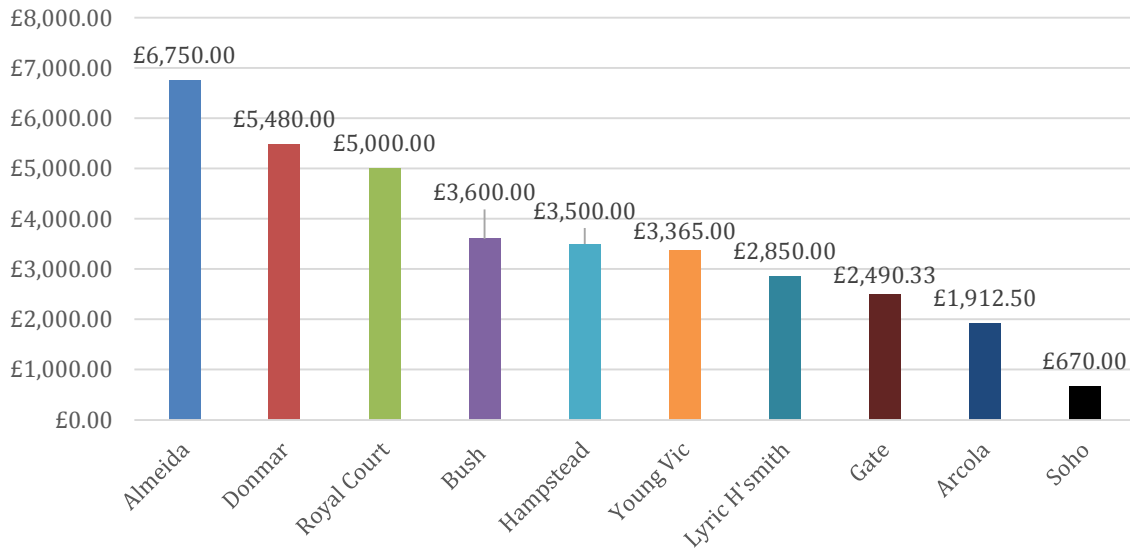
PRODUCTIONS BY SECTOR

Our members are particularly active in the subsidised sectors.



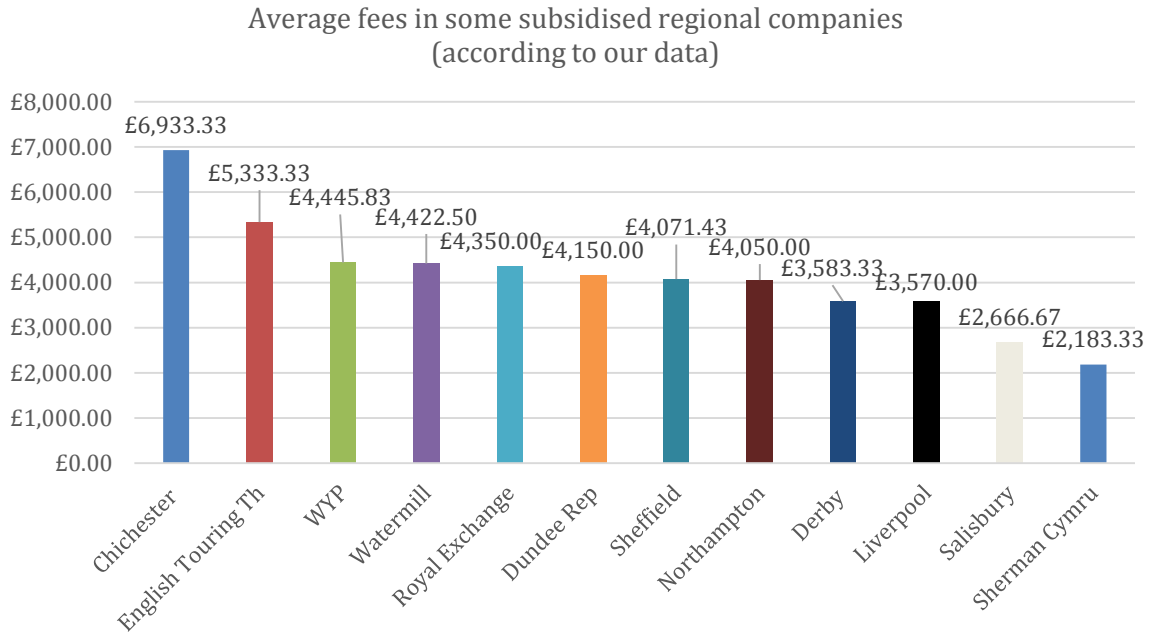
SOME TYPICAL DIRECTORS' FEES – LONDON

Average fees in the main subsidised London theatres, excl. NT
(according to our data)



Caveat: Special circumstances can sometimes distort the average. The Almeida figure here is higher than the 2014 average of £5500, while Hampstead and the Young Vic usually paid £5000 and £5500 respectively in the main house, less in the studio. The low figure at Soho Theatre is partly because directors have submitted information on visiting productions, readings and outreach projects. A main house Soho production would pay a bit more.

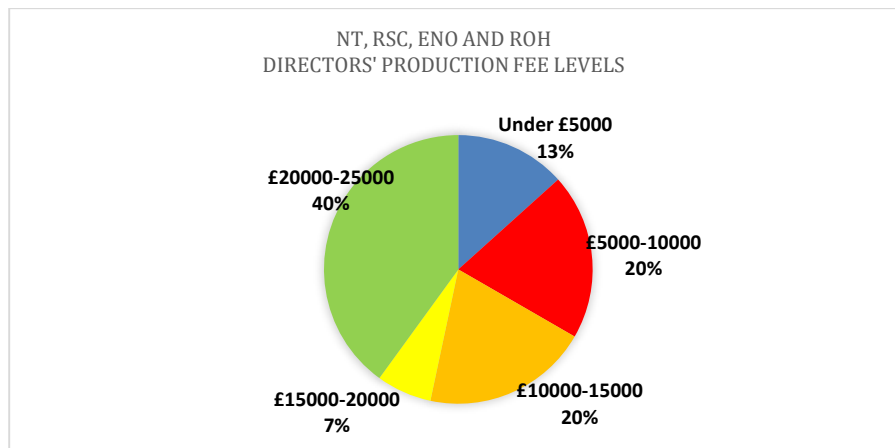
SOME TYPICAL DIRECTORS' FEES – REGIONAL



Caveat: The Salisbury Playhouse figure here seems low: a main house fee of £4000 is common.

THE BEST UK FEES

Rates paid at the National Theatre and the RSC were much higher than the majority, as are rates in the big opera companies, so we have grouped these in a separate chart.



Note: Not all opera fees are in this category of course. Our data on opera fees in general will be explored at a later date.

STAGE MANAGEMENT EARNINGS

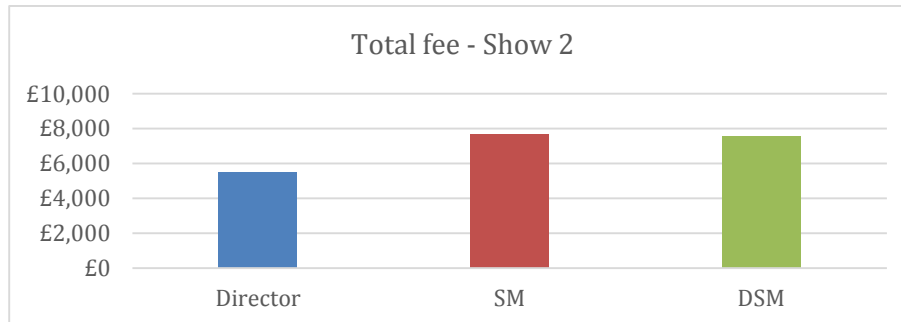
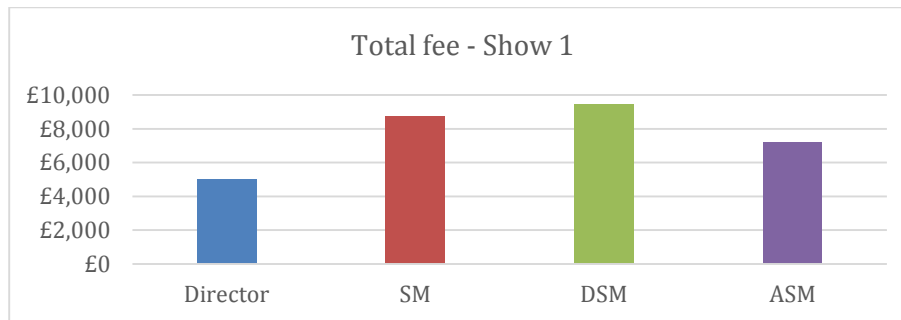
We compared the weekly earnings of two directors and their respective stage management teams on two recent productions in the same subsidised London theatre.

To produce an equal length engagement we calculated their time as follows:

Director: Rehearsal period plus actual preparation time, rounded down to weeks

SMs: Rehearsal period, plus same number of weeks of run as director had of prep.

The length of engagement in both examples is calculated at a notional eleven weeks.



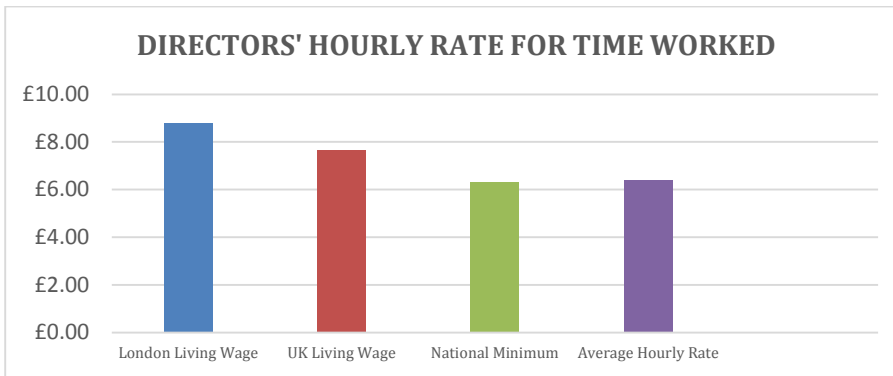
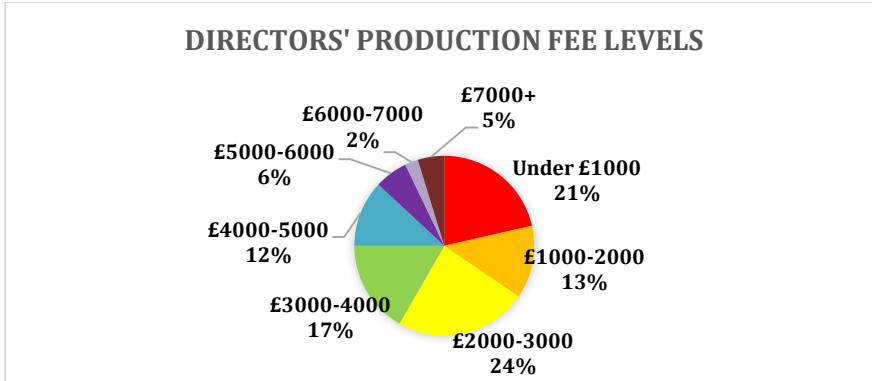
It is clear that both directors earned a great deal less than any member of their Stage Management team on these two productions, even before the latter's holiday pay was added. Directors do not receive holiday pay.

FEE RANGES AND HOURLY RATES BY SECTOR

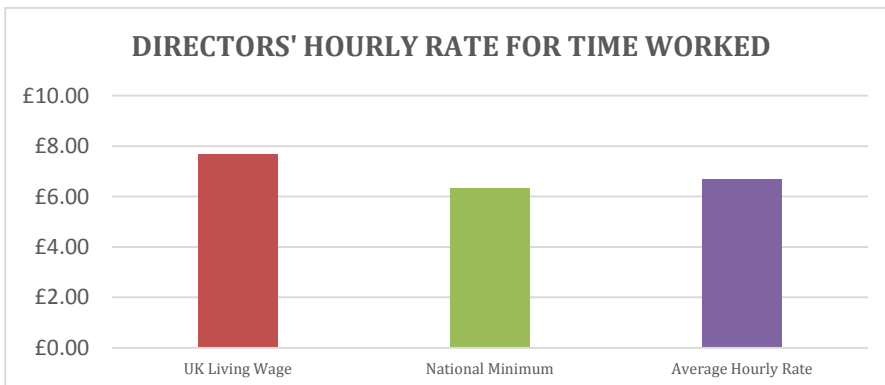
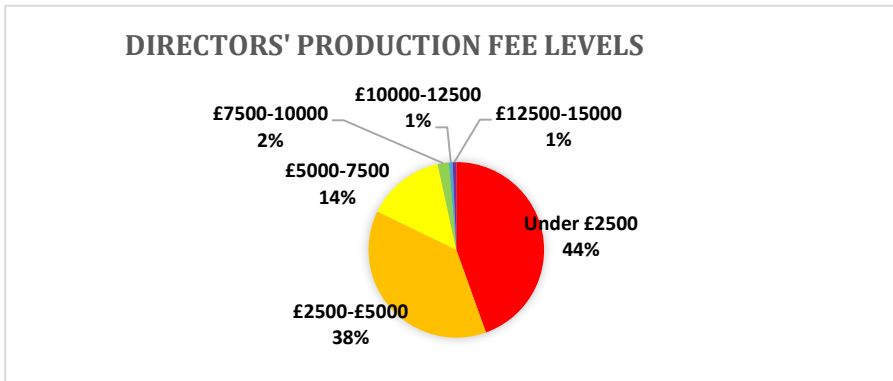
Our Survey Data was collected under various Sectors. The graphs on the following pages make clear the range of directors' fees and their average rates per hour actually worked, sector by sector. We asked members to specify clearly the days and/or hours worked outside the rehearsal period (e.g. in preparation) and added those to the total rehearsal period specified in the contract. Prep days were calculated at 8 hrs/day, rehearsal days at 10 hrs/day, both at 6 days a week, which is normal in the profession. The overall total of hours worked was then divided into the fee to produce an hourly rate for every production in the Survey.

FEE RANGES AND HOURLY RATES BY SECTOR

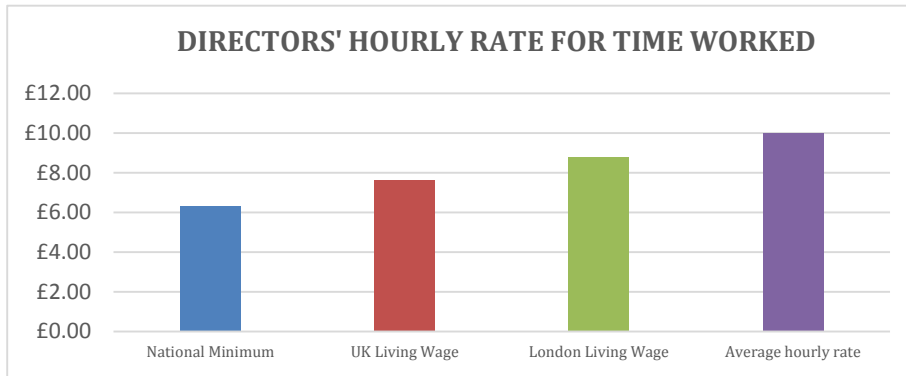
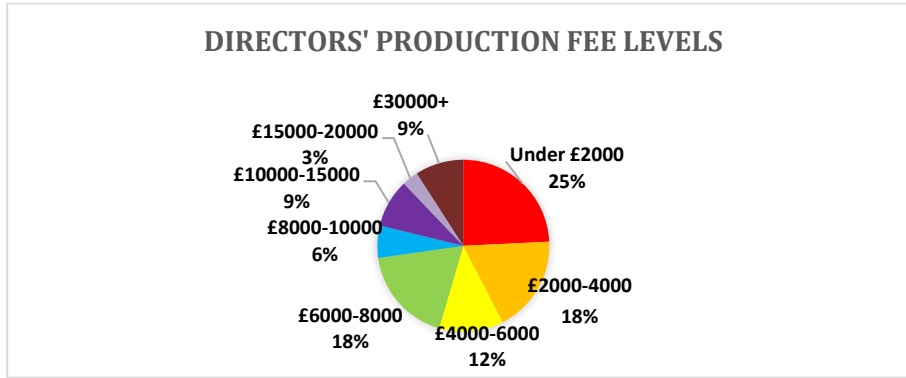
SUBSIDISED LONDON THEATRES



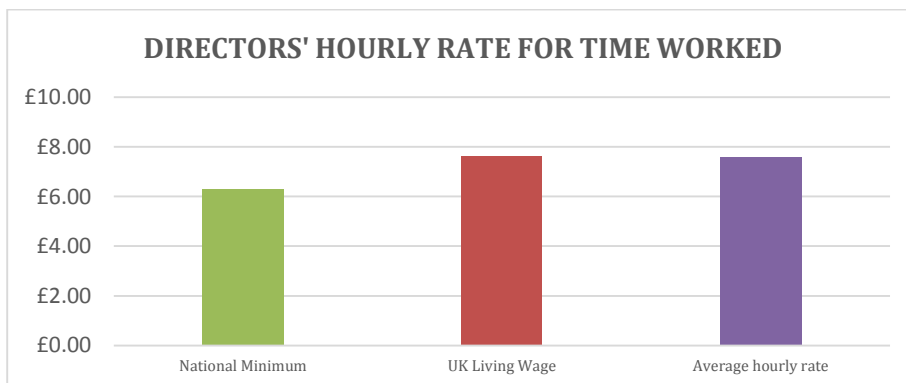
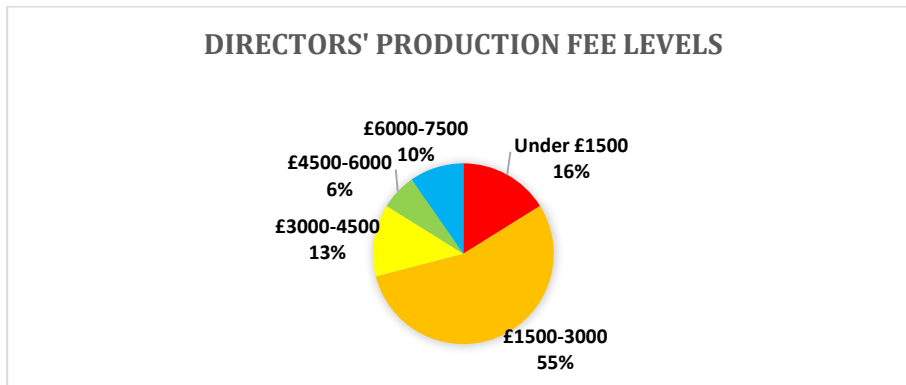
SUBSIDISED REGIONAL THEATRES



COMMERCIAL LONDON COMPANIES

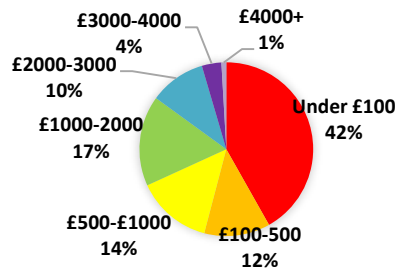


COMMERCIAL REGIONAL COMPANIES



THE FRINGE

DIRECTORS' PRODUCTION FEE LEVELS

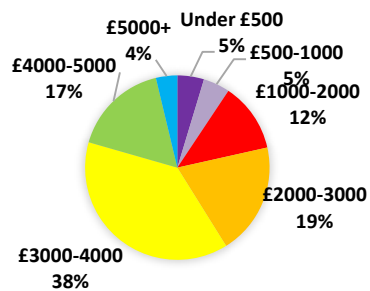


DIRECTORS' HOURLY RATE FOR TIME WORKED



DRAMA SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

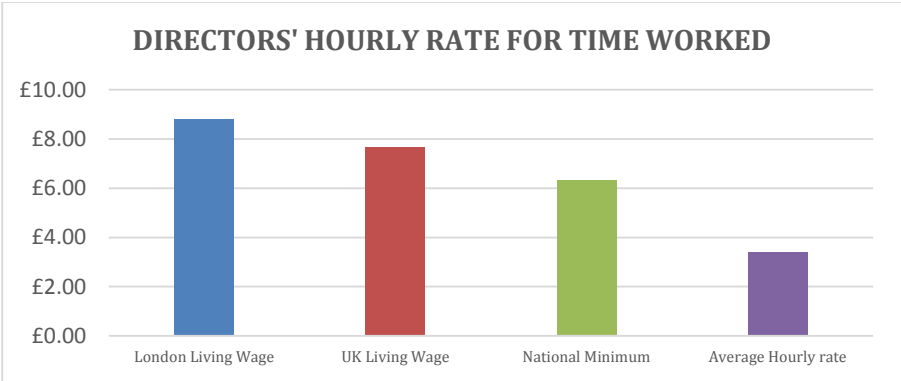
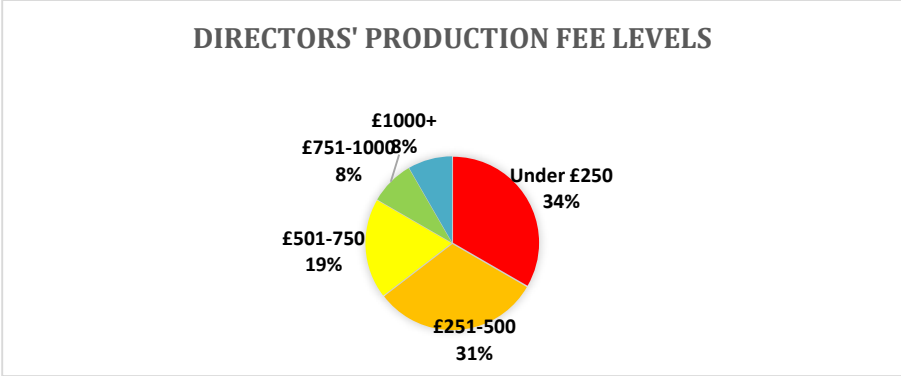
DIRECTORS' PRODUCTION FEE LEVELS



DIRECTORS' HOURLY RATE FOR TIME WORKED



COMMUNITY/OUTREACH



NOTE: ASSISTANT, ASSOCIATE AND RESIDENT DIRECTORS
We have collected a certain amount of data on these, which we hope to publish at a later date.