

ABTT Seminar: Directing for the Round

14:01:05 **From Elysia Moore** : Welcome everyone! How are you all today?

It is great to have you all joining us this afternoon. We are just waiting for you to all get into the room before we start the session. Do let us know where you are joining us from.

14:01:39 **From Lexie Ward (She/Her)** : Hi everyone, joining today from a cloudy Carlisle :)

14:01:47 **From Alistair Livingstone** : Im online from Rostrevor - Hi everyone.

14:01:48 **From Amy Clare Tasker** : hello from North London 😊

14:01:56 **From Damian Sandys** : West London here!

14:01:59 **From Thomas Henderson** : Hello from Durham

14:02:07 **From Steven Elder** : Tonbridge (Steven E)

14:02:07 **From Alex Lauff** : hello from Worthing in South England

14:02:08 **From Beth Morton** : Hi everyone - dialling in from Glasgow

14:02:08 **From Christine Stott** : Hello from the Pennines

14:02:10 **From Roman Romanski** : I'm Roman Stefanski, from Wimbledon, London

14:02:11 **From Adam Barnard** : Hello from sunny Hove!

14:02:16 **From Nicholas Edwards** : I'm Nicholas Edwards of Idibri and I designed the acoustics of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

14:02:18 **From Michael Weller** : Hello from Brooklyn, New York

14:02:30 **From Jordan Langford** : Hey! I'm joining you from York (originally from Scarborough - about five mins from the SJT!)

14:02:30 **From Diana Logan** : Hello from the Stephen Joseph Theatre and Scarborough

14:02:34 **From Francesca Tennant (she/her)** : Hello from Salford :)

14:02:36 **From Elysia Moore** : For people just joining us, we will be using this chat function today to discuss between ourselves and it is great to hear from you all! We will use the Q&A function for any questions you want to ask directly to our panelists!

14:02:38 **From Penny Gkritzapi** : Hello from West London:)

14:02:38 **From Su Gilroy** : Hello from south west London

14:02:41 **From Jonathan** : Hi from London :)

14:02:41 **From Andy Corelli** : Hello from Edinburgh

14:02:54 **From James Marshall** : Hello from Worthing

- 14:02:57** **From Louise Monaghan** : Hello from Lewes.
- 14:03:01** **From dorian@theatrearts.biz** : Dorian From Colchester: hello Faynia! Hello Sam (Dundee)
- 14:03:03** **From Toby Murray** : Hello from Brighton!
- 14:03:04** **From James Marshall** : Hello from Worthing
- 14:03:07** **From Elysia Moore** : During this seminar we will be hearing from directors who have worked extensively in the round.

The seminar will be followed by a Q&A session so we can help address any questions you may have.

If you have any questions during the session, please do pop these into the Q&A section for our panelists. You can use this chat function to talk between yourselves.

- 14:03:08** **From Robert Morgan** : Hello from South Yorkshire
- 14:03:20** **From Helen Leblique** : Hi from Middlesbrough in the North East!
- 14:03:29** **From Alice Kornitzer** : Hello from Berlin, usually SW London
- 14:04:01** **From Elysia Moore** : Speaking now is Dave Wybrow. Dave has been Director of The Cockpit, a purpose-built London theatre in-the-round for over 20 years and is known for his work with The Godot Company.

The Cockpit has managed to stay open during the pandemic and is due to revive their five-star in-the-round production of Waiting for Godot next year.

- 14:04:23** **From Elysia Moore** : Our first panelist is Theresa Heskins. Theresa is a theatremaker and Artistic Director of the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

She has transferred productions from that space to other in-the-round venues including the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough and end-on theatres in the UK and USA.

<https://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/>

- 14:04:54** **From Elysia Moore** : Our second panelist is Sam Walters. Sam trained as an actor at LAMDA and began directing at Worcester Repertory Company in 1967.

He directed for various repertory theatre companies, drama schools and organisations abroad before he founded the Orange Tree Theatre in a room above the pub of that name in Richmond in 1971. It quickly became a theatre-in-the-round and in 1991 the new Orange Tree Theatre was opened - this was the first and only permanent professional theatre in-the-round in London.

He retired in 2014 after running the Orange Tree Theatre for 42 years!

<https://orangetreetheatre.co.uk/>

14:05:36 **From Elysia Moore :** The third panelist joining us today is Lotte Wakeham. Lotte became Artistic Director of the Octagon Theatre in Bolton in 2019. She was previously the Associate Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, where her productions in the round included *The World Goes Round* and *Di and Viv and Rose*.

She spent much of her early career as an assistant director working in the round including *The Norman Conquests* at the Old Vic Theatre, *The King and I* at the Royal Albert Hall and *Rope* at the Almeida Theatre.

<https://octagonbolton.co.uk/>

14:06:10 **From Elysia Moore :** We also have Anthony Biggs joining us today. Anthony has been Co-Artistic Director of the Playground Theatre, a former bus depot converted into a flexible performance space since it opened in Latimer Road in 2017.

His directing credits at the Playground Theatre include *Shirleymander*, *The Paradise Circus*, the UK premiere of *The Jazz Age*, a new opera *Army of Lovers* and a new ballet *The Great Bear*. Recently he directed Helena Bonham Carter, Jolie Richardson and the Chickenshed company for Save the Children's Centenary Gala and a new immersive theatre experience for the band Bastille.

Previously Anthony was Artistic Director of Jermyn Street Theatre for five years.

<https://theplaygroundtheatre.london/>

14:06:56 **From Elysia Moore :** And last but not least is our final panelist Faynia Williams started her career acting in Stephen Joseph's theatre-in-the-round opposite Alan Ayckbourn. She is a multi-award-winning international director/designer and is Artistic Director of Brighton Theatre.

Faynia is also a BBC producer of drama and documentaries and has created a programme with Richard Bannerman on Stephen Joseph's theatre-in-the-round, called *Surrounded*.

It is hoped that the BBC will repeat the programme to celebrate Stephen's centenary in June.

<http://www.brightontheatre.com/>

14:09:32 **From Elysia Moore :** For people just joining us, we will be using this chat function today to discuss between ourselves and it is great to hear from you all!

We will use the Q&A function for any questions you want to ask directly to our panelists!

If you want to speak via the chat function, do make sure you have selected "all panellists and attendees"

If you want to ask a question, please find the Q&A tab which will be located either at the bottom or the top of your screen (depending on the device you are using).

14:13:49 **From Michael Weller** : Are actors, having trained for thrust and proscenium stages, ever unable to get the joke about acting in the round? How do you help them?

14:14:04 **From Alistair Livingstone** : Sam you once said that 'There is no play that cannot be produced in the round and no play that is not the better for it!

14:14:38 **From David Cockayne** : Olivier never wanted to be seen onstage against members of the audience - which partly explains the Olivier Theatre...sadly...and Chichester.

14:16:51 **From Elysia Moore** : The first question we are discussing today is: What opportunities and challenges are there when staging a production in the round?

14:17:21 **From Steven Elder** : Only problem I found were out-stretched legs in the front row....but with a little subtle kick early doors....feet soon got retracted, and away you go...!

14:20:26 **From Alistair Livingstone** : I think Theresa has used projection really effectively - ref Lighting Seminar

14:21:03 **From Elysia Moore** : If you have any questions during the session, please do pop these into the Q&A section for our panelists.

If you have any thoughts about what we are discussing, please do get involved and share your opinion via this chat function to talk.

If you want to share on this chat box please make sure you have selected "all panellists and attendees" before you send your message!

14:23:21 **From AntonyLaw** : Love working in the round - Cut my Teeth at The Cockpit (hello Dave) learnt. At first for the actors it's scary - but its great as there's no where to hide.

14:24:05 **From AntonyLaw** : Absolutely Dave - yes, they have to learn to 'feed the birds'

14:27:04 **From Elysia Moore** : The question our panellists are currently answering is: Does certain material lend itself to this staging format?

14:27:52 **From Alexis Danan** : Q - Would you recommend round for a solo show / monologue ?

14:28:23 **From Faynia Williams** : Hi Dorian, so good to know you are here

14:29:45 **From Andy Corelli** : Do you know if your audiences prefer theatre in the round? Do they feel more involved or more threatened by the proximity?

14:30:31 **From Alistair Livingstone** : Roland Joffe in an article on SJ said 'Stephen's key idea was the sense of that theatre's potential , both as an agent of social change and as an agent of conservative reinforcement was crucially linked - embodied even - in the physical architecture of the venue".

14:32:48 **From David Cockayne** : When the Royal Exchange opened I was working at Manchester Library Theatre and there was a lot of discussion about whether or not there was anything that could not be stage there. I asked about this a few years ago in an Equity session with their directors and they said that there wasn't, up to then. They staged "The Entertainer" and that worked. But oddly a year after it had opened I designed a Don Taylor play (he also directed) at the Forum Theatre there which

required a fully equipped 18thC theatre on stage, with from tabs etc. On reflection I don't think that could be staged in-the-round at all easily...but it would be interesting to be proved wrong. It had been a tv play first.

14:37:56 **From Sam Brown** : could any of the panelists comment on how they have to adapt their technique/craft from a stagecraft/directorial point of view when working in the round as opposed to in a conventional end-on arrangement?

14:41:02 **From Elysia Moore** : Some amazing questions coming in! Thank you everyone

14:43:05 **From Wayne Parsons** : Any conversation/thoughts about programming/presenting dance theatre in the round? Does anyone have any experience of programming dance in the round? There is a lot of conversation about movement and keeping action going. Interesting overlay with dance/movement direction.

14:47:07 **From Alistair Livingstone** : Of course English National Ballet has done several of the classics in the round

14:47:45 **From Alistair Livingstone** : SJ would have said 'don't read it'

14:47:56 **From Dorian** : for the scottish play I devised set piece to go in the centre, It became a tree, a table, cauldron, a chair etc.. Big mistake putting it in the middle. That meant actors could walk clockwise or anticlockwise or in an extreme case, jump over it.... Very limiting...

14:49:01 **From Elysia Moore** : The question we are currently answering is: What is your process for adapting shows for or from the round?

14:53:21 **From AntonyLaw** : Corners work well

14:54:42 **From David Cockayne** : The issue of "status" is interesting...is there the equivalent of the "point of command" (upstage centre in the Barbican or Olivier)? I assume not, it must be done via movement etc.?

14:57:51 **From Penny Gkritzapi** : Epidauros :)

14:57:54 **From Alistair Livingstone** : Epidauros - Stephen talked about it a great deal

14:58:19 **From Michael Weller** : Must dash/meeting. So wonderful for me (in New York) to hear a discussion about theatre craft and aesthetics for a change.

14:59:39 **From Elysia Moore** : Thank you for joining us Michael!

15:01:19 **From Jayne Jack** : Drone filming in the round will give filmed content the experience of the round audience.

15:01:19 **From Alexis Danan** : tears of joy

15:02:12 **From Roman Romanski** : (Message for Sam - I believe the West End transfer he was referring to was The Primary English Class which started at the O/T and transferred to the Wyndhams)

15:02:39 **From Elysia Moore** : The question we are currently answering is: What will theatre-in-the-round represent in the future?

15:03:19 **From David Cockayne :** If the government doesn't increase arts funding to a decent level maybe t-i-r will be the only format to survive in quantity? But the DCMS isn't informed enough to understand that.

15:03:27 **From Elysia Moore :** We will be moving on to the Q&A shortly. If you have a question please do pop your question into the Q&A tab!

15:03:32 **From Jessica Millott :** The beauty of being an audience member in the round is you get a different show/experience to an audience member sitting on the opposite side of you. Filming would be brilliant but would take away this part of the experience.

15:04:00 **From Jayne Jack :** The natural social gathering of folk around a live performance is in the round - audience will always gather round before they form lines.

15:07:01 **From Amy Clare Tasker :** I'm very interested in the idea of technology in the round, especially the challenge of projection. Maybe the proliferation of "theatre for devices" will be a solution to this, where the audience watches a performance in the round with additional material on their phones.

15:08:32 **From David Cockayne :** Having designed a good deal of opera, Faynia, it is very very hard to make that work in-the-round as the conductor needs overall control and the acoustic would be very hard, unless radio mics were used and opera singers don't like them at all.

15:08:52 **From Theresa Heskins she/her :** I don't find projection in the round a challenge: the stage is the most amazing horizontal screen. Although lighting the actors who are standing upon the screen does take some ingenuity and planning

15:09:00 **From Henry Bell :** It's been interesting writing a book about the round and how much of it exists in Street Theatre and performance in non-architectural spaces. People gathering around other people to see performance has been around since folks lived in caves

15:10:43 **From Richard Speir :** As Wayne above and Faynia just now mentioned, opera is crying out for more in the round experiences and exploration! I'm sure that territory is something many directors would find exciting

15:12:01 **From Jayne Jack :** @ Richard Opera North have delivered several at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough - breathtaking experience to be in the audience.

15:12:59 **From Richard Speir :** @Jayne Must have been fantastic!

15:13:48 **From Wayne Parsons :** @Jayne sounds good

15:15:19 **From David Cockayne :** Opera in a smaller space is ok but not in a larger one. I think ENB did Swan Lake at the Albert Hall with a degree of success, and ENO have done an opera there too, can't recall which, Butterfly perhaps!

15:18:20 **From Francesca Tennant (she/her) :** For a similar reason I think dance works brilliantly in the round - 'back dancing' is often just as good as 'front dancing' and 'side dancing'. It is sculptural and the added intimacy you get from the round can be super exciting. You see the muscles and sweat in a way that in larger proscenium theatres this is hidden giving the illusion of ease and grace.

15:20:04 **From Steven Elder** : Once had to the 180 degrees turn stark naked in the round for "Toscas Kiss" at The Orange Tree. I'm still hoping it was quite dark...

15:20:53 **From Jayne Jack** : @Steven or quite impressive...;-)

15:21:20 **From Theresa Heskins she/her** : Jonny Donahoe's solo performance in Paines Plough's Every Brilliant Thing: just amazing in the round - engaging with every member of the audience at every moment

15:21:44 **From Steven Elder** : Thank you but not so sure about that :)

15:21:50 **From Alexis Danan** : thanks you for your answers

15:22:27 **From Richard Speir** : Thank you!

15:25:31 **From Steven Elder** : Many thanks

15:27:12 **From Jonathan** : Thank you so much everyone!

15:29:02 **From David Cockayne** : My own costume designs have always been provisional until I talk with the performer.

15:29:22 **From Alexis Danan** : it's been such an enlighting session. Many thanks for organizing it. Can't wait to bring back people in rounds

15:29:51 **From James Marshall** : thank you

15:30:16 **From lis Evans** : Very interesting discussion... looking forward to getting back to theatre in the round soon!

15:30:23 **From Louise Monaghan**: Fascinating. Thank you.

15:30:40 **From Robert Morgan** : Thank you very much.

15:31:18 **From Helen Leblique**: Thanks to all for an interesting afternoon!

15:33:25 **From Stefanny** : Thank you for answering this answer! :)

15:33:44 **From Elysia Moore** : Thank you, for an inspiring seminar and thank you to everyone who joined us today for this interesting topic! We hope you are taking something away with you.

15:33:52 **From Wayne Parsons** : Thank you.

15:33:53 **From Elysia Moore** : This seminar has been recorded and will be available in a few days with captioning on the ABTT website here: https://www.abtt.org.uk/events-and-courses/abtt_seminars/2021-2/directing-for-the-round/

15:33:58 **From Lexie Ward (She/Her)** : Thanks everyone

15:33:59 **From Stefanny** : Thank you for answering this question, I meant :D

15:34:00 **From Jordan Langford** : Thank you, so so informative and helpful. You're all very inspiring.

15:34:01 **From Elysia Moore** : Thank you, for an inspiring seminar and thank you to everyone who joined us today for this interesting topic! We hope you are taking something away with you.

15:34:16 **From AntonyLaw** : Bless you all - many thanks

15:34:16 **From Elysia Moore** : Other ABTT seminars that have been recorded can be found here: https://www.abtt.org.uk/events-and-courses/abtt_seminars/

15:34:16 **From Richard Speir** : Thank you vey much everybody! Great session.

15:34:17 **From Roman Romanski** : Thank you so much everyone. Excellent comments and chats

15:34:21 **From Diana Logan** : Thanks so much everyone

15:34:25 **From Elysia Moore** : If you are interested in finding out more about the SJC you can do so here: <https://www.abtt.org.uk/committees/sjc/>

If you would like to find out more about Stage Directors UK, please find them on social media or take a look at their website here: <https://stagedirectorsuk.com/>

Be sure to check out the work of The Cockpit who have lots of schemes to help those wishing to create theatre: <https://www.thecockpit.org.uk/>

15:34:41 **From Andy Corelli** : Brilliant discussion - many thanks!

15:34:42 **From Elysia Moore** : If you would like to find out more about the Stephen Joseph Award you can do so here: <https://www.abtt.org.uk/sja-award-2021/>

15:34:52 **From Francesca Tennant (she/her)** : Thanks very much everyone!

15:35:02 **From Elysia Moore** : If you are interested the ABTT are collating relevant resources for you our industry here: <https://www.abtt.org.uk/resources-guidance/industry-resources/>

If you are interested in finding out more about joining the ABTT please do look on the website here: <https://www.abtt.org.uk/join-abtt/memberships-for-individuals/>

Do remember that the ABTT is a charity as well as a membership organisation. If you would like to support us in hosting further seminars and events like this, please do donate here: <https://www.abtt.org.uk/get-involved/donate/>

15:35:15 **From Faynia Williams** : so lovely to see you all