

ENSEMBLE _THEATRE FACTION_

How We Work - explained in words

CONTEXT

The CoViD-19 global health emergency has given The Faction the moment to reflect on how we want to emerge from a shut down theatre sector a better company than we went in. We haven't rushed to create content, choosing instead to evaluate and explore. We want to put these thoughts into practice in a way that is actionable and by which we can be held accountable.

These actions must directly address anti-racism and the Black Lives Matter movement. The Faction has an unequivocal commitment to being a truly anti-racist company. We are listening to the advice about starting diverse, and this document has been drafted in collaboration with the whole company as it requires the collective participation of every company member. The Faction's artistic directors acknowledge that the primary responsibility for the facilitation and delivery of these actions is on them.

The Faction's artistic directors must do more to dismantle the prevalent racist structures within the practice of creating theatre. The actions outlined below will continue, or we will undertake them, to restructuring those systems.

In our work, the process is *at least* as important as the presentation and the making of theatre is not only what you see on stage but every thought and conversation you have about every part of the process.

Structure

We will ensure every structure of The Faction is genuinely diverse.

(Board / Ensemble / Administration / Creative Team / Actors on stage)

Our first actions will include ensuring our black

ensemble members are represented at board level, and engaging more black-identifying practitioners in our creative teams and as associate artists.

We will be conscious, considerate and meaningful with language

When using the word 'diversity' and 'representation' we will be specific and not coded.

For example, we will be clear when we mean artists of colour and when we mean black-identifying artists specifically.

We will not discriminate

Anyone can occupy any role without exclusion on the basis of age, class, d/Deafness, disability, gender, parenthood, race, religion, sex, sexuality or on any other basis by which individuals or communities are discriminated against or marginalised.

Where text or policy must be (re)written, it will be. This process will be in collaboration across the organisation and with appropriate professional consultation.

We will restructure our spaces

Our rehearsal rooms, creative spaces and organisational meetings will be de-centred.

Recognising that identity is a complex combination of experiences and factors we will work to ensure nobody is a singular minority.

For example, there will not be a process where the entire creative and producing team are white (which has happened) or have a cast whereby only one artist

would identify as disabled or black. We will use anonymous 'monitoring' forms on every project to ensure no characteristics are assumed.

Our first steps here are to evaluate our historical practice and engage with intra-cultural practitioners

We acknowledge an anti-racist company is made up of anti-racist people

We will provide anti-racist training with an external practitioner for every permanent structure of The Faction (Board/Administration/Ensemble). Regular facilitators will be engaged on a project to project basis to support the creation of genuinely safe spaces.

Our first steps here are to engage in company-wide conversations about what this looks like, identify, fundraise for and engage educators and facilitators of anti-racist and unconscious bias training.

No individual will be valued more or less than another individual

This means financially compensating everyone equally. Everyone will be paid equally on a project to project basis. Over the next 2 years, for each engagement we will aim to pay everyone inline with national average salary of £550 per week (£28,500 pa) but not less than union rates (£494pw).

Our first steps here will be to collaborate with our associate creatives and creatives in the industry to establish a fair-pay system that accurately reflects working hours. (ie we will assess whether there is a more appropriate system than a fee based structure).

Practice

We 'repurpose the classics' to speak to our current moment

When the text needs a new voice, new material is written. We constantly interrogate the narratives we present, in our programming decisions, in our process and in our performances and continue to find ways to decolonise the canon.

We will create an audience council to reflect on our work

The audience are as much a part of making the work as any team creating the production. To develop new audiences, to make great work, we need to include the audience. **Our first steps here** is to establish a working group to explore how this functions and establish the council

We will create a design philosophy

This will enhance us creatively and be a part of the process of making work (e.g. what materials we are

using and where are they from) and will only purchase from companies that uphold our ethical values.

We will consider the environmental impact of making work

We will research and work in partnerships to find ways to off set the carbon footprint of every production and publish the production's carbon footprint when the project is complete. We will work to make this about our working practice and not only retrospective action.

Any one physical production must be able to pack into a space no bigger than a Luton van

This is 20 meters cubed. We have always had a 'light of foot' philosophy and the idea of being mobile enough to travel any show in one van speaks to the nature of our work and somewhat limits environmental impact.

We will feature at least two languages spoken on stage

We are a multilingual ensemble, English is not the first language of all our artists. We live in a multilingual world and create work in multilingual regions. Through our work we have discovered and will continue to discover how language goes beyond the physical word, and how it has cultural and societal significance

in the creation of worlds on stage.

We acknowledge outreach and education work is not an add-on

Every production must be accompanied by a programme of workshops and pre- and post-performance talkbacks that are designed alongside the conception of the project and not post rehearsals. We will work with partner organisations and individuals to realise and deliver on this to ensure these activities are as engaging, creative and productive as possible.

Access

We will trial initiatives to break down barriers for access for audiences, artists and administrators

For every project or appointment we will use existing platforms and initiatives to support people with least access. We will fundraise to create our own bespoke initiatives to address gaps and needs.

For example free ticket schemes and on-the-job training opportunities.

We will open our doors

Every year we will offer two open workshop auditions for artists wanting to meet and develop a relationship with the company. We will advertise these workshops

widely and with key partners to ensure access for artists who are currently underrepresented in theatre. There will be a travel budget for workshop attendees. We will provide feedback for every person who auditions.

We will support emerging artists

Every production will be the first professional credit for at least one company member

For example e.g. this could be a drama school graduate, but without excluding those for whom training is inaccessible or prohibitively expensive.

We will increase our reach

Over the next two years every production will tour to at least two different regions of the UK or beyond, and have at least two access performances meeting different needs in each location, working with key partners for example StageText and Hear The Picture. These will not be 'an addition' but an integral part of The Faction's offer to audiences. We will continue to develop meaningful relationships with venues and their audiences. Touring and presenting a show is not enough, how can we build and establish real interaction with local audiences?

We will make tickets as affordable as possible

We will work with venues to offer fair ticket pricing and introduce schemes for people with least access and

resource.

For example is there a way to record the show for people who are house-bound, can we commit to free tickets to every show for the unemployed and homeless?

Transparency

Programming will be a conversation

Potential projects are presented to the audience council, our ensemble and our board. Venues hold the decision making power but we will use this practice to put our best case forward.

We are also developing new ways as an ensemble to initiate projects and share seed ideas.

Structures will integrate

An ensemble member will be invited to every board meeting. Board members and audience council members will be invited to rehearsals.

We will run a feedback sessions for every production

This will include audience, cast, creative team, ensemble and board and we will develop an effective, safe and productive feedback loop.

When we fail on any of these actions, we will acknowledge that failure, and we will evolve

These actions will form the basis of evaluating every production and we will publish on our website every evaluation within 90 days of the project's completion. 90 days is a realistic time frame for our organisational size and resource.

These resolutions as a whole are ambitious, and we recognise the danger of over-promising and underdelivering

A lot of these actions require more resource and will benefit from and require partner organisations to deliver. But now is the time for system change and we actively encourage potential partners to get in touch.

This document will constantly evolve and, as we improve, the document will be redrafted. The most up to date version will always be available on our website in accessible forms.