

## Rory Kinnear interview

The stage and screen actor tells us: "I'm more excited about directing a Shakespeare opera than anything I've done in the last five years"

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Helen George

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## Rise of the 'theatre gig'

How fusing musicals and concerts – from punk to garage and techno – is bringing the atmosphere of a nightclub, and new audiences, to the theatre

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Freddie Fox

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# THE STAGE

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## Bum Bum Train faces inquiry into unpaid interns

DAVID HUTCHISON

Immersive theatre company You Me Bum Bum Train has been accused of exploiting workers after advertising for unpaid production interns.

Backstage union BECTU is investigating the legality of the "outrageous" internships, for which successful applicants would work at least two days each week for a minimum of four hours a day.

The unpaid production assistant positions were advertised to students on university drama courses, with a promised letter of recommendation from the show's directors as an incentive.

According to the job advert, the interns' roles would include "compiling records and documentation of the sets and props", "helping to make good the venue and take down sets" and "help support the management of the production office".

BECTU general secretary Gerry Morrissey said that as any potential interns were not part of a training project, and would not receive any qualifications, they "should at the very least be getting the minimum wage".

While You Me Bum Bum Train is an independent, not-for-profit company, it received a £150,000 grant from Arts Council England in 2014 to help build the show's elaborate sets.

Morrissey said: "Here we have government funds being put through the Arts Council, passed on to an organisation who are simply exploiting people. We're doing our best to make sure people coming into this industry have an opportunity to make a living and not be exploited. This is nothing short of outrageous."

You Me Bum Bum Train charges £48.50 for a ticket and has enjoyed several sell-out runs in London. It has previously come under fire for its reliance on unpaid volunteer performers. The show's producers have previously said that if every volunteer were paid, they would have to charge £2,000 per ticket to break even.

Morrissey pledged to complain to the Arts Council about the internships. "The moral point is that taxpayers' money is going to an organisation which is actually making money, charging more competitive rates for tickets, only to have [workers] be exploited," he said.

But producers Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd insisted You Me Bum Bum Train was in fact a "training project", and that it was "not simply a show being staged for the entertainment of the 'audience' and the commercial gain of the producers or promoters".

In a joint statement to The Stage, they continued: "It is a community activity, creating opportunities and experiences for hundreds of people who are not interested in being paid."

Claiming that "nobody is making significant sums of money" from the show, they reiterated that volunteers were free to leave "at any time" and worked on a self-devised timetable.

They added: "It is clear BECTU has done limited research into YMBBT. It seems they are more interested in openly criticising a constructive project so that they appear to be looking out for the interests of their paying members."

An ACE spokeswoman said: "It is vital that volunteers remain just that and do not become unpaid staff upon which organisations rely."

Editor's view, p8



Artist's impression of how the Palace's proposed Hogwarts banners would appear, if approved

## Palace Theatre plans Hogwarts transformation

MATTHEW HEMLEY

West End venue the Palace Theatre is seeking planning permission to give its facade a Harry Potter-themed overhaul.

A planning application has been submitted to Westminster City Council for permission to drape four banners on the theatre's frontage, each in a colour from one of the four Hogwarts houses that feature in the books, film and new play, which begins previews this month.

According to the application, submitted by Michael Jackson Consulting on behalf of the producers, signage for productions at the theatre have, until now, "been confined to display cases at street level and below the canopy".

"The impending production of Harry Potter has been eagerly anticipated by the public, with high levels of interest for tickets shown. As this production is likely to run for more than two years, the producers wish to install

the high-level banners with the house colours from the show to the facade of the building," the application states.

It adds that, when the show ends its run, the banners would be removed "and the screw holes would be made good to match the existing brickwork".

Meanwhile, the theatre has advised that theatregoers need to allow an hour to get to their seats for each performance of the show.

"Please aim to arrive one hour before the start time of each performance in order to ensure that you are seated in good time; there are bars and an official merchandise kiosk to enjoy before the show, and latecomers will not be admitted," the website states.

It also advised that "no suitcases or large bags will be allowed into the theatre building".

"All admissible bags will be searched upon each entry to the theatre. Any dangerous items, professional photography, video or audio recording equipment will not be allowed into the building. This is a condition of entry," it says.

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is written by Jack Thorne and produced by Sonia Friedman Productions, Colin Callender's Playground Entertainment and Harry Potter Theatrical Productions.

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For arts' sake, should we leave or remain?  
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# SCENE AROUND

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## LILIAN BAYLIS AWARDS, OLD VIC, LONDON



Award presenter Kenneth Branagh (centre, left) with the Royal Victoria Hall Foundation's clerk Carol Cooper, and chair Valerie Colgan (far right), with the winners of this year's awards

## A SUBJECT OF SCANDAL AND CONCERN



Cast members Edmund Digby-Jones, Caroline Moroney, Doron Davidson, Jamie Muscato, Richard Shanks and Ralph Birtwell at the press night at the Finborough Theatre, London

## THE VERTICAL HOUR/WATCH IT SAILOR PRESS NIGHT



Director Zoe Waterman (second, right) and the cast of The Vertical Hour



Cast and crew of Watch It Sailor at the press night, Theatre by the Lake, Keswick

## KES, WEST YORKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE



Adapter Robert Alan Evans, cast member Jack Lord, director Amy Leach and cast member Dan Parr at the press night in Leeds

## FLOWERS FOR MRS HARRIS PRESS NIGHT, SHEFFIELD



Cast members Moyo Akande, Laura Pitt-Pulford, Rebecca Caine, Clare Burt, Nicola Sloane and Anna-Jane Casey at the press night, Crucible Theatre



Director Daniel Evans with Rachel Wagstaff (book) and Richard Taylor (music and lyrics)

## CULTURE FORUM NORTH, LEEDS



Speakers Peter Bazalgette (Arts Council England), Pat Connor (BBC North), and Andrew Thompson (Arts and Humanities Research Council) at the Howard Assembly Room, Leeds

## STAGE ONE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY LUNCH, HOSPITAL CLUB, LONDON



ATG's Michael Lynas with producer Judy Craymer



Actors Jenny Seagrove and Tracey Childs, who was a speaker at the event



Joseph Smith with producers Oliver Mackwood and Cameron Mackintosh

## MANCHESTER ROYAL EXCHANGE



Artistic director Sarah Frankcom, associate artists Benji Reid and Maxine Peake, and associate artistic director Matthew Xia at the theatre's 40th season launch