

Tarek Iskander

The pain and misery of the pandemic has also ushered in an inexorable desire for change, says Battersea Arts Centre's artistic director

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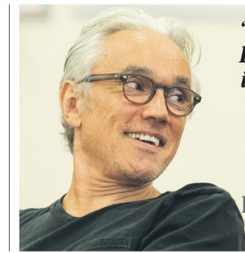
'I would love to play Audrey in Little Shop of Horrors'

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'I'll keep fighting'

Tony winner and Lackawanna Blues creator Ruben Santiago-Hudson on bringing his life-story play to Broadway

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'Working with Hilary Mantel is an amazing privilege'

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Barbican Centre 'in freefall' ahead of racism review

MATTHEW HEMLEY

London's Barbican Centre has been hit by a "mass exodus" of staff. The Stage understands, with current and former employees claiming people are "leaving in their droves" in the wake of an expose of racism at the arts centre.

Management and the board at the City of London venue are coming under increasing pressure to share the full findings of a review into accounts of discrimination, the interim findings of which were presented to the Barbican's board last week.

The Stage has spoken to a number of staff – both current and former, many of them long-serving, and across a range of departments within the Barbican Centre – who described an organisation in "freefall". They claimed there was a lack of faith and confidence in senior management and how they would deal with the findings of an external review commissioned earlier this year into about 100 cases of discrimination shared by employees, known as Barbican Stories.

The staff said they were concerned that the full findings of the review, carried out by law firm Lewis Silkin and due to be presented to the Barbican's board in the next couple of weeks, will not be shared openly with them, and have urged both senior management and the board to ensure staff are kept fully informed of its findings.

The City of London Corporation, which is the founder and principal funder of the

Barbican, has vowed to be "as open and transparent" as possible.

Staff have claimed that a "culture of fear" has developed within the organisation, and have spoken of plummeting morale in the wake of the Barbican Stories publication, with some departments down to half their normal levels. Remaining staff are expected to pick up the workload, it is claimed.

One current member of staff described the organisation as a "mess" and said they had been told that staff were unlikely to see the final report. "It's concerning thinking this really important piece of work will only be seen by four people potentially and no action needs to be taken, so how do we hold anybody to account?" they said.

Claiming people were "leaving in their droves", they told The Stage that each week another "three or four people leave", adding: "It's not sustainable, as the infrastructure is wasting away. It's hopeless, helpless – coupled with sadness and demotivation. And it's difficult to concentrate, with [people suffering from] poor mental health."

Another staff member, who has worked at the Barbican for more than a decade, described "a real lack of confidence" that the external review "can achieve anything".

"People are worried that, no matter what it reports, the Barbican doesn't have the capacity to act on anything," he said. "The grievance process to report incidents of racism has not worked in the past, so why would it work now?"

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Akram Khan's Creature – does it get a roar of approval?

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Red hot: Moulin Rouge! triumphs at delayed Tonys

GIVERNY MASSO

Moulin Rouge! The Musical was the biggest winner at the delayed 2020 Tony Awards, triumphing in 10 categories including best musical. British wins included five awards for the Old Vic's production of Jack Thorne's A Christmas Carol.

The awards took place on September 26 at Broadway's Winter Garden Theatre, coming as theatres reopen on Broadway for the first time since the pandemic began in March 2020.

The best performance by an actor/actress in a leading role in a play categories were won by Andrew Burnap for The Inheritance and Mary-Louise Parker for The Sound Inside.

Adrienne Warren, for Tina – The Tina Turner Musical, and Aaron Tveit, for Moulin Rouge! The Musical, were named best lead performers in a musical.

British talent recognised included members of the creative team for the Old Vic in London's production of Jack Thorne's A Christmas Carol, which ran at the Lyceum Theatre on Broadway in 2019. It won five awards across technical categories. These included Rob Howell, who won both the scenic and costume design awards, and lighting designer Hugh Vanstone.

The Broadway transfer of The Inheritance won four awards, including best play and best director for Stephen Daldry.

Musical Jagged Little Pill led the nominations with 15 nods, but won only two awards: best performance by an actress in a featured role in a musical (Lauren Patten), and best book of a musical (Diablo Cody).

Other winners included A Soldier's Play by Charles Fuller for best revival of a play, and dancer, choreographer and director Graciela Daniele, who was presented with the lifetime achievement in theatre award.

Lyn Gardner

Difficult times like these call for brave theatremakers

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Rob Halliday

Want to work in theatre? Learn how to code

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Shaws' Jaws

Ian Shaw, son of Robert, on playing his film-star dad

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