

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

# Regional Theatre Initiative

*2001 – 2005*

“The Regional Theatre Initiative has been a far sighted and creative response to director training in the United Kingdom. It has provided tremendous opportunity not only to young directors but also the theatre community as a whole. It has championed and supported the taking of risks – something we should all do.”

**Joanna Read**, Artistic Director, Salisbury Playhouse



In 1999 Esmée Fairbairn Foundation – a major independent grantmaker – decided to take a more hands on and strategic approach alongside its responsive grantmaking. The Foundation would take the initiative itself where appropriate, and commit resources to areas of need and opportunity that it had identified, sometimes as a result of past grants, often working in partnership with other organisations.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has established ten strategic initiatives since then. In each case the object is to contribute to the development of policy and practice through trying out different approaches, while sharing the learning derived. More information about the Foundation and its strategic initiatives can be found at: [www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

The Regional Theatre Initiative, which aims to offer a unique training model for theatre directors, is a strategic initiative of the Foundation's Arts & Heritage programme. The scheme, worth more than £500,000, aimed to provide an opportunity for young and emerging directors to direct a classic play on the larger stage.

Almost 20 years ago, another grant making body – the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – funded a symposium on directors' training. Organised by the Directors Guild of Great Britain, the symposium, held in October 1986, led to the setting up of an enquiry into directors' training in 1987. This was led under the chairmanship of Professor Edward Braun and the working party included experts from the theatre community such as directors Mike Alfreds, Yvonne Brewster and Adrian Noble, as well as theatre managers and actors including Janet Suzman and Harriet Walter.

Soon after being appointed to lead the Arts & Heritage programme in 2000, I read the report of that enquiry, *A Better Direction*, and felt that this was something that merited serious consideration. Over the next six months and with the full backing of Lord Rees-Mogg the (then) chairman of our Arts & Heritage programme,

I discussed with Esmée Fairbairn Trustees and staff how the Foundation could make a difference in this area, and thus the Regional Theatre Initiative (RTI) was born.

The landscape for theatre has changed radically since *A Better Direction* was published in 1989. Things are moving fast and there have also been significant developments over the past four years since we launched the RTI. A recent survey commissioned by Arts Council England (ACE) shows that there are more than 10 postgraduate courses in theatre directing in universities and drama schools. Four of these offer secondments or attachments to professional theatres and companies. There are also numerous theatre companies offering emerging directors the opportunity on a voluntary basis, to observe the rehearsal process and the running of an organisation. Funding is available for specific projects from trusts and foundations as well as via Grants for the Arts (ACE), however, despite the gains of the past few years, there seem to be few schemes like the RTI that are specifically defined as post-entry level professional development opportunities.

#### **Consultation and collaboration**

As well as discussing the RTI with ACE, we also talked to a number of people during the research phase who were concerned about the lack of training and professional development opportunities for new or emerging directors. These included: Grahame Morris and Michael Grandage at Sheffield Theatres, Jude Kelly at West Yorkshire Playhouse, Jack Andrews from the Channel 4 Directors Scheme, and Peter

Cheeseman who has finally managed to launch the MFA in Theatre Directing – at Birkbeck College, University of London. Advice was also sought from Sian Ede, Arts Director at the Gulbenkian Foundation.

From its inception the RTI has been run in collaboration with ACE. Following discussions with the Federation of Scottish Theatres and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC), the scheme was extended to Scotland in 2004. As well as providing advice on the design and criteria for the scheme the Arts Councils have been involved in the theatre selection process and developing an evaluation framework for RTI. In England independent evaluation was carried out by The Laughing Audience and in Scotland by Professor Ian Brown.

Over the past four years Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Trustees have taken a keen interest in the development of the scheme and have seen many of the productions supported. An initial briefing session to discuss the overall aims of the RTI in March 2002 gave the participating theatres a chance to share their experiences in an informal way. As a result of suggestions made by the participants, Esmée Fairbairn decided to place further emphasis on gaining press coverage for the RTI as a whole as well as encouraging journalists from national newspapers to review each of the productions. Arts correspondents and reviewers were invited to a lunch to meet some of the emerging directors and they were also able to talk to the artistic directors of the various participating theatres. In addition to gaining coverage in the local press, most of the English productions have been reviewed in national newspapers.

**This publication**

This publication celebrates the achievements of the ten emerging directors who have benefited directly from the RTI. It is also a testament to the courage shown by the management of the nine theatres which agreed to participate in this scheme. The risks – artistic, financial, and reputational – taken by these theatres have paid dividends and the RTI has resulted in a series of high-quality productions of classic plays enjoyed by thousands of people. It is too early to be sure of the true legacy of this scheme, RTI has been a huge learning curve for all involved, but judging by the positive response from the theatre community, we believe that the lessons from the RTI and the unique model that it has created are likely to have an impact on shaping future policy in this area of the arts.

**Shreela Ghosh**

Programme Director, Arts & Heritage  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation





## Grahame Morris Executive Director, Sheffield Theatres and Chairman of the Arts Council's Drama Advisory Panel in 2002

When, following the Boyden Report, the Arts Council undertook its Theatre Review, it did so from a position strengthened by new government investment for theatre – the first genuinely new such investment for a generation. It was clear, however, that the crisis in producing theatres in England was not only a financial crisis. Another key to a richer and more diverse future could be found in the need to identify, nurture and support new creative voices on the main stages of our theatres. The Regional Theatre Initiative is a major step in realising this important aspiration. A new generation of directors will have the opportunity to express themselves through work on a large scale with the support of experienced artists and theatre organisations. The RTI is an important sign of the English theatre's eagerness to change and challenge itself in response to its renewed confidence. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Arts Council England are to be congratulated on the development of this new initiative.

Grahame Morris is now Lead Advisor for Theatre, ACE.

## Aims and objectives

Developed in collaboration with ACE, the RTI was intended to work alongside the National Policy for Theatre in England and aimed to make a useful contribution by:

- developing the artists and creative managers of the future
- creating regional distinctiveness
- producing a better range of high quality work.

Specifically, the scheme was designed so that each emerging director would have the chance to cover the following:

- shadowing the Artistic Director on a classic play
- working with the Artistic Director on programme choice
- understanding budgeting processes and working with the management team
- understanding the roles played by the production departments
- experience of working with and directing large casts
- working with the education/outreach team – to achieve integrated audience development
- an insight into marketing deadlines and planning processes
- cultivating a wide range of external contacts through networking.

It was agreed that the Artistic Directors of the participating theatres would provide support and mentoring during the production period and advice on subsequent career paths. In addition to this, the RTI encouraged the young/emerging director to seek an independent mentor. The host theatre also agreed to extend invitations to key people (artistic directors, executive producers, theatre managers, as well as critics and others) to view the resulting production.

**“Training will not produce a talent that was not there to start with. At the same time, if there is to be training for directors, it should operate on a serious level and it should be set up in a way that will encourage diversity rather than standardization.”**

*A Better Direction, Gulbenkian Enquiry, 1989*

**David Taylor**  
Head of Drama,  
Scottish Arts Council

The Regional Theatre Initiative has been a useful tool in developing the directing skills of the Associates in Scotland. The scheme offered the opportunity for two emerging directors to test their skills on a large cast production within the supportive structure of a producing theatre. The directors were able to work with experienced actors– with all the benefits and challenges that come with that. The scheme has also provided opportunities for the artistic management of the participating theatres to develop their experience of mentoring and supporting directors with less experience than themselves.

**Nicola Thorold**  
Director, Theatre,  
Arts Council England

This project aimed to develop those taking part not only as directors of plays, but also as potential future artistic directors. The young/emerging directors have had the opportunity to understand the way a theatre works and where the major deadlines for decisions stand in the run up to a production. They have also had to learn how to lead a team of people from all the various departments – actors, stage management, designers, set builders and so on. This exciting opportunity has been an important partnership between Arts Council England and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**“I am always nervous of seeing my older plays – particularly this, the oldest of them all: it churns up in me such ancient memories, not only of the events themselves, but also of the innocence I had, as a writer at my own beginning. ... You have stood the play on its feet on the threshold of the 21st century, and facing forward – and who knows what sorts of ‘night’ this century will bring?... I don’t think any company could serve a playwright more.”**

**David Rudkin, author of *Afore Night Come*, in a letter sent to the Company at The Young Vic**





**Director: Rufus Norris**  
**The Young Vic\***

*Afore Night Come* by David Rudkin:  
The harvest is ripe in a Black Country pear orchard, as seasoned hands settle to familiar tasks and the ritual education of newcomers. But corrupted land yields a bitter crop. The weather turns, friction mounts and pesticide begins to fall. First produced by the RSC in 1962, this is an insight into human nature and a dark warning of our inability to avoid reaping what we have sown.

Opened: 21 September 2001  
Artistic Director: David Lan



**Director:**  
**Anna Mackmin**  
**Crucible Theatre, Sheffield**

*Iphigenia* by Euripides (new version translated by Edna O'Brian): 'Who will hold the cup for the first rain of blood?' Agamemnon is instructed to sacrifice his beloved daughter, Iphigenia, to appease the goddess Artemis and thus ensure favourable winds for the Greek expedition to Troy.

Opened: 5 February 2003  
Artistic Director: Michael Grandage\*\*



**Director: Douglas Rintoul**  
**Salisbury Playhouse**

*Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare: Petruchio arrives in Padua looking for a wife, and is determined to win the hand of the feisty young heiress, Katherina. He sees her volatile reputation as an irresistible challenge to his masculinity. *Taming of the Shrew* is a riotous and finally tender tale, full of mistaken identities, humour, greed and loyalty.

Opened: 5 September 2002  
Artistic Director: Joanna Read



**Director:**  
**Gregory Thompson**  
**The Young Vic\***

*Andorra* by Max Frisch: Enemies gather at the border and the people of Andorra are forced to confront the sins of the past. A choice arises: continue to lie or stand up for truth. Last seen at the National Theatre in 1964, *Andorra* was part of the political left's attempt to come to terms with the swift rise of fascism in Europe.

Opened: 19 October 2001  
Artistic Director: David Lan



**Director: Toby Frow**  
**Birmingham Repertory Theatre**

*A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller: A raw American tragedy which crackles with tensions and betrayals as Eddie Carbone's obsession with his pretty orphaned niece spirals out of control. The waterfront neighbourhood of 1950s Red Hook, Brooklyn is home to 21,000 immigrants, cast adrift by poverty on the very edges of the American dream.

Opened: 26 September 2003  
Artistic Director: Jonathan Church

\* The Young Vic productions were part of a pilot project which took place in 2001.



**Director:**  
**Paul Savage**  
**Nottingham Playhouse**

*Othello* by William Shakespeare:  
 A respected military commander, Othello is a determined and passionate man, blinded by love and misled by those he trusts. His devotion to Desdemona outweighs the curse of her father, and fuelled by Iago's manipulation of circumstantial evidence, Othello's pride and honour is put to the test.  
 Opened: 31 October 2003  
 Artistic Director: Giles Croft



**Director:**  
**Femi Elufowoju Jr**  
**West Yorkshire Playhouse**

*Medea* by Euripides: Jason abandons his wife Medea and their young sons in order to pursue a more politically useful marriage to the daughter of the King of Corinth. Medea's revenge is terrible, killing first the new bride and her father, before turning to an even more shocking retribution.  
 Opened: 14 November 2003  
 Artistic Director: Ian Brown



**Director: Michael Buffong**  
**Royal Exchange Theatre,**  
**Manchester**

*Six Degrees of Separation* by John Guare:  
 Flan and Ouisa Kitteredge, well-heeled, art-loving Manhattan-ites, good people with children in the best universities, living a life of stability and smart self-satisfaction. Into their world comes Paul, a mercurial, charismatic young black man with connections to famous film stars and crusading causes. Paul seems to be everything the Kitteredges ever hoped for in a young man – but is he all that he appears to be? And what is his real purpose?  
 Opened: 14 April 2004  
 Artistic Directors: Matthew Lloyd, Greg Hersov, Braham Murray



**Director: Martin Danziger**  
**Dundee Repertory Theatre**

*The Visit* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, (in a new translation by Peter Arnott): Join the inhabitants of a Scottish airport town. Its days of fortune are a distant memory, until Clara, the richest woman in the world, makes a glamorous return home after decades away. This is a story of passion, greed, humour, and vengeance in a new translation for Scottish audiences.  
 Opened: 16 March 2005  
 Artistic Directors: Dominic Hill, James Brining



**Director: Steven Little**  
**The Byre Theatre,**  
**St. Andrews**

*Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare: As preparations for the wedding between Hero and Claudius get underway, Hero's cousin Beatrice and Benedick, a confirmed bachelor, are manipulated by their friends into realising their love for each other. But the wicked Don John plans to disrupt the wedding.  
 Opened: 26 February 2004  
 Artistic Director: Ken Alexander\*\*

\*\* The Artistic Directors at these theatres have subsequently changed.



*A View from The Bridge*  
Birmingham Repertory Theatre

“On occasion, it is very difficult to be calm and lucid, as a reviewer. So, let me throw my hat over the roof and say straightaway that Birmingham Rep has come up with a production that is a masterpiece...Under Toby Frow’s direction, you almost get the smell of the rancid Brooklyn slum where Arthur Miller’s grim and totally absorbing play is located...Not to be missed.”

Review by **Richard Edmonds** *The Birmingham Post* 1 October 2003



*Medea*

**West Yorkshire Playhouse**

“Femi Elufowoju’s production draws on the traditions of Yoruba theatre, and stirringly creates a harsh, hot, reverberating world...Even though the Greek reticence about showing violence on stage is fractured – so that you see Medea’s little son advancing towards her dagger – the murderous action moves like a ritual, with languorous deliberation. (Tanya) Moodie never ceases to be majestic: her mellow voice never cracks, and her serpentine movements are – something rare now on stage – on a grand scale.”

**Review by Susannah Clapp** *The Observer* 23 November 2003



## Rufus Norris The Young Vic

It is no exaggeration to say that my involvement in the season has profoundly changed my career. I had directed 23 plays in studio theatres, however, the transition to a more ambitious level of production was never going to be smooth, and I am enormously grateful in hindsight that the level of support was consistent and well conceived. I was encouraged to think ambitiously about the creative team on the project – who have you always wanted to work with? – and managed to persuade Ian MacNeil to chance his arm and come on board as designer... Looking back, I still find it hard to believe it all came together, and this was really down to the production team at The Young Vic, who tied themselves in knots trying to achieve what we were after, and almost on budget!

I have earned my way the hard way through the fringe and slog, and was not over-awed by the prospect of a bigger show; in fact, I was probably over-confident of my ability to bridge the divide without problem. I never felt once that my hand was being held, or that I was being leant on to work with this person or go that way. Vitally, however, I knew the support was there if needed, and at the two or three moments of indecision or faltering I was steadied in a discreet, empowering way.

The production went very well; I was very fortunate to be awarded an Evening Standard Award on the strength of it; most happily, I am joining The Young Vic as an Associate Director. The experience has taught me many things, some of them hard lessons, and has greatly developed my confidence and energy for this new level of craft that I am beginning to learn.

Reading this back I am aware that it sounds like an advertising campaign for the future of the initiative, but I cannot help that. There are many people who do and will deserve such an opportunity, and I am truly grateful to have been one of the first to benefit so fully from it.

## Gregory Thompson The Young Vic

I enjoyed the benefits of a full production team who were wanting something good in their theatre and the access to all this support allowed me to concentrate solely on the directing... The relief from the pressure of marketing, of finding an audience – whether creating and distributing publicity material or employing press people etc. – was fantastic! To go home at night and not have to do anything on the producing side was a little strange at first.

I enjoyed working with such talented and creative people and perhaps most importantly it has helped me define some of the qualities I need in my collaborators... I got lost in the system a bit. Perhaps having a more experienced stage management team would have helped – in the sense of people who were aware of what I didn't know and were able to say 'it's okay if you do this and this but these are the consequences' or whatever... I also feel that due to getting used to how the building worked and showing too much deference to the skill of the actors and to the author I didn't take hold of the project in the way that I feel I needed to in order to make it successful.

## Martin Danziger Dundee Repertory Theatre

The end result was a good show, although not exactly what I had envisaged. Maybe I should have been bolder, maybe I should have been more forceful in asserting my vision of the piece, and my approach. Overall, despite the difficulties involved in the production, I have come away with most of the hoped for outcomes. I have gained a valuable insight into the workings of a building-based company. I have a much better understanding of the possibilities and challenges that face such an organisation, and I have begun to address the challenges involved in directing shows in a main stage theatre.

## Douglas Rintoul Salisbury Playhouse

As an emerging theatre director RTI offered me an opportunity, which otherwise would have seemed unimaginable. RTI gave me the chance to direct my first large scale Shakespeare on a regional theatre main stage. This opportunity was significant in developing my skill and confidence as a director and enabled me to realise a project on a national level. This would not have been possible without the financial and artistic support of the RTI. As a consequence all of my work since has been positively influenced by this one experience. I only wish I could be given a similar opportunity again.

## Toby Frow Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Jonathan Church, artistic director of the Birmingham Rep, offered me the chance to take part in the RTI with a very specific view in mind – to allow me to bridge the gap between small scale fringe work and assisting on the one hand and main-house directing on the other. In brief the scheme has done that for me and moved me directly up the ladder of opportunity that is so slippery and enigmatic in this profession. It has solved the catch 22 that faces all young directors working in theatre today – how do you get to work on large spaces without the ability to show an example of your work on a large space? It has also led to my ongoing involvement with the Rep, and effected an introduction to other regional theatres – the West Yorkshire Playhouse, where my show played in addition to Birmingham – and Northampton, where I've recently worked as a result of being able to invite the artistic director to my production of *A View From the Bridge*. While I can't speak for others, my own experience has been nothing but positive and has – on top of all the career benefits I've listed already – provided me with the single best opportunity I have had to test myself and my work. Many thanks!

**“I have done in my life hard academic labour, hard managerial labour and hard physical labour, and I am bound to say the hardest job I have ever done is directing a play.”**

**Peter Hall, director, in 'A Better Direction', Gulbenkian Enquiry, 1989**

## Femi Elufowoju Jr West Yorkshire Playhouse

Esmée Fairbairn certainly opens up a forum for new and fresh possibilities, enabling potential craftsmen from a new age to manifest new visions through theatre. Particularly, the Regional Theatre Initiative enabled me to learn a whole deal about structure and theatre management within a building, gain insight into the various support mechanisms serving and driving every department towards the production, and become a more skillful theatre director and an efficient manager of a creative team.

All of the above served as invaluable tuition for an artistic director returning to a small regional touring theatre company. The overall opportunity afforded me was not without its imperfections. The highly successful production of *Medea* was created, managed and negotiated through a process of pain and tribulation. I am thankful to Esmée Fairbairn and the West Yorkshire Playhouse for providing me with the learning curve, the appropriate tools and experience which has now enabled me to practise my profession with more tenacity, patience and further confidence.

## Michael Buffong Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

The RTI award gave me the opportunity to direct a piece of my choice – *Six Degrees of Separation* – a classic play which I have always loved. It enabled me to put my skills and ideas into practice and made my work visible at the highest level – in the main house. It was a joy to work with top level artists – designer, casting director, lighting and sound practitioners. I felt very much part of the theatre and was made to feel extremely welcome. I also valued the chance to see how the building was run and how artistic decisions are made for a theatre of this scale.

I loved directing the production and since *Six Degrees* my career has continued to thrive. I shall be returning to the Royal Exchange this Autumn to direct my second main house piece and am enjoying developing a relationship with the theatre. The award has marked a turning point in my career and has been one of the best creative challenges I have ever experienced.



**David Lan**  
**Artistic Director,**  
**The Young Vic**

We are delighted to have been the launchpad of the Regional Theatre Initiative. Working with the National Theatre Studio, we were able to give two remarkable young directors, who had previously worked only in studios or specially chosen sites, the opportunity to direct on our challenging main stage.

Rufus Norris' *Afore Night Come* won him an Evening Standard Outstanding Newcomer Award and established him as one of this country's leading directors. Gregory Thompson's *Andorra* led on to a number of other productions, including for the RSC at the Swan.

This first season evolved into the Direct Action programme, each show giving a director the chance to work more ambitiously, in better resourced circumstances than had previously been possible for them. They now form the backbone of our seasons and are an integral part of our work.

**Joanna Read**  
**Artistic Director,**  
**Salisbury Playhouse**

The RTI has been a far sighted and creative response to director training in the United Kingdom. It enabled the Playhouse to give Doug Rintoul the opportunity to direct *Taming of the Shrew* in September 2002, helping us resume a large scale classic in an already packed season.

The match of young director to controversial classic proved to be explosive, imaginative and hugely successful. Our stage was filled with a fresh, vital interpretation of a classic and our audience responded with enthusiasm to the energy and excitement of the production. It gave Doug the chance to develop his style and taste on a Shakespeare, introduced new creative talents to our staff and enabled the production to soar, supported by the skilled and experienced staff at the Playhouse.

An unqualified success, one that we repeated the following year by invited Doug back to direct *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The RTI has provided tremendous opportunity not only to young directors but also the theatre community as a whole. It has championed and supported the taking of risks – something we all should do.

**Giles Croft**  
**Artistic Director,**  
**Nottingham Playhouse**

The Esmée Fairbairn programme came at exactly the right time for the Playhouse. We were just embarking on the Eclipse project, a scheme to promote the work of black artists working on the middle scale, when we were approached to participate. The RTI's focus on the production of classic work meant it was an ideal match for us. It also had the advantage of trusting the organisations to deliver the work without interference whilst providing clear guidelines without being prescriptive, a very rare thing these days.

We were fortunate to have a director, Paul Savage, who had already worked for Roundabout and with whom we wanted to work more. This and his enthusiasm for *Othello* meant that he matched both our priorities and the scheme's aims. In the end we were enabled to promote an artist with a piece of our work that we wanted to produce in a manner than would not otherwise have been possible. In our view this was a terrific scheme from which other organisations could learn.

**“Creative foundations exploit their unique potential to stimulate creative, constructive conversation, thus enabling democratic debate and the problem solving capacity of society.”**

**Diana Leat and Helmut K. Anheier,** “Approaches to Grantmaking Foundations' Roles” Rensselaerville Presentation January 2005

**Ian Brown**  
Artistic Director,  
West Yorkshire Playhouse

I felt the flexibility and openness of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation towards finding the best way possible for a particular theatre to move forward really benefited the West Yorkshire Playhouse and enabled us to tailor the experience for our director.

I was very much aware that there was always a risk in trying out a new director in unaccustomed surroundings and I am very glad that I thought to put in a safety net around the production, and there was plenty of support around for resolving any problems.

I would certainly embark on such a project again and I hope the Foundation will be pleased with the success of the scheme.

**Braham Murray**  
Artistic Director,  
Royal Exchange Theatre

It is usual to praise an initiative that has been a benefit to you, but in this case the praise is totally sincere. There is no question that the RTI has enabled theatres such as ours to further the careers of talented young directors in a unique way. There are other young director schemes but none of which prompts major companies to take the leap with a young director on to a main stage with a big production. In our case, Michael Buffong, who we had already sighted in our Studio, seized the opportunity and staged a masterly production of *Six Degrees of Separation* and as a result will return to the company in our next season and has formed a relationship with us for the future. What more need be said?!

**Dominic Hill**  
Artistic Director,  
Dundee Repertory Theatre

I think the RTI offers a unique opportunity for emerging directors. Usually after a period of training – whether assisting or graduating from one of the few directors' courses – the problem of how to get work within a producing theatre, while earning enough money to live on is a major one. When I first worked in a regional theatre, the ability to understand how such a building works, how plays are chosen and members of staff are managed, was a major learning experience for me. It taught me how important a producing theatre is to its community and made me want one day to be an artistic director. It also helped me to improve my craft in a supportive environment. The RTI gives someone the same opportunity, but because they are already experienced as a director they don't just sit and watch rehearsals for a year – instead they have some status and importance in the building and the time to understand the working of a theatre from a day-to-day, 'hands on' point of view. I think it is an invaluable experience and an important part of how we train directors for the future.





*The Taming of the Shrew* –  
Salisbury Playhouse  
Review by Lyn Gardner  
*The Guardian* 12 September 2002  
“Rintoul’s confident production has a lovely comic edge as it conveys these ideas – not by imposing them upon the play, but through clever use of Shakespeare’s sharp-eyed observations on the complexities of human nature. The acting is also the best I’ve seen in a classical play at this address for some time.”



*Iphigenia* – Crucible Theatre, Sheffield  
Review by Michael Billington  
*The Guardian* 12 February 2003  
“Played on a virtually bare stage, Anna Mackmin’s production matches the directness of O’Brien’s text. Lloyd Owen, his voice cracking as he calls himself “a broken king”, also successfully brings out both the helplessness and the hubris of Agamemnon. Strong support too from Susan Brown as a vehement Clytemnestra who ends surrounded in a pool of prophetic blood and from Lisa Dillon who, in her stage debut, lends *Iphigenia* a touching filial trust. Eight young Sheffield women also rescue the chorus from the usual deadly singsong in a first-rate production that may not be echt Euripides but that is very good Edna.”  
(Lisa Dillon was awarded Most Promising Newcomer for her performance as Iphigenia by the Critics’ Circle.)



*Afore Night Come* –  
The Young Vic  
Review by Michael Billington  
*The Guardian* 27 September 2001  
“I have grown up with David Rudkin’s *Afore Night Come*. . . Seeing it again in Rufus Norris’s production, I am struck by its abiding power and its anticipation of the violence that haunted British theatre in the 1960s.”



*The Visit* – Dundee Repertory Theatre  
Review by Mark Brown  
*Sunday Herald* 20 March 2005  
“It is a sad statement on the relative poverty of Scottish theatre that a full cast production of *The Visit* (with its 38 characters) is all but unimaginable. Peter Arnett’s liberal translation for 12 actors, can’t create the effect of the original, but Danziger and the Dundee Rep ensemble fashion a wonderfully surreal, contemporary social comedy.”



*Andorra* – The Young Vic  
Review by Paul Taylor  
*The Independent* 25 October 2001  
“The casting in Gregory Thompson’s impressive production of *Andorra* is blind to colour and to disability. There’s nothing outré or self-congratulatory about this policy as deployed here: rather, it makes its own tellingly defiant statement, given that Max Frisch’s 1961 play – which explores the mechanics of racism – is an eloquent, despairing study of man’s compulsion to stereotype and scapegoat.”



*Six Degrees of Separation* –  
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester  
Review by Lynne Walker  
*The Independent* 27 April 2004  
“Since its opening off-Broadway in 1990 and its terrific London production a couple of years later. . . *Six Degrees* has had surprisingly few major revivals. In his assured production, his first on the Royal Exchange Theatre’s main stage, Michael Buffong doesn’t put a foot wrong. Fortunate in his brilliant ensemble, he draws stylish performances from a cast that is every bit as winning as the London line-up of a decade ago.”

## Directors' biographies

The directors featured in the RTI had a wide-range of experience. Some including Femi Elufowoju Jr, Gregory Thompson, Martin Danziger and Rufus Norris had been the Artistic Director of smaller theatre companies. Four of the directors already had an association with the theatres at which they worked, including Douglas Rintoul, who had received a Channel Four Theatre Director Scheme bursary at Salisbury Playhouse, Paul Savage who had worked for Roundabout, the education programme at Nottingham Playhouse, Michael Buffong who had directed at the Royal Exchange Studio and Anna Mackmin who was Literary Associate at Sheffield Theatres. Steven Little had been Director on Attachment at the National Theatre Studio and Toby Frow had been a Trainee Director at the Orange Tree Theatre and Donmar Warehouse. All had directed at various venues across the UK and many had directed at small and mid-scale theatres in London including the Donmar Warehouse, Southwark Playhouse, Riverside Studios and New Ambassadors Theatre.

## What happened next

Since completing their RTI productions several of the directors have maintained their links with the regional theatres involved. These include Douglas Rintoul and Toby Frow, both of whom subsequently directed again at Salisbury Playhouse and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Rufus Norris and Anna Mackmin were employed as Associate Directors at The Young Vic and Sheffield Theatres respectively. Anna has recently directed at the Royal Court in London and Rufus is currently directing at the Almeida Theatre and his work has also been transferred to the West End and Broadway. Others have gone on to develop their careers at regional theatres across the UK, for example Michael Buffong has recently worked at Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich and will return to the Royal Exchange next season. Also, since directing Andorra, Gregory Thompson has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

## Evaluation of the RTI

Professor Ian Brown is currently in the process of completing his report on the two Scottish productions. The Laughing Audience were commissioned to evaluate the RTI in England. Their final report concluded overall that the scheme was a success, the standard of productions was high and critical response was judged generally to be positive. However, the evaluators felt the scheme may have been overly ambitious in its objectives in both attempting to provide opportunities for emerging directors and addressing the issue of finding the artistic directors of tomorrow.

The artistic freedom extended to theatres and emerging directors was welcomed, as was the lack of bureaucracy.

The collaboration with ACE, the evaluators considered, was "an unusual and profitable alliance between a private foundation and a public sector body."

**"Conventional approaches to evaluation... sit uneasily with real risk taking and the possibility of failure. But in an important sense these foundations do not have 'failures'. Things that go wrong or do not work out are seen not as failures but as valuable learning opportunities."**

**Diana Leat and Helmut K. Anheier,**  
Rensselaerville Presentation January 2005



## Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest independent grantmaking foundations in the UK. It makes grants of some £28 million each year to organisations to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the UK both now and in the future. It has four grantmaking programmes, Arts & Heritage, Education, Environment and Social Change: Enterprise and Independence.

The Foundation was established in 1961 by Ian Fairbairn, a leading city figure whose company, M&G, was the pioneer of the UK unit trust industry. It was set up as a memorial to Ian Fairbairn's wife Esmée, who had played a prominent role in developing the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the Citizens Advice Bureaux before being killed during an air raid towards the end of the second world war. Her sons Paul and Oliver Stobart also contributed generously to the original trust fund, as co-founders.

In 2000 the Foundation decided to move from a generalist approach to grantmaking and established the four specialist programmes. In addition to the Regional Theatre Initiative (RTI) which is a partnership with the Arts Councils worth £500,000, over the past four years, through its responsive grantmaking, the Arts & Heritage programme has committed nearly £4 million towards drama. Mostly, the funding has been used by the companies to develop and extend their touring programme and increase their profile in the English regions as well as across UK borders. For example, large grants have been made to English Touring Theatre and Cardboard Citizens. The Foundation has also increased its spending on professional development and alongside the RTI, it has enabled organisations like Tamasha Theatre Company to run specific training courses for Black and Minority Ethnic individuals, as well as supporting a young directors programme at The Arches in Glasgow.

The largest single grant was made to The Young Vic which is working with several regional theatres on Young Genius – a season of classic plays by renowned playwrights all written before the age of 26 – which will culminate at The Barbican Theatre in autumn 2005.



### Photography:

Andorra, Afore Night Come & Medea – Keith Pattison  
Iphigenia – Ivan Kyncl  
Much Ado About Nothing – Peter Adamson  
Othello & A View from the Bridge – Robert Day  
Six Degrees of Separation – Stephen Vaughan  
Taming of the Shrew – Robert Workman  
The Visit – Douglas MacBride

Design: [www.red-stone.com](http://www.red-stone.com)  
Printed on Revive by Beacon Press

May 2005

Published by:

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation,  
11 Park Place, London SW1A 1LP  
[www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)  
Registered charity 200051



Esmée  
Fairbairn  
FOUNDATION



Scottish  
Arts Council