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The power and burden of representing diversity in a performing arts organization: A recognition-based approach

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Abstract

This paper explores tensions related to using representation to signal diversity and inclusion on and behind the stage in a performing arts organization in Sweden. Drawing on a recognition-based approach to inclusion, we analyze how minority and majority organisational members negotiate tensions related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity. Our ethnographic study illustrates how increased representation gives rise to conflicting experiences when collective or individual heterogeneity is negated and directs attention to the interpersonal and organisational relations that condition these experiences. We contribute to the critical literature on diversity and inclusion, and to research on recognition-based inclusion, by elucidating the interplay between recognition and misrecognition that shapes how representation is negotiated. We critically examine the complexities of using representation to promote diversity and inclusion and discuss its implications for creating more equal conditions of participation in culture and arts.

KEYWORDS
diversity, inclusion, performing arts, recognition, representation

1 | INTRODUCTION

> In a way, I am proud that I am a minority member of the management group. I think, to some extent, I am the representation. I feel special. This speaks about something, right? Setting an example? Yet, I prefer not to stand out because of my appearance, in other words, I hope to be just as 'normal' as my [White] colleagues.

Maria[1] works in a performing arts organization in Sweden where diversity and inclusion are central to the organisational mission and aims. She is the only person of color in the management team, and she is constantly reminded that she looks different from the White norm. Although Maria acknowledges that her position can be empowering and an inspiration for others, she struggles with the idea of speaking on behalf of other minority members. Her experiences reflect a noted tension related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity in research on representation in culture and arts.

While the 'burden of representation' (Mercer, 1990) has been used to describe how minority individuals are expected to represent a specific group identity through their art, increased representation of minorities can also be empowering and serve as a vehicle for esthetic and political contestation (Kondo, 1997, 2018). Existing research has shed light on how the relationship between the power and burden of representation is negotiated in cinema and visual art (Thackway, 2014; Tolia-Kelly & Morris, 2004), and how it shapes experiences in theater and classical music (Kondo, 1997, 2018; Shim, 2021). Less attention has, however, been directed toward the interpersonal and organisational relations that condition these experiences, and how they relate to the ways in which diversity and inclusion are 'done' in cultural organizations. This is what we set out to explore in this paper, which we situate in the intersection of critical research on creative industries (Finkel et al., 2017) and on diversity and inclusion (Ahonen et al., 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007).

In organization and management studies, diversity commonly refers to differences in terms of, for instance, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, and physical (dis)ability. The notion is used to examine policies and practices that advantage some and disadvantage others, and to foster initiatives for social justice and equality (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Studies have explored how diversity and inclusion are 'done,' for instance, how minority individuals (re)negotiate organisational power relations and structures (Jammaers et al., 2016; Liu, 2017; Van Laer & Janssens, 2017; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007) and how they experience being in 'token' positions (Watkins et al., 2019). Scholars have elaborated on how these experiences are informed by both privileges and disadvantages, making them ambiguous, situated, and dependent upon organisational and societal circumstances (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022; Ozturk & Berber, 2022; Slay & Smith, 2011). These findings mirror the noted ambiguity of the power and burden of representation in culture and arts, while affirming the importance of developing an understanding of the organisational and interpersonal conditions that shape these experiences (Holgersson & Romani, 2020).

In this paper, we build on these studies and explore the power and burden of representing diversity (Mercer, 1990; Thackway, 2014; Tolia-Kelly & Morris, 2004) by drawing on an ethnographic study of SPAC (pseudonym), a performing arts organization in Sweden that aims to foster diversity and inclusion by increasing the representation of minority members on and behind the stage. We, specifically, analyze how minority and majority organisational members negotiate tensions related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity by drawing on a recognition-based approach to inclusion (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021). This approach centralizes the importance of developing organisational policies, practices, and relations premised on an openness toward difference as a lived expression of heterogeneity rather than as a descriptive marker, for instance, related to gender, race, or ethnicity. The recognition-based approach is grounded in an understanding of social relations as ongoing, embodied, and situated negotiations of self/other relations, where a sense of equality emerges through the reciprocal recognition of others' expressions of selfhood (see also Harding et al., 2013; Islam, 2012).

When studying how diversity and inclusion are 'done' in organizations, using a recognition-based approach allows for an understanding of tensions and feelings of exclusion that may emerge from practices or discourses

premised on the construction of differences and/or 'othering' (Ahonen et al., 2014; Romani et al., 2019). It also directs attention to the relational nature of inclusion and exclusion (Dobusch, 2021; Pio & Syed, 2018), for instance, how practices that are meant to be inclusive can be perceived as exclusive. Building on this conceptual framing, our findings illustrate how minority organisational members experience representing diversity on and behind the stage as majority members emphasize diversity as 'visibility' and as 'competence,' and how this contributes to negating collective and individual heterogeneity as minority organisational members are thought to be similar or to represent similar experiences and competences. We further theorize these tendencies as forms of misrecognition (Harding et al., 2013; Islam, 2012) that perpetuate feelings of 'difference' and conceal unequal conditions of participation in the organization.

We contribute to the critical literature on diversity and inclusion (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Ahonen et al., 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007) and to research on recognition-based inclusion (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021) by elaborating on the interplay between recognition and misrecognition and by showing how it conditions the ambiguity of minority members' experiences (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022; Ozturk & Berber, 2022; Slay & Smith, 2011). We argue that this is key for understanding how increased representation can promote organisational diversity and inclusion while giving rise to tensions and feelings of exclusion. Understanding the complexity of representing diversity is important in culture and arts where unequal access to decision-making bodies and funding dictates the conditions of participation and with that, who is being represented, and on whose terms (Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013; Saha, 2017).

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 | Representation in culture and arts

Increased representation of minorities is a key intervention for promoting diversity and inclusion in culture, arts, and creative industries (Finkel et al., 2017; Kondo, 1997, 2018). Through the visibility of minority artists and cultures, representation can serve as a source of inspiration, creativity, and self-expression (Cuyler, 2013; Kondo, 2018). In performing arts, representation also enables minority audiences to identify with people who are 'like them' on stage, to see 'their reality' in artistic productions, and to gain a sense of acknowledgment (Kondo, 1997). This marks the power of representation as a possible vehicle for esthetic and political contestation. It can, however, also essentialize and de-historicize difference rather than shed light on the construction of social categories such as race (Hall, 1993), and thus allow for the circulation of 'hegemonic racial ideologies' (Kondo, 2018).

Saha (2017) problematizes the value of increased representation that does not interrogate the underlying power relations within cultural productions. He notes that it would be misleading to assume that the 'reproduction of "negative," "stereotypical" and reductive representations of racial and ethnic minorities will be solved by increasing the numbers of minorities working in the media' (p. 303) as this fails to account for how dominant conditions 'stifle[s] creativity and difference in favor of formula and homogeneity' (p. 303). Saha (2017) elaborates on this in relation to Hall's (1993) notion of 'segregated visibility'; a form of representation and inclusion of minorities that does not shift power relations but supports the emergence of 'carefully regulated' spaces and expressions within culture and arts.

In organization and management studies, the complexity of representation has been studied on a subjective and interpersonal level. Zanoni et al. (2017) illustrated how popular discourse tends to assert 'difference' (e.g., in terms of race or ethnicity) as a source of creativity, which informs how minority artists communicate their creative identities. This may support the forging of fixed identities of 'difference' (as 'other' to the norm) instead of promoting expressions of esthetic and political contestation (Zanoni et al., 2017; cf. Kondo, 1997). The tendency toward homogenization is reflected in the 'burden of representation' (Mercer, 1990) amongst minority artists. As noted, this notion has been used to describe how artists are expected to represent a group identity through their art, for instance, in terms of 'Black culture' (Thackway, 2014; Tolia-Kelly & Morris, 2004).

The experience of representation as a burden has been tied to assumptions of homogeneity within groups, that is, that the experiences and interests of specific minorities are aligned, and that 'culture' is a 'fixed and final property of different racial groups' (Mercer, 1990, 63). Shim (2021) elaborated on this sense of burden in relation to 'tokenism.' She showed how women of color in Western classical music, theorized as a 'white [male] cultural space,' struggle with expectations to represent their race and gender. Not only is this experienced as emotionally and mentally exhausting, but it also affects the outcome of their creative work. Shim's (2021) findings reflect a tendency noted in the literature on tokenism, where being a minority member is often associated with negative outcomes (see e.g., Watkins et al., 2019).

In summary, extant research shows that while the increased representation of minority artists in performing arts is crucial to combat inequalities, it does not necessarily support the creation of more inclusive organisations, nor allow for more diverse artistic expressions. However, less attention has been directed toward the interpersonal and organisational conditions that shape minority experiences in culture and arts. This is of particular interest in the light of recent calls to support the diversification of cultural organisations (Finkel et al., 2017; Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013; Shim, 2021), and to develop a nuanced understanding of the organisational aspects that could promote more equal and just working conditions. To consider this, we turn to critical studies on diversity and inclusion in organisations, and to recognition-based inclusion.

2.2 | Critical studies on diversity and inclusion

Critical diversity research focuses on how diversity is organized, operationalized, and researched (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Ahonen et al., 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Studies have problematized how diversity is treated as an organisational resource linked to performance and profitability (Ahmed, 2012; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Ozturk & Berber, 2022) and used ambiguously (Dortants & Knoppers, 2016). On the one hand, it is argued that when diversity is framed as an issue to be 'solved' (Ahonen & Tienari, 2015) organisational power relations are neglected and differences amongst groups are essentialized (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Romani et al., 2019). This essentialization contributes to the (re)production of White heterosexual, middle-class cisgender men as the norm, supposedly devoid of diverse attributes, while 'others' are cast as 'different' and in need of 'management' (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Prasad & Mills, 1997).

An emphasis on inclusion often accompanies diversity in organisational discourse and practice (Adamson et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2012; Roberson, 2006). Inclusion can be understood as the 'active process in which individuals, groups, organizations, and societies — rather than seeking to foster homogeneity — view and approach diversity as a valued resource' (Ferdman, 2017, 238). Critical scholars have, however, noted how means of (organisational) inclusion are often premised on minority individuals contributing with something that the majority deems to be of value, thus perpetuating a commodification of 'difference' (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021). Organisational practices that seek to be inclusive may contribute to granting 'others' the status of 'subjects' only insofar as they consent to the dominant order (Ahmed, 2012), thus giving rise to tensions between, for instance, self-expression and senses of belongingness (Ferdman, 2017). As a response, Pio and Syed (2018) have, among others, highlighted the need to embrace more relational ways of engaging with inclusion to reduce dualistic thinking premised on binaries (see also Dobusch, 2021; Tyler, 2019), and stressed the importance of grounding ways of knowing in the heterogeneous experiences of minority members.

While the voices of minority members were long overlooked in diversity practice and research (Ahmed & Swan, 2006; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), recent studies highlight how they engage in forms of 'micro-emancipation' (Zanoni et al., 2017) and affirmative identity construction in relation to dominant discourses (Jammaers et al., 2016). Studies show how diversity and inclusion are 'done' through struggles, while also pointing to structural barriers that continue to shape the experiences of marginalized minorities in sometimes ambivalent ways (Liu, 2017; Van Laer & Janssens, 2017). This is reflected in studies that explore, for instance, how stigma (Slay & Smith, 2011), racism (Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021; Ozturk & Berber, 2022), and privilege (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022) are negotiated amongst minority individuals. These studies show that while organizations in the Global North are becoming

more 'diverse,' minority members struggle to position themselves in relation to dominant norms (see also, e.g., Jammaers et al., 2016; Pio & Syed, 2018; Van Laer & Janssens, 2017). Studies also highlight the importance of considering the interpersonal and organisational conditions that prompt ambiguous experiences amongst minority individuals and, thus, perpetuate inequalities.

2.3 | Recognition-based approach to inclusion

In this study, we draw on a recognition-based approach to inclusion. It is premised on acknowledging and affirming collective and individual heterogeneity and can, thereby, allow for a problematization of interpersonal and organisational practices and discourses premised on differences and/or 'othering' (Tyler, 2019). Grounded in Judith Butler's work on subject formation, this approach acknowledges how individuals become subjects through mutual recognition (Harding et al., 2013; Islam, 2012), that is, by being considered equals on an embodied level. Tyler (2019) and Tyler and Vachhani (2021) argue that a recognition-based approach provides an alternative to how 'inclusion' often is practiced in ways that essentialize differences. Rather than *including 'others,'* emphasis is placed on nurturing a relational openness toward them and their heterogeneous expressions of selfhood.

Attempts to include minority individuals on conditional terms can, on the contrary, perpetuate exclusion as individuals are recognized as 'different' rather than as 'subjects' (cf., Ahmed, 2012). This negates rather than affirms individual heterogeneity and may give rise to a sense of misrecognition (Islam, 2012), that is, not being considered as an equal or, for instance, being 'ambivalently recognized' as one simultaneously is affirmed and negated socially (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022). A recognition-based approach can thus allow for a sensitivity to how not all (organisational) subjects are (equally) recognized and how that may relate to specific interpersonal and organisational conditions. Tyler and Vachhani (2021), for instance, elaborate on how processes of 'over-inclusion' and 'exclusion' may work in tandem as some 'differences' are co-opted as an organisational resource while others are negated.

Although Tyler (2019) and Tyler and Vachhani (2021) have elaborated on the relational, onto-epistemological underpinnings of recognition-based inclusion, and illustrated its practical and political potential, few empirical studies have been conducted to further develop the approach. There is little research about how recognition and misrecognition is experienced in relation to how diversity and inclusion is 'done' (cf., Islam, 2012), and how it can inform understanding of minority members' ambiguous sense of neither being 'included' nor 'excluded.' In contrast to critical diversity and inclusion studies that problematize the ongoing construction of 'otherness' from discursive perspectives (Ahonen et al., 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), a recognition-based approach draws attention to how heterogeneity may be acknowledged both organizationally and interpersonally and, in particular, how it can give rise to tensions between organisational ideals, practices, and discourses, and the lived experiences of minorities. This can be of specific value in contexts where the 'co-optation of difference' (Tyler & Vachhani, 2021) may be necessary to challenge dominant norms, for instance, in culture, arts, and creative industries (Finkel et al., 2017), or to account for differences in what may be considered desirable in terms of representation on an individual, organisational, or industry level.

To analyze how minority and majority organisational members negotiate tensions related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity, we draw on the outlined recognition-based approach. This allows us to consider how reciprocal ties between individuals are nurtured and negated when using representation to signal diversity and inclusion, and how it may condition experiences amongst minority members marked by both recognition and sense of power, and misrecognition and sense of burden.

3 | RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 | Organisational and societal context

We build on an ethnographic study of SPAC (pseudonym), a publicly funded performing arts organization in Sweden. SPAC organizes and stages theater and dance performances around the country with the help of volunteer

associations. It was founded on the principle of disseminating 'national Swedish values and culture' and has faced challenges in adapting its repertoires to account for demographic and socio-cultural changes in society. Its mission is to serve artistic ideals *and* to enforce diversity and inclusion, which became increasingly debated questions in Sweden with the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter movements.

Given that SPAC is publicly funded, it is important to situate it in its societal context. Sweden is a developed and a relatively small capitalist democracy that has grown increasingly neoliberal in recent decades. While a gender-egalitarian image is cultivated in societal discourse, and women have made significant advances in the labor market, issues of discrimination remain (Lane & Jordansson, 2020; Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren, 2016). 'Diversity' was adopted in Sweden to refer to ethnicity (and to heterogeneity in terms of national origin) in particular (de los Reyes, 2000). However, the Swedish labor market remains segregated not only in terms of gender but also ethnicity and race (Hübinette et al., 2012). Unemployment is persistently higher among migrant men and women, even of the second generation, and ethnic minorities are often perceived as less suitable for qualified jobs (Rydgren, 2004; Vogiazides & Mondani, 2020). These tendencies are mirrored in culture and arts where issues related to diversity, inclusion, discrimination, and barriers to equal participation are continuously discussed (Kulturanalys, 2015, 2017, 2022).

3.2 | Ethnographic approach and focus of the study

Between August 2018 and January 2020, the first author worked as an in-house researcher at SPAC with a focus on diversity and inclusion. She conducted participant observation of daily work (including meetings and rehearsals) and theater performances. A total of 68 pages of fieldnotes were written during the research, depicting organisational relations and practices. The first author also conducted interviews with 39 people from the management team, human resources department, and artistic departments (including artists, staging crew, and producers). The interviewees were encouraged to reflect on questions related to diversity and inclusion. Thirteen of the interviewees were born in Sweden to migrant parents, came to Sweden as children, or are newly arrived migrants. Nine were interviewed several times as they were specifically interested in the first author's work.

Through observations and interviews, the first author gained an in-depth understanding of SPAC as an organization, the practices in place to work toward the stated diversity and inclusion objectives, and how organisational members experienced these. It became clear that a central aim at SPAC was to support a more 'pluralistic' conception of 'culture' by promoting 'diversity' on the stage (in the selection of repertoires and performers), in front of it (in the audience), and behind it (in production). This was done by increasing the representation of minority group members (i.e., those not seen as White Swedes) and by developing repertoires that were understood to cater for 'broader audiences,' for instance, in terms of cultural background. Increased representation was emphasized at all levels of the organization: in top management decision-making, in artistic creative processes (such as auditions, choices of repertoires, casting, and plays), and in support functions such as human resources. Most minority organisational members reflected on how they felt empowered working at SPAC. However, experiences of being different and marginalized persisted.

This discrepancy led the first author to reflect on how representation was 'done' in the organization and how it was often treated as a means to an end such as achieving 'diversity.' She began to explore the power and burden of representation (Thackway, 2014; Tolia-Kelly & Morris, 2004) amongst minority organisational members by making use of her position as an in-house ethnographer. The distinction between 'on stage' (who is represented and what happens in staging and performing plays) and 'behind the stage' (who is represented and what happens in production, management, and other key activities in the organization) became important for the research process that iterated between empirical analysis and theorizing.

3.3 | The authors and collaborative reflexivity

After her initial analytical explorations with issues around representation, the first author invited the second and third authors to join the study. The question of 'who speaks and where one speaks from' (Just, Risberg, and Villesèche, 2021)

is important when studying diversity and inclusion as it influences which dynamics of power are made central in the analysis and how these are understood. The research process was guided by the authors' attempts to collectively embrace the embodied 'craftiness' of analyzing and writing (Bell & Willmott, 2020). Reflexivity became a means to account for the messiness and indeterminacy in doing research together, promoting a form of situated rather than confined knowledge production (ibid.).

The first author is of Asian origin. She migrated to Sweden some 20 years ago, speaks Swedish fluently, and is a Swedish citizen. As a representative of a visible ethnic minority in Sweden, she was often seen as an 'in-group' member by the research participants with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds. In interviews and informal conversations, they tended to shift from using 'I' and 'you' to 'we' and 'us' to include the first author in their experiences. There was an implicit assumption of shared experiences, grounded in a shared 'otherness' vis-à-vis (an often unstated) ethnic or racial norm in Swedish society and organizations. The recognition of her own position in representation and the tension connected to it has inspired the first author to conduct this work.

The second author is a White academic who is not Swedish, although he has lived in Sweden and has experienced being a minority there. Having worked together on earlier projects, he acted as a sounding board for the first author and helped to develop the theoretical framing and the empirical storyline. The third author is a White Swede who has worked with the first author on another project on SPAC and was familiar with its diversity and inclusion work. While helping to develop the theoretical framing and the analysis of materials, as a White Swede, she could situate the tensions that emerged at SPAC within the broader societal context from the majority point of view.

Collaborative reflexivity is, however, a complex issue. Throughout the research process, it became evident that the authors were positioned differently in relation to, and had different preconceptions of, the subject of inquiry. While the first author often identified with how minorities at SPAC negotiated their experiences, the second and third authors made continuous efforts to understand what it means to be labeled 'diverse' in Sweden, each from a different position. This 'experience gap' between the authors mirrored different perceptions in the SPAC organization, where the (primarily White) management team and artistic decision-makers struggled at times to understand why efforts for diversity and inclusion were not as successful as they expected. The authors, thus, made use of their multiple positionings to appreciate the complexity of the interpersonal and organisational conditions at SPAC.

3.4 | Analytical process

The analysis was guided by an interpretive phenomenological approach (Smith et al., 2009). The authors engaged in close hermeneutical reading and re-reading of the first author's materials, gradually developing a feeling for the parts (e.g., interviewee statements as people made sense of their own and others' experiences) and the whole (e.g., connecting statements with other statements and observations). Interpretations were based on a dynamic combination of cues in the material as the authors made constant efforts to make sense of examples of interview and observational material that seemed to be representative of potentially important parts of the whole (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2018).

Emphasis was initially placed on how individuals made sense of their experiences and those of others in the organization, especially regarding developing 'inclusive' organisational practices or being 'included' through 'representation.' The first author went through all interview data and fieldnotes to mark incidents, comments, and discussions related to 'diversity,' 'inclusion,' and 'difference,' and reflections on being proud of representing 'diversity' as well as pressure and stress resulting from it. A preliminary outline of the material was then constructed. Here, ethnicity and race seemed to play a key part, especially given how the visibility of 'non-norm' bodies (representing ethnic and/or racial minorities) was often emphasized on stage. In the Swedish context there is a strong norm of conflating 'ethnic Swedishness' with being White rather than, for instance, sharing a similar cultural background. This 'doing' of ethnicity/race is part of how power relations materialize in Swedish organizations, perpetuating demarcations between White and non-White bodies (Hübinette et al., 2012).

To elaborate on how minority and majority members negotiated tensions related to representing diversity, and being made to represent diversity, the authors turned to critical literature on diversity and inclusion (Ahonen et al., 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007) and to the notion of recognition-based inclusion (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021). This meant engaging with the empirical materials while taking power relations, forms of essentializing and othering, and possible tensions related to 'inclusion' (e.g., by increased representation) into account by exploring them alongside conditions that either affirmed or negated subjects' expression of selfhood (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021). Attention was directed to *how* interpersonal relations and organisational practices that were meant to ensure diversity and inclusion at SPAC accounted for minority individuals, their experiences, and forms of self-expression. This allowed for an understanding of how differences between organisational ideals and lived experiences of minorities emerged, interpersonally and organizationally, and how these often reflected a tension between being represented (for instance, as a 'Black' or 'Latino/Latina' body) and being recognized (as a creative, competent subject).

The recognition-based approach helped to sensitize the authors to the conditions that supported and negated the power and burden of representation and how these were negotiated. This contributed to further insights into the interplay between recognition (through increased representation) and misrecognition (through negation of heterogeneity) at SPAC, and how it could take different forms on and behind the stage. It became clear that while diversity on stage primarily was seen as a matter of visibility (of 'diverse' bodies), diversity behind the stage was equated with competence, albeit often without further reflection of what this entailed. By reading these forms of 'recognition' through the experiences of minority members, the authors delineated how representation, at times, contributed to negating both collective and individual heterogeneity of difference. These instances were then theorized as forms of misrecognition (Harding et al., 2013; Islam, 2012; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021).

In what follows, our key findings are presented according to the analytical distinction between on and behind the stage. We use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants in the study. To further anonymize individuals' identities, we have in most cases removed the obvious indications of race and ethnicity. We also blurred the specific positions they occupy in the organization and use general descriptions or traits to imply their organisational roles.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | Diversity as visibility: Negotiating the power and burden of representation on stage

4.1.1 | Setting the scene, conditioning possibilities

In a publicly funded performing arts organization like SPAC, productions are not merely evaluated by their esthetic and artistic quality. They are expected to align with the 'culturally pluralist' ideals of contemporary Swedish society and to offer something to 'everyone, everywhere.' The stage is seen as a primary site to visibly realize the organization's diversity mission and aims. As stated by Michael, one of the top decision makers in the organization:

> We work on diversity and inclusion in everything we do. We aim at performing arts productions that reflect the lives of immigrants and refugees here in Sweden. We try to attract people with diverse cultural backgrounds to the theatre and we try to recruit individuals with different backgrounds and experience.

As emphasized by Michael, promoting 'cultural pluralism' is a core value of the organization. Increased ('diverse') representation on stage is understood as central to its strategy. This is grounded in the belief that representation would not only help promote social justice in production processes but also enable audiences to identify with people who are 'like them' on stage (Kondo, 1997). Actors and casting crew who represent ethnic minorities are recruited,

and visibility of diversity is actively promoted. James, one of the artistic decision-makers, is supportive of the idea but he also reflected on the sensitivity of the matter:

> Being a middle-aged white man, a decision-maker, in a way, I understand my responsibility here in terms of the inclusion of others. Yet, I also know that I am to be 'blamed' [gestures with hands] as I represent the authority in such a stereotypical way. I am always prepared to take the blame for this. I want people to know that I want to be part of the change.

James told the first author that he is often faced with the question of whether he chooses a performer based on their professionalism or their appearance and skin color. While James found this challenging, he insisted that:

> I always tell them that technique comes first in my decision to select a performer. But honestly, I need a black performer on stage, too. This diverse representation is a message we want to send out. On the individual level, I know nobody wants to be just a representation of identity of some group. Artists want to be recognised as unique selves. This is such a dilemma.

There were conflicting views among management at SPAC regarding how representation of diversity should be 'done' and in what productions. Lena, another artistic decision-maker, for instance, insisted that diverse representation should not interfere with esthetic styles: 'Working with art, I know there are some principles that should not be breached. For example, I don't use persons of other ethnicities for a classic western dance genre, because this would not be aesthetically correct.' These kinds of comments, indicating 'yes, but…' were not uncommon in interviews with majority decision-makers at SPAC. By drawing on the importance of 'artistic freedom,' narrow esthetic models of art were discursively reproduced (Johansson and Lindström, 2021). This contributed to justifying the exclusion of people of 'other' racial or ethnic backgrounds to be included on equal terms with majority members. Recruitment of more 'diverse' employees did not necessarily translate into equal recognition of artistic capabilities or esthetic value.

The organization of representation on stage, thus, failed to challenge existing power relations at SPAC and, instead, perpetuated forms of 'othering.' This also created tensions for individual performers. Angela is an actress whose family migrated to Sweden when she was a child. She grew up in Sweden and Swedish is one of her native tongues. Angela told the first author how she on stage often ends up representing those who differ from the Swedish norm:

> I often get roles as someone who is not Swedish, or classic white Swedish. But I have also noticed that I sometimes… because I do not look like… that I am often also questioned, that it is like 'are you really a full Latin American?', I often hear, 'your skin is so light, you have green eyes.' So it is that many… That the industry wants to have a clear picture of what immigrants should look like.

Angela's experiences show the ambiguity of being a minority. Referring to her skin color, Angela said with some irony that she is 'sometimes, but not very often, allowed to play like a normal person, because I am a little lighter.'

Tensions regarding recognizing diversity were further visible during the first author's fieldwork. In productions where the representation of 'diverse' bodies (e.g., in terms of ethnicity or race) was seen as 'acceptable' there was often a lack of recognition of the multiplicity of non-Swedish cultures and the lived experiences of individuals. The first author observed critical discussions on clichéd or homogeneous representations of 'otherness' on stage, particularly by minority individuals. Some thought that instead of representing the 'authentic' lives of, for instance, immigrants, SPAC tended to produce plays of their assumed struggles in ways that contributed to reinforcing narrow depictions of minority groups.

4.1.2 | Casting 'others,' constructing homogeneity

A typical repertoire at SPAC would be a story about refugees who were repressed in their home country, came to Sweden only to encounter cultural clashes, and then overcame the difficulties with the help of Swedish friends. Such

representations can be understood as affirming established racialized hierarchies in Sweden, that is, between the White, helpful Swede and racialized, helpless 'other.' This was also reflected in the audience as such productions often failed to attract those whose 'issues' they intended to represent, for instance, those who had struggled to survive in Sweden due to racism or discrimination. While claiming to stage cultural pluralism to attract pluralism, these representations partially contributed to separating (homogenous) audiences from the 'diverse' stories told. David, one of the artistic decision-makers, reflected on this:

> Yes, I understand that many people do not appreciate representations being arranged like this on stage. I am aware that sometimes they reproduce stereotypes. But we must include a broad range of repertoires that satisfy the tastes of many. We have productions of Swedish classics that are recognisable by Swedish, typically elderly people. We also need repertoires that reflect lives of LBGTQ people, foreigners, and refugees. Artistic value is extremely important, but we also have another mission that is to satisfy the needs of our audiences. We present a variety of repertoires, and we try to include diverse casting members. This is how we work on diversity.

David struggled with the balance between artistic quality, the representation of 'authentic' lives, and the obligation to promote diversity both on, and in front of, the stage. To satisfy 'the needs of audiences,' a variety of repertoires were developed, yet there seemed to be little discussion on how some of these contributed to representing 'difference' through recognizable traits and stereotypes to fit rather than contest established norms.

Producers and production developers in SPAC did continuously attempt to relate to 'true lives' of 'others' (for example, immigrants) that they sought to represent. They would, for instance, interview people and investigate relevant events to develop their productions, with the aim of representing and recognizing the reality of 'others' through plots that helped to communicate both 'with' and 'about' them. However, increased representation in terms of visibility could be mistaken for recognition of different stories and experiences, and how these vary among embodiments of 'difference' vis-à-vis the White Swedish norm. John, who worked in an internal consultant role, elaborated on his struggles with this:

> I was asked by a producer about my point of view on a new production about the struggle of immigrants. I was shocked that this person assumed that [as an immigrant] I must have struggled. He took it for granted that I held insights about it without getting to know me but only based on how I look and because I am a foreigner. This happens quite often. I defy such behaviours because they make me feel very different from the 'normal' citizens, which I refuse to accept.

John comes from a middle-class family who had moved to Sweden a few decades ago due to the war in their home country. John seemed to understand himself as an 'insider-outsider' in the organization and in Swedish society, which became problematic when being confronted with narrow representations of 'immigrants.' To counteract this, John hoped to promote artistic work that captured the complex lived experiences of people 'like him,' that is, representations that reflect a multitude of stories and not only diverse bodies:

> We must reconsider what we present on stage with deeper reflection and more inclusive thinking. The use of representation on stage needs to truly represent people's lives, different lives. The categories of being 'different,' if this is how we are perceived, need to be of a broader range. We are workers, intellectuals, doctors, and students… some of us struggle and others thrive. I do not identify with those being presented by the repertoires and plays. I often feel degraded by them. I know many have expressed concerns like this, but it seems that we keep producing the same kind of stuff.

John was visibly frustrated when sharing his experiences. It was clear that for him, the power of representation on stage does not come through. He longed for being seen and heard as a professional and not as a 'diverse' organisational

member, especially as a reduction to the latter often meant reproducing a particular idea of 'otherness' and assuming that all who had migrated to Sweden shared similar experiences. For John and many others, how representation was used to 'stage' diversity perpetuated ideas about those seen as 'others.'

4.1.3 | Recognizing appearances, not experiences

Performers from ethnic minority backgrounds, and with 'foreign' appearances, were most often assigned roles of 'others' as if they were better equipped at representing and relating to such characters due to somehow embodying diversity. The first author, however, noted how many minority actors struggled when working on such projects, even though the projects were supposed to emphasize and affirm diversity and inclusion. While they were 'included,' there seemed to be a lack of recognition as emphasis was placed on their appearances and not their diverse experiences, for instance, regarding cultural background. Angela elaborated:

> Sometimes, I feel I am locked into playing roles as foreigners because of how I look. [...] I don't like it. But I don't give up. And, as an actor, I want to play any character, white, black, Latina, Asian... This should not matter. I am grateful that I have a chance to be on stage. Being seen on stage is better than not, right?

The continuous casting of Angela and other minority actors as 'others' seemed to perpetuate a sense of being 'different' at SPAC. With that, the supposed power of representation turned into a burden as they were reduced to representing a specific group. This did not only limit their artistic possibilities in terms of offered roles but perpetuated a way of 'doing' diversity where all who were different from the White Swedish norm were seen as belonging to a homogenous group.

In interviews with the first author, minority actors often acknowledged how specific, although at times limiting, representations allowed for an increased visibility of diverse bodies which served as a powerful means to promote diversity, especially on stage, as John stated. While the emphasis on diversity on stage was meant to make various bodies, experiences, and stories visible, it often perpetuated ambiguous feelings amongst minority members. They expressed a combination of feeling empowered, grateful, and motivated to make a difference in the organization (and in the Swedish cultural scene more broadly) and of a sense of lack of recognition and appreciation. The latter were often discussed in relation to the (re)production of narrow representations, or segregated visibility (Hall, 1993), which also contributed to minority actors being excluded from roles reserved for Whites and continuously cast as 'others.' These tendencies, mirrored in both organisational practices (e.g., artistic decision-making) and interpersonal relations (e.g., how individuals justified their decisions) contributed to a misrecognition of *collective heterogeneity* as minority members were thought to be similar, or to represent similar experiences despite having different ethnic backgrounds and histories. Those who were labeled diverse were thus not recognized as culturally diverse but solely as members of a homogenous collective of 'otherness' (Mercer, 1990).

4.2 | Diversity as competence: Negotiating the power and burden of representation behind the stage

4.2.1 | Promoting diversity, overlooking differences

At SPAC, diversity and inclusion are not only pursued on stage but behind it, within management, administration, and human resources. The most common practice for increasing diversity behind the stage is to recruit people of diverse ethnic backgrounds on all levels and positions. When the first author asked whether Michael, one of the

administrative decision-makers, sought representation of diversity or competences in candidates for key positions, he quickly linked the two. Referring to Maria, quoted in the introduction, Michael noted:

> Well, I am aware that there are concerns about the recruitment of Maria and others. I understand the suspicion of filling a quota. However, what I see is the level of competence, energy, and potential. What I mean is that I see people with other types of backgrounds, including cultural backgrounds, different language skills, and experiences of having lived in other countries that are unique advantages. So, we decide to recruit such people. Yes, they do belong to diversity groups, but they stand out with their competences, too. Diversity is competence, in short.

Defining diversity as 'competence' helped Michael legitimize the use of representation as a strategic management approach. However, while Michael was confident in his approach, the views among other organisational members varied, especially among those who were meant to be 'included.' Many argued that the well-intentioned practices contributed to perpetuate differences between minority and majority members. Johanna, who was recently recruited to SPAC, was skeptical toward the straight-forward definition of diversity as 'competence' as she wished to be recognized as any other competent person:

> I know this sounds positive and I am grateful to have the support from the management… However, we need, at some point, to ask what is understood as competence. I want to be evaluated like all others because I feel equal to others until someone reminds me that I am not. I think that to say diversity is competence somehow makes me feel different. I believe I am competent and professional and have the experience for the job I am doing. So, I want to be evaluated by the same standards, not just by my so-called difference.

The first author observed how this tension surfaced time and time again. Minority members expressed concern that while their 'difference' was discursively highlighted, their professional qualities and competences were not fully recognized, and they were not treated as equals. Instead, they were made to represent a specific type of unspecified competence that was seen as directly related to their race or assumed minority belonging.

Much like on stage, promoting diversity by increasing the ratio of diverse ethnic and/or racial backgrounds behind the stage conflated the matter into one of numerical representation. Being reduced to representing an ethnic or racial group was seen by minority members to undermine their sense of individuality and competence, which contributed to understanding representation also as a source of burden. In recruitment processes, minority members carried a burden of suspicion that they were not chosen for competences and skills but to fill a quota of some sort. Maria expressed her struggle with this:

> I know there is talk about whether I am qualified for my job or whether I was recruited as a diversity quota person. I even doubted the decision myself in the beginning. I feel I need to explain to people about my qualifications. They make me feel that I am not qualified for the job but hired because of my skin colour. After some time, I convinced myself that I am fit for this job. I have long experience in my previous positions, maybe not in this scope, but you must begin somewhere, right?

Maria was visually distinguishable from the White Swedish norm although she has lived in Sweden since childhood and speaks the language fluently. She was aware that the decision to recruit her from outside the organization raised concerns, which she said had made her question herself, too, early on. Maria said that she came to accept her position

and that it represented a 'powerful gesture of opportunities' for people who have a similar background and appearance as her. Yet this came with bewildering feelings:

> I wish they would not come to me as someone who has a profound understanding of discriminating behaviour, inequality, unfairness, and so forth. When such topics are brought up in a conversation, people turn to me for confirmation. This makes me feel sick sometimes.

4.2.2 | Taking on a burden, expressing power

When dealing with the burden of representing others, minority members often expressed feelings of both doubt and enthusiasm for making changes. For example, while expressing frustration with being treated 'differently,' Maria also emphasized a strong willingness to use her position to make a difference in the organization, in performing arts, and in society at large. Like many of her colleagues, Maria strived to make visible the experiences and competencies of others 'who look like [her],' thus signaling a sense of empowerment grounded in one's possibility to represent diversity. Rebecca, an administrator whose parents moved to Sweden when she was very young, offered another example of this:

> I grew up here in Sweden, but I know I am different. I don't want my kids to experience the same. They are Swedish but look a bit different. They deserve to be treated equally and with justice. I like [SPAC] because I feel I can do something here. I can provide the children in this suburb where immigrants are concentrated a chance to take part in performing arts. I hope what I do contributes to something bigger.

While inspired to work toward including and representing 'others' in socially just ways, individuals like Rebecca hoped to receive organisational support and recognition for their efforts. Many efforts were, however, left unacknowledged. In daily practices, the idea of diversity as 'competence' did not always materialize as proponents thought it would. Anna is a producer who had migrated to Sweden with her family when she was a child. She speaks Swedish fluently and views her ethnic background, and sensitivity toward non-norm bodies and esthetics, as a resource in her work:

> I sometimes see things that a Swedish producer cannot see. For example, when we have a dark-haired or dark-skinned actor, I suggest a lighter background colour for the scenographer, which is a type of detail that is often overlooked. Actors with darker skin often disappear in dark backgrounds which were typically designed for fair skin and hair colours. I do think we need people with diverse backgrounds to contribute to performing arts with their unique knowledge, but not just to fit the quota. I wish this would be appreciated more.

Here, Anna offered an example of how her own 'difference' helped her understand how to represent non-White bodies on stage. She felt that her specific competence was not always recognized and valued by co-workers and the management, which, in turn, perpetuated inequalities as it influenced how bodies of minority members were acknowledged on stage. A similar sense of not being recognized and valued for the right reasons was evident amongst most minority members, which influenced their experiences of working in the organization. They often positioned themselves as 'outsiders' to the organisational norm that was described as 'typically Swedish.'

4.2.3 | Represented, but misrecognized

Although many minority employees at SPAC were born in Sweden or had migrated at a very young age, they felt being included on conditional terms and in ways that reified assumed differences while negating their unique competences.

While she grew up in Sweden, Johanna was made to feel different due to her appearance. She embraced and rejected the idea of 'being different means being competent.' She wished to be recognized for her professionalism:

> I've always loved art and culture and pursued it ever since I was a young child. But, of course, I have always felt different in the world of arts and culture in Sweden. It is a white world, and I am the odd one in it. [...] But I do not think my different appearance and background make me 'competent' automatically. I standout for my experience and knowledge. Indeed, I often feel that I am not taken seriously. People ... overlook my professionalism. [...] I hope to be recognised more for my personality, competence, knowledge, and experience. This has not been easy.

Johanna struggled between not being taken seriously and attempting to cultivate hope to be recognized not only as a professional but also as an individual. Anna, who was drawn to SPAC for its tolerance and openness, echoed Johanna when reflecting on her decision to leave:

> I've worked here for many years. I must say that I have really liked it. But once you feel that what you try to represent is not appreciated anymore, you grow tired, and you just want to look elsewhere... I believed that my contribution is special because of my different experiences and background. But when you see that your position is easily replaced by just another Swedish male and there is no appreciation for your special contribution, I know my decision to leave was the right thing to do.

A sense of fatigue from not being recognized, here understood as linked to appreciation, was evident amongst minority members at SPAC. Based on the first author's interviews and observations, it became clear that organisational and interpersonal support of the struggles that minorities faced was key to limiting the burden and bolstering the power of representation. How this was supposed to be 'done' was not always evident. Toward the end of her fieldwork, the first author observed how some majority members began to discuss diversity and inclusion as something beyond managerial reach. Mona, a management team member, expressed her confusion:

> We have done everything by the book. We developed a Code of Ethical Conduct and a strategy document. We make sure all departments and units are informed of our strategy on diversity and inclusion. We formed a crisis management team to resolve issues. But when can we achieve our goals?

Mona was clearly frustrated over how doing all the 'right things' did not lead to the desired outcomes. Like many other majority decision-makers, she did not reflect on the daily lives of minorities but reduced diversity and inclusion into a 'goal.' Reaching this goal behind the stage meant increasing the representation of minorities, equating diversity with competence, and assuming that this would translate into inclusion. However, this often led to a sense of misrecognition of *individual heterogeneity* as minority members were thought to be similar, or to represent similar competencies based on their appearances and an assumed sense of belongingness to a minority group. They were not recognized as equal professionals with unique contributions but as 'diverse,' which was discursively conflated with the idea of competence. Many of them expressed a sense of ambiguity related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity as it hindered them from participating in the organization on equal terms.

5 | DISCUSSION

In this paper, we departed from the noted ambiguity related to the power and burden of representation experienced by minorities in culture and arts (Mercer, 1990; Thackway, 2014; Tolia-Kelly & Morris, 2004). We set out to explore how such experiences are conditioned interpersonally and organizationally by examining them through a

recognition-based approach to inclusion (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021). Drawing on an ethnographic study of a performing arts organization in Sweden, we analyzed how minority and majority members negotiated the use of representation to signal diversity and inclusion on and behind the stage. Our findings illustrate that the work on stage was guided by an emphasis on diversity as 'visibility' and that the work behind the stage was steered by diversity as 'competence.' While this was meant to promote more equal conditions for organisational participation, tensions emerged that allowed us to shed light on the complexities of using representation to signal diversity and inclusion.

At SPAC, the power and burden of representation was negotiated differently but interrelatedly on and behind the stage. While diversity was openly celebrated, and artists and decision-makers expressed engagement and motivation to make a difference through their productions, the attempts were not always successful. This was, for instance, evident when increased representation of diversity on stage contributed to a 'segregated visibility' (Hall, 1993) that perpetuated stereotypical assumptions about race and ethnicity, or when minorities were included or consulted regarding productions on conditional terms. Instead of acknowledging possible differences across cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds, minority members were made to represent diversity collectively and in relation to the White norm. On stage, this contributed to the negation of *collective heterogeneity* as minority members were treated as similar and as representing similar experiences because of their (at times assumed) background. The use of increased representation as the vehicle of esthetic and political contestation failed to fully reach its potential.

Behind the stage, the increased representation of minority members was 'done' in ways that equated diversity with competence, which gave rise to similar ambiguous experiences. While, for instance, recruitment had been successful in terms of achieving representation of minorities throughout the organization, and many minority members felt proud and empowered by the possibility of representing change, they also expressed feelings of doubt and hesitation when being made to represent 'difference' as it did not make them feel appreciated as individuals and as professionals. Thus, instead of acknowledging minority members as diverse in terms of their distinct personalities and skills, their competences were affirmed in relation to their difference from the White norm. Behind the stage, this contributed to a negation of *individual heterogeneity* as minority members were treated as similar and as representing similar competences because of their appearances.

Through a recognition-based approach to inclusion (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021), the negation of collective and individual heterogeneity can be theorized as forms of misrecognition (Harding et al., 2013; Islam, 2012) premised on an asymmetry between organisational members, which further conditions the possibilities to participate in organisational life. Instead of being recognized as equals (and thus 'subjects') (cf., Ahmed, 2012) minority members were often expected to represent a specific group identity, which perpetuated the burden of representation (Mercer, 1990). They were, in other words, continuously included and consulted, though in ways that gave rise to ambiguous feelings and that concealed unequal conditions of participation.

Minority and majority members also negotiated representing, and being made to represent, diversity differently. While minority members emphasized the importance of changing the conditions in performing arts by promoting equal participation and heterogenous experiences, majority members at times seemed to view representation as an end in itself, for instance, when emphasizing the importance of making diverse bodies more 'visible' on stage without questioning how this was 'done.' Tensions arose between an ideal organisational state (an inclusive, representative order fulfilling the organization's aims), organisational and interpersonal means of recognition, and the lived experiences of minorities. This cannot be understood in the light of inclusion and exclusion in a dualistic sense (Dobusch, 2021; Pio & Syed, 2018) but rather as a more situated and embodied negotiation where reciprocity continuously was undermined as minority members were included on conditional terms (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021).

Through our recognition-based analysis, we offer a context-specific understanding of minority individuals' organisational experiences (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022; Ozturk & Berber, 2022; Slay & Smith, 2011), and direct attention to how the use of representation to signal diversity and inclusion can give rise to ambiguous feelings marked by both recognition (of difference) and misrecognition (of heterogeneity). In contrast to the question of 'tokenism' (Watkins et al., 2019), the negative outcomes of which often are discussed in relation to being a minority in an organization (Holgersson & Romani, 2020), a recognition-based approach allows us to understand how the lack of appreciation of

the heterogeneity of difference may be the primary issue at play, for instance, regarding backgrounds, experiences, and competences. Being a minority is then not the issue but rather that one's position in the organization is premised on a negation of individual and/or collective heterogeneity, which at SPAC was perpetuated through how representation was used and negotiated.

Our findings, thus, affirm research that emphasizes the importance of directing attention to the specific interpersonal and organisational conditions when studying the ambiguous experiences of minority members (Holgersson & Romani, 2020). Organizations in multicultural societies such as Sweden may, for instance, appear relatively equal in terms of the numerical aspect of representation, while the heterogeneity of difference may not always be readily appreciated or acknowledged. Addressing the possible limits in recognizing heterogeneity could allow for organizations to strengthen the empowering aspects of representation and advance minority members' creative possibilities and agency. This is, arguably, of particular importance in culture and arts as unequal conditions of participation prevail, which further contribute to dictating who is being represented, and on whose terms (Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013; Saha, 2017).

The interpersonal and organisational tensions we have outlined can, to some extent, be seen as specific to the creative industries. In comparison to the work of Tyler and Vachhani (2021), the co-optation of 'difference' can within performing arts serve as an important vehicle for esthetic and political contestation and contribute to challenging dominant cultural norms (Kondo, 1997, 2018). However, while majority performers historically have been allowed to 'transgress' their Whiteness through stereotypical and, at times, derogatory depictions of 'others' (Hübinette et al., 2012), our findings show how minority performers still may be confined to limited cultural scripts and often-assumed minority group's sense of belongingness. This affirms the noted issue regarding how minority performers might (not) be fully recognized subjectively and professionally, which can be linked to the creation of 'carefully regulated' spaces and expressions for minorities in culture and arts (Hall, 1993; Saha, 2017). These may limit not only individuals' artistic agency but also the possibilities for developing productions that subvert norms and challenge prevailing inequalities. Thus, while previous research has illustrated how popular discourses assert 'difference' as a source of creativity that informs minority individuals' identity work (Zanoni et al., 2017), our study shows how it is also conditioned interpersonally and organizationally as 'difference' is asserted through practices meant to be creatively inclusive but that fail to come across as affirming and empowering.

In summary, increased representation can, from a recognition-based understanding (Tyler, 2019; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021), add a not always welcome politicized angle to how inclusion is 'done' if subjects are made to speak for 'others' (as a group), while at the same time not being recognized or allowed to speak for 'themselves' (as subjects). This alludes to a dissonance between the emphasized importance of increased representation across organizations and industries, and attempts to be recognized as a competent, professional, and equal subject while 'representing' a minority group (Shim, 2021). Instead of merely representing diversity by making 'diverse' bodies visible, our findings elucidate how the heterogeneity of difference must be recognized and promoted both collectively and individually. In performing arts, embracing this could allow for producing repertoires that challenge, rather than affirm, existing ways of constructing differences and forms of inclusion and exclusion, and by promoting heterogeneity in the stories told and perspectives highlighted.

6 | CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have explored tensions related to the use of representation to signal diversity and inclusion on and behind the stage in a performing arts organization in Sweden. Drawing on a recognition-based approach to inclusion, we have analyzed how minority and majority members negotiated tensions related to representing, and being made to represent, diversity on both an interpersonal and organisational level. Our findings indicate that for representing, and being made to represent, diversity to be experienced as affirming and empowering by minorities, the organization must foster recognition-based relations that allow for both individual and collective heterogeneity. Otherwise, the use of representation may perpetuate misrecognition amongst minority members and limit the possibilities of equal participation.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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ENDNOTE

[1] All names in the paper are pseudonyms.

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