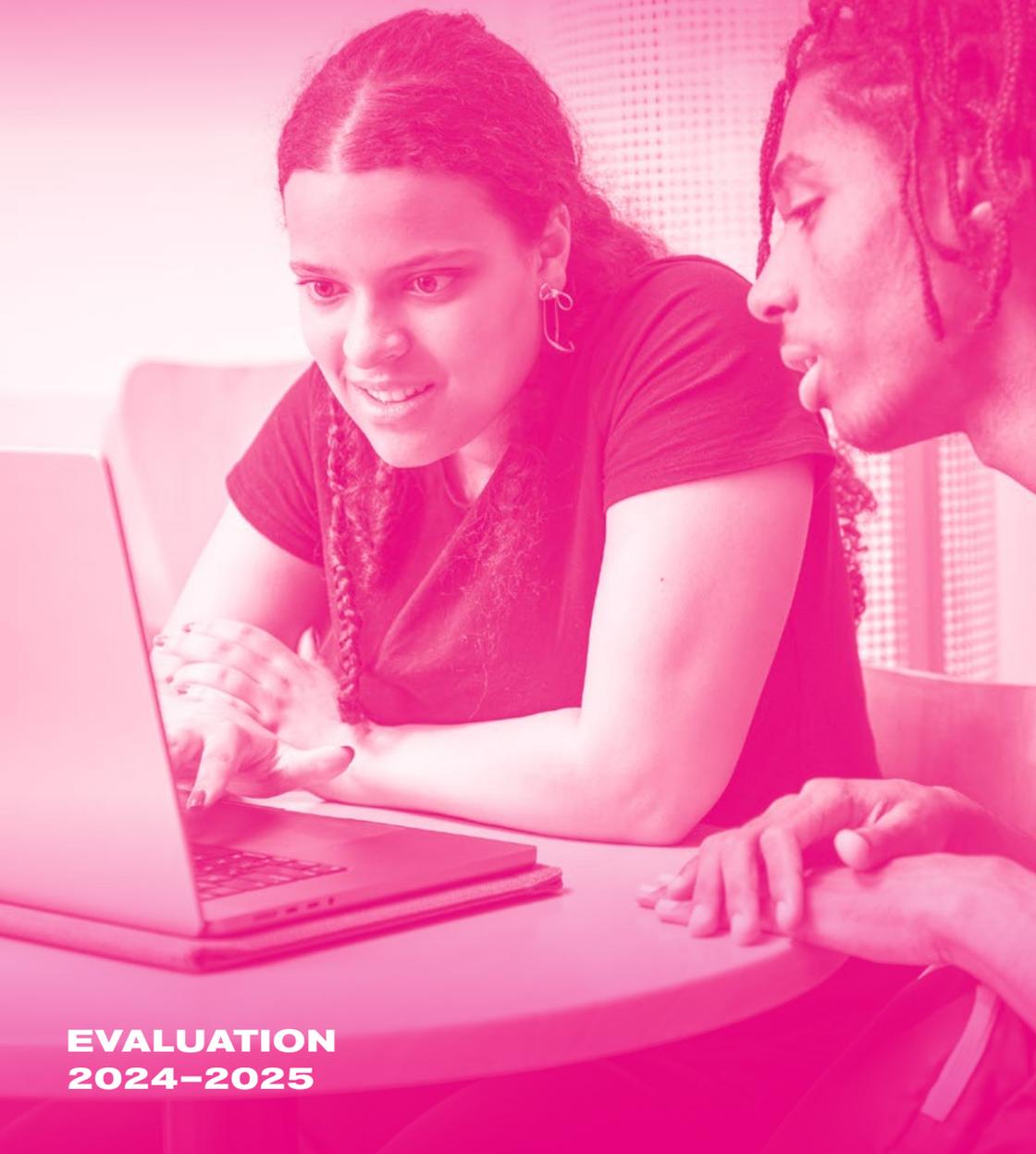


OV WORK EXPERIENCE AT THE OLD VIC



**EVALUATION
2024-2025**

Education & Community at The Old Vic	02
OV Work Experience Programme	03
Participant information	04
Participant outcomes	08
Case study	12
Impact	19
Ideas for the future	23
	27

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SCHOOLS CLUB

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PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Ideas
 Happen
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OV WORK EXPERIENCE

This year The Old Vic offered a one-week work experience programme for up to 20 participants aged 14–18 (OV Work Experience).

Aims of the project:

- Develop key transferable employability skills in communication, presentation, teamwork and problem solving
- Find out about a range of careers in the arts and how to access them
- Gain first-hand insight into the workings of a professional and busy working theatre
- Participants to run their own event, gaining an insight into the elements required, from programming and producing, to marketing and operations.

For one week, participants took part in a series of workshops led by different departments at The Old Vic, such as Production, Marketing and Technical. These workshops explored a side of theatre making that most young people had not encountered before and opened up a range of future career opportunities. Participants also had a playwriting masterclass from an invited professional and were led by two Old Vic facilitators who are active theatre makers. At the end of the week, participants collaborated to curate, produce and deliver their own event, putting to use all the knowledge they had gained throughout the programme.

OV Work Experience fully immerses the participants in a producing theatre, offering invaluable careers advice and supporting the next generation of theatre workers.

‘I think I stepped out of my comfort zone by really engaging and speaking to people I am unfamiliar with’

OV Work Experience Participant

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY AT THE OLD VIC

Our renowned education and community projects inspire learning and connection. Each year we work with over 6,000 people of all ages, from five to 100+, in London and beyond, as well as a further 25,000 through our online learning platform, The Hub. We reach people at all stages of life to support skills development, employment prospects and wellbeing.

Our programmes build community cohesion, open up access to the arts and develop the emerging theatre professionals of tomorrow. We do this through a range of initiatives, including free theatre tickets, workshops delivered at The Old Vic, in schools, in the community and online, and through innovative employability and training programmes.

Our programmes are free to access and focus on engaging with communities who are underrepresented in the theatre industry, or who have limited access to it.



RECRUITMENT AND CRITERIA

The programme ran from 07–11 Jul 2025 in person at Living Space, Waterloo and The Old Vic. The programme was offered to students who had participated in Schools Club or Take the Lead, and for the first time we opened up the programme to students whose school had applied for Schools Club or Take the Lead but had not been selected.

Applications opened in Mar 2025. The invitation to apply was shared with teachers, who then passed it on to their students. The opportunity was promoted to students in the final workshops for Schools Club and Take the Lead. In total, we received 178 applications.

20 people were chosen to take part in the programme and were selected using the following criteria:

- Understands the project
- Interested in a range of roles within the arts
- Demonstrates passion for theatre
- Has no or limited access to opportunities in the arts.

We invited 65 applicants to attend two in-person selection workshops delivered by Education Managers, Becky Rathkey and Alice Watson, and Education & Community Coordinator, Sophia Chimonas. Invited applicants who were unable to attend the in-person selection workshops were offered a virtual interview. 20 young people were offered a place on the programme.

Participants were drawn from a range of London boroughs: Barnet, Brent, Bromley, Croydon, Haringey, Harrow, Hounslow, Lambeth, Merton, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Royal Borough of Greenwich, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth.



DELIVERY

Participants were supported throughout the programme by facilitators Marshall Stay and Roberta Zuric, and the Education & Community team. Each day started with a check-in and a warm-up to ensure participants felt comfortable and prepared for the day ahead and at the end of each day we concluded with a check-out to check on each participant's experience. Workshops were led by relevant Old Vic staff members or by external artists. Breaks were factored in throughout the day alongside wellbeing check-ins with participants. We were also joined by access support workers for two students each day to support them throughout the week with any access requirements.

Participants were offered a ticket to attend the press night performance of *Girl from the North Country* at The Old Vic. This was an opportunity to spend the evening with other participants and to make further connections. Dinner was provided for each participant before the performance.

At the end of the week, participants shared what they had learned throughout the programme. The sharing was called *Theatre's Future: Lost or Evolving* and included a mixture of devised and improvised performance, inviting audience members to enter into a king's court to debate the existence of theatre. Participants in character led on topics of debate, including 'Is theatre as inclusive as it should be?', 'Does AI increase or undermine artistry in theatre?' and 'Will theatre be obsolete?'. Audience members were asked to make their case in support of theatre and dissuade the King, performed by one of the participants, from banning theatre. The sharing was supported by marketing materials, including a poster, digital invitation and video footage celebrating the programme from the participants' perspective.

The sharing was attended by colleagues from across The Old Vic, family members of the participants and staff from some of the participants' schools. At the end of the programme, participants were informed about Backstage, our new six-storey building next door to The Old Vic which has a cafe, script library, studio theatre and the Clore Learning Centre. Participants were also told about future projects they could sign up to.

'I loved the whole experience and all of the people'

OV Work Experience Participant

SCHEDULE

Monday

- Participants took part in warm-up games to get to know each other
- Participants took part in a speed networking session with Old Vic staff.

Tuesday

- Participants took part in an introduction to marketing and social media led by Issy Abdul-Rahim.
- Participants took part in a session on producing with Aimee Belchak and Conor Gray.

Wednesday

- Participants took part in a playwriting workshop with Jahvel Hall
- Participants took part in a session on sound design with Marshall Stay
- Participants attended the evening press night performance of *Girl from the North Country* at The Old Vic.

Thursday

- Participants took part in a session on artistic voice with Marshall Stay and Roberta Zuric
- Participants got to experience different roles within the Technical team and had the opportunity to ask questions to different team members led by Christian Wallace, Alex Riley and Fiona Lehmann. Participants spent the afternoon preparing for their event.

Friday

- Participants spent the morning preparing for their event
- Participants delivered their in-person event.

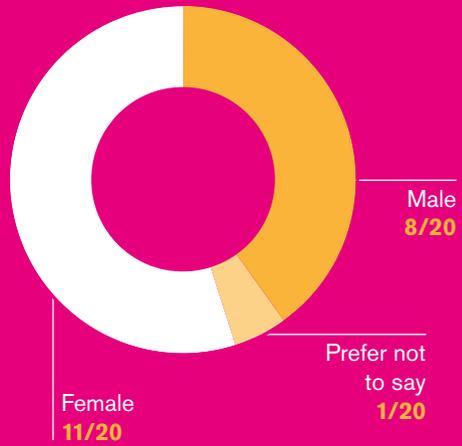


**‘The Old Vic
is so inclusive
and welcoming’**

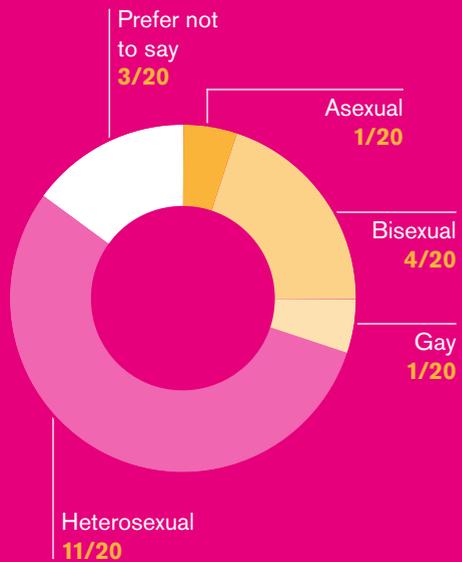
OV Work Experience Participant

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

GENDER



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



IDENTITY

Do you identify as trans?



Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?



AGE

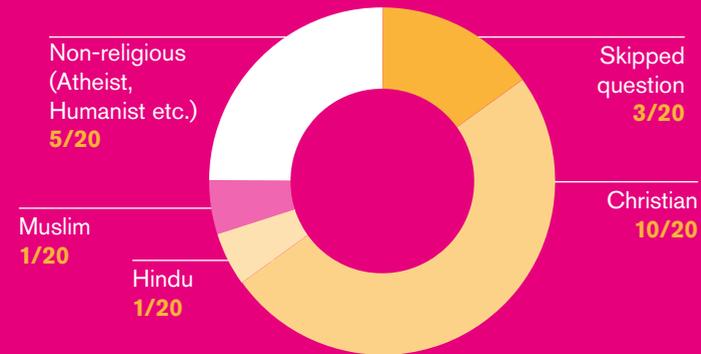
7/20

Under 16

13/20

16–18

RELIGION AND BELIEF



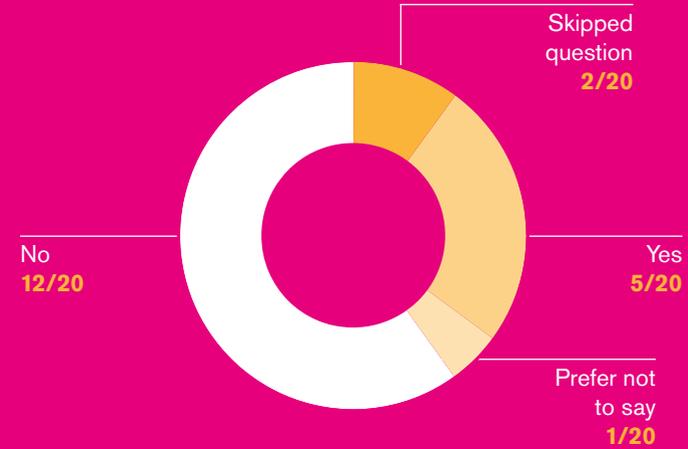
ETHNICITY

- 1/20 Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- 1/20 Asian or Asian British: Indian
- 2/20 Black or Black British: African
- 4/20 Black or Black British: Caribbean
- 1/20 Black or Black British: Other
- 1/20 Mixed: Asian and White
- 1/20 Mixed: Black African and White
- 8/20 White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish
- 1/20 White: Other

Participants specified: African and Caribbean, Polish.



DISABILITY



Of the participants who selected yes:
(able to select more than one response)

1/5 Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)

1/5 Learning, concentrating or remembering (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

4/5 Mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder)

2/5 Social or behavioural issues (e.g. neurodiverse conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder or asperger's syndrome)

1/5 Vision (e.g. blindness or partial sight)

'I now have access to work shadowing, and I know both how to use my skills in a workplace and how to apply for theatre work'

OV Work Experience Participant

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

19 out of the 20 participants filled in the 'after' section of the evaluation.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Before the programme:

19/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic

10/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt connected to The Old Vic.

After the programme:

19/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic

19/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt connected to The Old Vic.

WELLBEING

Before the programme:

19/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were generally confident in their own skills and abilities

13/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident about applying for work.

After the programme:

18/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were generally confident in their own skills and abilities

18/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident about applying for work.

INDUSTRY SKILLS

Before the programme:

16/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident working in a theatre environment.

After the programme:

19/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident working in a theatre environment.

'It gave me the confidence I need to take the next steps in my career whilst preparing me with insight and information I didn't have before. They showed us the different challenges within the jobs and opened up opportunities too'

OV Work Experience Participant

**PARTICIPANT
OUTCOMES**

LIFE SKILLS

Before the programme:

20/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were a good team player

18/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they had good communication skills

17/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were good at problem solving

10/20

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were good at networking.

After the programme:

18/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were a good team player

19/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic

18/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were good at problem solving

17/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt they were good at networking.

'My confidence has improved significantly'

OV Work Experience Participant

QUALITY AND IMPACT

19/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

Overall, this project was excellent

They feel better connected to networks and know how to access opportunities that can help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries

The workshop leaders were excellent at creating a welcoming and inclusive environment

The project had given them the skills and experience that will help with their next creative steps.

18/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

They feel more connected to a community.

17/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

The workshop leaders adapted to their needs

As a result of the project their theatre knowledge and skills were developing

As a result of this project their confidence in themselves had improved.

**PARTICIPANT
OUTCOMES**



PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

QUALITY AND IMPACT

15/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

During this project they did something they didn't know they were capable of.

14/19

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of engaging in this project their mental health and wellbeing has improved.

SCALE

On a scale of 0–100, to what extent do you feel that The Old Vic is an inclusive environment? The average score was:



On a scale of 0–100, how likely would you be to recommend this programme to a friend? The average score was:





CASE STUDY ELLEN

Ellen is a student who took part in The Old Vic's 2025 work experience programme. Passionate about theatre, she signed up with a desire to learn more about the industry and connect with peers who shared similar interests.

She began by discussing how she would describe the programme to a friend, sharing that she would, *'110% recommend this programme, especially to [someone interested in] drama or theatre'.*

For Ellen, one of the most transformative aspects of the experience was how it supported her mental wellbeing and confidence. When asked about this, she said, *'I think it definitely has helped my mental wellbeing, because... going into the experience, I was sort of a lot more reserved... I tend to sort of... close myself off and it takes me... time to open up'.* She continued, *'Just being surrounded by the people that... have the same passion for theatre and, like, knowing you're not going to be judged just helped me so much, and I felt like I was able to express myself a lot more'.*

When asked if the programme had helped with her confidence, Ellen explained that taking part in the experience helped *'boost my confidence a lot more... not only in my creative side, but my sort of talkative side as well. I usually wouldn't talk to a lot of people I don't really know but being around those people, it just sort of helped me push and... I think I've gotten a lot better at talking to people'.*

Ellen also shared how taking part in the programme helped her form lasting friendships and networks. *'I definitely think I have made... good, strong theatre friends... we were all talking about maybe, like, doing something else... outside of the work experience, maybe, like, going to watch a show at The Old Vic again, and sort of, like gathering the group again. It's definitely helped me build friendships.'* She explained how meaningful it was to connect with others who shared her interests, *'Seeing the passion for theatre within the group was just so nice and comforting, because I think through that, I sort of gained more confidence to sort of express my feelings about theatre, and I think it just helped a lot'.* These relationships, built through shared experience, were a key takeaway for her.

When asked what felt special about Old Vic projects, Ellen highlighted the opportunity to see behind the scenes of a professional theatre, backstage, costume, tech, for example. *'A lot of people have their own views on the exterior part of theatre... but no one actually sees the interior. And just going into it, seeing it, made it feel so special.'*

The experience also helped Ellen gain clarity about her future. Initially interested in stage management, she shared, *'It took out my creative side, my tech-savvy side, and I found myself asking a lot more questions'*. When asked whether the programme had equipped her with skills for her next creative steps, she said, *'It's given me a lot of transferable skills, like, the confidence boost was one thing, and then talking to people, applying for things... doing this work experience has definitely made me consider a... theatre job'*.

One of the most useful aspects of the programme, Ellen said, was how interactive the workshops were. *'It wasn't just them presenting and us watching. They said, "Now it's your turn", and that helped me understand what that department was about.'* She even found herself enjoying playwriting despite not usually liking English at school because of the facilitator's inclusive delivery. Ellen explained, *'The way he sort of presented it to you and made you interact with him, like, it... helped me... understand and, like, take in a lot more'*.

When asked about the workshop leaders, Ellen highlighted their openness and said, *'They were willing to share their past experiences and sort of their journey into theatre'*. She added, *'They were so open and interactive. If I got stuck, I could go to Marshall for sound... I knew I had that support'*. She also shared how the facilitators helped ease any nerves on the first day, *'Waiting outside the actual room, it was like... it was a bit awkward. Then we went in, and we saw Roberta, we saw Marshall, we saw Alice and Becky, and they were all just so welcoming, and it was like, sort of like a family, like, theatre family vibe, and it... gave off, like, such a calm, comfortable... sort of connection between all of us'*.

Ellen also had positive feedback about The Old Vic staff more broadly, especially in relation to the networking event. *'On the first day when we met all of the departments, it was just nice, sort of, seeing, like, the whole theatre community come together to... welcome us.'*

When asked what could have been improved, Ellen responded, *'To be honest with you, I couldn't find any faults... it was actually a bit more than I had expected it to be'*.





CONNECTIONS

Throughout the week participants were able to not only develop a connection to The Old Vic but also a connection to a network of people within the theatre industry and a connection to each other. Before the programme began, only 50% of participants said that they felt connected to The Old Vic which increased to 100% at the end of the project. At the end of the project 100% of participants said that they felt better connected to networks and now know how to access opportunities that can help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries.

The participants developed a strong bond throughout the programme and have continued to stay connected to each other since the programme finished.

'I feel as though working with a group of people that have the same passions and are unique really helped me open up and bring my skills into action and I loved seeing everyone work together.' OV Work Experience Participant



'I now know about lots of the working parts of theatre and have contacts in the industry'

OV Work Experience Participant

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CAREER CONFIDENCE

One of the key aims of the programme is to introduce participants to a wide range of roles within the theatre and to inspire confidence for their next creative steps. This year we introduced participants to more roles and departments than previous years. Through the staff networking event, a technical tour and workshops exploring different creative disciplines, participants were able to leave the programme with a broad knowledge of the many career options available within a large theatre. Many participants reported that this was the most useful part of the programme. Participants reported that having this knowledge had enabled them to focus in on the areas of theatre that they really wanted to work in. At the end of the project 19/19 of students said that the project had helped them with their next creative steps.

'I know which parts I enjoy and feel I'd thrive in the most, so will look to pursue that further.' OV Work Experience Participant

Through the practical workshops and the producing of their own event, participants reported that they had developed theatre-making skills throughout the week. At the end of the week 17/19 participants said that as a result of the programme, their theatre knowledge and skills were developing.

'I now know how to use QLab for sound design!'
OV Work Experience Participant

One of the key skills participants gained was in networking. Participants had the opportunity to attend a networking session with Old Vic staff at the start of the week. Many participants reported that this opportunity was not only useful but also boosted their confidence. At the start of the programme 10/20 participants said they were good at networking. By the end of the project this had increased to 17/19 participants.

'Meeting all the staff they were so welcoming. Really boosted my confidence.' OV Work Experience Participant

'I definitely feel like it has helped me gain a lot of transferable skills I can use anywhere and in any job'

OV Work Experience Participant

The development of knowledge and skills led to an increase in confidence in applying for work and also confidence in working for a theatre. At the start of the project 13/20 of participants said they felt confident applying for work, at the end of the project this had increased to 18/19, and 19/19 of participants said they felt confident working in a theatre environment. At the end of the project many participants felt confident to pursue shadowing opportunities and felt they had gained the skills to enable them to network successfully. Since the completion of the project, participants have contacted The Old Vic to enquire about future shadowing opportunities.

'I now have connections at The Old Vic and feel like I have enough knowledge to shadow someone.'
OV Work Experience Participant





IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

BACKSTAGE

The opening of Backstage at The Old Vic will provide a number of opportunities for us to build on the success of the OV Work Experience programme next year. The Clore Learning Centre will allow us to host the entire week onsite, enabling participants to feel a part of the building and therefore deepen their connection to the staff and the theatre. Access to the studio theatre will give us the opportunity to create more hands-on technical skills workshops which we have not been able to provide previously. Having an additional space will provide us with the opportunity to deliver small group sessions to support participants to develop their technical skills in a more focussed environment. The additional resources that the spaces will provide will enable the participants to be more ambitious with their final event. This year, following the success of the sound design workshop, a small group of participants created sound design for the event. Next year, using the studio theatre for the final event will allow for participants to use both sound and lighting throughout. Holding the sharing in Backstage will also enable more Old Vic staff to attend and will provide greater audience capacity overall.

SHADOWING OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the week, participants were able to speak with many members of staff at The Old Vic, not only at the speed networking session but also during individual workshops with different departments. Something that came out of many of the Q&A sessions was that participants are seeking careers within the industry and should try and shadow roles that they are particularly interested in. At the end of the programme, participants reported feeling more confident in networking and approaching organisations for shadowing opportunities. In future years of the programme we would like to be able to offer each participant the opportunity to shadow a department for a day once the programme has finished. This would give the participants additional engagement with The Old Vic and more focussed experience in their area of interest, helping them further with their next creative steps.

‘Keep doing what you’re doing. You’re giving the children hope and motivation to go and believe in what we do’

OV Work Experience Participant

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