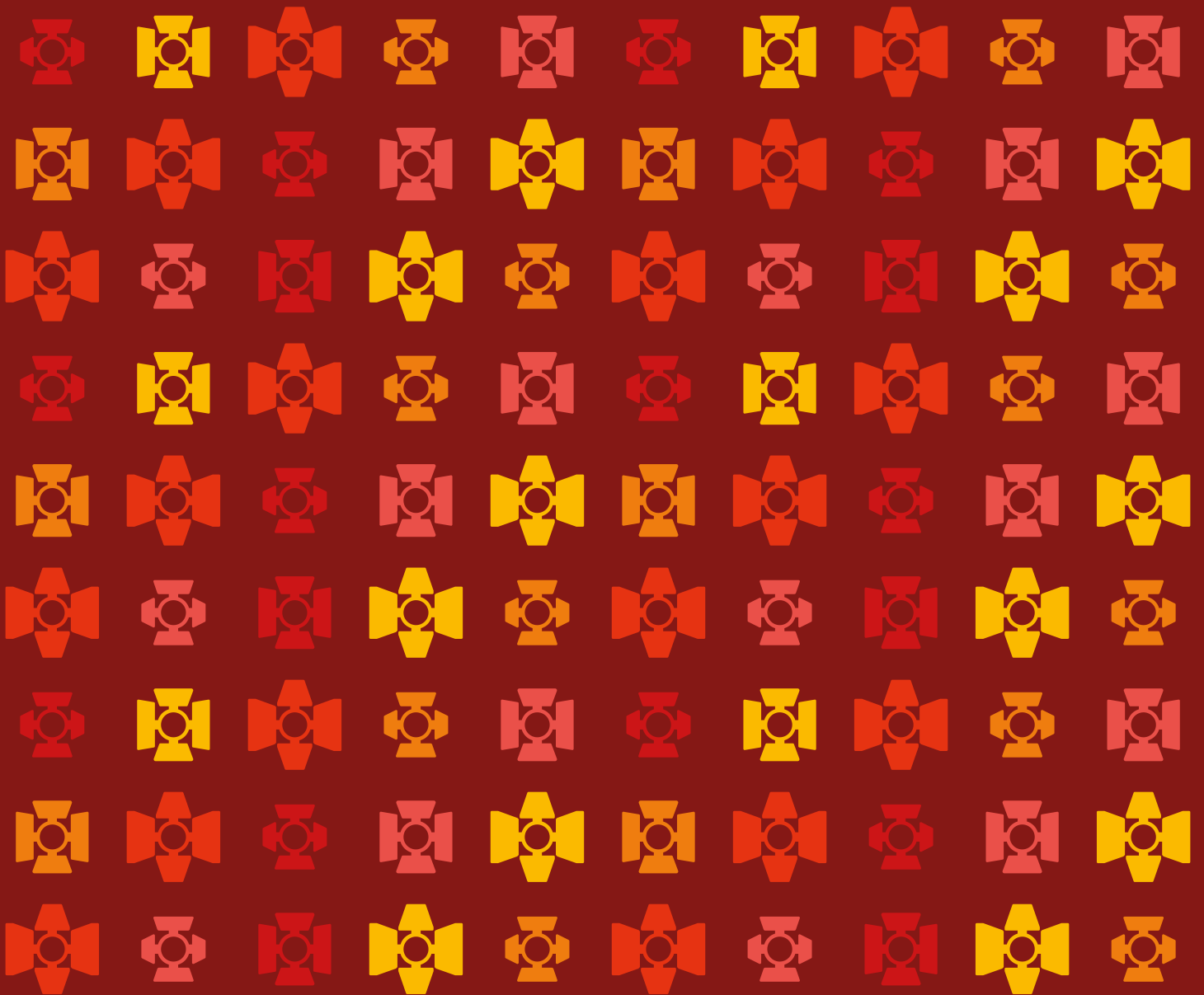


# TOMORROW AT THE OLD VIC END OF PROJECT REPORT



2026

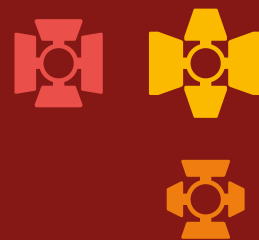


WELCOME  
251

THE OLD VIC

BACKSTAGE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a decade, The Old Vic has been undertaking a transformative capital project, **Tomorrow at The Old Vic**, to improve accessibility and expand the theatre's physical footprint for the first time in over 200 years.

The first phase of the campaign saw improvements to the historic theatre building's exterior in 2017, followed by the refurbishment of the front of house spaces in 2018/19, and the upgrade of the back of house spaces in 2022/23, to significantly improve access in our Grade II\* listed building. This year, the final phase of the project came to fruition with the construction of **Backstage** — a new hub adjacent to the theatre for creativity, education and community.

After an 18-month build, Backstage opened to the public on 20 Oct 2025. The construction of this new civic resource enables us to realise a long-held ambition of creating a permanent home for our successful Education & Community programmes within the walls of The Old Vic for the first time, addressing issues of capacity and increasing the reach and impact of our social mission work.

We are proud to share this report on the successful completion of Backstage, a space that will welcome and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds for generations to come.



View of The Old Vic and Backstage from Waterloo Road

# THE OLD VIC: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

For over 200 years, the independent, not-for-profit Old Vic has been at the centre of its civic, creative and cultural community: London's local theatre with global impact, reaching audiences of 350,000+ every year through the eclectic work on stage and more than 9,000 people off stage through free education, employment and social mobility projects. At the heart of the mission is making The Old Vic open to anyone and Backstage will enable the theatre to go further in strengthening and realising that mission.

Since beginning his tenure as Artistic Director in 2015, Matthew Warchus has been on a 10-year journey to transform The Old Vic into an unintimidating brand with an eclectic and accessible programme and a bright and welcoming building. It has been a decade of change and Backstage marks the culmination of his vision coming to life in bricks and mortar.

Conceived as a centre for inclusive education and creativity, Backstage will deliver life-enhancing opportunities for local communities, schools and emerging creative practitioners. It will also strengthen the theatre's sustainability through new income streams and increased footfall, ensuring this iconic institution remains relevant and resilient for many more years.

Backstage is a space shaped by people, open to all, built for creativity and rooted in community.

**'It is a true honour to be a custodian of this magical theatre at such a momentous time in its 200-year history. Located at the heart of our city, The Old Vic has always strived to be a beacon of entertainment and exploration that hopes to engage as many people as possible. For a decade, the team and I have been committed to making our theatre more welcoming, more adventurous and less intimidating through changes to the physical spaces, and through the work on and off stage. The Backstage building demonstrates this ongoing commitment and marks a new chapter in the life of this wonderful theatre'**

Matthew Warchus, The Old Vic's Artistic Director



Participants take part in a workshop in the Clore Learning Centre

# HISTORY OF 131 WATERLOO ROAD

The site at 131 Waterloo Road, now home to Backstage, has a rich and varied history. From the 1830s until the mid-to late twentieth century, it was occupied by a public house known as The Royal Victoria. A building of similar footprint first appears on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map; during the Second World War, the structure sustained severe damage from bombing; a wartime photograph (see below) illustrates the extent of destruction, suggesting the building was gutted by fire and lost much of its original façade. Today, each floor of Backstage features bare brickwork, purposefully left exposed as a celebration of the history of our extraordinary building and a reminder of its resilience (see right).

Post-war repairs saw the removal of the upper floors and a remodelling of the frontage in a contemporary style. By the early 2000s, the premises operated as the Waterloo Bar and Kitchen and, in 2019, it was refurbished and reopened as the cocktail bar Hello Darling, before becoming vacant during the pandemic. The building was demolished in early 2024 to enable the construction of Backstage, transforming a disused site into a vibrant community hub.



Exposed brickwork in the Clore Learning Centre



Bomb damage to 131 Waterloo Road, c.1941



131 Waterloo Road: before and after

# THE JOURNEY TO BACKSTAGE

## Sep 2022

Planning permission granted by Lambeth Council

## Feb 2023

Technical design of the building finalised with project architect Haworth Tompkins



## Mar 2023

Tender process to appoint Main Contractor to oversee construction programme commences

## Oct 2023

Rise Contracts appointed as Main Contractor

## Jan 2024

Build programme begins with the demolition of existing site at 131 Waterloo Road



## Mar 2024

A Breaking Ground event is held on site to mark the transition from demolition to construction

## Apr 2024

The Old Vic's time capsule is buried in the foundations of the building, containing 20 objects reflecting the theatre's decorated history



## May 2024

Site groundworks complete and construction of Backstage begins

## Sep 2024

Installation of the building's timber superstructure



## Dec 2024

The building is made watertight and internal fit-out begins

### May 2025

Main construction and fit-out of the building are complete

### 25 Jul 2025

Partial possession and handover of the site to The Old Vic to continue its setup

### Aug 2025

Brise Soleil façade is installed, snagging and testing phase begins and loose furniture and fittings are procured



### 08 Sep 2025

Practical Completion is achieved and The Old Vic takes full control of the site

### 20 Oct 2025

Backstage soft launches to the public: Cafe & Bar and Borthwick Script Library open



### 06 Nov 2025

The building is formally opened at the Backstage Opening Party



Matthew Warchus, Justine Simons and Laura Stevenson



### 22 Nov 2025

Old Vic friends and local residents are invited to an **Open Day** to celebrate the new space.



# THE BACKSTAGE BUILDING

The new six-storey building represents a significant expansion for The Old Vic, adding 836m<sup>2</sup> (GEA) of space and increasing our front of house footprint by 25%. This contemporary and colourful creative hub, with sustainability and accessibility at its core, will be game-changing for our social mission.

**‘Our hope is that this new extension welcomes even more people into our theatre: to eat and drink in our new cafe, to participate in our education programmes and to see new work in our Greene Studio. It is also a building for artists with more space to create and to collaborate. I am so grateful to all those who have helped to make this happen’**

Laura Stevenson, The Old Vic's Executive Director

## **B – Basement and Professional Kitchen**

The basement level of Backstage is equipped with the facilities needed to support the building's Food & Beverage (F&B) operations — a secondary income stream to support our unsubsidised business model — including a professional kitchen and chef's dressing room. This floor also includes toilets and changing facilities, and connects to our Back of House spaces in the historic building (eg staff offices, cast dressing rooms and Stage Door).

## **G – Cafe & Bar**

At ground level, visitors enter to a fully accessible and welcoming reception area and vibrant triple-height Cafe & Bar, inviting for local residents and workers and offering the opportunity for the local community to be informally introduced to the theatre. The Cafe & Bar is supported by the Jenkins family.

Backstage's F&B offering is designed to provide affordable all-day dining and drinking in a stylish and accessible environment, where everyone feels welcome. In the daytime, the cafe has wide customer appeal offering options from a coffee bar alongside quality smaller food items. It centres around counter service and offers a comfortable and inviting space for visitors to relax or work.

In the evening, the Cafe & Bar transitions into a social space featuring small plates and an eclectic drinks list, offering table service for pre-theatre dining and the opportunity for post-show events such as live music.



Cafe & Bar



Cafe & Bar



Triple-height space connecting the Cafe & Bar to the Borthwick Script Library

## 1 — Borthwick Script Library, Writers' Room and Sir Donald Gosling Balcony

The Borthwick Script Library, a free to access resource for the public and emerging artists, stocked with scripts in partnership with a number of publishers and individual donations, addresses the limited selection of plays available in local libraries. The shelves also serve as a 'wall of curiosity' providing a place for props and artefacts to be displayed and celebrate The Old Vic's rich theatrical heritage.

The Writers' Room, supported by Nick Clarry and Tim & Sarah Minchin, is a flexible, double-height space that is designed for freelance artists to create work, hold readings and will be home to a new OV Creative Residencies programme.

This floor is also an extension of the ground floor level Cafe & Bar with additional seating areas, for visitors to read a script, work or dine.

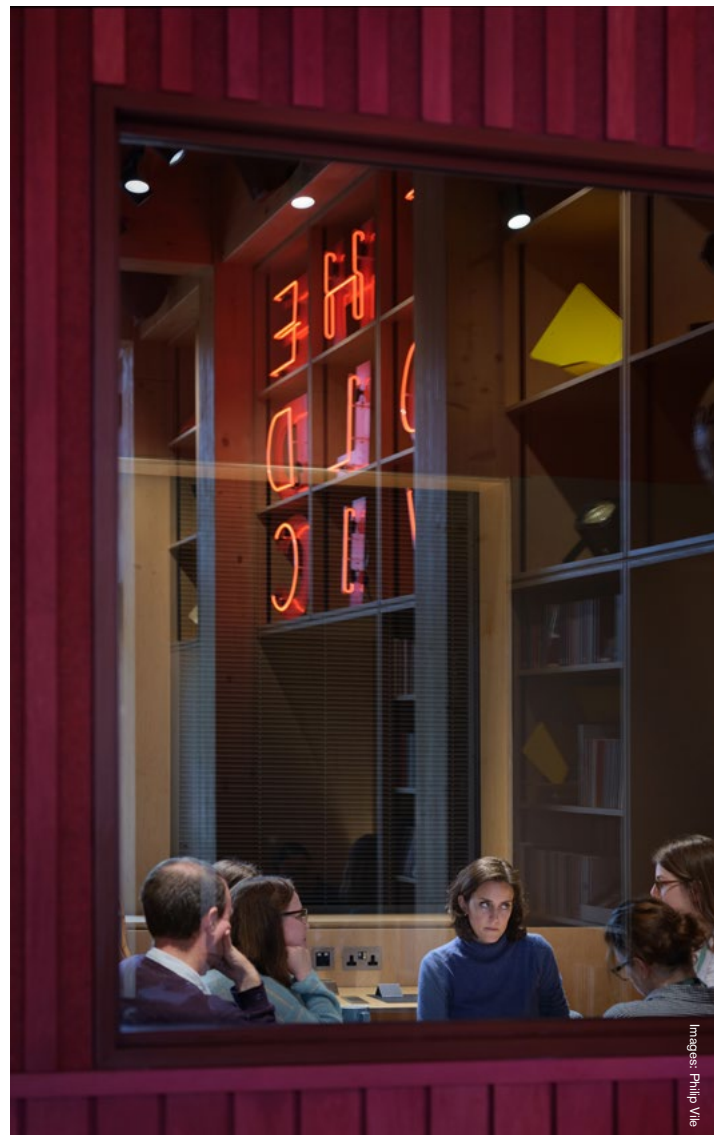
The Sir Donald Gosling balcony oversails Waterloo Road with views of Millennium Green and serves as a natural extension to the building for use throughout the day and night.



Borthwick Script Library and Sir Donald Gosling Balcony



Borthwick Script Library



Writers' Room

## 2 – Green Room, Foyle Meeting Room and Rayne Education Office

A communal, open plan Green Room, supported by Tina Alexandrou and Clive Cowdery, provides Old Vic creatives and staff a place to meet, unwind and exchange ideas. Early and mid-career artists taking part in our programmes will connect with and learn from established professionals. This flexible and social space with expansive views across Millennium Green triples the size of the previous facilities and replaces the cramped and windowless Green Room in the historic theatre.

A new Education Office, close to the Clore Learning Centre, offers flexible desk space to freelance facilitators and Education Associates alongside permanent staff. A new meeting room provides critical additional space for small-scale, private meetings, bookable by Old Vic staff, emerging artists and creative teams.

This floor is fully accessible and connects to the newly refurbished back of house areas, including expanded dressing rooms and offices, as well as access to a Space for Change (usable by the public).

**‘I’m really loving working in the new Backstage building as part of OV Theatre Makers. The open, spacious rehearsal room makes it such a practical place to work, and having access to the Green Room and other facilities in the building gives the programme a real professional feel. Seeing the studio where we’ll perform our scratch and having sessions in the theatre really helps us feel connected to the space’**

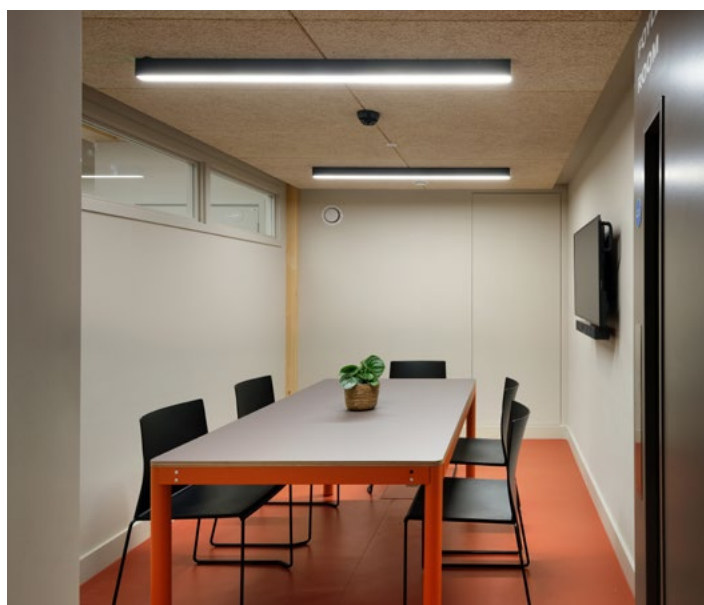
OV Theatre Makers Participant 2025/26

**‘Having our Education Office in the heart of the Backstage building, just steps from the Clore Learning Centre, keeps us connected to freelance facilitators and participants – making it easy for them to drop in, collaborate and feel part of a shared creative community’**

Hannah Fosker, The Old Vic’s Director of Education and Community



Green Room



Foyle Meeting Room



Rayne Education Office

### 3 – Clore Learning Centre

On the third floor, the purpose-designed Clore Learning Centre offers a permanent home for our education, community and artist development programmes (see page 20 for more). Linked to the historic rehearsal room, across 100sqm it enables the delivery of enhanced employability, social mobility and community programmes, including skills training and impactful learning opportunities to improve prospects.

Designed for versatility, the space accommodates up to 70 people and can be configured in classroom, lecture or workshop layout for schools and community groups. Its recycled rubberised flooring ensures excellent sound absorption, minimising noise transfer to the adjacent Greene Studio.

The Clore Learning Centre is fully equipped with an integrated sound system, projector and screen, pull-down blackout blinds and pendant lighting for flexibility. Practical features include two WCs, two sinks and dedicated storage for Education and Community equipment, including a storeroom and bespoke built-in joinery.

**‘I’m loving the new building and especially the Clore – it’s beautifully crafted with sustainability at every corner, and has allowed us to take the OV Theatre Maker company to the next level’**

Education and Community Participant 2025/26

### Greene Studio

The rehearsal room, renamed the Greene Studio, can be transformed into a flexible studio theatre space, opening up opportunities for the creative sector and answering an urgent need for a ‘training ground’ for young artists. The projects run in the space will promote a more inclusive creative economy and provide a springboard for the next generation of UK talent. The Clore Learning Centre will also function as a supporting foyer area for audiences when performances are being held in the Greene Studio; sound and light lobbies between the two rooms ensure their concurrent use for education, rehearsal or performance. The Greene Studio will allow us to grow and diversify local community audiences who can access theatre through more affordable means and family friendly programming. Programming for the Greene Studio is set to commence in the autumn.

**‘The Backstage building is a vital hub for artists and exemplifies The Old Vic’s commitment to creative endeavour and the next generation of talent. The building will not only provide practical spaces and resources for emerging artists but also aims to cultivate a community of collaboration’**

Griselda Yorke, The Old Vic’s Producer



Clore Learning Centre



Greene Studio

## 4 – Events Space and Terrace

A flexible, naturally-ventilated Events Space is located on the top floor of the building and features an external terrace with panoramic views across London. Full lift accessibility ensures the space is inclusive and easily reachable for all users. Biodiversity is maximised on the terrace with built-in planters and insect houses, creating a small but rich urban habitat. This floor provides a striking entertaining space for Old Vic events as well as increasing our commercial income through hire opportunities.

**‘We had such a great time celebrating in Backstage. It really is a special space and I think you are going to be very busy in the Spring/Summer when guests can make use of the terrace’**

Commercial hire client



Events Space in theatre-style layout



Events Space set up for private hire



Top floor terrace with panoramic views

# DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY

Stirling Prize-winning architecture firm Haworth Tompkins were appointed as the design lead on the project. Internationally recognised as one of the most accomplished performance space architects, Haworth Tompkins have worked with many of the UK's leading theatres and performing arts venues, including Bristol Old Vic, Bush Theatre, National Theatre, Battersea Arts Centre, Royal Court Theatre and the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

Working in close collaboration with The Old Vic and the wider project team, Haworth Tompkins created a building that expertly blends new and old, echoing the physical connection of Backstage to the historic theatre and acknowledging the heritage of 131 Waterloo Road.

The design focused on creating modern, welcoming spaces that are flooded with natural light and enhanced by bold use of colour. Tones used throughout Backstage draw inspiration from the theatre's back of house spaces, refurbished in 2023, with the addition of warm grey and terracotta to evoke a sense of calm. Internal finishes also pick up on key colours within the building's striking Brise Soleil façade creating visual cohesion throughout.

Sustainability also formed an integral part of the design process. Haworth Tompkins were challenged to create a new space that blends creative ambition with environmental credentials, adopting regenerative principles to achieve long-term positive (rather than neutral) impacts.

**‘The new extension supports every part of the theatre’s life, from writing and rehearsal to education, outreach and performance. Sustainability sits at the heart of the building’s ethos, prioritising the use of recycled materials, low-embodied carbon structure and passive energy systems. Working closely with the theatre’s team has been a privilege, their vision and purpose shaped every detail, and every decision reflects The Old Vic’s commitment to be welcoming, creative, accessible and forward-looking with a building built to serve artists, audiences and the community for generations to come’**  
Lucy Picardo, Director Haworth Tompkins

We are proud to have been awarded BREEAM Excellent certification and achieved an A rated Energy Performance Certificate. Sustainable measures include:

- Low-embodied carbon glulam timber for the primary structural frame and flooring
- Retaining existing walls where possible and maximising the reuse of salvaged materials in the new design such as historic brickwork
- Partnering with Smile Plastics to create tables and countertops from a recycled plastic called Kaleido, which also includes shredded Old Vic programmes
- A lightwell which optimises natural light throughout the building. The void features a central chandelier made from reclaimed and salvaged theatre ‘barn doors’ lights
- Users to have control over any residual solar glare with pull-down blinds
- Minimal water usage and leakage through selection of sanitaryware
- Working closely with British furniture supplier Aram to ensure all furniture is sustainably made and sourced
- Efficient LED lighting system that creates a low energy and easy to manage system. Additionally, the lights in all WCs are made from recycled theatre Fresnel lenses.



Interior finishes used throughout Backstage

## Design Feature: Natural Ventilation System

Skelly & Couch, our Project Environmental Engineers, developed a bespoke natural, passive ventilation system which services all primary spaces and reduces our energy consumption.

**Grilles:** Air enters the building through heat exchangers fixed to grilles on the side of the building; the grilles ensure air flow is as efficient as possible. In the winter, these heat exchangers will temper the incoming air, minimising the potential for cold drafts.

**Chimneys:** Bespoke chimneys have been designed to manage natural air flow. In warmer weather, cooler air enters the lower occupied spaces and is expelled through a solar chimney that runs all the way through the building. These grilles and chimney's are left open securely overnight to remove heat build up during the day.

**Windows:** Glazing at each floor increases daylight penetration and provides visual connectivity between floors. The double glazing prevents rising hot air from contributing extra heat to the surrounding spaces.

**Roof Lights:** The building features a large void from the roof, allowing sunlight to flood the building during the daytime. We have included grilles at the bottom of the void above the main staircase to promote stack ventilation. This strategy draws cooler air to the lower levels of the building while expelling excess warm air, maintaining a pleasant temperature year-round.

As a result of these architectural features and with an air source heat pump to provide heating and hot water, the building does not require a gas source to run. The efforts to maximise natural ventilation and lighting will also significantly reduce our daily electricity consumption. In the long-term, these measures will strengthen our pathway to net zero.

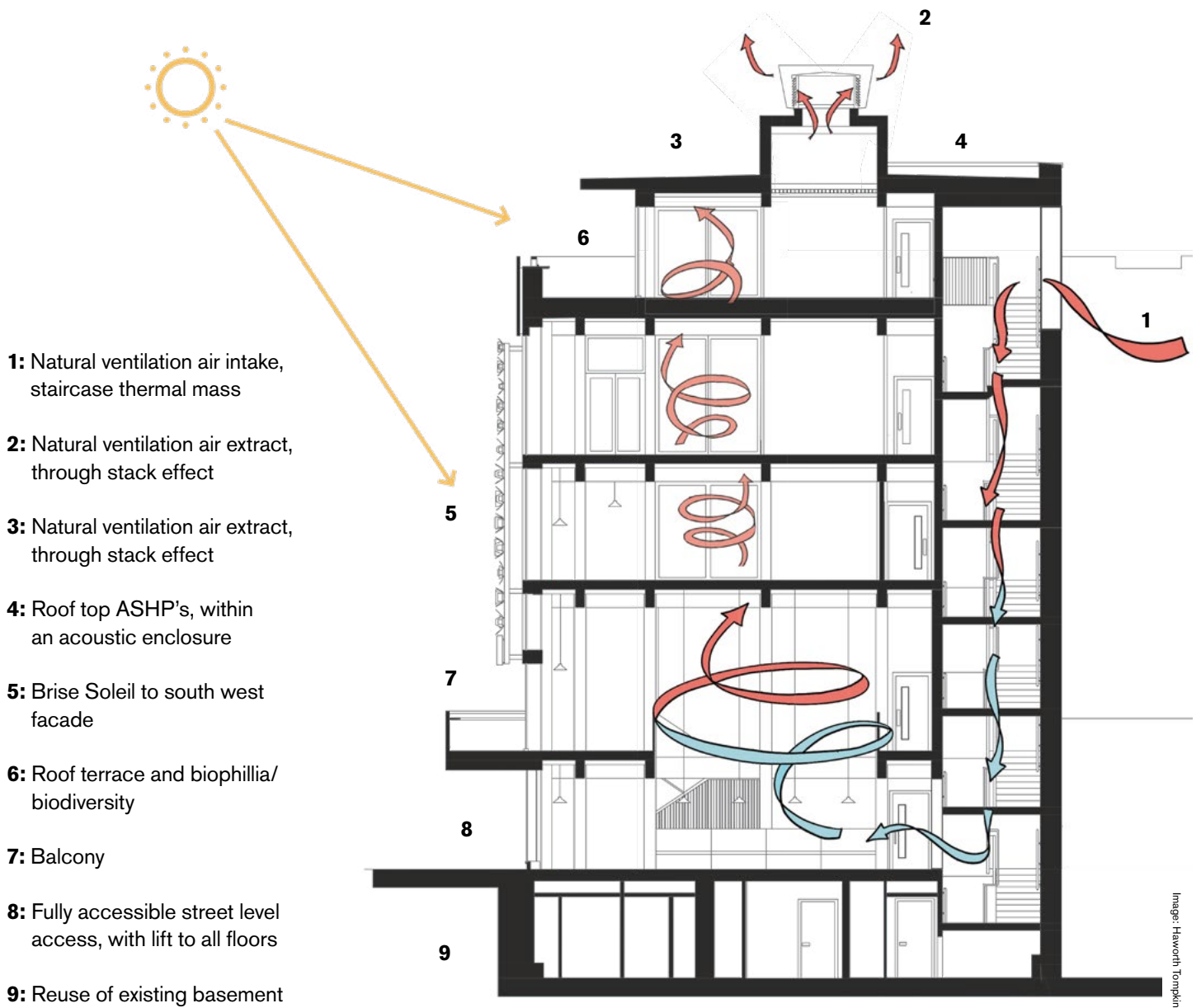


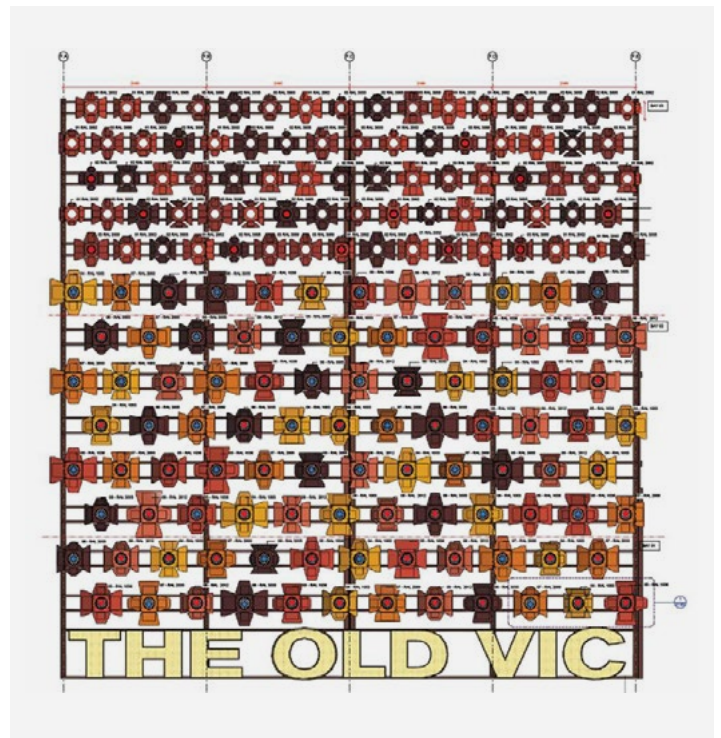
Diagram illustrating the operation of Backstage's natural ventilation system

## Design Feature: Brise Soleil façade

The design intent for the façade of the building on Waterloo Road was to repurpose more than 150 theatre lighting 'barn doors' to create a colourful and playful wall of sun deflectors (known as a Brise Soleil). The salvaged lights have been upcycled with powder coating in a variety of colours echoing the warm tones used inside the building, installed in various opening positions and fitted with LED lights to illuminate Backstage at night.

Haworth Tompkins worked with a specialist façade engineer Premier Engineering and curtain walling and Corten cladding experts RAF Group to ensure that the bespoke Brise Soleil is of the highest quality, is technically rigorous serving its primary function as a solar shading device which controls heat gain and glare and is robustly detailed to ensure its longevity.

Some of the reclaimed theatre barn doors were sourced from other London-based theatres, including the English National Opera, Sadler's Wells and the National Theatre, all of whom originated at The Old Vic, linking their history to a new chapter of our story.



Mechanical drawing of Brise Soleil



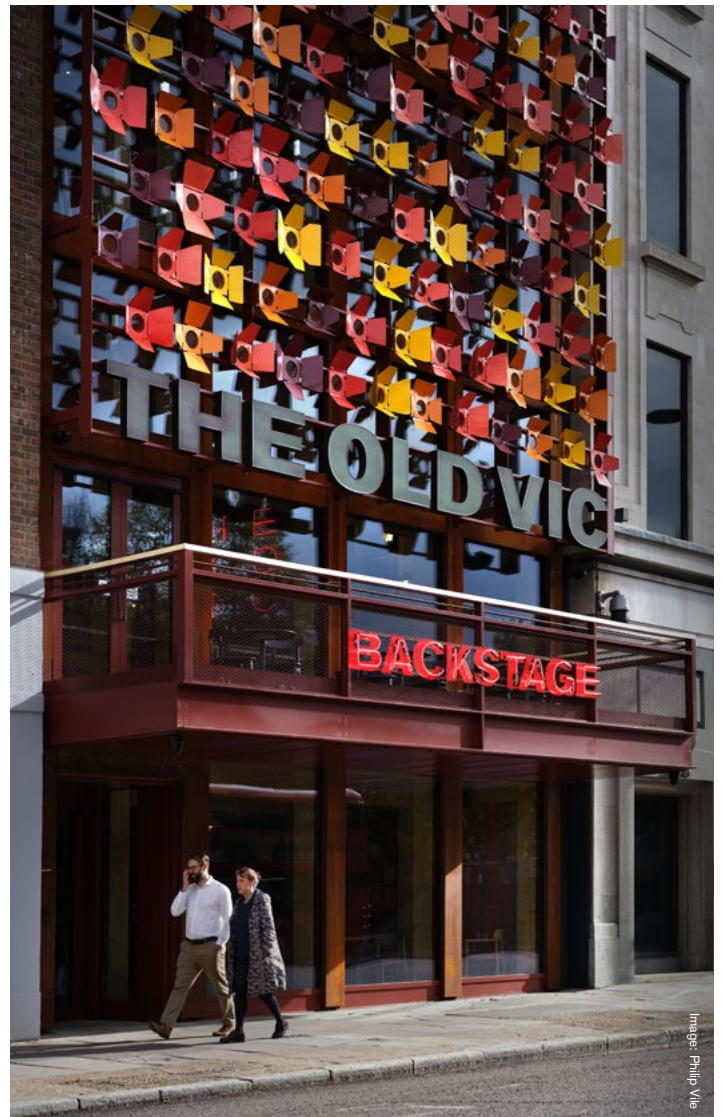
Backstage's unique 'barn door' façade

# ACCESS

Backstage marks a step change in The Old Vic's access provision, reinforcing our commitment to enable anyone to experience, make and benefit from theatre. The new building is entirely accessible and step-free and has further improved access to The Old Vic's backstage area; the percentage of fully accessible back of house spaces has increased from zero at the start of the campaign to 74.3%. These improvements help remove the barriers to beneficiaries and artists with access needs who might otherwise not be able to participate or work with The Old Vic, increasing our capacity to broaden the reach of our programmes.

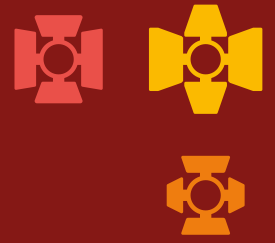
Key access measures in the new building include:

- Large lift giving step-free access to all levels including an accessible route to the Greene Studio (increasing potential to be more inclusive for production-related workshops and rehearsals)
  - Step-free access throughout including a level entrance with power-assisted doors
  - Hearing induction loops accessible in 70% of the building
  - Provision of wide doors and generous circulation routes, providing ramps to replace stepped circulation routes
  - Provision of a low-level countertop on the main bar for wheelchair users, with integrated hearing loop
  - Wheelchair accessible WCs, wheelchair accessible baby changing and large accessible WC and shower provided with adult size changing bench (Space for Change)
  - Step-free inclusive interconnectivity to Stage Door (via a ramped corridor) and Back of House areas for Old Vic Staff and creatives
  - New accessible Green Room with adapted counters and amenities
- A roof terrace with perforated guarding to enable all visitors, including wheelchair users, views over the London skyline
  - Step-free entry between the Clore Learning Centre and the Greene Studio
  - New cycle parking enabling access to adaptable bicycles
  - LED lighting is designed to minimise glare and provide adequate illumination for vision impaired users
  - Consideration given to internal finishes, colours and acoustic treatments for all, including visitors with neurodivergence.



The level entrance to Backstage, allowing step-free access for all visitors

# BACKSTAGE IN NUMBERS



Since Oct 2025, **623 participants** have attended **19 workshops and events** in the Clore Learning Centre.

Over **1,500 scripts** have been donated to the Borthwick Script Library for visitors to read, return and repeat.

The Brise Soleil façade is made from **176 repurposed 'barn doors'**, giving the building its unique look.

The building has created **41 new jobs**, supporting young people and boosting the local economy.

The main lightwell is an impressive **18 meters tall**, spanning the full height of the building.

**Bee-friendly planters, insect houses and three bird boxes** have been installed to encourage biodiversity.

More than **14,500 guests** have been served in the Cafe & Bar since opening.

All **12 WCs** feature a **recycled Fresnel lens light**, repurposing disused Old Vic theatre lights.

There are **four connection points** linking the new building to our historic theatre.

The main building structure uses **1,275 linear meters of glulam**, a low-carbon engineered timber.

The original Old Vic **Stage Door sign** has been given a new life as part of a display in the Borthwick Script Library.

The building cost **£9,972 per m<sup>2</sup>** of floor area to construct (excluding professional fees).



# PROJECT OUTCOMES AND RESPONSES

The Old Vic's free-to-access learning and participation programmes provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds promoting creativity, learning, wellbeing and employability, operating across all 32 London boroughs. Demand and need are very evident; projects are consistently oversubscribed. Before opening the new building, 90% of our Education and Community activity was delivered in temporary offsite venues, which limited connection to the theatre.

Backstage transforms our offer, providing a permanent, purpose-built base for programmes that open accessible pathways into the arts and vital skills development. This allows us to expand and deepen the impact of existing activity, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, offer a training ground for underrepresented artists and advance equality of access to culture. Operating from a dedicated space enables us to develop lasting relationships with both participants and partners.

Backstage makes it possible for us to:

- Establish an education resource through the Clore Learning Centre that strives to overcome barriers to arts participation and improve workforce diversity
- Increase the number of people who engage with our work each year
- Bring existing projects that tackle pressing issues faced by young people, such as social mobility, employability and inequality of opportunity, within the walls of The Old Vic (e.g. **Take the Lead**)
- Be a crucial asset to assist with work readiness and skills development (e.g. **Front Line**)
- Deliver vital new projects that use the power of theatre to address urgent societal issues as well as foster young people's creativity at a time when arts subjects are squeezed in schools\*. Projects focus on the needs of different groups, ages and abilities (e.g. **OV Community Choir** and OV Storytelling Workshops launching in 2026)

\*Aligning with the government's response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review (5 Nov 2025), which is intended to give young people the skills for life and work. The response also gives credence to the arts as part of an inclusive curriculum.

- Create a flexi-use studio theatre, delivering on our artist development agenda and supporting freelance creatives through projects, such as **OV Theatre Makers**. We anticipate there will be 800+ participants annually
- Allow equity of access for all by providing fast, reliable free Wi-Fi connectivity in the Cafe & Bar. Through our partnership with Bloomberg, free-to-access tablets and laptops have been provided to address the issue of digital poverty
- Support the theatre's sustainability through new income streams and improved facilities with a Cafe & Bar and Events Space that will bring a regular income stream to subsidise our charitable work. New commercial activity is forecast to breakeven by Year three of operation (year end 31 Aug 2028)
- Improve local infrastructure in the surrounding boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, create employment opportunities for young people, knit together the local community and embed The Old Vic as a sustainable, valued local institution.

## Media Responses

The launch of Backstage garnered attention in the media, generating publicity across national, industry and broadcast media. Key highlights include:

- Exclusive interviews with The Old Vic's Executive Director, Laura Stevenson, in **City AM** and Artistic Director Matthew Warchus in **The Times**
- Coverage across the architecture industry, e.g. **Wallpaper, Building** and **Architects' Journal**, highlighting the building's design and sustainability achievements
- Articles on multiple news outlets, such as **The Stage, The Independent, Broadsheet** and **Daily Mail**.

Over the next year, we will be submitting entries to leading industry awards (including the RIBA Architectural Awards and UK Theatre Awards) to celebrate the building's excellence in both design and function.

# NEW EDUCATION & COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Our immediate priorities are to embed our existing programmes within Backstage, build connections and develop new opportunities. Initiatives launching over the next two years include:

**OV Storytelling Workshops:** Interactive sessions for children, parents, guardians, and carers to enjoy together. Aiming to build connections, support wellbeing and develop new skills. Each session will consist of an interactive storytelling, followed by a practical workshop, exploring different backstage roles within the theatre.

**OV Community Choir:** Intergenerational choir for adults aged 18+ with the aim of combatting isolation and reducing loneliness in the community. The pilot programme will run for one term with 40 participants in 2026.

**OV Community Network:** Piloting a new community network for alumni of our community programmes to come together connect and experience workshops and coffee mornings.

**OV Facilitators:** Our training programme for facilitators will return in late 2026, working with 25 participants each year and a further 90 through workshops which they will deliver as part of their course.

## Work for Early and Mid-Career Artists

We are excited to launch a new programme of work for early and mid-career artists which will include practical masterclasses, script surgeries, mentorship opportunities, access to development space and a chance to connect with other creatives. Drawing on our extensive network of artists and practitioners, these sessions will offer a unique stepping stone for theatre makers to explore the next stage of their careers.

Forming part of the programme are **OV Creative Residencies**. In 2027, we will host three paid residencies using the Writers' Room and Greene Studio. Creative pairs (e.g. Director-Writer) will utilise paid development time through R&D, an industry presentation and public scratch performances.

## Partnerships

This year we are partnering with Streetwise Opera, offering use of our new spaces free of charge so that they can deliver weekly singing and creative workshops aimed at people with experience of homelessness. These sessions will be delivered from the Clore Learning Centre.



A workshop takes place in the Clore Learning Centre

Since Oct 2025, our Education & Community programmes have moved into the Clore Learning Centre, establishing a dedicated home for the first time. Early feedback from facilitators and participants highlights their initial impressions of the space:

**‘The Backstage building at The Old Vic is a creative hub that radiates atmospheric warmth and contemporary style. I like the communal spaces that make it feel cosy and welcoming and how it’s made clear from the get go that accessibility was at the forefront of the design process. As a disabled participant, the building feels easy to navigate’**

OV Theatre Makers Participant 2025/26

**‘This space makes me feel very warm. Hopefully I can come back again lots of times and enjoy having a chat and a cup of tea’**

OV Theatre Club Participant 2025/26

**‘The new Clore space feels really special. It’s bright, uplifting, and has a lovely creative energy. But beyond this, entering through the stage door really adds to the experience of feeling a part of the theatre. When welcoming participants to the Theatre Club taster workshop, I felt genuinely proud to bring them into the Backstage building.’**

**As a facilitator, training in the building itself feels completely different from working offsite. Having access to spaces like the green room, where other OV staff are based, has been a real highlight. It’s fostered a wonderful sense of belonging and made me feel like an (even more) valued part of the organisation.**

**I can’t wait to see all of the other developments that happen as part of the Backstage building!’**

Theatre Club Facilitator 2025/26



Participants take part in a choir 'taster session' at Backstage's Open Day

# CONCLUSION

Backstage represents a bold new chapter for The Old Vic, expanding our footprint for the first time in 207 years and creating a permanent base for our Education & Community and emerging theatre professionals programmes. This sustainable, accessible, purpose-built space will enable us to deepen the impact of our projects, improve life chances and illuminate pathways into the arts for people from all walks of life. Most importantly, it unlocks new opportunities for learning, collaboration and artistic development for those facing barriers to accessing cultural opportunities.

**‘By embedding this bricks-and-mortar commitment to community, education and artist development work into the fabric of our building, we can help ensure that this invaluable, life-changing work becomes part of the bones of The Old Vic’**

Matthew Warchus, The Old Vic’s Artistic Director



Backstage’s donor board located on the first floor Borthwick Script Library

# THE PROJECT TEAM

Architect

**Haworth Tompkins**

Main Contractor

**Rise Contracts Limited**

Client Representative

**Steam PM, Iain Roberts**

Project Management

**Equals Consulting (Backstage)/**

**Bristow Consulting (Back of House)**

Cost Consultant

**AECOM**

MEP Engineer

**Skelly & Couch**

Structural Engineer

**Momentum**

Theatre and Acoustic Consultant

**Charcoalblue**

Façade Lighting Design

**BDP Lighting**

Access Consultant

**Access=Design, Vin Goodwin**

Fire Consultant

**The Fire Surgery**

Sustainability Consultant

**Twin & Earth**



LED lights cast a warm glow across the Backstage façade at night



THE OLD VIC

BACKSTAGE