

OV THEATRE MAKERS AT THE OLD VIC



**EVALUATION
2025-2026**

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OV THEATRE MAKERS

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OV THEATRE MAKERS

OV Theatre Makers is a free, six-month training programme for young people aged 18–30 from across the UK. It offers a route into the industry for emerging theatre makers who are interested in creating their own work but have not had formal training and may have faced barriers accessing the arts.

With the support of director, Joseph Hancock, and leading professional theatre makers, company members explore contemporary theatre-making practices to build a toolkit of skills, that will help them develop their own work and career. Developing a broad range of theatre-making skills from writing and devising, to directing and producing, company members then have the chance to showcase their work in a scratch night in the brand-new Greene Studio at The Old Vic.

The programme supports participants' wellbeing, employability and career development by equipping them with a variety of knowledge, guidance and practical tools. It also allows them to build a community of like-minded artists and a network of creatives in the industry.

'I'm excited about the future and making a career for myself in the arts – there are no illusions about the difficulties of this and they were made clear, but the programme reminded me that it will be worth it'

OV Theatre Maker

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY AT THE OLD VIC

Our renowned education and community projects inspire learning and connection. Each year we work with 9,000 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

Applications to OV Theatre Makers were open for four weeks and closed on Thu 03 Jul.

The eligibility criteria were as follows:

- Applicants must be aged 18–30 and based in the UK
- Applicants must be able to travel to London to take part (The Old Vic is able to support with travel if required)
- Applicants must be able to attend all dates
- As an alternative route to formalised education, OV Theatre Makers is not open to anyone who has already received/ is receiving formal, degree level (or equivalent) arts training. This includes attending drama school or any theatre/drama/ acting/performance/technical theatre-related degrees.



We added three new criteria to the programme for 2025–26 to further ensure the opportunity reached those who would benefit the most.

- Applicants cannot be currently studying for any degree and cannot hold above a bachelor's degree (e.g. Masters or PhD)
- Applicants cannot be working as a professional in theatre. This includes administrative, backstage, technical or creative roles.
- Applicants must have attended state school when aged 11–16.

Applicants were asked to complete a short application form and to create a two-minute video or audio submission to convey why they wanted to join the programme and what theatre they would like to make. A 'how to' guide was available to support participants in creating their submission and to explain the criteria applications would be assessed on.

Programme information was made available on The Old Vic's website and advertised through the theatre's social media channels, as well as an email campaign to our dedicated 'Take Part' mailing list. In order to reach as many people as possible, specifically those from groups that experience barriers accessing arts opportunities, we contacted a huge number of UK-wide charities, councils and organisations. These included youth groups, virtual schools, young carer organisations, job centres and employability organisations.

This year we added additional criteria to make it clearer who this programme is designed for. Applicants could not currently be studying for any degree and couldn't be working in professional theatre. This resulted in a higher number of applicants who needed the opportunity more than others.

'This opportunity came at a time where I decided to pivot into the arts, theatre specifically and I wasn't sure how to do it. It's given me the best entry point'

OV Theatre Maker

Online information session

During the recruitment window we hosted an online information session to share more detailed information about the programme and the application process, and answer any questions from prospective applicants. It also highlighted the access support available throughout the application process and programme. This session was hosted by participation manager, Charlotte Gaughan and OV Theatre Makers director, Joseph Hancock, and was attended by 49 people. A further 32 people requested the transcript and slides.

Tailored support during the application process

We encouraged any applicants who might need additional support, either with the application process or on the programme, to get in touch with us directly. This led to more phone calls and email conversations than in previous years where participants could get tailored advice and guidance, and use an alternative method of applying where needed. We received positive feedback from applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) as to how accessible the application process was. One person noted that *'You've shown so much care from before the programme even began'*.

We received a total of 161 applications which were shortlisted against the following criteria:

- Creativity of video/audio submission
- Clarity of applicant's ideas
- Applicant's interest in theatre
- Applicant's interest in developing theatre-making skills
- Applicant's understanding of the programme.

We shortlisted 65 applicants to attend one of four relaxed and informal selection sessions. One was held online to support those living outside of London. All applicants had the opportunity to pitch an idea for a show they would like to develop; they then worked in groups and selected one idea to present back, thinking about where they would like to stage their show, technical requirements and how they would market it. Following this, we shortlisted 21 company members based on the following criteria:

- Contribution to creative ideas
- Understanding of programme
- Being a supportive and generous company member
- Clear and original presentation.



DELIVERY

We were delighted to host the OV Theatre Makers programme in our brand-new building, Backstage, for the first time this year.

This purpose-built, six-storey building is the new home of education and community work at The Old Vic with a variety of exciting new ways to support the next generation of theatre makers. Sessions this year took part in our Clore Learning Centre and the scratch night was hosted in our brand-new Greene Studio. Participants also benefited from a new writers' room, script library, green room and café.

'Being based within The Old Vic building was so inspiring, as it made the learning experience feel closely connected to a working theatre. Overall, the space supported both the practical and collaborative aspects of the Theatre Makers programme very effectively.' OV Theatre Maker

Staffing

OV Theatre Makers sessions were led by director, Joseph Hancock, with support from participation manager Charlotte Gaughan, participation coordinator Suzie Carney and assistant director Rachel Woodward Carlton. The assistant director position is a paid development opportunity offered to OV Theatre Makers alumni. This role provides a range of administrative, pastoral and delivery support throughout the programme and tailored dramaturgical support for the scratch event.

'The assistant director role has been the most wonderful chance to develop my skills as a facilitator, improve my administrative skills and deepen my confidence as a theatre maker while getting to support this year's company. It is incredibly special that this job role exists for OV Theatre Makers alumni, it really feels like the team is invested in creating a legacy of support for their company members. It's amazing to have the chance to continue working with and give back to a programme which impacted my life so positively.'
OV Theatre Makers Assistant Director

Welcome Day

The programme began with a welcome day on Sat 13 Sep which supported the company to get to know The Old Vic, the staff team and each other. The day began with a variety of fun, gentle games and exercises to ease participants into the space and alleviate any worries or anxiety they had about joining the company and working with new people. Director, Joseph Hancock then took the company through his own work as a director before leading a 'Theatre Makers Top Trumps' exercise to allow the company to share their skills and interests with the group.

Feedback from previous iterations of the programme indicated that participants wanted more time to work on the scratch process, as this is the part of the programme that stretched them the most. To accommodate this in an efficient way, we reduced the welcome weekend to one day to gain an additional session later in the programme.



'I think the best thing about the whole programme is the community that you've helped us build. There's not a person on the programme that I wouldn't call a friend now and that feels really special. It feels like the programme placed a real emphasis on team building and meant we were all so gelled as a group'

OV Theatre Maker



Visiting Professionals Masterclass

Sessions: Sep–Nov 2025

The company received masterclass workshops delivered by five guest artists. Themes and focus were tailored to the company, based on what they had shared through the application process and at the start of the programme.

Writer and director **Charlie Josephine**, led a workshop exploring writing from lived experience, exploring form, content and artistic wellbeing when telling personal stories. This was one of the key themes the company were interested in developing. Charlie's adaptation of *Pinnocchio* was playing at Shakespeare's Globe and the company were able to watch at a discounted rate.

Director **Lyndsey Turner** took the company on a deep dive into the fundamentals of story. The session looked at how stories work, what they do, how they're engineered and why we need them from a directorial point of view. The company also had the opportunity to ask Lyndsey questions about her career as a director across UK theatre.

Zoë Robinson, creative producer at Headlong Theatre, led a guide to producing on a small to medium scale, focusing on the practical steps to getting your work made. This included funding, building creative teams, timelines for productions and how to actualise these things. Participants were tasked with setting up small production companies and worked through the process of putting on their own work using the tools and timelines discussed.

'The masterclasses were a fantastic overview that gave practical tips on how to apply [our knowledge] going forward.' The professionals were very patient and giving with their time'

OV Theatre Maker

Multi-disciplinary theatre maker and performer, **Chris Thorpe** led a workshop which provided a holistic look at being a solo maker in the current theatre climate. The session covered how to work from source material, how to challenge an audience to take action and ended with company members bringing their ideas to life in a fast-paced and DIY theatre installation.

When looking forward to the scratch, this year's company were particularly interested in developing their dramaturgical skills. We were delighted to welcome **Daniel Bailey**, former associate artistic director at the Bush Theatre and Birmingham Rep, to lead a session focusing on this. Daniel took the company through the fundamentals of dramaturgy and then a deep dive into the core principles of concept, development and programming.

'The masterclasses with industry professionals and learning from the people leading theatre making right now. Learning from and engaging with them in person gave me practical insights and the genuine belief that their stories mean that a pathway to success is possible for me.'
OV Theatre Maker

Additional Masterclass sessions

As well as the masterclasses delivered by visiting professionals, the company had a variety of sessions looking at the practicality and reality of being a freelance theatre maker and the current landscape of the theatre industry. This included sessions on the following:

- How to talk about plays
- Where to work, a guide to working with venues of varying sizes, locations and structures across the UK
- The Theatre Green Book
- Introduction to rehearsal room and production processes
- Q&A with Hannah Fosker, director of education & community at The Old Vic
- Q&A with Lilac Yosiphon, Old Vic associate director on *Mary Page Marlowe*
- Introduction to technical theatre from Christian Wallace, technical services director
- Observing a technical rehearsal of *A Christmas Carol*.

Alumni

The company had the chance to meet and learn from OV Theatre Makers alumni at numerous points during the programme, including:

- A Q&A with Jade Franks which offered an opportunity to hear about writing from personal experience and taking her play, *Eat the Rich (but not me mates x)*, to Edinburgh and then Soho Theatre
- We welcomed Mojola Akinyemi, Hannah Caplan and Dom Stephens to one of our sessions working on material for the scratch. Following a Q&A about their work and experience of the programme they supported the company with their scratch ideas
- The alumni lunch, held as part of the Backstage open day, provided an informal chance to meet with alumni from all previous years of the programme.

'Having former OV Theatre Maker people come in, both to do presentations and Q&As and during the mingle session before Christmas, has been so great too. It's made me feel part of something bigger which I hope I can be part of for a long time'

OV Theatre Maker

Scratch Night

2026 marked the first opportunity to host the OV Theatre Makers scratch night in the Greene Studio in our brand-new Backstage building. The company were very excited to have their work hosted within The Old Vic building and to have the chance to work more closely with The Old Vic Technical team.

From the start of the programme the scratch is posed as an opportunity to take risks, try out new things and a space to fail in a safe environment. We encouraged company members to try out disciplines that they have not done before and to seek opportunity to collaborate with as many people as possible.

The scratch night was embedded into the process early, in line with previous years' feedback that participants needed more time to prepare and devise. As well as gaining an additional 'making' session from the welcome weekend, we also were able to add an additional session to this part of the programme.

Bringing the scratch in house meant the company had access to the Greene Studio space throughout the making process, as well as it being set up in show configuration two weeks out from the night itself. This offered more opportunity to feel at ease in the space, as well as to use it to its maximum capacity. It also allowed the opportunity to work with our in-house technical team and technical freelance staff, meaning company members could gain valuable experience in communicating their technical needs and ideas to industry professionals.

Following a rehearsal weekend and full tech day, the scratch night took place on Sat 28 Feb to a full capacity audience of 84 people. Following feedback from last year's programme, this year each company member had two ringfenced seats to offer to their friends and family.

From an initial prompt of 'Together Apart' the company devised, wrote, performed and produced *Signal Interrupted: a Scratch Night* with a total of 18 pieces covering a variety of forms and themes from music and movement to monologues, sketches and installation pieces. The company also designed and created the visual imagery and copy used in marketing the scratch.

'Having an opportunity to test out roles I was less familiar with through the scratch night has helped me feel even more confident as a multihyphenate theatre maker and helped me to grow my skills and hopefully improve my employability'

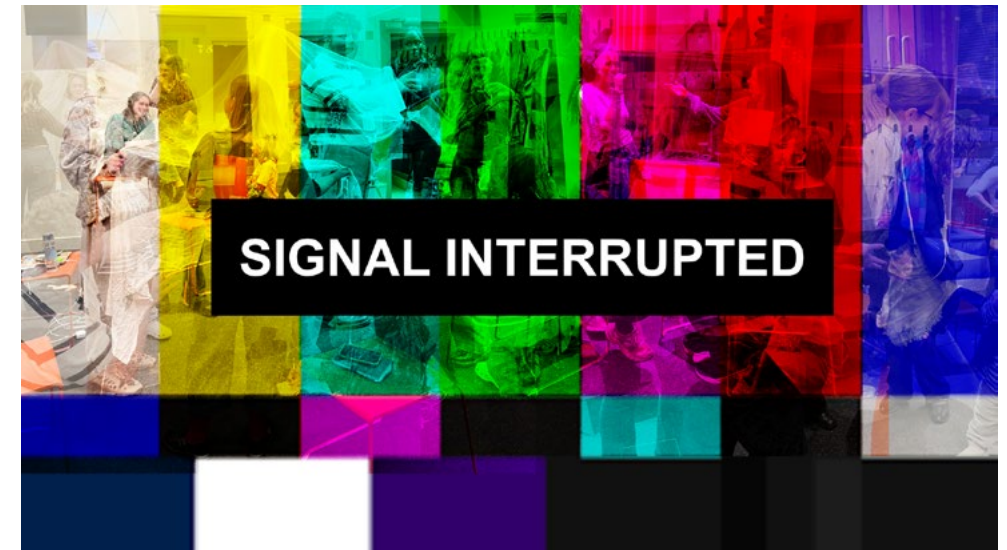
OV Theatre Maker

Travel and Accommodation Support

We offered 13 company members financial support to cover travel and accommodation during the programme. The participation manager also offered one-to-one support with booking and arranging travel, understanding that for some people, this was their first time visiting London, and for some, the stress of arranging their own travel could be a barrier to taking part.

Old Vic Productions

During the programme the company watched three Old Vic Productions. These were *Mary Page Marlowe*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Arcadia*.



'It's so fabulous and so important that the programme is free. I know I wouldn't have been able to do this if not and I feel very grateful. It's also so great that you cover transport fees for those that live outside of London, both because it makes the programme more accessible and because having non-Londoners in the room has added really helpful insights to the group about what theatre in the rest of the UK looks like'

OV Theatre Maker

Theatre Ticket Bursary

Participants were also given a £60 bursary to spend on tickets to cultural and arts events, as well as a 'Discounted Tickets Guide' to raise awareness of ticket schemes across the UK. The bursary is given in acknowledgement of the fact that theatre can be hard to access for people from lower income households and particularly during a cost-of-living crisis.

Participants were encouraged to experience art forms they would not usually engage with to develop their cultural capital. Discussions on work that had been seen were built into sessions to develop participants' ability to talk about theatre with their peers. Through the bursary, participants were able to see the following productions:

- *A Grain of Sand*, Arcola Theatre
- *After Sunday*, Bush Theatre
- *Bacchae*, National Theatre
- *Bitch Boxer*, Arcola Theatre
- *Bogwitch*, Soho Theatre Walthamstow
- *Born with Teeth*, Wyndham's Theatre
- *Choir Boy*, Stratford East
- *Christmas Day*, Almeida Theatre
- *Clarkston*, Trafalgar Theatre
- *Clean Slate*, Pleasance Theatre
- *Coven*, Kiln Theatre
- *Deep Azure*, Shakespeare's Globe
- *Donbas*, Theatre503
- *Eat The Rich (but maybe not me mates x)*, Soho Theatre
- *Flagshaggers*, The Hope Theatre
- *Guess How Much I Love You?*, Royal Court
- *Hamlet*, National Theatre
- *Hedda*, Orange Tree Theatre
- *HER*, Traverse Theatre
- *Into the Woods*, Bridge Theatre
- *Juniper Blood*, Donmar Warehouse
- *Kindling*, Park Theatre
- *Limp Wrist and the Iron Fist*, Brixton House
- *Loop*, Theatre503
- *Manic Street Creature*, Kiln Theatre
- *Mr Jones*, Finborough Theatre
- *Museum of Austerity*, Young Vic
- *My Neighbour Totoro*, Gillian Lynne Theatre
- *Pinocchio*, Shakespeare's Globe
- *Playing Burford*, Swansea Grand Theatre
- *Punch*, Apollo Theatre
- *Ragdoll*, Jermyn Street Theatre
- *Sonny's Blues*, Shakespeare's Globe
- *Stereophonic*, Duke of York's Theatre
- *The Flowers of Srebrenica*, Jacksons Lane
- *The Hunger Games*, Troubadour Theatre
- *The Rivals*, Orange Tree Theatre
- *Tiny Planet*, Half Moon Theatre
- *Titus Andronicus*, Hampstead Theatre
- *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare's Globe
- *Wendy and Peter Pan*, Barbican Theatre
- *Wolf Works*, *Royal Ballet and Opera*

'Our discussions about what plays we've seen were a really good exercise in how we should view and speak about theatre and for me this was very helpful when directing my own piece and thinking about future work. We wouldn't have been able to do this without the theatre bursary'

OV Theatre Maker

Emerging Theatre Professionals (ETP) Network

Company members were also invited to join the newly launched ETP network which provides ongoing connection to The Old Vic via a range of networking events, workshops and free/discounted tickets to shows at The Old Vic and a range of other theatres.

Some have already taken advantage of the following:

- Free rehearsal space as part of our OV Lab programme
- A 'Directing Musical Theatre' workshop with *Billy Elliott* director, Simon Pollard
- Tickets to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* including a Q&A with cast and creatives.

'Learning to talk about theatre, the ticket bursary and [being] given access to the writers' room and plays. It makes us more inclined to participate with theatre if we are given access to things we're not able to receive normally'

OV Theatre Maker



The Equal Opportunities Form was completed by all **21 participants** at the start of the programme.

AGE

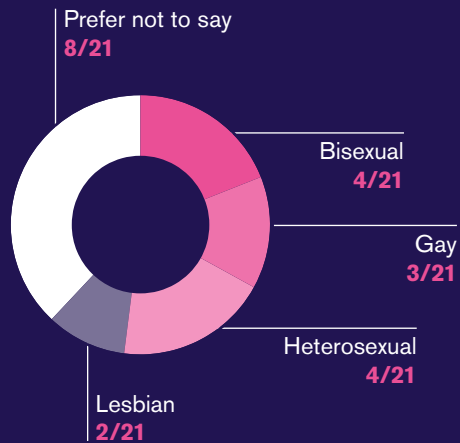
11/21

19–24

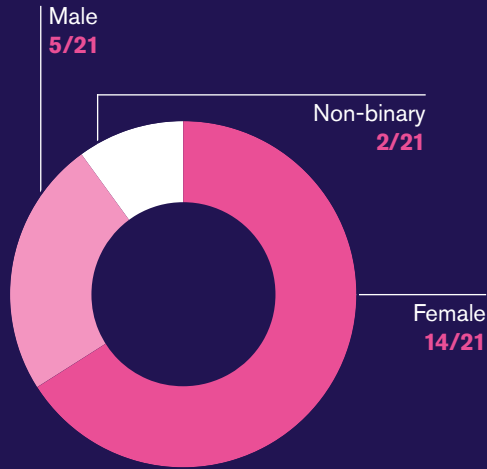
10/21

26–30

SEXUAL ORIENTATION



GENDER



IDENTITY

Do you identify as trans?

2/21

Yes

19/21

No

IDENTITY

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

18/21

Yes

1/21

Prefer not to say

2/21

No

ETHNICITY

1/21 Arab

3/21 Black or Black British: African

1/21 Mixed: Other

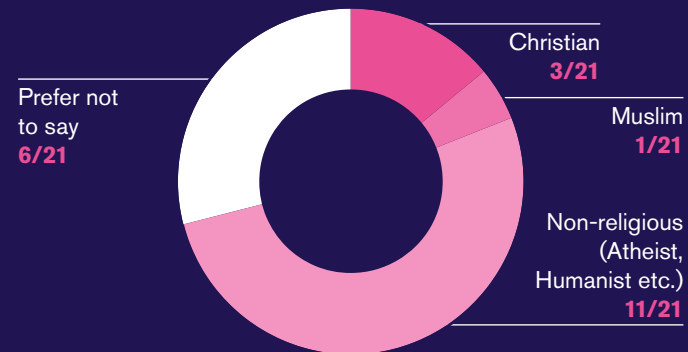
1/21 Turkish and Kurdish

11/21 White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish

1/21 White Irish

3/21 Prefer not to say

RELIGION AND BELIEF

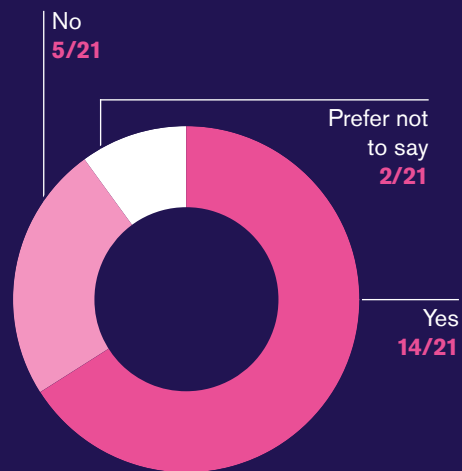


'Phenomenal experience; life changing'

OV Theatre Maker

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

DISABILITY



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

2/21 Learning, concentrating or remembering (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

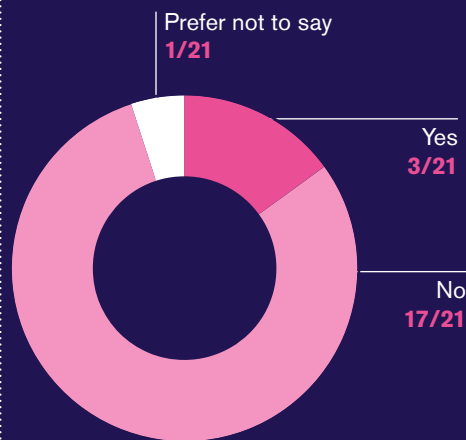
5/21 Mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder)

3/21 Mobility (e.g. difficulty walking short distances, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying)

6/21 Social or behavioural (e.g. autism, attention deficit disorder)

4/21 Other

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES



CARE EXPERIENCE

Are you care experienced/a care leaver?

1/21

Yes

20/21

No

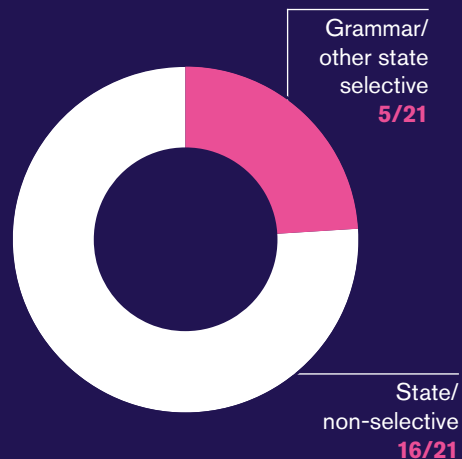
BOROUGH/LOCAL AUTHORITY

1/21	Aberdeen
2/21	Bexley
2/21	Camden
1/21	Devon
1/21	Derbyshire
2/21	Hammersmith and Fulham
1/21	Harrow
1/21	Havering
1/21	Kent
1/21	Lancashire
1/21	Lewisham
2/21	Southwark
4/21	Tower Hamlets
1/21	Vale of Glamorgan

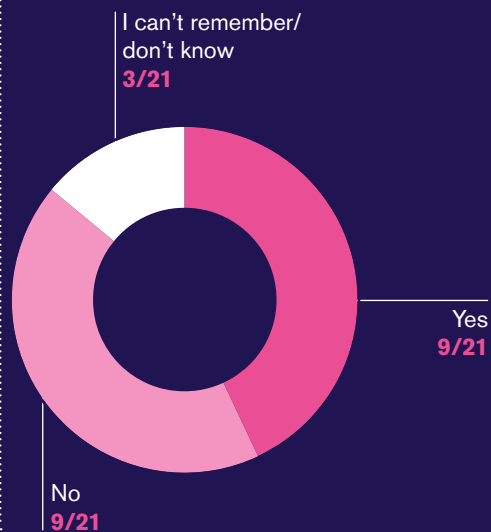
‘I have such a clear vision of what I see for myself as an artist in this industry’

OV Theatre Maker

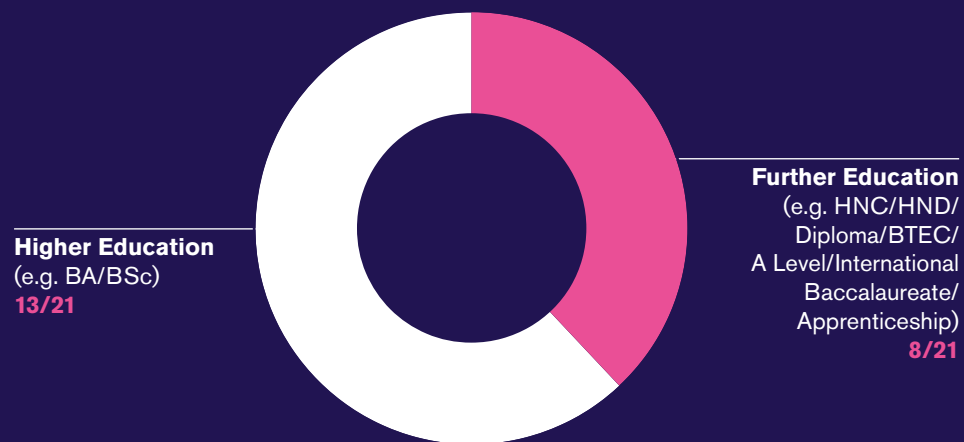
EDUCATION



FREE SCHOOL MEALS

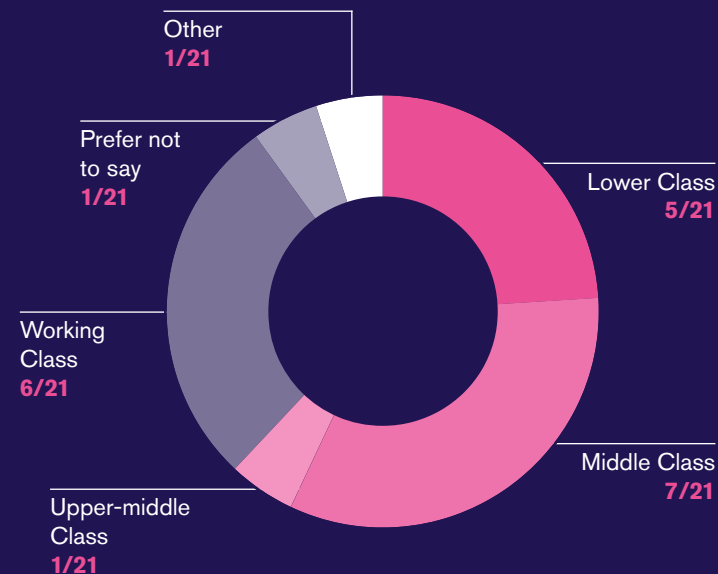


QUALIFICATIONS



SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

What do you feel best describes your socio-economic background?



Participants specified: 'Welfare class?' and 'Culturally middle?'

'Biggest thanks for your support, kindness and patience to ensure everyone understood and was on the same page and for encouraging me to trust myself. I can't believe how much I pushed myself and I'm so proud for that'

OV Theatre Maker

20 participants completed the end of programme evaluation. Not all participants completed all questions.

ACTIVITY

Have you ever been to The Old Vic before?

6/15 | **9/15**

Yes

No

One participant had taken part in the Front Line education and community programme at The Old Vic before.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Before the programme:

18/20

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

After the programme:

19/19

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

6/20

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

19/20

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

‘Already I’ve started putting into practice skills that I had no clue about before the programme’

OV Theatre Maker

WELLBEING

Before the programme:

12/20

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

After the programme:

19/20

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

As a result of this programme:

16/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that their mental health and wellbeing had improved.

14/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they coped well with rejection in a professional context.

INDUSTRY SKILLS

Before the programme:

7/20

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

After the programme:

18/18

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

**PARTICIPANT
OUTCOMES**

LIFE SKILLS

Before the programme:

20/20

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

18/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills

18/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good problem-solving skills

3/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were good at networking

3/20

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

After the programme:

20/20

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

19/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills

18/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good problem-solving skills

18/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were good at networking

15/20

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

QUALITY AND IMPACT

20/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this project, they felt more connected to a community

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

As a result of this project, their theatre knowledge and skills were developing.

19/19

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

Overall, this project was excellent.

'The leaders really pushed me in ways I needed, and that made me create things I didn't know were possible. They softly guided us on how to make the things in our heads happen on stage'

OV Theatre Maker

**PARTICIPANT
OUTCOMES**



QUALITY AND IMPACT

19/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

The workshop leaders adapted to their needs

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

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

18/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this project, their employability skills were developing.

17/20

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this project, they felt better connected to networks and knew how to access opportunities that could help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries.

'Theatre makers was pivotal to understanding how theatre works in general and really helped to de-mystify the space'

OV Theatre Maker

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES



CASE STUDY JENNA

Jenna is a 2025–2026 OV Theatre Makers company member. Jenna wanted to take part in the programme to ‘expand my knowledge and step into trying to do my own projects and really round my skill set’ as well as to meet a ‘new network of people’.

Jenna shared the positive experience of networking with like-minded people from the very start of the process, *‘I already met some really lovely people in the selection workshop, and I wanted to be part of that cohort’*. Jenna commented that they have *‘really bad imposter syndrome’* and taking part in OV Theatre Makers was really important to them as it has given them *‘the push to know that I am good enough to do it, and not to give up’*.

Jenna lives outside of London and shared that having the travel expenses paid for was *‘a proper access barrier that’s been removed for me. I’ve never been part of a cohort that has supported people like this’*. Jenna also reflected that having their travel expenses paid and a ticket bursary meant they were *‘able to go and see new theatres, it was really amazing to get to go and watch new work and get to talk about it as well’*.

Jenna also appreciated that the programme doesn’t have age cap at 25 saying, *‘so many things are 16 to 25 or 18 to 25’*. They reflected that during Covid they wouldn’t have been able to take up opportunities like this, and at the time felt like they *‘missed out on a lot of opportunities’* but felt with this programme that *‘the higher age eligibility was really good. It was nice to mix with people of all different ages’*. Jenna also shared that because the programme was for people who had not had access to drama school they didn’t feel *‘intimidated to apply because I thought, I’ll be on a similar experience level to the rest of the group’*.

When asked to what extent the programme has helped them develop their theatre-making skills and knowledge, Jenna pointed to *'writing and directing' their own work* and the *'collaborative nature' of the programme as 'massive areas of development'*. Working with a group who were *'really championing each other'* helped develop Jenna's skills and knowledge, as they were able to test things out in a space that felt *'really safe and, in a really supportive environment'*.

Jenna also commented on the skills development from the comprehensive scratch process; *'seeing it come to life and go from all the way through, from writing it to dramatising it with another person, to directing it and even learning the lighting terminology when we were doing the tech run'*. They were particularly supported by director Joe's *'really great way of explaining things'* and gave an example of now having the *'vocabulary to dissect work and explain elements of theatre'* due to Joe's support.



Collaboration was another skill that Jenna developed on the programme, saying *'I've learned how to collaborate with people with completely different skill sets and different communication styles and how to adapt processes to get everyone in the room on the same page'*. This strengthened their skills as a theatre maker and supports their next creative steps.

Jenna's confidence has also grown from taking part in the programme, and they shared that they *'saw a massive change in the things that I was making and the way that I was communicating and confidently leading a group'*. They followed up by saying, *'I shy away from talking about my achievements, but I made a piece that I'm really, really proud of and I'm very confidently telling people I am turning it into a play'*.

When asked about what could have made the programme better, Jenna had some really useful insights into the scratch process, and how at times, the company weren't fully sure of what was coming next and how the process would work. This will be built into the programme next year. Jenna also mentioned the importance of balancing theoretical learning with practical application in masterclasses, which is really useful for looking ahead.

Jenna shared their appreciation for the team at The Old Vic, and how they made the experience *'very supportive and welcoming'*, going on to say, *'it was just such a lovely energy from the facilitators in the room'*.

Finally, Jenna shared how meaningful it was for the company to have their work housed in the new Greene Studio at The Old Vic and that *'opening the space by performing in there for the first time was really amazing'*. They went on to say, *'the fact that it was in the round and was connected to the main stage also felt special because it felt like we were really connected to the building'*.

'The team were really supportive and nurturing of our ideas and knew when to lead and when to step back and give us the turn to step up. I think it was amazing that we were able to be trusted but know that we still had a great support network around us'

Jenna, OV Theatre Maker

THEATRE-MAKING SKILLS

A key aim of the programme is to develop the company's multidisciplinary theatre-making skill set, and this is reflected in the feedback. All participants agreed that as a result of OV Theatre Makers, their theatre knowledge and skills are developing.

All participants agreed that they had achieved goals they set for themselves at the start, many of these being to gain or develop specific theatre-making skills. These included *'creating co-written scripts with collaborators. Successfully completing a tech rehearsal as a director. Understanding the role of a producer'*. Others reflected, *'I wrote and directed something which was performed on stage! This was a goal of mine before the programme and something I couldn't even dream of a year ago'* and some talked of the range of skills, *'I really wanted to do a little bit of everything: producing/directing/writing/acting and I am so thrilled that I was given the space to do just that'*.

Some reflected on developing skills that were completely new to them or previously out of their comfort zone, *'I set myself a second goal: to take on tasks and responsibilities that were new to me, rather than defaulting to what I'd usually do. Having the opportunity to write a script to be considered for the scratch made me realise how much I really enjoyed it, and I'm still thinking about that now'*. Another reflected, *'I wanted to develop as a dramaturg and gain experience in the role which I did. But I also got to try my hand at set and sound design, as well as directing a musical number, which I didn't even think I would get the opportunity to'*.

'This course has been brilliant in terms of letting us make what we want of the experience and has grown my confidence as a director, songwriter, dramaturg, set and sound designer. I've loved the range of opportunities I've had'
 OV Theatre Maker

Participants also talked about the benefit of developing the more logistical and pragmatic elements of theatre making and freelance work, *'as someone who's new to the theatre industry (coming into the sector through this programme) I have found it invaluable to learn about the more practical, logistical and financial aspects of what it is to be a theatre maker. It's made me feel like I can be a theatre maker too!'*

Finally, employability skills also saw an improvement following the programme with 18 out of 18 participants agreeing they were confident in working in a theatre and 15 out of 20 being confident applying for work compared to three out of 20 at the start. Confidence in forging a career in the theatre industry was bolstered with one participant saying, *'I didn't really think theatre was something I could genuinely aspire to as a career. This project has really enabled me to believe in myself as a creative'*, and another, *'It's affirmed a lot for me what I want my career to look like and had consistently been a real source of growth, support, and joy for me'*. Feedback also reflected on improved knowledge of career paths with one participant saying, *'before the programme I had no idea what my career in the industry would look like or how to get started. Now I have several avenues that I can move between'*.



PEER AND ALUMNI NETWORKING

Another key impact of the programme was the opportunity to build a comprehensive community of collaborators and supporters through networking with peers, programme alumni and industry professionals. All participants agreed they feel more connected to a community since taking part in the programme and 18 out of 20 participants agreed they were good at networking compared to only three out of 20 at the start.

One company member remarked on the programme's ability to create a *'solid, talented network of artists/collaborators'* and another that meeting with both peers and alumni of the programme allowed them to *'discover new routes and options for getting into/staying connected to theatre making. I've found future collaborators'*.

The feedback also reflected the feeling of safety in having a ready-made group of collaborators to call upon once the programme had finished, *'there are some things I am unsure about, but I now have a great network of people I can ask for advice and support'*. This is something we see in action with the OV Theatre Makers alumni, many of whom have continued to collaborate on ideas and new work seeded during the programme. Through our OV Lab programme, offering free rehearsal space to alumni, we have also been able to see these working relationships continue, years after participants take part. Our new Emerging Theatre Professionals Network ensures the opportunity for continued collaboration and sharing of ideas.

'I found the collaborative structure of the course particularly valuable. Working with different people in the cohort exposed me to a range of creative approaches and perspectives, which helped me think more critically about storytelling, character and staging'

OV Theatre Maker

THE SCRATCH

Another prevalent theme within the feedback is the importance of the scratch night in giving participants an opportunity to put into practice the skills developed in the first half of the programme. One participant noted *'one of the most useful aspects of the programme was the opportunity to develop and test new ideas in a supportive environment. Having the space to write, devise and collaborate with other theatre makers allowed me to explore my practice both as an actor and a writer'*.

Many spoke of the new skills added to their tool box via the scratch, *'I believe I have added a new skill set to my practice e.g. movement direction, which I would not have dared to try if not for this scratch night'* and another, *'having an opportunity to test out roles I was less familiar with through the scratch night has helped me feel even more confident as a multihyphenate theatre maker and helped me to grow my skills and hopefully improve my employability'*.

Others reflected, *'the scratch process was also such a concentrated way of making theatre from a single prompt and doing that in such a professional setting was so useful'*, highlighting the importance of hosting the scratch in house and with access to The Old Vic technical team.

'The chance to present work in the scratch night was very useful, as it provided a clear goal to work towards and an opportunity to experience the process of developing an idea from an early stage through to performance. Being part of a programme at The Old Vic also gave valuable insight into how a professional theatre environment supports the development of new work'

OV Theatre Maker

CONNECTION TO THE OLD VIC

Finally, being the first education and community programme to be embedded into the new building, Backstage, has had such a positive impact on the participants' connection to The Old Vic. The company found it particularly special to be the first artists putting on a production in the Greene Studio. 19 out of 20 people agreed they felt comfortable and welcome at The Old Vic and 19 out of 19 agreed they felt connected to it by the end of OV Theatre Makers.

One person commented *'being in a building that produces theatre makes me feel closer to the idea that we are here to learn about making theatre and it is possible'* and another, *'I truly feel so lucky to feel like I have such a deep connection with one of the most prolific and established theatres in the world'*. Participants also felt the space was welcoming and inclusive, *'I also appreciated how welcoming and accessible the space felt, it created an environment where people felt comfortable sharing ideas and taking creative risks'*.

'Being based within The Old Vic building was also inspiring, as it made the learning experience feel closely connected to a working theatre. Overall the space supported both the practical and collaborative aspects of the Theatre Makers programme very effectively'

OV Theatre Maker



SMALLER-SCALE MAKING OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD OF THE SCRATCH

Participants most enjoyed masterclasses that had a predominantly practical focus and opportunities to do some fast-paced making earlier on in the programme, and would have enjoyed more of this. One person asked for *'more practical, on-your-feet tasks scattered throughout the sessions, particularly in the earlier weeks'* and another suggested that introducing more elements of practical theatre making from the beginning would have made them *'closer and more comfortable to my peers from earlier on, and also that our creative ideas could have developed a little longer alongside the masterclasses'*.

Next year we will incorporate more opportunities for fast-paced, stand-alone making earlier in the programme and we will also emphasise the importance of the practical application of learning to the professionals delivering the masterclasses.



SCRATCH NIGHT TIMELINE AND PROCESS

We will continue to work on the scratch night process to ensure it leaves enough time for creation and solidifying ideas whilst keeping the rapid paced DIY nature, which is essential to the development of theatre-making skills. We will continue to programme the welcome as a one-day session in order to keep the two additional sessions during the scratch-making process.

In particular, we will look to make the timeline of the scratch more transparent and easier to understand for the company, so they know what is needed from them at each stage of the process. One participant suggested adding a *'column of expectations where you lay out what should be done by each week in the lead up to the scratch could be helpful next year'*; this is a great idea which we will incorporate going forward.

This year, due to hosting the programme onsite, we were able to offer additional rehearsal time outside of the programme. These were during the day in the weeks leading up to the scratch. One participant noted that they would have preferred to have some evening slots available as they were not free during the day. We will look to accommodate this next year.

'As a professional, I have felt respected and empowered during my time here and when handling my projects. In addition to this, I feel like my own mental wellbeing had been acknowledged and was given space by the facilitators to process things in my own time and space. I have always felt like I have a voice here'

OV Theatre Maker

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