OV BACKSTAGE AT THE OLD VIC



EVALUATION
2025–2026

CONTENTS

Education & Community at The Old Vic 2
OV Backstage 3
Programme 6
Participant information 18
Participant outcomes 24
Case study 30
Impact 32
Ideas for the future 37

THE OLD VIC EDUCATION & COMMUNITY TEAM
Participation Coordinator
Suzie Carney
Education & Community Coordinator
Sophia Chimonas
Education & Community Director
Hannah Fosker
Participation Manager
Charlotte Gaughan
Education Manager
Tom Latham
Education Manager
Becky Rathkey
Education & Community Intern
John Rice-Murphy
Head of Education & Community
Flo Schroeder
Community Manager
Jemima Senior
Education Manager
Alice Watson

OV BACKSTAGE PROJECT COORDINATOR
Micaëla Corcoran

WITH THANKS TO
The Old Vic Technical team:
Stage Chargehand
Scott Carver
Production Director
Dominic Fraser
Deputy Head of Stage
Matt Hill
Deputy Head of Wardrobe
Andy Keelan
Head of Wardrobe
Fiona Lehmann
Head of Stage
Aran Morrison
Head of Sound
James Percival
Deputy Head of Lighting
Alex Riley
Lighting Chargehand
Eimante Rukaite
Head of Lighting
Andrew Stuttard
Technical Services Director
Christian Wallace
Deputy Head of Production
Madeleine Young

Freelance Artists:
Dresser
Jennifer Mills
Head of Wigs, Hair & Make Up
Rob Wilson
Sound No 1
Phil Michael
Sound No 2
Maisie Roberts
Lighting Board Operator
Kian Reeves
Stage Crew
Trent Morrison

How The Other Half Loves
Creative Team:
Director
Phillip Breen
Set & Costume
Rob Howell
Lighting
Azusa Ono
Sound
Dyfan Jones
Casting
Ruby Gilmour
Voice
Joel Trill
Intimacy
Asha Jennings-Grant
Fights
Kev McCurdy
Associate Director
Phillippe Cato
Associate Set
Megan Rouse
Associate Costume
Lucy Gaiger
Props Supervisor
Katie Saunders for Propworks
Wigs, Hair & Make Up
Campbell Young Associates

Stage Management Team:
Company Stage Manager
Kim Battistini
Deputy Stage Manager
Klare Roger
Assistant Stage Manager
Lucy Rees

Artists who took part in Networking Sessions:
Africa Blagrove
Cáit Canavan
Laura Flowers
Sophie Halse
Ed Locke
Karen Lowe
India Mills
David Palmer
Emily Perry
Gabrielle Robertson
Mark Shayle
Karla Sinton
Lucie Warren

Additional Participant Support:
Sharon Calcutt Cheadle
EJ Saunders
Mark Stevenson

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO
Ben Delfont
National Theatre Costume and Props Hire
National Theatre
Pirates Crew
The Tom Stoppard Theatre
Young Vic

EVALUATION
Editors
Suzie Carney
Sophia Chimonas
Charlotte Gaughan
Design by
James Cunninghame Graham
Photography by
Laima Arlauskaite
Marshall Stay

With generous thanks to all Old Vic staff and Associates

OV BACKSTAGE

Generously supported by
Maria Björnson Memorial Fund, **CHK Foundation**, **Kate Downey & Rob Knox**, **The Mackintosh Foundation** and **Sandra Charitable Trust**

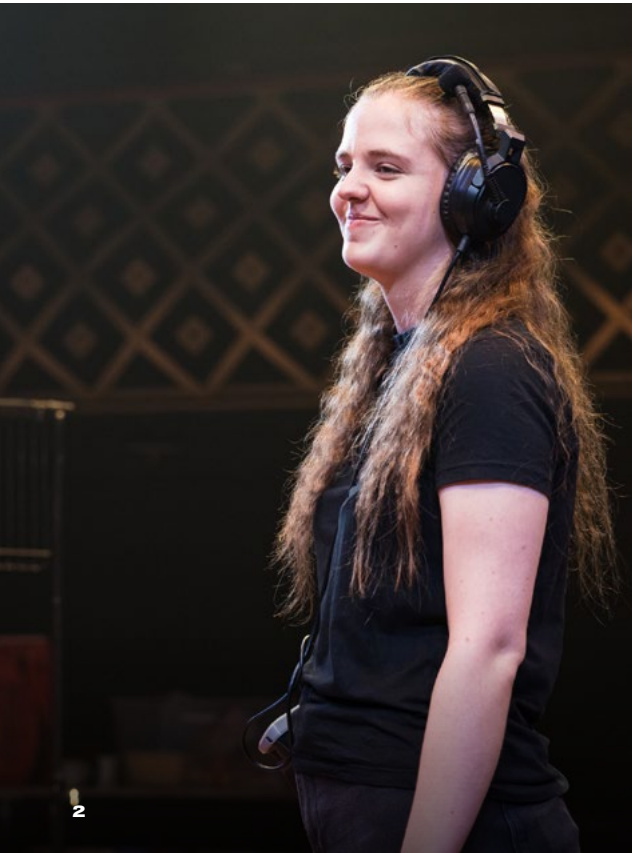
LOTTERY FUNDED
Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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.



OV BACKSTAGE

OV Backstage offers paid placements on an Old Vic production to six 18–30 year olds from underrepresented backgrounds in the arts.

The programme offers participants the opportunity to work across the lifecycle of an Old Vic production, from rehearsals through to press night, gaining hands-on experience, knowledge and an understanding of what a career in the industry looks like. The programme offers a route into the industry for those who have not undergone formal training and may face barriers to accessing traditional routes, such as university. The programme supports the next generation of backstage theatre workers, diversifying the future workforce and responding to the skills shortage currently faced by the theatre industry.

This year's participants worked on *How the Other Half Loves*, an Alan Ayckbourn play performed in the round. The programme began with two induction days where participants were introduced to each other, the team and the building as well as learning about the timeline of a professional production and the roles associated with them. Participants were also equipped with the OV Backstage Resource Pack to supplement their learning.

Following this they shadowed The Old Vic Technical team, *How the Other Half Loves* creatives and wider freelance production staff in one of five backstage disciplines: **costume and wardrobe**, **lighting**, **set and staging**, **sound** and **stage management**. This year one of the participants took on a lighting swing placement, spending time with a variety of different departments.

'Having the chance to get hands on and actually operate the show and experience what it's like to be that person who is responsible for running that show, that was so helpful'
OV Backstage Participant

Participants had 15 paid days of work across the programme and these were scheduled so each would be present for the most informative and practical elements of their individual disciplines. During their shifts they shadowed industry professionals, were taught discipline-specific skills and had a chance to contribute practically to the production. There were also group trips to other London theatres and industry relevant locations.

The project culminated with a networking session to help participants take the next steps in their careers and meet further industry professionals to broaden their knowledge and networks.

The project is led by the Education & Community team and a dedicated OV Backstage coordinator, who liaise with the Technical team, Production team, creatives and wider freelance team to coordinate each placement. This year the coordinator role was taken on by freelance Stage Manager, Micaëla Corcoran. OV Backstage is brought about through collaboration from a huge number of people across The Old Vic and beyond, working together to provide the most insightful and beneficial experience for all participants.

‘I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of such an incredible programme. It has been such a privilege to work with such amazing and generous people. I can’t express enough how invaluable, supportive and life changing this is for me. Thank you all!’
OV Backstage Participant



RECRUITMENT AND CRITERIA

OV Backstage was set up to work with young people who are currently underrepresented in backstage roles, including people from the Global Majority, women, those from working class backgrounds, care experienced people, neurodivergent people and disabled people.

In addition, to be eligible to apply for the programme, participants had to:

— Be aged between 18–30
— Be interested in developing a career in their chosen discipline
— Have had some prior experience in their chosen discipline, for example at school or a short course
— Not have undertaken any formal training or a university degree in their chosen discipline.

Two additional criteria were added this year in line with our other emerging theatre professionals programmes to ensure the opportunity reached those who most needed it, and these were:

— You must have attended state school when aged 11–16
— You must not be currently studying for any degree and must not hold above a bachelor's degree (e.g. master's degree or PhD).



PROGRAMME

Application Process
Applicants were asked to complete an application form to collect personal details, eligibility, availability for the project and any access requirements. They were also asked the following questions, which could be answered in a written format or by a video/audio recording:

— Why are you interested in your discipline?
— What past experience or transferable skills do you have in your chosen discipline?
— How would you hope to use the experience gained on the OV Backstage programme in your future?

Applications for OV Backstage opened on Thu 30 Apr and closed on Thu 21 May. Programme information was made available on The Old Vic's website and advertised though the theatre's social media channels, as well as in an email campaign to our dedicated 'Take Part' mailing list. Detailed copy about each discipline was created in collaboration with the Technical team to ensure applicants understood what the role entailed.

To reach as many people as possible, specifically those from groups that experience barriers accessing arts opportunities, we contacted charities, councils and other relevant organisations. These included youth groups, virtual schools, young carer organisations, job centres and employability organisations.

In addition, the Education & Community team conducted targeted outreach to organisations which offer entry level courses in technical theatre, such as the National Theatre, National Youth Theatre and Stratford East. The programme was featured on the newsletter and opportunity boards of a range of organisations that support young people to find creative opportunities. These included Get into Theatre, Arts Jobs, The Dots, Creative Portal, Backstage Niche and Disability Arts Online. The programme was also shared with organisations that work with young people with transferable skills who may not be aware of opportunities within the arts, such as Single Homeless Project, The King's Trust, Drive Forward Foundation, and Lambeth and Southwark Councils.

'I got a bit of experience in everything'
OV Backstage Participant

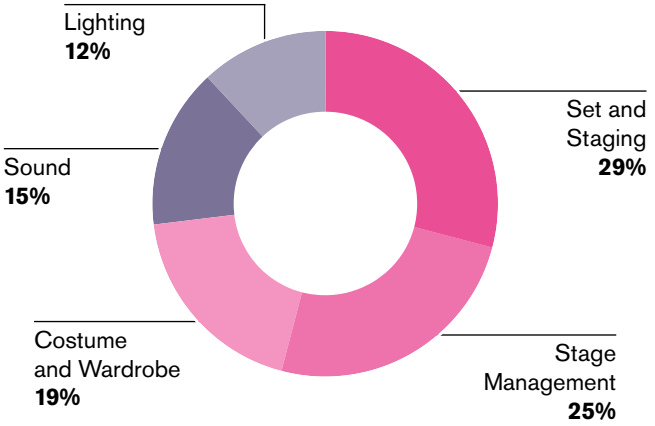
Online Information Session
At the start of the application window we ran an online information session where participants could find out more about the programme and the placements on offer, as well as receive advice and guidance about the application process and ask questions. This was hosted by Participation Manager, Charlotte Gaughan and Participation Coordinator, Suzie Carney. The session was attended by **52 people** with a further **93 people** accessing the transcript and slides after the session.

Applications
298 people applied to take part in OV Backstage for 2025–26, an **increase of 45%** from 2024–25.

The most common ways that people heard about the programme included **25% from referral organisations**, **23% via word of mouth**, **14% via The Old Vic's website** and **12% via The Old Vic's e-newsletter**. We also continue to share the opportunity with other backstage programmes where OV Backstage could act as a suitable next step for their participants.



Applications were split across the following disciplines:



18 candidates were shortlisted for interview, and **six candidates** were selected to take part in the programme. Interviews were carried out by the Education & Community team along with the relevant head of department for each discipline. An additional benefit to having the latter present, was the opportunity for all applicants to ask questions to a leading industry professional. This year we also offered follow up opportunities for some interviewees that were shortlisted in each area but weren't selected. This included in-person and online meetings with Old Vic technical staff and suggestions of alternative next steps.

'They've seen me for who I am and what I want to do and given me that boost to think you can do it'
OV Backstage Participant

DELIVERY

Induction

The programme began with two induction days, allowing participants to get to know one another and project staff, as well as introducing them to The Old Vic and its programming. Reflecting on last year's evaluation we made some changes to the induction period to support participant integration. This included a dedicated meet and greet with the Technical team to help participants get to know the people they would be working with, and a 'Get to know me' survey to gather information on how participants best like to learn and any goals for the placement which were shared with Old Vic staff.

In advance of the induction days, participants completed online certified manual handling and ladder training. This followed feedback from last year that ladder training would have opened up other practical opportunities during the programme. By moving this training online, we were able to expand the in-person activities that took place during the two induction days.



The induction days included:

— 'Getting to know you' activities
— Learning useful theatre terminology
— An introduction to theatre roles and departments and how they work together
— A health and safety induction
— A backstage tour with Technical Services Director, Christian Wallace
— An introduction to the model box and production plans
— Watching *Glengarry Glen Ross*, giving participants an opportunity to see how the theatre is transformed from one production to the next.

Following feedback from last year's programme we also wanted to find a way to communicate the programme to the wider freelance and casual staff working on our productions that might not be aware of the OV Backstage programme. We created a 'Supporting Education and Community Participants Guide' which included some background on the programme and advice for working with the OV Backstage participants.This was sent out ahead of the programme starting.

Participants were provided with their own steel toe cap boots and head torches to use during the programme and to take away with them after.

'The welcoming environment and willingness to share knowledge has created a community feeling/ environment'
OV Backstage Participant

Placement Shifts
Following the induction days, participants were embedded in their relevant departments to shadow and take part in the production through the get-out of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and then fit-up, rehearsals, technical rehearsals and previews for *How the Other Half Loves*.

Please see below for a summary of activity for each discipline.

Costume and Wardrobe
The Costume and Wardrobe placement shadowed Head of Wardrobe, Fiona Lehman and Deputy Head of Wardrobe, Andy Keelan. They supported with the cataloguing, restoring and storage of the outgoing *Glengarry Glen Ross* costumes and the get-in of the *How the Other Half Loves* costumes. They supported with laundry calls and ironing, as well as laying out dressing rooms and preparing dresser tracks, learning about costume track plotting as they went. During the previews they shadowed multiple dressers and wardrobe assistants as well as learning from Rob Wilson, Head of Wigs, Hair and Make Up.

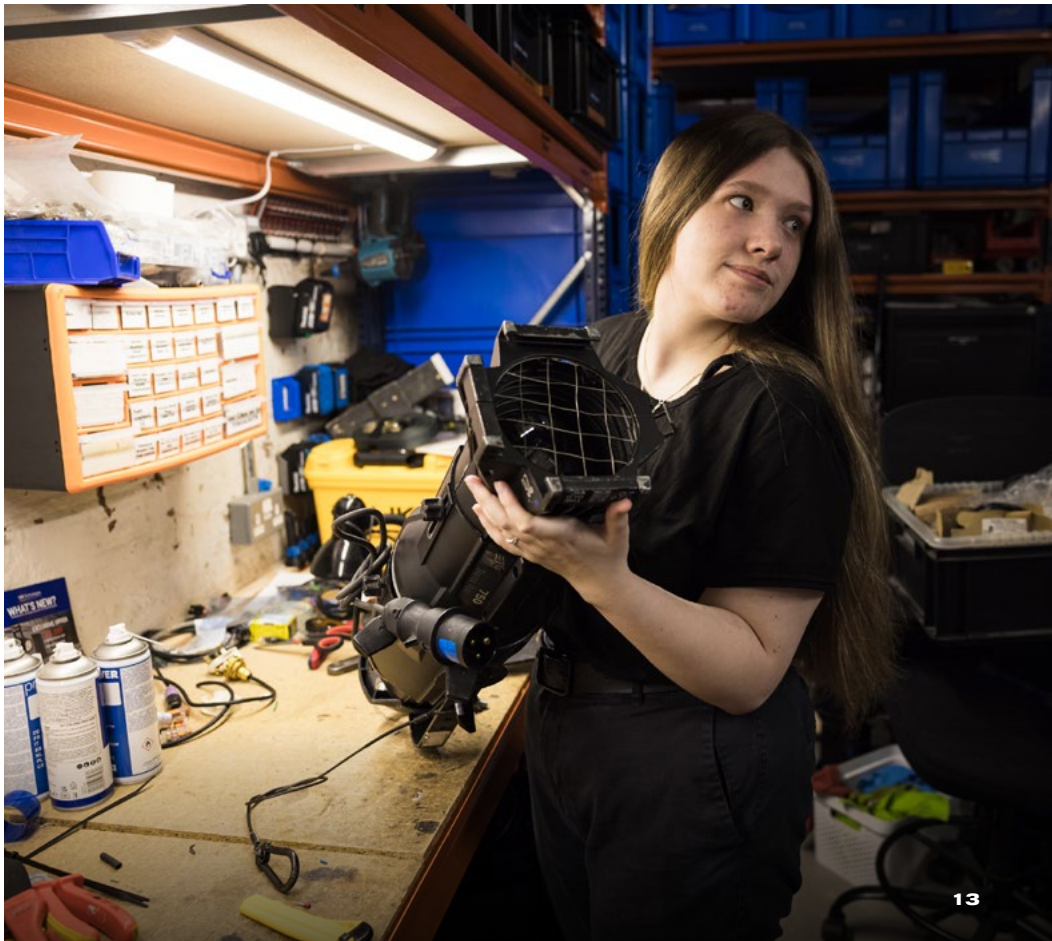
Sound
The Sound placement shadowed Head of Sound, James Percival. Ahead of the get-out they supported with the creation of sound practicals which produce diegetic sound effects on stage. During the get-in they supported with speaker rigging and shadowed delay speakers being assigned and sound quiet time. During previews they fitted mics, shadowed Sound No.1, Phil Michael and Sound No.2, Maisie Roberts, and were trusted to set up the sound system and cover part of the sound track during the show.

Set and Staging
The Set and Staging participant shadowed Head of Stage, Aran Morrison, Deputy Head of Stage, Matt Hill and Stage Chargehand, Scott Carver. They had a workshop and tool induction ahead of supporting with the get-out of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, including de-rigging flats and packing down furniture. They supported with the installation of a herringbone stage floor, stage masking and the get-in of props and furniture. During previews they shadowed crewing tracks and had a technical drawings and carpentry workshop session with the Head of Stage. They were also able to work with a variety of freelance crew members.

‘100% the most inclusive environment I’ve been involved in. I have thoroughly enjoyed OV Backstage and have had the chance to learn so much that I will take forward with me into my career’
OV Backstage Participant

Lighting and Lighting Swing
We had two participants working within Lighting, one of whom was a swing so also had shifts with Sound, and Set and Staging. Both placements shadowed Head of Lighting, Andrew Stuttard, Deputy Head of Lighting, Alex Riley and Lighting Chargehand, Eimante Rukaite. They both attended the off-site LX prep work at White Light including prepping and labelling cables and LX fixtures, as well as supporting the get-in and rigging for *How the Other Half Loves*. During previews they shadowed Lighting Board Operator, Kian Reeves and had the chance to partly operate the show. Our swing placement also shadowed sound quiet time and had shifts shadowing crewing tracks and Sound No.1 during previews.

Stage Management
Our Stage Management placement shadowed Company Stage Manager, Kim Battistini, Deputy Stage Manager, Klare Roger and Assistant Stage Manager, Lucy Rees. They attended off-site rehearsals, supported with unpacking props and costume in the rehearsal room. They supported the get-out of the rehearsal room and get-in to the theatre. During previews they shadowed the CSM and ASM tracks, as well as attending understudy rehearsals. They also completed a shadow shift on *Arcadia* at the Tom Stoppard Theatre and had a stage management toolkit session with Stage Manager, EJ Saunders.



Ov Backstage Resource Pack
Participants are provided with the OV Backstage Resource Pack to complement and scaffold their learning throughout the project. Created by previous OV Backstage Coordinator and freelance Stage Manager, EJ Saunders, it includes information on production processes and timelines, guides to roles in each of the OV Backstage disciplines, links to useful information, career guidance and resources, self-led learning and tasks for different stages of the production, and a glossary of theatre terminology. The resource pack was sent out earlier this year to support participants to prepare for their time with us.

Pastoral and Access Support
The OV Backstage team, consisting of Participation Manager, Charlotte Gaughan, Participation Coordinator, Suzie Carney and Project Coordinator, Micaëla Corcoran, provided tailored pastoral care and access support for participants. This included regular individual and group check-ins, as well as opportunities to reflect on learning and confidence levels, to ensure participants didn't feel overwhelmed working in a large theatre building. At certain points in the programme, where multiple participants were on site, additional freelance staff were employed to ensure everyone was supported and that health and safety procedures were being followed.

Support with travel costs were on offer to all participants who required it, to ensure that costs were not a barrier to participation. Five participants were provided with this support.

'I've never once felt left out, unsupported or anything negative as a result of my conditions. The Old Vic truly feels like home. Thank you everyone'
OV Backstage Participant

Theatre/Industry Visits and Workshops
We arranged a variety of group visits during the programme to further enhance participants' learning and understanding of the wider theatre industry. This also allowed them to meet a wider range of professionals with varying entry routes and career journeys.

We watched a performance of *Arcadia* at the newly named Tom Stoppard Theatre, following its transfer from The Old Vic. The group were then given a backstage tour of the theatre by the Company Stage Manager, Ben Delfont, and met relevant technicians from all OV Backstage disciplines. One participant was also able to do one of their paid shifts on the show.

Our Technical Services Director, Christian Wallace and Deputy Production Manager, Madeleine Young arranged a tour of the Young Vic and National Theatre, which was a great opportunity to see the scope of technical roles in different sized venues. Technical staff from both venues took time to show the group round and answer any questions the participants had.

Participants in relevant disciplines went on a tour of the National Theatre Costume and Prop Hire Store. We tasked them with sourcing props and costumes for *How the Other Half Loves*.

Finally, the group also took part in a practical sustainability workshop, learning about the Theatre Green Book and sustainable theatre-making practices.



Next Steps Workshop
The programme culminated in a Next Steps workshop to support participants to create goals and organise plans for their career journey after the programme. This included:

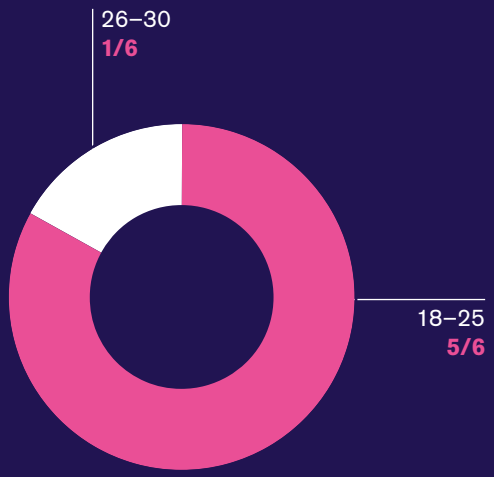
— Each participant having the opportunity to meet with two industry professionals relevant to their career progression. Guests were curated to fit with who would be most inspirational and beneficial for each person to meet. Since the session, two participants have already had additional shadowing opportunities from these connections
— Being joined by Mark Shayle from the Association of British Theatre Technicians to talk about careers and support available to technicians
— An alumni Q&A with Sophie, who took part in the programme last year, to find out about their journey after the programme and advice for next steps
— One-to-one CV and careers advice discussions
— A goal reflection session where participants reflected on goals set at the start of the programme and set new goals for the future. They were encouraged to break goals down into manageable chunks, for one week, one month and one year following the programme. To support accountability, goals set for one month were sent via post to individuals.

‘I have been connected to numerous networks to help me pursue jobs and networks’
OV Backstage Participant

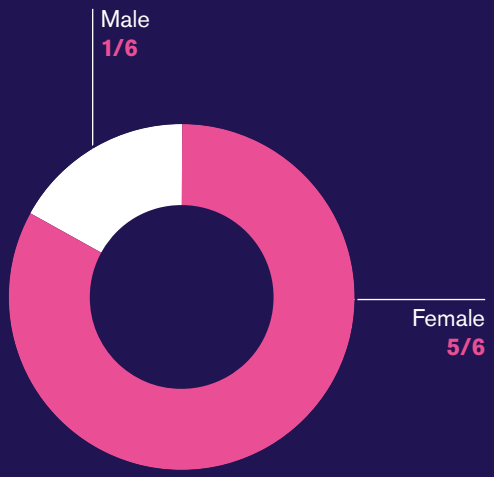


PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

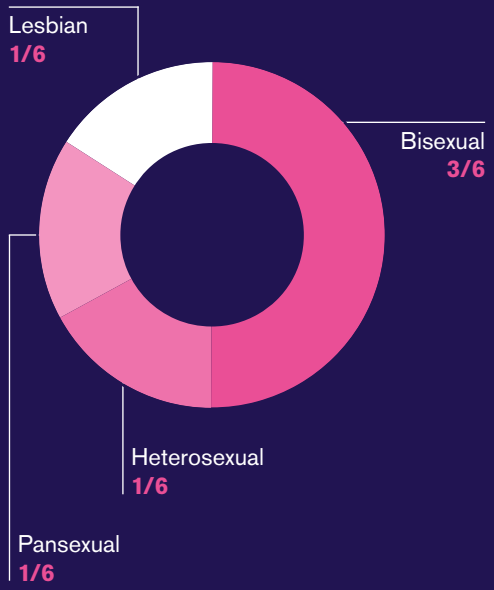
AGE



GENDER



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



IDENTITY

Do you identify as trans?

6/6

No

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

6/6

Yes

ETHNICITY

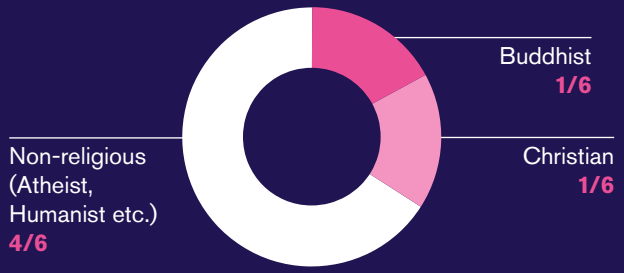
1/6 Another Asian background

1/6 Mixed Ethnicity: Asian/ White

3/6 White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish

1/6 Prefer not to say

RELIGION AND BELIEF



DISABILITY

3/6 **Yes**

2/6 **No**

1/6 **Prefer not to say**

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

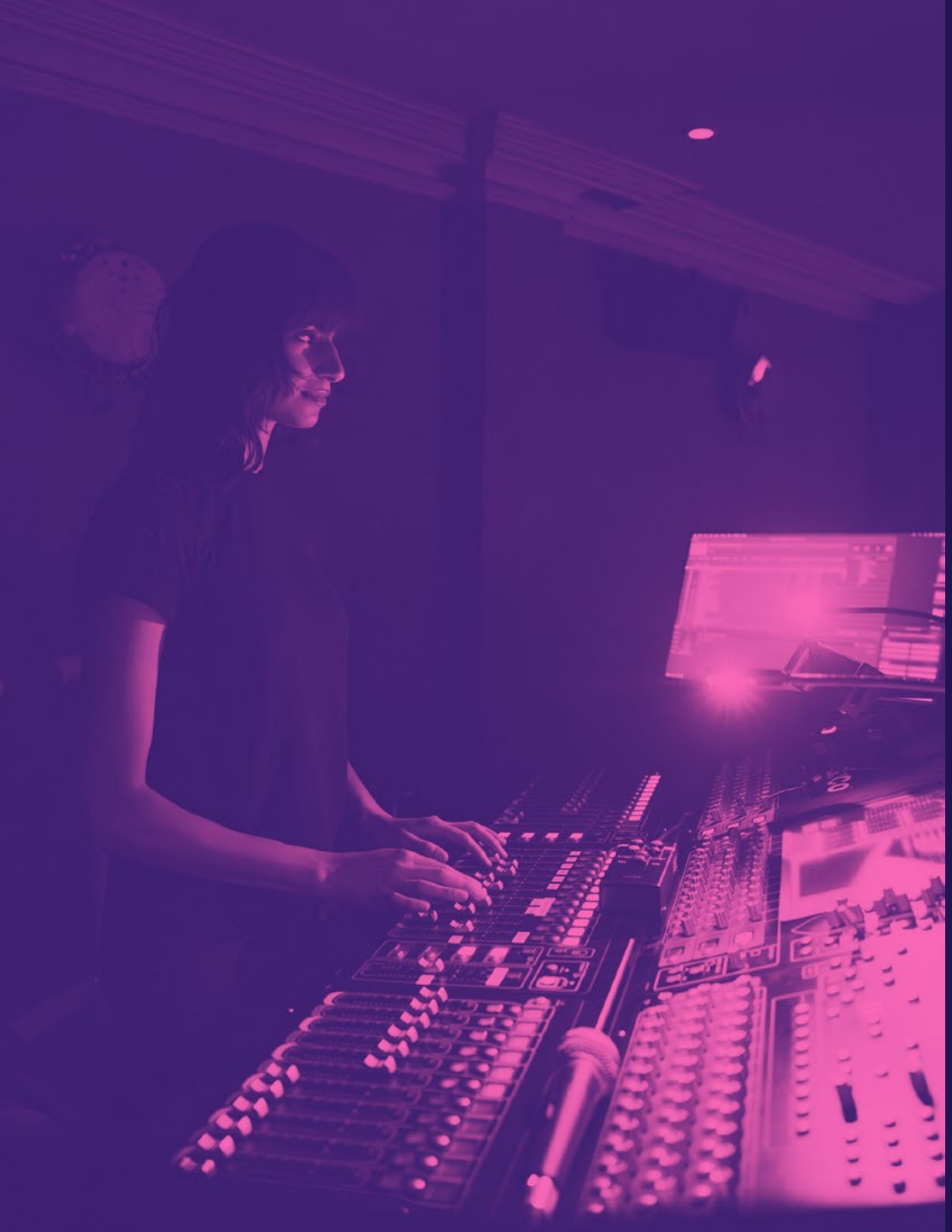
1/3 Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)

2/3 Learning, concentrating or remembering (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

2/3 Mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder)

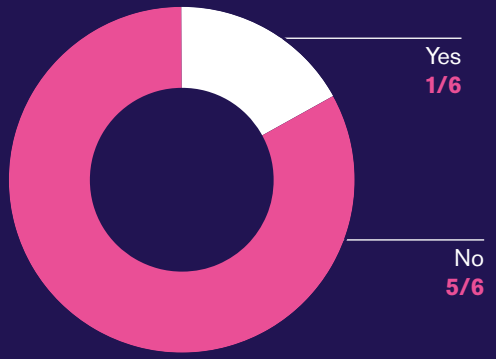
1/3 Mobility (e.g. difficulty walking short distances, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying)

2/3 Social or behavioural (e.g. neurodiverse conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder or asperger's syndrome)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES



LOCAL AUTHORITY

1/6
Bedfordshire

1/6
Croydon

1/6
Essex

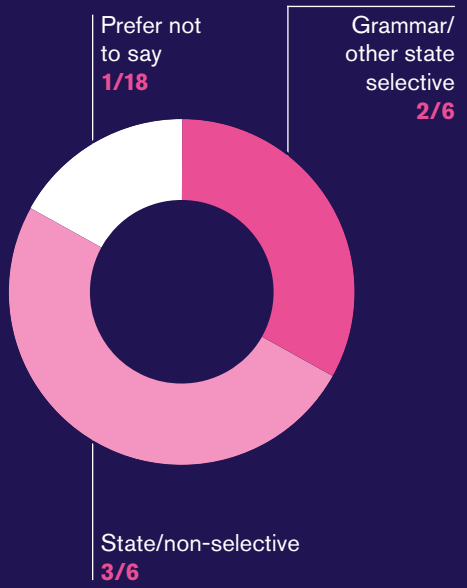
1/6
Lewisham

1/6
Richmond

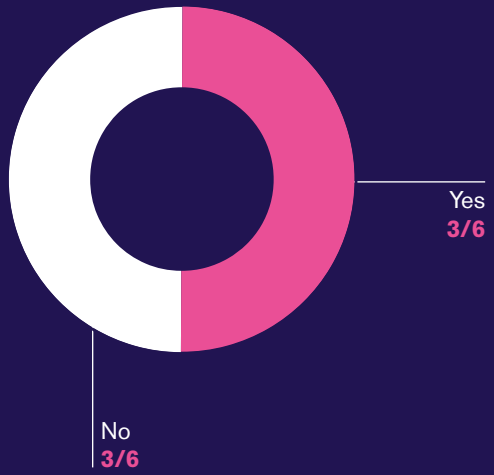
1/6
Sutton

‘I have nothing but good things to say’
OV Backstage Participant

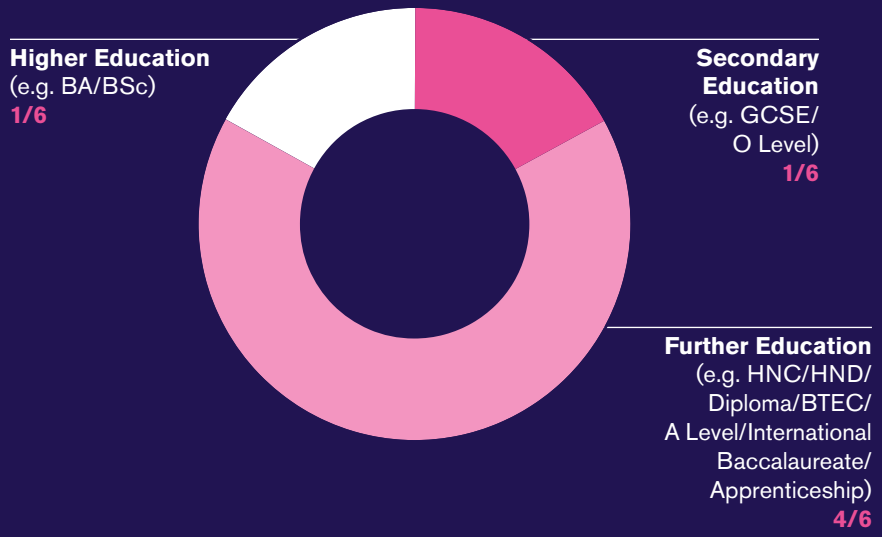
EDUCATION



FREE SCHOOL MEALS

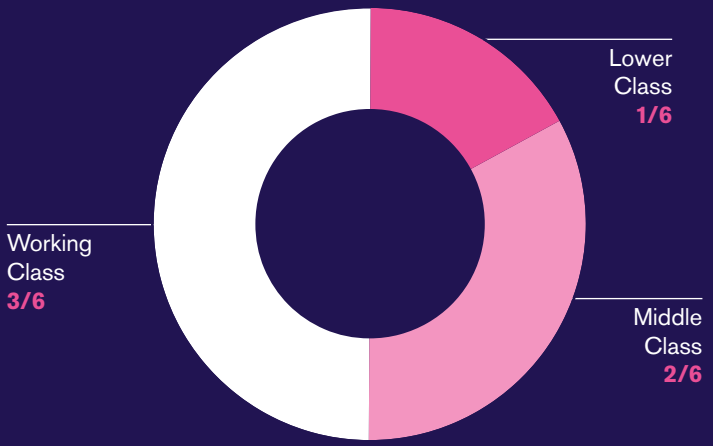


QUALIFICATIONS



SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

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



CARE EXPERIENCE

Are you care experienced/a care leaver?

1/6
Yes

5/6
No

‘Having The Old Vic on my CV boosts my confidence so much’
OV Backstage Participant

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Before the programme:

6/6

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

3/6

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

After the programme:

6/6

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

6/6

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

WELLBEING

Before the programme:

4/6

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

3/6

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

After the programme:

6/6

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

6/6

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

LIFE SKILLS

Before the programme:

5/6

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

5/6

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

2/6

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

2/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt good at networking

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills.

After the programme:

6/6

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

6/6

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

6/6

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

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt good at networking

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had good communication skills.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

BACKSTAGE AND TECHNICAL THEATRE

Before the programme:

4/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about their backstage discipline

3/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident in their technical theatre skills related to their discipline

2/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about the production timeline of a theatre show

2/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about jobs and careers in their backstage discipline.

After the programme:

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about their backstage discipline

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident in their technical theatre skills related to their discipline

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about the production timeline of a theatre show

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that they had a good understanding about jobs and careers in their backstage discipline.

INDUSTRY SKILLS

Before the programme:

2/6

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

After the programme:

6/6

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

‘I feel more confident now because it’s helped me get a taste of what day-to-day work feels like’

OV Backstage Participant



PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

QUALITY AND IMPACT

6/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The workshop leaders adapted to their needs

Overall, this project was excellent.

5/6

participants strongly agreed or agreed that:

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

CASE STUDY
LUCY

Lucy is a 19 year old who took part in the OV Backstage programme. When asked what made them want to participate in the project, they explained that it was important to have the '*opportunity to learn whilst bridging the gap between learning and practical work*', something unique that the OV Backstage programme has to offer.

Lucy went on to explain that, while studying at college, they were learning the theoretical aspects of theatre but didn't feel as though they were acquiring practical skills. They wanted to gain that '*knowledge alongside actual experience in a professional environment*', which ultimately motivated them to take part in the programme.

Lucy has a passion for lighting and worked as an LX swing during their time on the programme, allowing them to work closely with the lighting department. They described the experience, saying, '*I was on the stage with a headset listening to the lighting designer*' and '*got to operate lighting on some of the live shows*'. One moment that stood out to Lucy was getting the opportunity to operate a show, explaining, '*I think the most exciting one for me was definitely getting to operate the show and making sure that it went to plan. That was a wow moment*'.

Although Lucy primarily worked with the lighting team, what they found '*unique*' about the programme was the opportunity to work across other backstage departments and roles. They highlighted one experience working alongside the sound team, where they were able to '*fit a radio mic and someone's head mic*' before going on to shadow one of the sound technicians, helping them mic up an actor. This hands-on experience was an important part of the day-to-day learning throughout the programme.

When asked what they found most useful about the programme, Lucy identified, '*definitely the opportunity to have both the theoretical input and then the hands-on experience*'. They went on to explain, '*you learn from asking your questions and then you get the chance to actually put [it] into practice in a professional setting*'. Working with the sound team also broadened Lucy's understanding of the different opportunities available backstage, introducing them to roles and departments they hadn't previously considered and inspiring an interest in exploring them further.

Another valuable aspect of the programme was the '*one-on-one learning*' Lucy received from professionals working in the industry. Having the opportunity to ask questions, gain knowledge from those with experience in the field and then '*get the chance to put that into practice*' was an '*invaluable*' part of their experience.

Lucy described how the one-to-one support, alongside the opportunity to work across multiple departments, helped to build their confidence not only in their practical skills but also on an '*interpersonal skills level*'. They explained that the '*welcoming*' environment made them feel comfortable asking questions and receiving professional feedback. As a result, they now have '*a lot less doubt*' in their abilities.

When asked what felt special about the projects run by The Old Vic, Lucy spoke about the inclusivity of the programme and how, as '*a teenage girl struggling with physical health*', they had often been told, '*you can't do it, you're never going to make it in the industry. You don't have enough resilience*'. Coming to The Old Vic, however, gave Lucy the opportunity to feel '*seen and validated*', describing it as '*by far the most inclusive, most accommodating, most safe environment I've ever been in*'.

Lucy went on to explain how the programme made them feel seen in a way they hadn't experienced before, '*for people to not only see me for who I am, a girl who loves theatre and simply wants a future in it, but to then see me that way despite everything I have going on and everything I've experienced, I genuinely can't even explain what that felt like*'. Lucy went into further detail about why they felt the programme was so inclusive highlighting that '*the crew were so lovely and so willing to share all of their knowledge with you*', which helped them feel at ease and encouraged, which in turn, allowed Lucy to develop their knowledge further and gain a more well-rounded experience throughout the programme.

Overall, Lucy expressed their sheer appreciation for the programme saying, '*I will forever shout from the rooftops about you guys, what an amazing experience*'. With everything learned and gained from OV Backstage, Lucy can '*now go out into the world and say ok, this is the knowledge that I have, and this is what I have to offer*'.

CONFIDENCE IN FINDING FUTURE WORK AND CAREER PATHWAYS

One area that showed a large increase post programme was the participants' confidence in finding and applying for future work and understanding of career pathways in technical theatre. All participants agreed their employability skills had developed as a result of OV Backstage and confidence in applying for work rose from two out of six before the programme to six out of six afterwards. The next steps workshop and access to networking opportunities were given as key reasons for this increase. One person reflected, '*I've been given so many resources to help me apply for work that I feel like I'm more able to do it confidently*', and another, '*I now have a good understanding of what people/companies are looking for and I strongly feel my skills and communication skills are strong enough to pursue work after this programme*'.



All participants also agreed that as a result of OV Backstage, they felt better connected to networks and know how to access opportunities that can help them pursue a career in the creative and cultural industries. There was also an increase from two out of six, to six out of six in participants reporting they were good at networking. One person said, '*the amount of networking/people who have offered to look out for more work for me is very high and having The Old Vic name attached to me will definitely put me on the map, as it is evidence of being in a professional environment*'. Another reflected that, '*the welcoming environment and willingness to share knowledge has created a community feeling/environment. I have been connected to numerous networks to help me pursue jobs*'.

When asked what OV Backstage had inspired them to do, advocating for themselves in their future careers was a common theme.

OV Backstage has inspired me to:

— '*Keep my foot in the door, now that's in the way of it not letting it shut.*'
— '*Keep trying.*'
— '*Feel the confidence to pursue theatre professionally, get my hands dirty and look around. I feel that I've been taught the right way to expand in the wardrobe sector of theatre.*'
— '*Reach out to other creatives and take on any opportunities I might be offered in the future.*'
— '*Show up confidently at any place of work.*'
— '*Go after shadowing and work opportunities as an ASM and figure out a pathway to being a DSM.*'

Finally having a good understanding about jobs and careers in backstage areas also increased from two out of six, to six out of six after the programme. Participants felt career pathways had been demystified with one reflecting that OV Backstage has '*given me many pieces of a plan of action going into the world of work*'.

'The next steps workshop has given me a sense of direction like nothing else has before'
OV Backstage Participant

BACKSTAGE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

We saw huge development in both knowledge of technical theatre, including production timelines and their own disciplines, as well as their practical skills over the course of the programme. All participants agreed that as a result of OV Backstage, their theatre knowledge and skills are developing and confidence working in theatre went from two out of six, to six out of six across the programme. One participant said, '*shadowing different department roles in sound for a day/show helped my understanding of how a theatre timeline works, how problems are solved quickly and effectively*' and another said, '*shadowing the dressers and seeing the interactions of wardrobe department with each other and other technical departments has helped this career path feel more manageable and clear as I understand the responsibilities of different jobs within Wardrobe*'.

All participants agreed by the end of the programme that they felt confident in the technical theatre skills related to their discipline. Many commented on the opportunity to learn by doing, as a reason for this with one saying the most useful part was, '*having the opportunity to learn something new and put it into practice by being hands on*' and another that '*doing practical tasks myself raised my confidence in my skills*'.

Others praised the mentorship of those they shadowed, '*being able to learn directly from the people in my backstage discipline has been an invaluable experience. I've been given the opportunity to feel like a part of the team and so I've been able to pick things up as I go, whilst being allowed to make mistakes. This has been the most useful part of the project because it's truly been the most impactful*'.

'It's difficult to be immersed in this environment and not learn something useful. Everyone involved has been so supportive and welcoming. I've been able to feel comfortable enough to actually learn and develop aspects of my skillset and keep them'
OV Backstage Participant

As well as developing skills they had set out to achieve, one person also mentioned that the '*training I received taught me skills I had no clue about before starting and I was able to practise them across the programme*'. The lighting swing participant also mentioned the benefit of learning across disciplines saying they '*achieved the goal of learning something about a department I hadn't had backstage experience in before*'.

ACHIEVING GOALS

All participants felt they had achieved goals they set for themselves at the start of the programme. These included:

— '*Being able to throw myself in and fully submerse myself.*'
— '*Built relationships, communication, learned the process of costumes from the start of a show day to the end, laundry calls and dressing charts.*'
— '*To learn as much as I can about roles backstage, especially Sound.*'
— '*I feel more confident in myself knowing what Stage Management positions I want to work as in the future and feel more comfortable asking for help or answers.*'





IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

DISCIPLINES AND PRODUCTIONS

Participants in some disciplines mentioned wanting to do more practical tasks and how this had been difficult due to the cast size and configuration of the production. In future iterations of the programme we want to look at being more responsive to the scope of our productions and what disciplines might be best served by specific shows. This could involve placements running on different shows or more opportunity to work across disciplines. The disciplines which were supported by in-house Old Vic staff were more successfully embedded in the Technical team, and this is something we will also try to address in our future offer.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

One participant mentioned in the feedback that '*The OV team renewed some of their qualifications/training right before this project, such as harness training*', and that it would be great if participants could take advantage of these opportunities as well. In the future we will look to see what theatre-wide training is happening around the programme and where suitable, involve the participants.

SCHEDULING

Technical staff reflected that they would have liked to have been more in control of the learning process for their individual participants. Next year we will look at how we can hand over more of the scheduling and programming to the relevant staff teams.

'Not only am I walking away with enough memories to last a lifetime, I'm taking skills, knowledge and experiences from real people that helped them to get to where they are now. Plus tons and tons of resources'

OV Backstage Participant

The Old Vic
The Cut, London SE1 8NB
0344 871 7628
oldvictheatre.com

The Old Vic Theatre Trust 2000 Charity No. 1072590
The Old Vic Endowment Trust Charity No. 1147946