

WELCOME TO SPRING 2024 AT TOBACCO FACTORY THEATRES



We have just kicked off our Spring/Summer season with award-winning Artistic Director of Graeae, Jenny Sealey's new show, *Self-Raising*. Jenny has spent a lifetime championing stories by Deaf and disabled artists and took to the stage to tell her own story about growing up deaf in a blisteringly honest, laugh-out-loud one-woman show. A great way to open our Spring season!

Lyn Gardner said of *Stan's Café* that, "there is probably no more interesting Company working in the UK today" – and we couldn't agree more. A play packed with live music and wit about one of the Midlands' first Black Police officers, *Community Service* offers an emotional and uplifting production exploring the contribution of *Windrush* and the history of policing in the West Midlands, from 23rd to 27th of April.

Best known for their award-winning approach to the classics, *Flabbergast Theatre* bring *Romeo and Juliet* to TFT from 5th to 8th of June. Whilst celebrating Shakespeare's spectacular verse, expect live music, clowning, mask work and some impressive swashbuckling to boot in a refreshing take on the great romantic tragedy.

Our Get Involved programme has another busy term ahead. A packed programme of activities and workshops will culminate this season with our busy Summer Schools in August for young theatre makers aged between 5 and 18. You can read more about the inspiring projects that our wonderful Get Involved team have been doing in the community, and through our artist development programme in recent months, in this newsletter.

Remember to check out our exclusive Members events listed on the back page and be sure to book your places in advance with Aimee at aimee@tobaccofactorytheatres.com.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of our Members, once more, for your incredible support. Without your generosity none of this would be possible and we both look forward to seeing you again at TFT very soon.

Heidi Vaughan
Artistic Director & CEO

David Dewhurst
Executive Director



NEW CHAIR OF THE BOARD ANNOUNCED

Bertel Martin has taken over as Chair of the Board from Sarah Smith MBE who has stood down after 13 years. Bertel has been involved in Bristol's voluntary sector and arts scene for over 30 years, as a director, producer, manager and freelance writer. He has worked for the Black Voluntary Sector Development Unit, Bristol Old Vic and Kuumba and sat on the board of Circomedia, Albany Centre, Bristol Broadside, Theatre Bristol, *Come the Revolution*, *Nilaari* and *Bristol Short Story Prize*. As a founding member and coordinator of *Bristol Black Writers Group* that helped change the perception of Black arts in Bristol, his national work has included being the

director of *Plymouth International Book Festival*. He has sat on Arts Council England advisory boards for developing Black theatre in England and he currently works as Finance & Operations Manager for *acta Community Theatre*.

Speaking of his appointment, Heidi Vaughan said: "We are delighted to welcome Bertel into this role with his wealth of experience in the arts sector across the Southwest and nationally. We are, of course, very sad to see Sarah leave us and thank her for all that she has done for TFT."



SPECIAL COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OF OLIVER TWIST

Members of our local community enjoyed a special performance of Oliver Twist in January. The first community performance at Tobacco Factory Theatres since the pandemic, local youth projects, refugee charities and organisations working with children and young people were invited to experience the magic of theatre for the first time, free of charge.

Heidi Vaughan said; "Tobacco Factory Theatres are passionate about making theatre truly accessible to everyone. While we're proud to offer affordable concessionary tickets and Financial Difficulty ticket options across our programme, we are fully aware that the reality of the cost-of-living crisis is hitting our community hard and we need to go that one step further."

In partnership with Theatre Works, a charity dedicated to providing theatre and related educational experiences to children and young people who might not normally have access to the theatre, 175 free tickets were made available to local children. A further 100 tickets were offered to community groups and charities by Tobacco Factory Arts Trust. As well as seeing the show, attendees got to enjoy an ice-cream in the interval, kindly donated by Marshfield Ice Cream. A meet and greet with members of the cast following the performance rounded off a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. It was a very special and memorable way to wrap up a record-breaking run for a Christmas show at TFT.



TFT BUSINESS CLUB IS BACK

We are so happy to announce that the TFT Business Club is back. We believe passionately in the power of collaboration between arts and business to break down social barriers and make a positive impact in our community. Not only do the funds raised assist us with the vital means to support our Get Involved work in the local area, corporate partnerships also allow us to produce exceptional theatre at Tobacco Factory Theatres.

Business ambassadors can really help to spread the word about what we do, which is so important to a registered charity such as ours. There are many benefits for business partners to enjoy in acknowledgment of their invaluable support, including exposure to TFT's audiences, free tickets to performances and digital storytelling to 50,000 social media followers. To find out more and to request a copy of our TFT Business Club brochure please contact development@tobaccofactorytheatres.com



EMERGING PRODUCERS PROVIDE SPARK

SPARK is an annual festival produced by BLUEPRINT, a cohort of emerging producers learning theatre promotion over 8 months, under the guidance of staff at Tobacco Factory Theatres. The programme responds to a shortage of producers working in theatre, and is designed to give an entry point to these skills for those who couldn't gain them in any other way. Graduates of the programme have gone on to work with Beyond Face, Para-Orchestra, MAYK and more.

In February, SPARK 2024: Protest Of The Everyday saw Tobacco Factory Theatres taken over by artists and producers right at the start of their careers to celebrate protest in all its forms - from marches to silent vigils to choosing not to smile when asked to.

Eight emerging producers programmed nine emerging Bristol-based artists and theatre companies creating theatre including new writing, dance, spoken word, clowning, comedy and more across the evening. Promoting and marketing the festival themselves, with support from staff at TFT, SPARK 24 performed to a sell-out crowd of 150 young people who described the acts as 'powerful', 'poignant', 'raw', 'honest', 'beautiful', 'soulful' and 'hilarious', with one comment coming up time and again - 'We want MORE!'.



INTRODUCING GEMMA LEE - "A new frontier for me"

Gemma Lee from the latest BLUEPRINT trainee producer cohort spoke to us about her experience on the programme and how it will help her towards her future goals.

Gemma said; "I really want to be in the arts, but I've never had the network or connections to get there. I've never known what doors to open or who to talk to you. I saw BLUEPRINT and I just knew this could be a new frontier for me. Learn something new, meet new people. I've always wanted to create a space for voices that you don't often see in the arts. I come from a kind of mixed-class background, but definitely working-class predominantly, and so I know it's hard for a lot of people from low engagement areas of this world to get onto these bigger stages. So for me that's a huge goal going forward."



SCHOOLS TAKE OVER: LOST IN NEVERLAND

Schools Take Over was delivered by Tobacco Factory Theatres for the first time in 2017 for students with special educational needs and has since become an annual project, in partnership with New Fosseway School. A creative team, including a Director, Composer and Designer work in collaboration with students to devise a brand new show over the period of three months, culminating in a performance in our Factory Theatre.

Following last year's gold-medal winning production of The Story Olympics, this year saw 35 students perform *Lost in Neverland*, where a school trip doesn't quite go to plan. Mysteriously transported to a magical land, far far away from their homes in Bristol the students raced against time, before all the magic ran out, to find their way safely home. Creative, explorative and adventurous, the Schools Takeover encourages freedom of expression and imagination and, thanks to the ongoing support of our Members, Tobacco Factory Theatres is the proud home of this annual take over from New Fosseway School. Watch this space to see what wonderful adventures await in 2024!



WRITERS LAB INSPIRES NEW VOICES

As our re-imagined production of *Oliver Twist* has proven, audiences want stories rooted in their community, set in their home city. To embrace the development of local voices, Tobacco Factory Theatres launched Writers Lab in the Autumn of 2023, a scheme designed to develop the playwrights of tomorrow. Led by our Get Involved team and playwright Mike Akers, who has had over fifty plays commissioned by Bristol Old Vic, Salisbury Playhouse, Travelling Light, Royal & Derngate, Coventry Belgrade and Tobacco Factory Theatres to name a few, we currently have 41 Bristol-based writers developing new scripts through this new scheme.

Suitable for beginners and those who have already started the journey, weekly sessions enable participants to discover their voice as writers, developing confidence and craft through exercises that explore the basics of dramatic structure, character development, dialogue and story. Writers Lab runs alongside our Acting Lab, both of which are currently fully subscribed. We hope to be able to announce more opportunities for more places in the coming year, and who knows, we may see some of these stories work-shopped at TFT in the future?



NEW ARTIST CAFÉ OPEN FOR ARTIST MEMBERS

Last October, the Get Involved team launched TFT's first ever Artist Café. A new offer as part of our free, 400-strong Artist Membership scheme for professional theatre makers in the South West, the Artist Café gives local creatives an opportunity to come together at Tobacco Factory Theatres to work, hold meetings and informally network. We recognise how important it is for creatives to have a space to meet, find mutual support and have a warm, quiet environment to work in with free WIFI, tea, coffee and the all-important selection of biscuits on offer!

Other benefits for Artist Members include a 20% discount on theatre tickets, invites to artist workshops, free networking and professional development events and opportunities for one to one sessions with members of TFT's experienced team.

The next Artist Café takes place on Wednesday 17th April and applications to join the Artist Membership are open by emailing expressions of interest to artists@tobaccofactorytheatres.com.



ARTS FOR IMPACT – HELP US TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY

We are delighted to have been accepted for the Big Give's 'Arts For Impact' match-funding fundraising campaign. Our goal is to double the number of free bursary places in 2024/25 right across our community programme. Led by our Get Involved team, this work will assist participants with personal development, new experiences and deeper insights into performing arts. We have just 7 days from the 19th March until 12pm on the 26th March, and all donations made during this time will be included in our target for match funding. For every £1 donated, we will receive £2. We will be singing from the roof tops, louder than our 70-strong community choir, when the donation window opens, so please keep an eye out for more information. Any support you can give us to help spread the word will enable us to offer more, free bursary places that are currently in such high demand.



MEMBERS' EVENTS 2024

DIRECTORS' BRUNCH - Friday 19th April 2024, 10am

Join CEO and Artistic Director, Heidi Vaughan, and Executive Director, David Dewhurst for a relaxed brunch as they announce two new in-house productions and give an insight to exciting plans that TFT has in store in 2024/25. This event is exclusively available to Directors Circle, Factory Front Row and Benefactor Members only. All places must be pre-booked to attend.

SUMMER PARTY - ALL MEMBERS EVENT - Sunday 15th September 2024

We are delighted to be hosting this afternoon of celebration as we thank you, our incredible supporters, with a relaxed afternoon party showcasing some of our work. With a personal introduction from our very own Heidi Vaughan, the event will consist of live performances and an opportunity to meet the team, and other members. Entry is free of charge, however you will need to pre-book your place as we will not be able to accommodate walk-in's. You are also able to purchase additional tickets to bring along guests, at the price of £5 per person.

DIRECTORS' AFTERNOON TEA - Thursday 10 October 2024, 2.30pm

Be the first to find out what the TFT Creative team have planned for 2025. Enjoy afternoon tea with the Executive Team and get the chance to look forwards to the Spring 25 offering here at TFT. This event is available to Directors Circle, Factory Front Row, Patrons and Benefactors and is a pre-book only event.

TFT BUSINESS CLUB MEMBERS EVENING - Thursday 5th December 2024, from 6pm

A new offering for TFT Business Club Members. Join us for an evening of networking and to attend a special performance of our Christmas Production, straight off the back of press night. Enjoy a complimentary drink on arrival as we come together with friends of Tobacco Factory Theatres to enjoy the official opening week of this year's Christmas production.

HOW TO BOOK FOR MEMBERS EVENTS

To book for any of the events listed, please email Aimée Arscott: aimee@tobaccofactorytheatres.com

NB: When booking your place for the Directors' Brunch or Directors' Afternoon Tea, please remember to inform us of any dietary requirements.

TFT IN NUMBERS:

- 427 performances & workshops and 51,048 audience members & participants in 2023/24
- 5,500 school-aged children saw Oliver Twist at Christmas
- 41 South West-based writers are developing scripts through Writers Lab
- 450 Artist Members are receiving professional development support with our Arts Team
- 8 Emerging Producers have developed skills in theatre promotion through BLUEPRINT
- 171 cups of tea and coffee have been drunk in our new monthly Artist Café sessions
- 402 Jammy Dodgers eaten by actor Tom Fletcher as Dodger at 71 performances of Oliver Twist

ARTS FOR IMPACT 19 - 26 MAR
EVERY DONATION DOUBLED
HELP US TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY

