

OT ORANGE TREE THEATRE

A powerhouse of independent theatre



ANNUAL REVIEW 2019/21

ORANGE TREE THEATRE 2019/21 IN NUMBERS



2019/21 OT AUDIENCE

38,503
TICKETS SOLD

9,254
THAT'S **24%**
VISITED FOR THE FIRST TIME

3,190
UNDER **30s**

6,471
PEOPLE SAW 7 NEW PLAYS

OT COMMUNITY

4,665
TOOK PART
60%
WERE FROM RICHMOND

4,010
IN SCHOOLS

AWARDS
10
NOMINATIONS
4
SHORTLISTS
1
WIN



PERFORMERS EMPLOYED

62

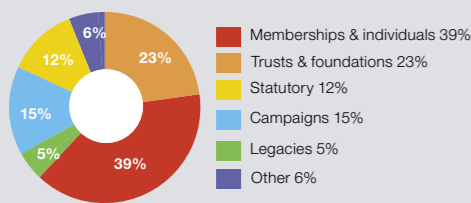


CREATIVES EMPLOYED

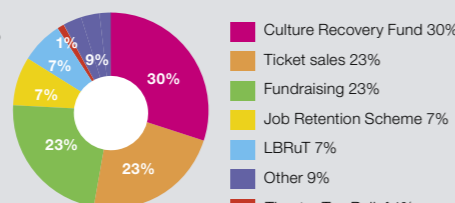
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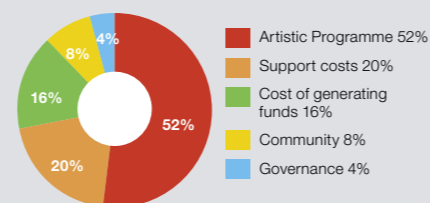
1,005
PEOPLE DONATED TO OUR
SURVIVAL & RECOVERY FUNDS



Fundraised income 2019/21



Incoming Resources 2019/21



Resources Expended 2019/21

Welcome

The story arc of this Annual Review, covering two years for obvious reasons, is one of classic drama: from great success to existential peril, a period in the wilderness and finally a triumphant return to life.

Between September 2019 and March 2020, we produced five hugely successful shows, in that striking and quintessential OT mix of new work, contemporary revivals and sharp rediscoveries. Brilliantly written, often challenging dramas exploring the historic yet continuing prevalence of antisemitism, the fluidities of sexuality, the consequences and occasional hypocrisies of religion and the all too relatable dramas of school and of growing up. Between them, *Amsterdam*, *Little Baby Jesus*, *Candida*, *The Sugar Syndrome* and *The Mikvah Project* represented the OT at its very best.

But by early March 2020 it was clear a storm was brewing. As Covid-19 spread, audiences became understandably risk averse, and ultimately theatres were closed by law.

At times of societal crisis, one of theatre's historic functions has been to act as the physical focal point for gatherings: political, celebratory or even for simple shelter. We were forbidden even this. A dark theatre is a very empty place indeed.

Added to which, we seemed faced with a potential financial tsunami that we wouldn't survive, as the period of closure extended. And a closed theatre company rarely re-opens.

To all of those at the Treasury, DCMS, the Arts Council and perhaps especially those who lobbied them so successfully, I say a profound thank you: the Culture Recovery Fund saved not just the Orange Tree but the core of the British theatre ecology from disaster. Despite the bleak winter lockdown of 2020, we could plan for the future, after what felt like a brush with certain and permanent closure.

We had always wanted to live-stream performances at the OT: it seemed likely that the experience would be quite unlike a camera pointed at a far away picture frame stage. So we worked with The Umbrella Rooms on a new way of conveying the OT experience in performance: cameras would see the audience (and the other cameras), the sound would be what it felt like in the room, and multiple cameras placed round the space would switch focus freely and rapidly, just as an audience member's does.

To test some of this, while in-person performances were still not allowed, we commissioned six emerging writers to write short plays that we would perform live and stream from the theatre for the first time. Given the frame of writing about 'inside' or 'outside', they came up with six unsettling, funny and engaging pieces. The OT came back to life for the first time in almost 12 months. It was exciting and very moving. The experience on screen was intimate and full of potential. **OT On Screen** had begun.

17th May 2021 was set as the date when live, in-person performances would be allowed. But the circumstances were still to be heavily prescribed. We stripped out the bench seating and put in individual seats up to the capacity allowed – there's nothing more depressing than looking at swathes of empty seats. And we thought that two short sharp early Bernard Shaw plays, full of wit and vigour and rigour, would be the ideal first way back to performances. A crack cast of some of the OT's favourite actors bravely and brilliantly made them shine. And The Umbrella Rooms ensured that the live-streamed performances – our first with an audience – were just the unique OT experience we'd hoped for. We were back.

We usually try to thank people in our Annual Review at this point. But after such an epic story of success, peril, wilderness and recovery it's hard to know where to begin. Anyone and everyone connected to us and our work who have supported us in the last two years deserves enormous praise and gratitude. The home team, our amazing core staff, have endured all this and thrived in spectacular style. And we know that we were motivated to survive and get back by wanting to work again with all our many friends and colleagues who are freelance – without them there is nothing, and they endured more than most.

It was thrilling to return and make things happen in our unique space again. A little bruised and battered, but perhaps stronger in some ways, and looking at the world with fresh eyes. And looking to the future now with great optimism and confidence. Thanks to you all for helping us make it.

Paul Miller, *Artistic Director*

COVER: ALI WRIGHT



★★★★★

Here is a play that will be racing through you, making you laugh and think, long after you've left the theatre

The Guardian on Little Baby Jesus

PHOTOS: HELEN MURRAY / ALI WRIGHT / JOHAN PERSSON

PHOTO: ALI WRIGHT

Artistic highlights



Amsterdam

The 2019/20 Season opened with *Amsterdam* by Maya Arad Yasur, a prize-winning Israeli playwright whose work has been produced worldwide. In his new role as Artistic Director of ATC, co-producers of *Winter Solstice* at the OT, Matthew Xia returned to direct following his production of *Blood Knot* in the spring.

"Amsterdam is full of rewards... a moving excavation of the tensions surging under the city's streets." Alice Saville, *Time Out*

"Brilliantly directed... It's performed with vitality by a cast of four... How we pay the debts of history is one of the many rich thematic questions Yasur tackles." Jessie Thompson, *Evening Standard*

Amsterdam was also livestreamed worldwide for free in January 2020, launching OT On Screen, supported by The Space.

An Orange Tree Theatre, Actors Touring Company and Theatre Royal Plymouth production



Little Baby Jesus

The first production in a new partnership with the JMK Award. The JMK Trust was founded in memory of James Menzies-Kitchin, a director of thrilling promise, to give practical learning opportunities to theatre directors of similar ability and vision. As 2019 winner, Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu's production of Arinzé Kene's *Little Baby Jesus* was produced by the OT to great acclaim.

★★★★★ "With this production director Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu – winner of the 2019 JMK Award – announces himself as a serious talent." *The Stage*

★★★★★ "The cast is flawless... This story is urgent and honest, lingering long after the lights go down." *A Younger Theatre*

Nominated for 3 Off West End Awards: Best Director (Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu), Best Sound (Nicola Chang), Best Performance Ensemble (Anyebe Godwin, Rachel Nwokoro and Khai Shaw)



Candida

Artistic Director Paul Miller followed his phenomenally successful, critically acclaimed OT productions of Shaw's early plays *Misalliance*, *The Philanderer* and *Widowers' Houses* with *Candida* from Nov 2019 – Jan 2020. The production became the highest grossing play in OT history.

★★★★ "Miller's production, which shows a rare understanding of Shaw, itself has the sparkle of vintage fizz." Michael Billington, *The Guardian*

"Lams is tremendous, dishing out line after line of sharp-pointed advice and assessment to the two gormless men in front of her, with aplomb" Simon Gwynn, *Exeunt*

"High-energy revival of early Bernard Shaw" Julia Rank, *The Stage*

It may have been twelve months,
but with *Inside the Orange Tree* makes
a triumphant return

Theatre Weekly



PHOTOS: THE OTHER RICHARD / ALI WRIGHT



The Sugar Syndrome

January saw the first major revival of Lucy Prebble's debut play: a devastatingly and disturbingly funny exploration of an unlikely friendship, our desire to connect, and the limits of empathy. Prebble's work includes *A Very Expensive Poison*, *The Effect* and *ENRON* on stage and the BAFTA and Emmy Award-winning *Succession* on screen. Directed by 2019 JMK Award runner-up, Oscar Toeman.

★★★★★ "I love it... *The Sugar Syndrome* tells a story which is an important one to be reminded of in 2020."

A Younger Theatre

★★★★ "Slyly audacious, spinning our sympathies, sliding under the skin"

The Sunday Times

★★★★ "A really excellent revival."

The Arts Desk

Nominated for 4 Off West End Awards – Best Leading Performance (Jessica Rhodes – winner) and Best Supporting Performance (Ali Barouti, Alexandra Gilbreath, John Hollingworth)

PHOTO: ALI WRIGHT

The Mikvah Project

Director Georgia Green's acclaimed production from our 2019 Directors' Festival was remounted in spring 2020 and was mid-run when the theatre was forced to close due to Covid-19. Josh Azouz's play tells the story of Eitan, 17, and Avi, 35, who meet every Friday at the Mikvah; the production memorably featured a pool in the floor of the OT's versatile stage. A play about the courage it takes to confront our hidden desires. Filled with singing and water, chutzpah and joy, we were reminded how easily a heart can break.

★★★★★ "Georgia Green's production is an example of the alchemy that happens when you get the perfect combination of play and theatre." *Time Out*

★★★★★ "Josh Azouz's tender, funny play... Poignant, thoughtful... about belief, identity and healing, delivered with a beguilingly light touch." *FT*

★★★★★ "Impeccably played by Alex Waldmann and Josh Zaré" *The Jewish Chronicle*

Nominated for an Off West End Award for Best Performance: Josh Zaré

Inside/Outside

Following the closure of the theatre on 16 March 2020, the OT returned a year later, in the virtual world, with livestreamed productions of six new plays through OT On Screen, commissioned by the OT during our closure. The collection of short plays covered stories of estrangement and loneliness; of connection and redemption; of despair in confinement to hope found in life outdoors and featured:

Inside – *Guidesky and I* by Deborah Bruce, *When The Daffodils* by Joel Tan, *Ursa Major* by Joe White; **Outside** – *Two Billion Beats* by Sonali Bhattacharyya, *Prodigal* by Kalungi Ssebandeke, *The Kiss* by Zoe Cooper

★★★★★ "Even watching on a screen, there's a real sense that this is 'live theatre' and it's electrifying..." *Theatre Weekly* [on *Inside*]

★★★★★ "The strength of the writing in each play makes for an absorbing evening" *Broadway World* [on *Outside*]

Supported by DCMS and Arts Council England through the Culture Recovery Fund and by the Hayburn Trust.



Shaw Shorts

In May, after a challenging 15 months of closure, the OT was finally able to open its doors and welcome audiences back to its unique space. At just 40% capacity, *How He Lied to Her Husband* and *Overruled*, our *Shaw Shorts* quickly sold out, delighting audiences in person and On Screen. Directed by Artistic Director Paul Miller.

★★★★★ “It’s delightful to see how current a classic play can feel. With nothing less than the highest standards of performance, the Orange Tree is making a glorious return”
A Younger Theatre

★★★★★ “Delightfully revived by Shavian specialist director Paul Miller [who] plays the propositions sharp and fast, focusing on the absurd geometries of human desire.” *The Guardian*

★★★★★ “Shaw takes mischievous delight in the way his characters tie themselves in knots as they assert, renounce and reaffirm their romantic illusions.”
Daily Mail

Supported by DCMS and Arts Council England through the Culture Recovery Fund.

PHOTOS: SHAW SHORTS © THE OTHER RICHARD

It’s delightful to see how current
a classic play can feel

A Younger Theatre



The Launch of OT Community

In light of the pandemic, and the continued anxieties, uncertainty and isolation that it has brought with it, our Education & Participation Programme responded and reshaped into OT Community.

The new programme recognises the unique qualities that theatre can offer our community. Providing a space, in person and at times virtually, to share, listen and escape, the OT Community has restored the connection we have been missing.

Ranging from babies to over 60s, the various groups will assemble as a full community throughout the year. The groups will be working collaboratively towards our first OT Community Festival in 2022.



Little Baby Jesus – Young People’s Takeover, 28 Oct – 2 Nov

In support of the Orange Tree’s JMK Award winning show, *Little Baby Jesus*, the Community team curated a Young People’s Takeover week which included post-show workshops on writing, directing and acting, panel talks on The Future of Youth Culture and spoken-word performances. The Young Company created a response piece to the play, which they devised and shared with the audience and actors during the run of the show.

All events during the week were free to take part in for anyone under 30. This was programmed specifically during Richmond borough’s October half term week.

Across the week a total of 80 young people took part in the free events.

Across the entirety of the run, we engaged with many young people who were first time-bookers at the OT.

This production demonstrated the positive impact of strategically funded community activity in widening access to our shows and on audience diversity.

We offered 150 free tickets to young people

Working closely with the Black Ticket Project, we were able to offer

- **87 FREE TICKETS** to young black people (a project run by producer Tobi Kyeremateng to help engage and provide access for young black people in the arts)

- **65 FREE TICKETS** went to young people from various Young Companies and arts organisations, including groups who were identified as ‘at-risk’ of leaving education

- **351 STUDENTS** across the run attended from 13 different secondary schools, colleges, and universities, spanning further afield beyond the local area.

Summer School July 2019

In July 2019, we ran our annual summer schools project for 40 young people from the Richmond borough. Led by directors Izzy Cotterill (7-11yrs) and Freyja Winterson (12-16yrs), the groups began the week with a trip to the Natural History Museum and a puppetry workshop with designer, maker and puppeteer Maia Kirkman Richards, providing them with stimulus for their devised pieces. The outcome of the project was a performance exploring the impact of climate change and how we look after each other. This thoughtful and political piece was a great example of how our participation work gives young people space to explore their thoughts and a platform to have their voices heard.

Youth Theatre, Young Company and Over 60s

After completing a successful term and a half with our Youth Theatre, Young Company and Over 60s groups, the Covid-19 pandemic brought our classes to a stop. During this period, we remained in contact with participants and sent everyone activity packs, to keep communication flowing at a time when participants might feel isolated and under-stimulated.

Many attendees generously supported the theatre by donating their fees once it was clear sessions would have to stop.

Classes resumed in Autumn 2020 in person, moving to zoom for Spring 2021, with groups taking to the challenge of operating on a new medium by working towards online performances. They proved to be fun interactive sessions, providing connection to those who felt isolated as a result of the pandemic.

Our Work in Schools

Shakespeare Up Close

Due to the third lockdown, our Shakespeare project for secondary schools was adapted to take place online, allowing us to continue working with pupils despite restrictions. 90-minute versions of Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet were filmed and streamed to 1,190 school pupils online for free. To accompany the streams, we created resource videos for teachers to support them to teaching both plays in school.

Primary Shakespeare

This Shakespeare project for primary schools usually involves in-school workshops, with pupils then coming to the theatre to watch the performance. This year, in order to accommodate for various forms of Covid-19 restrictions, the OT toured into schools to deliver both the workshops and performances. We then hosted four performances in the theatre during half term to enable families and public audiences to attend. 833 young people took part in the project.



STILLS FROM FILM BY THE UMBRELLA ROOMS



In 2019-2021 the Orange Tree produced a range of premiers: new work by British and international playwrights, many of whom have been nurtured through our commitment to talent development. Premiers included Maya Arad Yasur's *Amsterdam*, presented in co-production with Actors Touring Theatre, and our first ever live streamed plays *Inside / Outside*.

PHOTO: HELEN MURRAY

PHOTO: ALI WRIGHT (INSIDE/OUTSIDE)



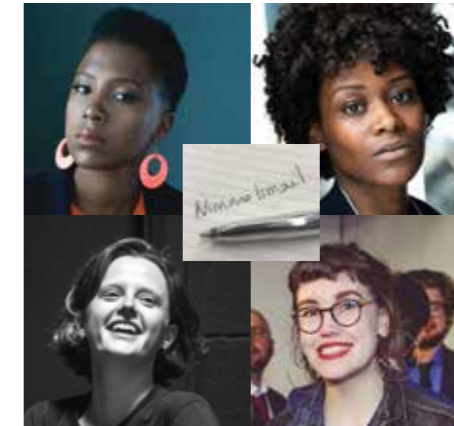
Inside / Outside

"It may have been twelve months, but with *Inside the Orange Tree* makes a triumphant return...*Inside* reminds us how wonderful live theatre can be even if we can't yet get 'outside' to see it."
Theatre Weekly

In March and April 2021, as the country was emerging from lockdown, we presented six short plays written around the themes of *Inside* and *Outside*, performed live at the theatre and streamed into people's homes.

The writers were Deborah Bruce (*The Distance*), Joe White (*Mayfly*) and Zoe Cooper (*Jess and Joe Forever, Out of Water*), and three writers new to Orange Tree audiences, Sonali Bhattacharyya, Joel Tan and Kalungi Ssebandeke.

"As I write, the Orange Tree has been closed for a year. It's time to switch the lights back on. *Inside/Outside* will be the first time we have told stories here since March 2020. These plays offer us hope. Two strangers learn that they can help one another move forwards in Joe White's *Ursa Major*, and in Zoe Cooper's *The Kiss* Lou is changed by the time she has lived through, but still committed to how she might pave the way for a new generation. Like Meg in Joel Tan's play, we are looking forward to when the daffodils come, and we can once again tell one another stories, breathe the same air, embrace."
Guy Jones, OT Literary Associate



Writers Collective

The OT continues to develop the most exciting emerging playwrights through the OT Writers Collective, a talent development programme comprising a series of workshops and masterclasses supporting the participants to develop their playwrighting craft.

In 2021, the Writers Collective were Jade Anouka, Cassiopoeia Berkley-Agyepong, Nimmo Ismail, Gemma Lawrence and Tamsin Daisy Rees.

The project was supported by the Idlewild Trust, the Garrick Charitable Trust and the Fidelio Charitable Trust.



Channel 4 Playwright on Attachment

In 2020, Ross Willis was one of the winners of the Channel 4 Playwrights Scheme, offering playwrights a bursary and an attachment to a theatre. Ross was a member of the Writers Collective 2018, and spent his attachment developing a new play for the OT.

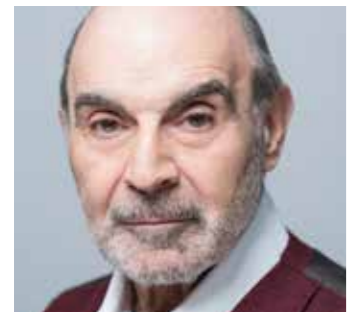
In 2021, former Writers Collective member and writer on attachment Sonali Bhattacharyya won the Theatre Uncut Political Playwriting Award for *Chasing Hares*, the play she developed with the OT team when she was on attachment.

Events & Extras



Under the Orange Tree

Our special series of intimate and insightful In Conversation events with prolific stars of stage and screen continued, and this year extended to include writer and long-serving critic Michael Billington on his retirement from *The Guardian* after almost 40 years, interviewed by OT Artistic Director Paul Miller. This year's series also included conversations hosted by OT Ambassador Gyles Brandreth with David Suchet and Dame Penelope Wilton.



Paul Miller's *Macbeth* at Chichester Festival Theatre

Following the success of *A Midsummer's Night* in autumn 2019, OT Patrons were invited to join Paul Miller for his production of *Macbeth* at Chichester Festival Theatre, starring John Simm and Dervla Kirwan. The "spectacular" (*iNews*) production, designed by Simon Daw (*Candida* at OT, *Owen Wingrave*, Aldeburgh Music & Edinburgh International Festival), with lighting by Mark Doubleday (*French Without Tears* at OT, *Waiting For Godot*, Sheffield Crucible), music and sound by Max Pappenheim (*Amsterdam* at OT, *Assembly*, Donmar), was followed by dinner with Paul Miller and the OT team, marking a memorable evening for all in attendance.



OT Extras

The OT's Artistic Programme was once again complemented by a host of OT Extras – our series of performances of the best music, theatre and comedy, curated by Matthew Poxon. Performances this season included the return of Jonny and the Baptists with *Love Richmond Hate Bastards*, Barb Jungr performing her new album *Bob, Brel and Me*, and *My Name Is Why: in conversation with Lemn Sissay*. We also welcomed newcomers to the OT, great British jazz voice Elaine Delmar singing Gershwin and Porter, Hannah Maxwell with *I Am Dram*, and performer Simon Green and pianist David Shrubsole with *Life Is For Living – Conversations with Coward*.



OT Extraordinary

In the summer of 2021, the OT hosted a very special event to celebrate the return of live theatre and to raise funds towards our Recovery Fund: OT Extraordinary. Featuring performances from a variety of artists spanning musicals, spoken word, poetry and monologues, the evening took place at the height of the 'ping-demic' and became all the more extraordinary as OT Ambassador Samantha Bond gallantly stepped in to co-host alongside Paul Miller, as billed host Mel Giedroyc was instructed to isolate with just a few hours' notice. Despite the many challenges thrown at the organisers, performers and audience in getting to the theatre, it was blitz spirit all around. The resulting evening was a joyful celebration of at last being able to come together to collectively experience extraordinary performers up close once again.

PHOTOS: ROBIN SINHA (DAVID SUCHET); MANUAL HARLAN (MACBETH)



PHOTO: HELEN MURRAY

So far over 4,000 people in over 20 countries have streamed OT online performances

OT On Screen

OT On Screen was launched in January 2019 with a free stream of a multi-camera recording of *Amsterdam*, funded by The Space and Arts Council England, on our YouTube channel. With audiences unable to enjoy live theatre in person, we developed OT On Screen to livestream to people at home. Working with filmmakers The Umbrella Rooms, we live-streamed a series of eight short new plays we commissioned under the title *Inside/Outside*. This offered a unique opportunity to reach current and new audiences across the UK and globally. 37% of those watching had never previously visited the OT. We then committed to continuing live streaming our work when audiences returned in person to the theatre, with two livestreamed performances each of *Shaw Shorts* and *Last Easter*. Each of the livestreams had audio description and captioning available. So far over 4,000 people have streamed our productions online in over 20 countries.

Artistic Programme

We are extremely excited to present the second half of our Recovery Season this year. Starting with a world premiere in February, through to Paul Miller directing *The False Servant* in June, there is something for everybody in 2022.

OT Community

Following our introduction of new weekly classes for parents and babies, 3–5 year-olds and 5–7 year-olds, our OT Community programme will focus on continuing to strengthen our local connections next year. We're looking forward to our community festival planned for August 2022, a long-awaited opportunity to bring together all of our OT Community classes

Events

OT Elsewhere – *Rice* by Michele Lee recently had its UK premiere at the OT in a fantastic co-production with Actors Touring Company. This production will be touring across England from 4 February, please see our website for details orangetreetheatre.co.uk/whats-on.



PHOTO: THE OTHER RICHARD



PHOTO: ISTOCK

Thank you

And finally, we must close with a sincere thank you to all our supporters. We know you have heard it before, but we must say it again: these last two years would not have been possible without you. Our loyal community standing firmly by our side, while facing the most unexpected and tragic of times, is truly something for which we could never thank you enough.

While the theatre was dark, we had time to consider what was truly important to us as an organisation, and the word we kept coming back to is community. Creating an environment where everyone from Richmond locals to livestream viewers in Australia, and mums & babies to our over 60s group, know they are welcome at the OT. You, our supporters, are what makes this possible. We look forward to sharing more theatre with you all in our road to recovery, where we will work to allow audiences to experience the next generation of theatre talent, experiment with ground-breaking new drama and explore plays from the past that inspire the theatre-makers of the present.

Thank you.

Orange Tree Theatre
1 Clarence Street
Richmond-upon-Thames
TW9 2SA

Registered charity number 266128

The Orange Tree would like to thank the following for their support in 2019 – 2021:

With thanks to DCMS and Arts Council England for support through the Culture Recovery Fund



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Haskel Family Foundation



29th May 1961 Charitable Trust



Idlewild Trust



Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust
Fidelio Charitable Trust



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The Devey Family
Sue Howes & Greg Dyke
Richard Humphreys
David & Selina Marks
Elizabeth Pryce
Duncan & Kate Tatton-Brown
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Jodi Rilot
John Seaton
Nicholas Watkinson
And all our anonymous donors, including those who included a gift to us in their will.

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Judith Coke
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Phillip Glenister
Beth Goddard
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Stephanie Turner

Development Committee

Charlotte Bassadone
Maggie Collier
Harriet Devey
Elizabeth Heery
Vivien Heilbron
Annie Rushton
Sarah Tippett

Company of 2019–2021

Daniel Abelson, Fisayo Akinade, Fiston Barek, Ali Barouti, Ishia Bennison, Alex Bhat, Joe Bolland, Alexandra Gilbreath, Anyebe Godwin, Zainab Hasan, John Hollingworth, Michal Horowicz, Martin Hutson, Robinah Kironde, Claire Lams, Sarah Middleton, Jordan Mifsud, Kwaku Mills, Jessica Murrain, Dorothea Myer-Bennett, Rachel Nwokoro, Joseph Potter, Ashna Rabheru, Jessica Rhodes, Khai Shaw, Michael Simkins, Samantha Spiro, Alex Waldmann, Temi Wilkey, Sasha Winslow, Hara Yannas, Josh Zare



BROCHURE DESIGN ANNIE RUSHTON | PRINT IMPRESS

Our programme at the OT is a coalition. We produce a range of new plays by emerging talents, contemporary revivals of rarely seen work, and unexpectedly entertaining rediscoveries from our dramatic heritage. It's a coalition of audiences, too. Some see everything, some choose carefully what's for them; some are staunchly loyal locals, some travel to see something special; some savour the richness of the old plays, some yearn for the shock of the new. It means that night by night a unique mix of people sit together who've found their way here for very different reasons and the chemistry is different each time.

Our recovery is about rebuilding the unique OT coalition. It's about using the miracle of our survival to reconnect us all to society.

Like many, we are a little bruised and shaken but also amazed and delighted to be back in business. And with the next stage of our Recovery Season we look forward to welcoming audiences back again, newly fascinated by the world around us.