



Orange Tree Theatre

Annual Review 2014/15



Miller's revival is deliriously funny from beginning to end... It's staggeringly good. It's riotously funny. Eighty years later, Rattigan's first big hit is a hit again.

Dan Rebellato on *French Without Tears*

Welcome

At the Orange Tree we believe in looking at our past dramatic riches to illuminate the present, setting them alongside new voices and stories that help point the way to a better future.

In this last year we've witnessed the turning point in a Nottinghamshire miner's wife in *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*, seen young people in a dark corner of Manchester working out if it's possible to be good in this world in *Pomona*, seen a young doctor in Victorian London wrestle with the same dilemma in *Widowers' Houses*.

We've marvelled as two lowly Trinidadian tailors unexpectedly take part in a political turning point in *Play Mas* and felt for the middle-aged radical socialist as she bravely faced her own personal and political turning point in *Each His Own Wilderness*. *buckets* was a dizzying array of turning points; *When We Were Women* showed us just one, devastating, moment when a young woman in Glasgow had to face the truth about her husband. *French Without Tears* offered the gloriously funny spectacle of a group of young men facing up to their emotions; *The Distance* showed a mother honestly facing her feelings too, forcing a turning point for everyone she knows.

And there are turning points for the audience too of course.

Over the last year, 7,343 people of school age have seen our productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale*. That's over 7,000 people who've seen Titania wake up and fall in love with a donkey, seen *Macbeth* contemplate mortality, seen, unbelievably, Hermione's statue come to life – **all for the very first time**. These are turning points in young people's lives.

If you like numbers we have plenty more for you, but in the end these are just statistics. Why does any of this matter? Why does the Orange Tree matter?

It matters because we need small oases of creativity like the Orange Tree.

It matters that we have a space in our public life that insists on putting the frail human figure at the centre of events. It matters because in a world where the chaos of online chatter and the utter debasement of our public discourse in the media leads to a cynical politics, **we need places to go to that insist on simple human truths**. Truths so close that you can sense them. Truths the hand can touch.

It matters because those 7,343 young people seeing our Shakespeare are experiencing those stories for the first time and will never be the same again. It matters because the very act of gathering to tell stories in an intimate in-the-round space like ours is a profound statement in itself: our destinies are linked, it says. We share this world in common. We must watch out for one another, listen to each other. We breathe the same air. We belong to each other.

It matters because in an increasingly atomised world we need spaces like this where we come together and face our common humanity in all its frailties and failings, alongside its bursts of progress and joy.

It matters that we present stories from the past and the present alongside each other, showing life as it's lived, filtered through the singular imagination of our writers and the remarkable presence of our actors. Unplugged; un-miked; low-tech. **This is close-up magic.**

It matters because we've proved in the last year alone that there are things we can do at the Orange Tree that no one else can do, or is even trying to do.

We must look to the future now and cherish this precious and unique space. It matters today more than ever.

Taken from a speech made by Artistic Director Paul Miller at the Richmond May Fair Gala 2015

This is what
immersive small
theatres should
do, and where
the Orange Tree
continues to be
some way ahead
of most of its rivals.

What's on Stage



PHOTO BY MANUEL HARLAN

Artistic highlights

2014-15 marked the first season under new Artistic Director Paul Miller. This was a classic OT mix of new and rediscovered plays, but with a bold new twist.

Paul's mission in putting together this programme was to make full use of the Theatre's intimate space to experience up-close a range of remarkable human stories from a wide variety of times and places – voices and tales from our past and our present alongside visions of the future. Both he and Executive Director Sarah Nicholson brought together an impressive collection of exciting emerging and established theatre-makers to enrich the Theatre's artistic offering.

In September 2014 Paul Miller opened his inaugural Season with his production of DH Lawrence's *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*. This production marked a change in how work is produced at the Orange Tree Theatre by engaging a freelance creative team to include designer, lighting designer and sound designer.

Miller has put together an eclectic season of challenging new work alongside revivals, and this makes a very promising start

Sarah Hemming, Financial Times



PHOTO BY MARK DOUJET

October brought *The Distance*, a new play by Deborah Bruce, directed by Charlotte Gwinner. A play about relationships, it explored friendship, motherhood (and fatherhood) and the expectations we place on parents according to their gender.

Shot through with big emotions, moral dilemmas and, best of all, quiet truths.

Matt Trueman, Time Out



PHOTO BY HELEN WARNER



A superb revival of Mustapha Matura's 1974 darkly funny exploration of Trinidad... It sweeps you up and leaves you breathless.

Time Out Critics' Choice, Play Mas

PLAY MAS PHOTO BY ROBERT DAY



Pomona then burst onto the scene on 12 November – another new play, this time by emerging writer Alistair McDowall and directed by Ned Bennett. *Pomona* had a significant impact on the OT's profile within the wider industry, stating loudly the Theatre's commitment to producing new works by emerging artists at the cutting edge of British theatre. 4,866 saw the production with 25% of the audience being under 30.

It's thrilling to be in an audience that's having such an extreme reaction to a play. It's rare for people to be genuinely shocked and an exciting sign that the Orange Tree is in the process of a massive change
Honour Bayes, The Stage

This is the best new play I've seen in years. See it. Don't see anything else until you've seen this. Wait 2 weeks, then see it again. *Pomona* is the future of new writing theatre
Joe Penhall, award-winning playwright and screenwriter

- WINNER: UK Theatre Award Best Director – Ned Bennett
- WINNER: OFFIE Best Director – Ned Bennett
- WINNER: OFFIE Best New Play – Alistair McDowall
- WINNER: OFFIE Best Lighting Designer – Elliot Griggs
- WINNER: OFFIE Best Production



Playing for six weeks over the Christmas period, Paul directed Bernard Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* which sold out for the entire run.

It's been quite an autumn season at the Orange Tree. New artistic director Paul Miller has skilfully blended the theatre's specialty of early twentieth century rediscoveries with new writing and it's a fruitful mix
Fiona Mountford, Evening Standard



Rebecca Collingwood, *Widowers' Houses* shortlisted for the Ian Charleson Award



PHOTO BY RICHARD HUBERT SMITH

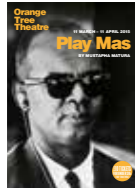


Little Light, an early play by contemporary playwright Alice Birch, had its world premiere on the OT's stage in February 2015. Directed by David Mercatali, Associate Director of Southwark Playhouse, the play revolves around a dark and distressing family ritual and examines our ability to let go.

A clear declaration of Miller's commitment to new blood
Andrzej Lukowski, Time Out



PHOTO BY RICHARD DAVENPORT



From March to April, acclaimed director and Artistic Director of Talawa, Paulette Randall, directed the first major revival of *Play Mas* by Mustapha Matura since its premiere at the Royal Court in 1974. Nearly half of the tickets sold for this show were to newcomers.

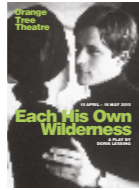
JOINT WINNER: inaugural Alfred Fagon Audience Award

This theatre-in-the-round's artistic rejuvenation under Paul Miller continues with this rare and rewarding revival of a blackly comical play by the London-based Trinidadian playwright Mustapha Matura *Dominic Maxwell, The Times*

Vigorous, comical and profoundly insightful. Matura's canny writing expounds the realities of imperialism with wit and humanity
Gillian Fisher, Afridiziak



PHOTO BY ROBERT DAY



The penultimate production of the 2014/15 Season was Nobel Prize-winning Doris Lessing's *Each His Own Wilderness*, directed by Paul, which played to packed houses and was highly acclaimed by the critics.

Explosive... Paul Miller's production grips like a vice... utterly riveting
★★★★★ *Sam Marlowe, The Times*



WINNER:
Joel MacCormack
Best Performer in a Play,
Each His Own Wilderness



PHOTO BY RICHARD HUBERT SMITH



The final production in the season reinforced the Theatre's commitment to championing work by emerging artists. Directed by the OT's Resident Director, Rania Jumaily, *buckets* was the first full-length play written by Adam Barnard, an Orange Tree Trainee Director Scheme graduate who has since served as Joint Artistic Director of Company of Angels and Artistic Director of Activated Image.

It is intriguing, intense and in some moments intoxicating... This is an intelligent and thought-provoking piece of new writing
Aleks Sierz, theatre-critic and author



PHOTO BY ROBERT DAY



Clare Holman and an outstanding Joel MacCormack... They're utterly electric as a mother and son

Tom Wicker, *Time Out* on *Each His Own Wilderness*

PHOTO BY RICHARD HUBERT SMITH

I was hugely impressed with the quality of the performance – it was 100% engaging and the students were absolutely roaring with laughter throughout. I can't imagine a better way to introduce a new challenging text.

Teacher at Alec Reed Academy on *Shakespeare Live: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2014



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM PHOTO BY ROBERT DAY

Education & Participation

The Orange Tree has over 30 years' experience of providing creative learning opportunities in schools. Its reputation has grown in this time as a result of the high quality, effective work it has produced, and because we operate responsively to the needs of our local schools, audiences and project participants. Over this time the Theatre has built strong working relationships across Richmond and the surrounding boroughs, making it easier to promote the opportunities available and for service users to have trust in the projects.

The Orange Tree's Education & Participation programme in 2014-15 worked with 10,047 children and young people aged 5 to 21 years through its workshops and performances for school children; Youth Theatre; partnership with St Mary's University; and performances and workshops at Garrick's Temple.

FOR SCHOOLS

PRIMARY SHAKESPEARE: *The Winter's Tale* for pupils aged 6 to 10 years old. It serves as a first introduction to Shakespeare for many of the participants, and focuses on the story and themes of a play to gently introduce the language by accessible means. In addition, with the inclusion of a Theatre visit post-workshop, the project introduces children to theatre-going in a friendly, welcoming environment in which traditional conventions – such as being quiet and still – are relaxed, and the work on stage has been created specifically with them in mind.

SHAKESPEARE RESIDENCY: *Macbeth* set-up to focus specifically on giving pupils at

schools with little or no cultural engagement an in-depth introduction to Shakespeare's plays and language. The project is offered completely free-of-charge to schools who cannot book our Primary Shakespeare project due to lack of available funds. We work with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and, for the past two years, the London Borough of Hounslow to identify the schools most in need in each area.

The sensitive nature of the themes in Macbeth were handled very well [in the storytelling workshop] and the children were completely captivated by the story: they understood the themes on a deep level – St Edmunds Catholic Primary



PHOTO BY ROBERT DAY

SHAKESPEARE LIVE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* aimed at 11 to 13 year olds, Shakespeare Live takes an abridged version of the play (which runs at just one hour) into secondary schools. Each performance is followed by an interactive workshop led by the four professional actors who performed the play, exploring with the students in detail key elements of the play and performance.

I was hugely impressed with the quality of the performance – it was 100% engaging and the students were absolutely roaring with laughter throughout. I can't imagine a better way to introduce a new challenging text. The students, instead of being put off Shakespeare are now looking forward to studying it! – Alec Reed Academy

SHAKESPEARE UP CLOSE: *Macbeth* invites secondary school students, particularly 13 to 16 year olds, into the Orange Tree's uniquely intimate auditorium to watch a performance of *Macbeth* created specifically for their age group. For teachers, the project offers an affordable (£5 per student, free to teachers) live performance that links to the curriculum.

The fact that the theatre is in-the-round was a real selling point as most of the students will never have seen a production staged in this way...The students really enjoyed the production especially all the 'jumpy' bits and blood. I think the show was very imaginative and the Banquo sequence was great. Please keep us on your mailing list as we will definitely return to the Orange Tree – The Green School

BESPOKE WORKSHOPS In addition to the Shakespeare projects, the Orange Tree ran a number of BESPOKE WORKSHOPS in schools for 1,166 students, plus CAREERS WORKSHOPS for a further 474 young people both in partnership with Richmond Education Business Partnership and independently.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Our partnership with St Mary's University helps to train the next generation of Theatre in Education practitioners and community theatre makers. We work with students to pass on experience of working with school children and community groups, and facilitate opportunities to put their learning into practice by working with beneficiaries at local schools or in partnership with local charities/ community groups.

APPLIED THEATRE PERFORMANCE MODULE

In 2014, the OT ran weekly sessions from September to December for 30 Year 3 students. Students worked with our specialist director/practitioner to develop performance pieces based on their work with local community groups including: Rape Crisis (Charity No. 1155140) and Whitefarm Lodge Care Home.

THEATRE IN EDUCATION MODULE

In 2015, the OT ran weekly sessions with 15 Year 1 students from January to April. As part of the module students worked with our practitioners to devise and deliver workshops on *Twelfth Night* to Year 6 school pupils at St Stephen's CE, St Catherine's School and Trafalgar Junior School.



PRIMARY SHAKESPEARE: THE WINTERS TALE PHOTOS BY ROBERT DAY

EXTRA-CURRICULAR

YOUTH THEATRE

During term time the Orange Tree runs five Youth Theatre groups per week for ages 7 to 16 years. The project has been demonstrated to improve drama skills, public speaking and confidence. Each group consists of 20 participants, including one scholarship place per group for those who would otherwise be unable to attend.

YOUNG COMPANY

Young Company is an audition-based project offering young people aged 16-19 years the chance to work over two terms, with a professional director, on a production to be performed to a public audience. The Young Company improve their performance, public speaking and teamwork skills through the project, and must demonstrate reliability and responsibility.

NT CONNECTIONS

NT Connections offers a similar experience to Young Company, for a wider age range (13-19 years) and in partnership with the National Theatre. This is run at no cost to the participants.

FOCUS ON: YOUTH THEATRE

Being closely involved with theatre and drama has made me a lot more confident and let me accept myself. As I was a part of the youth theatre from the age of 15, a lot of changes have gone on in my life alongside theatre, which would often prove a great coping mechanism. I have noticed that I'm not only better at the obvious benefits of theatre such as public speaking and expressing my emotions, but I am also more willing to voice my opinions and try new things, than my peers who have not had such a close theatre experience.

Attending youth theatre at Orange Tree introduced me to like-minded, life-long friends, as well as promoting my interest in theatre. I can now hold a conversation about *Frantic Assembly* and know the best shows on in London at any time, which I appreciate, as now I feel like a better rounded person. Being a member of the youth theatre was something I placed emphasis on in my UCAS form. All of the universities which interviewed me have asked about my involvement in drama and the Orange Tree Theatre definitely increased my chances of getting an offer.

As a child of first generation immigrants, theatre is not something I would have had the chance to experience at this age. Orange Tree Theatre gave me a chance to identify a lifelong passion, made me feel comfortable in an environment in which I thought I'd never belong and taught me a lot about the beauty of theatre.

There have been so many fantastic moments of being a part of the Orange Tree family, and I have so many wonderful memories. From performing at Greenwich and Soho festivals, through watching plays to crying with laughter in rehearsals, it is an incredible experience to work with people with so much passion and motivation as everyone at Orange Tree.

If I have to choose one moment which was my highlight of my involvement so far, it must be creating and performing in the Palace of 100 Plays, commemorating Joan Littlewood [as part of the Fun Palaces project in September 2014]. The entire young company spent a Saturday decorating the rehearsal rooms with paper, coloured cloth and whatever else was at hand, and then in the afternoon we performed a collective 100 plays, 5 lines per play. The plays were written by a range of people... I spent 2 hours performing in a disabled toilet, as people passed through the tiny space, at the end feeling like I could sleep for a week straight, but so proud of myself and the other performers.' *Youth Theatre scholarship recipient, 2015*

Literary

The Orange Tree has long had a reputation for discovering and championing emerging writers and new plays. This year we have been proud to give a home to extraordinary new plays by Alistair McDowall, Deborah Bruce, Alice Birch and Alistair McDowall, which have rubbed shoulders alongside our programme of revivals of overlooked work from the canon.

One of London's most historically significant new writing theatres re-discovered for a new generation... First place I ever attended a writing workshop. Simon Stephens

We also have a programme of writer development as part of our commitment to nurturing a new generation of playwrights:

ORANGE TREE WRITERS COLLECTIVE

Such an important part of my writing life
Isley Lynn, Writers Collective member
2013-14

Guy Jones, the Theatre's Literary Associate, runs the Collective, a year-round programme to develop early-career playwrights.

Nine emerging writers met throughout the season to share work, provocations and obsessions, and to meet directors and playwrights making work at the Theatre. They received dramaturgical support on their work, and created a network of peer support. At the end of the programme, we presented *Juicy Bits*, a collection of short plays written by the Collective over the course of the year in response to the season. The plays were directed by Resident Director Rania Jumaily, Literary Associate Guy Jones and Artistic Director Paul Miller, and featured professional actors from Paul's first season: Lori Barker (*Play Mas*), Emma Beattie (*The Distance*), Sarah Middleton (*Pomona*), Guy Rhys (*Pomona*), Gyuri Sarossy (*The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*) and Seun Shote (*Play Mas*).

The Orange Tree Writers Collective 2014-15 writers included:
Tristan Bernays, Amman Paul Singh Brar, Jess Brown, Afsaneh Gray, Nessah Muthy, Matt Parvin, Somalia Seaton, Dean Stalham and Sumerah Srivastav.

Collective alumni have gone on to have work developed and produced by other London theatres, on BBC Radio, at the Edinburgh Fringe and by independent production companies, as well as having had work developed at the Orange Tree. The new season's Collective began life in October 2015, with exciting plans for the future.

CHANNEL 4 PLAYWRIGHT

At the beginning of the year we were awarded a bursary to support Melissa Bubnic, our writer on attachment, as part of Channel 4's Playwright Scheme. Melissa has spent the year working closely with the theatre's artistic team, and is developing a new play for us. Her attachment will continue into 2016.

It is such a privilege to work with such a diverse and inspiring range of writers at the Orange Tree – whether it's developing work for the stage, or providing a network of support through the Collective. It is great to be able to provoke conversations about where we've come from, and where we're headed, and imagine what the future might be like. Guy Jones

PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT:
In rehearsal: *buckets*, *Pomona*, *Little Light*;
Rania Jumaily (Resident Director), Afsaneh Gray,
Dean Stalham, Amman Paul Singh Brar, Sumerah Srivastav,
Tristan Bernays, Guy Jones (Literary Associate), Matt Parvin



REHEARSAL PHOTOS BY ROBERT DAX; MANUEL HARLAN; RICHARD DAVENPORT

Into 2015–16

ARTISTIC PROGRAMME The new season (beginning September 2015) has marked the launch of a new way of working for the Orange Tree. With reduced funding (since the loss of our Arts Council England regular grant of £365,000 in 2014/15) and a desire to broaden the diversity and number of creatives we work with, the OT has begun co-producing, touring and presenting work in collaboration with companies and artists across the UK. In autumn 2015 alone, over 21,000 people saw our work on the South Bank, in Sheffield and in Manchester.

EDUCATION & PARTICIPATION The Education & Participation Programme is successful thanks to continuous monitoring and evaluation of the projects involved, and the team's ability to grow and adapt the Programme to best meet the needs of the individuals and groups that it exists to benefit. With this in mind, the Orange Tree will be introducing a number of new projects in 2016, including:

DISCOVER MORE A new project that aims to better link our Artistic and Education & Participation Programmes. Teachers are offered a pre- or post- show workshop for the students they bring to see a main programme production. Workshops open up key themes in the play to help students get the most out of the experience; enable students to focus on the performance elements they might wish to reflect on as part of their English / drama curriculum work; encourage students to reflect more deeply on the performance they saw, and to critically discuss the choices the production team made in transforming the play from page to stage, thereby developing arts literacy.

SHAKESPEARE UP CLOSE 2014-15 projects Shakespeare Up Close and Shakespeare Live have been amalgamated for 2016 due to the significant crossover between the aims and participants of both projects: both projects were created for secondary school students, with the aim of increasing their understanding of Shakespeare and his language, improving literacy and engagement in learning across English, history, drama and other subjects identified to be relevant to the themes of the production produced. This new, flexible version – which will enable schools to book to see the production in the Theatre, or in their own school halls – will, we believe, better meet the needs of teachers and pupils than the two separate projects could.

THEATRE IN EDUCATION MODULE AT ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY This project has grown for 2016: we will be running workshops in three primary schools, followed by a promenade performance of *Romeo + Juliet* for those same primary school children to attend at Strawberry Hill House.

YOUNG TECHNICIANS A new opportunity made available from autumn 2015 which offers participants practical experience in running the technical elements of a production. It lasts an academic year and enables the Technicians to work towards an Arts Award at Silver level or above.

POMONA (Sep – Nov 2015)
by Alistair McDowall
at the National Theatre's Temporary Space
and the Royal Exchange, Manchester
SAM SWANN, NOMINATED FOR THE
MANCHESTER THEATRE AWARD 2015
FOR BEST ACTOR (to be announced)

**a brilliant and breathless...
nightmare brought to terrifying life**
Sarah Walters, Manchester Evening News

.....
WHEN WE WERE WOMEN (Sep – Oct 2015)
by Sharman Macdonald

**a quietly haunting play that reveals
a lot about the oppressiveness
of family life and inherited sexual
attitudes in wartime Scotland**
Michael Billington, The Guardian

.....
FRENCH WITHOUT TEARS (Oct – Nov 2015)
by Terence Rattigan

**Paul Miller's adorable young cast
produce a hoot of an evening with
just enough heart** *David Jays, Sunday Times*

French Without Tears will return to the
Orange Tree in summer 2016,
before touring the UK in partnership
with English Touring Theatre.

.....
THE DISTANCE (Nov – Dec 2015)
by Deborah Bruce
at Sheffield Theatres and at the OT

**Shot through with big emotions,
moral dilemmas and, best of all,
quiet truths** *Matt Trueman, Time Out*

Miller directs a witty,
spirited and timely revival

Paul Taylor, *The Independent* on *Widowers' Houses*



PHOTO BY RICHARD HUBERT SMITH



With thanks to the following for their support of the Orange Tree in 2014-15:



- RPLC
- Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity
- Orange Tree Development Committee
- Richmond May Fair Ball Committee
- The Garrick Charitable Trust
- David & Selina Marks
- The Devey Family
- Haskel Family Foundation
- Barnes Community Players
- Kew Fete Committee
- Our dedicated Members

And all those who have donated through the Box Office



49,104
TICKETS SOLD
91% CAPACITY

13,155
VISITED THE ORANGE TREE
FOR THE 1ST TIME
2,076/27%
of which were
UNDER♥30S

15,809
SAW 3 NEW PLAYS

AUDIENCE FOR POMONA
45% NEW TO THE
ORANGE TREE
25% UNDER 30

EDUCATION & PARTICIPATION

Beneficiaries
4,694
47% INSIDE RICHMOND
5,363
53% BEYOND RICHMOND

PROJECT SATISFACTION
94%
VERY SATISFIED
6% SATISFIED

EVERY WEEK
120
7-19 YEAR OLDS
ATTEND YOUTH THEATRE

610
ACTORS
auditioned for
73 ROLES

238
PLAYS SUBMITTED



4
CO-PRODUCERS
3
VENUES OUTSIDE
RICHMOND

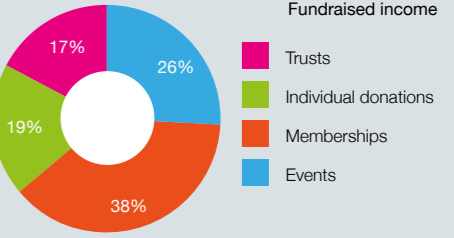
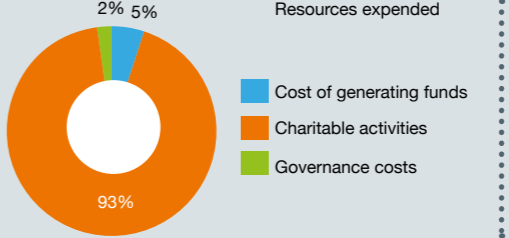
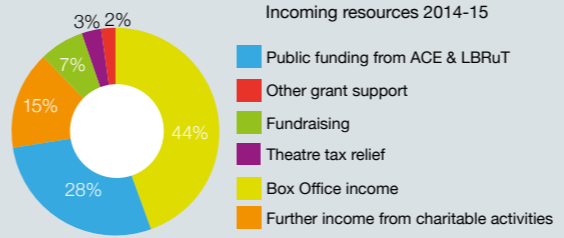
9 MAJOR AWARDS
2 UK THEATRE AWARDS
5 OFFIE AWARDS
EMPTY SPACE PETER BROOK AWARD
ALFRED FAGON AUDIENCE AWARD



OVER 20,000 FOLLOWERS
OVER 4,500 FOLLOWERS

MEMBERSHIP & FUNDRAISING

£25,411.71
TOTAL RAISED FOR THE ORANGE TREE AT 2015'S RICHMOND MAY FAIR GALA
£12,430.75 ONLINE DONATIONS BY AUDIENCE MEMBERS
1,108 MEMBERS SUPPORTING OT IN 2015



Building, boldly, skywards...

“You’ve heard of ageism. What about area-ism? You know, the idea that somehow a neighbourhood is so well-heeled, so leafy and nice, that it’s the place cool people run a mile from and where creativity and excitement go to die. Take a stroll along the affluent streets of Richmond and I suspect that’s the knee-jerk prejudice you might easily form, if you were inclined to do so. And I think the Orange Tree theatre, so greatly loved, admired and attended by locals that its survival has been taken for granted in many quarters, has fallen victim to that dismissive attitude, even though looking back over its work since its inception in 1971, it has kept cutting against the grain, while flying the flag for quality on the fringe.

Whatever pre-conceptions anyone has about this theatre, though, their ability to disdainfully leave it to its own devices has been dealt a resounding blow by Paul Miller since he took over as artistic director from Sam Walters. Here’s someone who not only hit the ground running, he did so as the earth beneath his feet was shaking with the tremors of a dumbfounding Arts Council funding cut. Showing a redoubtable Agincourt spirit he has fully reclaimed the theatre’s right to be on the map, made it in fact a destination venue. He has done so by building, boldly, skywards on the foundations of his predecessor, combining revivals with new work.

And what revivals, what new work. Bernard Shaw, DH Lawrence, Doris Lessing, Sharman McDonald and most recently Terence Rattigan – a repertoire that tells us where we’ve been and who we’ve been, over the past century. And then writers who are telling us in complex, uncertain terms who we are becoming: the likes of Alice Birch, Deborah Bruce and Alistair McDowall whose head-spinning dystopian play *Pomona* was so inspired the National snapped it up – so good it was hailed in reputable academic quarters as the play of the decade. What does all this tell us about the leafy old Orange Tree? I think: that we had better have a big basket at the ready to catch the fruit. It looks like being quite a harvest.”

Dominic Cavendish, *Telegraph* theatre critic at the Empty Space Peter Brook Award ceremony 2015.