

Annual Report

April 2022 - March 2023

QUEEN'S THEATRE HORNCHURCH



Supported by





A Year in Review

2022/23 has been the most extraordinary year for Queen's Theatre Hornchurch, with 104,548 people watching productions at the Theatre, 30,769 getting involved in participatory activity and 16,983 seeing productions made in Hornchurch on tour. Mathew Russell, Chief Executive, looks back on some highlights from an often record breaking 12 months.

April saw our new production of *'Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾ – the Musical'* opening to rave reviews, attracting an Offie nomination for Performance Ensemble. At the Bush Theatre, our first *Essex on Stage* showcase was successfully staged and, in Southend, Blouse and Skirt's *'Rice & Peas'*, an immersive West Indian dining experience, sold out.

In **May** our five star co-production, with Leeds Playhouse and Leicester Curve, of the world premiere of *'Maggie May'*, the production we were opening as the pandemic closed its doors, was performed (Eithne Brown was later nominated for UK Theatre Best Performance award). We began our year long innovative 8 person approach to creative leadership. We launched a pioneering partnership with New City College, supporting the next generation of theatre makers.

June and we were reading 539 applications received for our Future Laboratory international research project supporting emerging artists. We launched our new *Memory Cafe* in partnership with Havering Dementia Action Alliance. Our much loved theatre was Grade II listed in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – one of only six sites across the country listed for this occasion. We received news that the three year Theatre Nation Partnership application to Arts Council England had been successful and new funding was awarded from the Linbury Trust and Garfield Weston Foundation.

July included the world premiere of our sell out commissioned musical *'Never Never'* for QYouth Theatre, which saw 180 young people on stage. In Romford town centre we helped deliver Variable Matter's free immersive artwork *'The Rising Sun'*. And our work experience week was much enjoyed.

August was all about new projects as we enjoyed a development week for a new play, a fortnight with *Lung* at the NT Studio, commissioned new plays and developed partnerships. The Café was refurbished and re-launched with a fresh menu.

September was busy as we launched the *Blueprint Festival*, our biggest talent development project to date, involving 60+ creative practitioners. 48% of those attending were new to QTH and we celebrated three Offie nominations. Our regional premiere production of *'Kinky Boots'* opened in Ipswich to great reviews, before being seen by 9,459 people in Hornchurch, securing the second best box office result outside of a panto ever, and saw Aruhan Galieva nominated for Supporting Performance in a Musical.

In **October** we opened our 4 star world premiere *'Jekyll & Hyde'*, co-produced with Derby Theatre. It was nominated for two Offies, Best Ensemble and Best Design, and 25% of tickets were sold to schools. We attended the *Future Laboratory Masterclass* in Liege and hosted our first residency with artist Vera Boitcova. We worked with Havering Changing and Creative Estuary to community tour *'Rice & Peas'*. And launched our new Creative Health in Havering partnership.



November was a momentous moment as Arts Council England announced the results for its most competitive funding round, which saw a much needed, but rare in London, 71% grant increase for QTH. We completed fascinating research with 199 young people about their views on culture.

December and we were enjoying our record breaking production of *'Sleeping Beauty'*, seen by 26,805 people. And thanks to QGreen, achieved a 22% reduction in electricity and 25% reduction in gas between Decembers.

We kicked off **January** touring the National Theatre production of *'Shut Up I'm Dreaming'* into schools, where it was seen by 600 young people. And started *Speak Up* co-creation work with young people in the last of our confirmed 5 partner schools. We announced a new partnership with the Habbit Factory.

February saw a historic day as we achieved record breaking success at the Off West End awards held at Alexandra Palace. In a winning streak, we picked up the People's Vote awards for Most Comfortable Theatre and Best Online Info & Booking. We won a special award for *Blueprint*, the award for Best Panto and saw Oliver Hembrough win for *'All My Sons'*. On stage our world premiere of *'Rebus: A Game Called Malice'* was seen by 4,822 people. The National Theatre's Primary schools tour of *'Hamlet'* was hosted by QTH and St Edward's Academy. And we enjoyed an R&D week and sharing for *'Wilko Johnson: My Year to Live'*.

The year finished with an epic **March**. The world premiere of *'The Flood'* saw an onstage cast of 11 professionals and 33 community members, including an opportunity for New City College students to perform. Our *Centre Stage* scratch night for D/deaf, disabled and neuro divergent performers made a welcome return, alongside R&Ds for *'Eve and Cain'* and *'Zero'*. Our regional premiere Theatre Nation Partnerships production of *'Sucker Punch'* opened in Hornchurch, prior to a 9 week national tour. We hosted our first Social Prescribing Day and the Society of British Theatre Designers national exhibition of UK performance design *'Hello Stranger'* (accompanied by a series of special events).

An extraordinary end to a remarkable year, with thanks to the audiences, participants, artists, staff, board members, donors and funders who made it possible.

Mathew Russell

Transforming Communities



Spotlight on...

Schools and young people

As a member of the National Theatre's Theatre Nation Partnerships Programme, we have lots of exciting projects for schools and young people running throughout 2023!

In January, the National Theatre is touring a new production, *Shut Up, I'm Dreaming*, to 4 schools in Outer East London and South Essex in partnership with Queen's Theatre Hornchurch. In collaboration with young people across the country, the production has been created by acclaimed physical theatre company, *The PappyShow*, in response to workshops with over 100 secondary school students.

Directed by Kane Husbands, the production will visit a different school every day for 11 weeks across 11 areas in England. In Outer East London and South Essex, the production will tour Dagenham Park C of E School, Gaynes School, St Edward's C of E Academy and Marshalls Park Academy. School halls across the country will be transformed with a gigantic moveable climbing frame set.

The PappyShow is a physical theatre company which aims to platform marginalized identities and create diverse, joyful and collaborative productions rooted in the lived experience of their performers, bringing people together to move, dance, create moments of radical joy and share stories.

Following a successful pilot phase that began in Autumn 2021, Queen's

Theatre Hornchurch is also partnering with the National Theatre to deliver its *Speak Up* programme in five secondary schools in Outer East London and South Essex over the next three years.

"Speak Up feels like a community."

Speak Up student

Speak Up is a new secondary schools programme that aims to inspire a movement of young people who want to speak up about the issues that matter to them – in their schools, their communities and nationally. Young people will work collaboratively with their teachers, artists, local arts organisations and the National Theatre to make local artworks and creative projects.

The *Speak Up* partner schools are The Brittons Academy, Drapers Academy, Lime Academy Forest Approach, Sanders Draper and St Edward's C of E Academy. Students will take part in a variety of creative sessions to empower them to tell their own stories and connect with each other and their local communities.

The *Speak Up* Creative Associates, LUNG, deliver the national training with artists and teachers and to develop the creative ambitions of *Speak Up*. Campaign-led verbatim theatre company LUNG are Creative Associates for *Speak Up*, delivering national training with artists and teachers and developing the creative ambitions of the programme.

"We're so lucky that we get to do this every week."

Speak Up student

Keep your eyes peeled for more exciting projects, including the National Theatre's production of *Hamlet* visiting local primary schools in March and a mainstage takeover with NT Connections Festival 2023 and our 5 young company partners – Roding Valley High School, Eastbury Community School, New City College Epping Forest, Ormiston Rivers Academy and Store Room Youth Theatre.

Kerry Hunt, Education and Partnerships Producer



Spotlight on...

Community Partnerships

Our Communities Team are at the heart of new partnerships developing across Havering, connecting arts and culture with young people through schools and formal education, and championing the benefits of creative and cultural activities to people's health and wellbeing through social prescribing.

The **Havering Cultural Education Partnership** focuses on opportunities to transform the lives of Havering's children and young people, better promoting the value of culture in education.

The steering group has representatives from ten organisations, including the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch, the local authority, youth services, and primary, secondary and college education establishments.

Last month the partnership delivered its first conference 'The Children Have Spoken', sharing valuable learning from a series of youth consultation workshops to help understand the level of access to arts and culture across the borough, highlighting interests, needs and barriers to participating.

We worked with **8** organisations, delivered **14** workshops and spoke to **252** young people.

36.2% of young people who regularly access creative activity used positive language when describing the arts, compared to only **12.2%** of young people who do not regularly access creative activity.

33% suggested the top benefit of engaging with arts and culture was learning from other cultures, developing wider views and building tolerance.

24% suggested the second highest benefit was engaging with 'The Self,' meaning developing confidence, a sense of identity and discovering new skills

55% stated social anxiety as the largest barrier to engagement with Arts & Culture. One recurring keyword was 'judgement' from peers, or family and other external factors like social media.

The partnership is currently developing a three year programme of activity in response to the research, which will build on the early success of projects in the pilot year, including a new Cultural Commissioning initiative to empower and facilitate young people to design and produce their own creative and cultural events.

Creative Health Havering is a pilot network of local grassroots community organisations, third sector services and medical professionals exploring opportunities around social prescribing and the benefit of arts activity for health and wellbeing.

The network has explored a series of ambitions, including:

- How we better communicate the offer across Havering.
- How we learn from best practice of other boroughs.
- What opportunities there are to share training and CPD to promote best practice.
- What an increased offer for children & young people could look like.
- How we widen the offer for older people.
- How we can best support health inequalities in the borough.

The first event was hosted on National Social Prescribing Day, an annual celebration which recognises social care workers, local community groups, and organisations which support people's health and wellbeing.

We showcased local activity, demonstrating the positive impact it can have on people's health and wellbeing. The event saw representatives from over 20 organisations meet to network, start conversations, and experience first-hand some of the activities already on offer, including Therapeutic art demonstrated by Di's Diamonds, inclusive drama activities showcased by Habbit Factory, a sing-a-long with the Upminster Dementia Choir and Tiny Plays creative writing workshop hosted by Queen's Theatre Hornchurch.

James Watson, Director of Communities



Spotlight on...

Havering Changing

The Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is the host organisation for Havering Changing, a community led partnership that started in 2019, with the aspiration to bring the changing communities in Havering together to be part of inspiring creative and cultural experiences on their doorstep.

As the host organisation, the theatre has facilitated a consortium of local community, education and business partners to realise the ideas and ambitions of people living in Harold Hill, Orchard Village, Rainham, and Romford.

In each area members of the community choose, create and take part in their own programme of inspiring arts and culture.

Following a sold out community tour of Blouse and Skirt's production of *Rice & Peas* across venues in Havering in 2022, the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Havering Changing have increasingly worked together to support the best local creative talent to tell meaningful stories about Essex and East London in community settings.

Rice & Peas was a three-course, three-act immersive dining experience inspired by Artistic Director, Mia's, family history. Through each delicious West Indian course, audiences were transported back to discover the heartache and courage it took so many to start a new life in Great Britain.

As part of the tour the production visited Harold Hill Children's Centre, The Mardyke Community Centre, Rainham Royals, and the YMCA Thames Gateway.



Recently, in partnership, we have supported Variable Matter to produce *The People's Kitchen*, a touring community project that brought local people in Rainham together for a hot bowl of soup and meaningful conversation. The Variable Matter collective worked with range of different local people and community groups to create a space of hope and togetherness.

Havering Changing is part of a network of 39 Creative People & Places across the country that strives for everyone to have access to high quality creativity and culture where they live

This community art project built on the success of Variable Matter's previous partnership project with the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch and Havering Changing for *The Rising Sun*, which took place in Romford in July 2022, celebrating the voices of over 100 people and attracting over 1500 attendees. *The Rising Sun* transformed the market and brought together a diverse range of people, receiving national television coverage.

There are now plans in place for the partnership to continue to elevate local storytelling with two ambitious new productions that put local people at the heart of the story. This summer Lucy Pitman-Wallace is creating a new community led play called *Inked* that will show behind every tattoo there is a story to be told.

Joe Lichtenstein and people living in Orchard Village will give a fiesta to the *Fiesta!* To mark the end of the production of the Ford Fiesta this will be a celebratory send off to a car that marked Britain in a hugely positive way and along with the festivities to explore all the complexities of stories that this car will have created in and around our community, both positive and negative.

For more information about Havering Changing visit: haveringchanging.org

James Jackson, Havering Changing Project Director

Spotlight on...

Relaxed Performances

Throughout the year, we host a variety of additionally supported performances to enable those who might otherwise not be able to attend live theatre to experience it in a way that is more accessible to them. Perhaps you, or someone you know, could benefit?

Increasingly, theatres up and down the country are providing more and different accessible performances to accommodate the different needs of their audience. You might be familiar with captioned or signed performances for those who are hard of hearing, or audio described performances for those with visual impairments, but relaxed performances still remain a mystery for some!

A relaxed performance is a specially adapted show, where things that may seem overwhelming, off-putting or uncomfortable are adjusted to make the experience a more comfortable and enjoyable one. They primarily help adults or children with autism, sensory communication disorders, or learning difficulties.

However, many other people could benefit from the more relaxed environment of these performances, such as; anyone with epilepsy or a condition that makes them sensitive to light and sounds (such as migraines or misophonia), anyone with mental health conditions such as anxiety or panic disorder, or anyone who may need to get up and go to the toilet more frequently.

Common triggers are darkness, loud music, sudden noises and a generally unfamiliar environment in which you're expected to sit still and quiet for a long time. At a relaxed performance you can expect:

- Some technical changes such as bright lighting and loud noises being reduced, and special effects such as strobe lighting, pyrotechnics and smoke will be removed.
- The atmosphere is relaxed, the lights in the auditorium won't go fully dark, there is an open attitude towards audience noise and movement.
- You are free to leave the auditorium (and re-enter) as many times as you need, and a quiet space will be available if you need a break.
- The auditorium capacity is reduced so the theatre and foyer feel less busy, you can ask to have empty seats left around your booking.
- An information pack about the venue and the show will be sent in advance. If a familiarisation visit ahead of the performance would be helpful, this can be arranged in advance and supported by a member of theatre team.

For some audience members, the relaxed performance provided a safe environment to return to the theatre from the pandemic. For others, it allowed families to come together and share an experience in an environment that understood and supported their needs without the usual expectations of 'theatre etiquette'. These opportunities mean a lot to our audiences, as we saw from the responses to our **Relaxed Performance of *Sleeping Beauty*** this Christmas...

"Not many places do things for SEN children like this. I didn't have to spend 20 minutes explaining my daughter to people for her to be accepted. It's been brilliant."

"You just need to look at the smile on his face. He's beaming, as well as everyone around him. He's loved it. He's had a great day."

"The social story you sent out before the show, you have no idea how useful it is. It makes a trip like this possible."



Supporting Diverse Talent





Black British Stories

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is on a mission to tell Black British stories, from a new production of Roy Williams' searing *Sucker Punch* to the development of Anne Odeke's new *Windrush* musical for families.

Limbering up to take the main stage at the end of March is *Sucker Punch*, a Theatre Nation Partnerships production, produced by Queen's Theatre Hornchurch. This is the first UK revival of the hit play set in the world of boxing since it came out fighting in 2010 at London's Royal Court. Yet the hard-hitting subject matter from writer Roy Williams about what it is to be Black and British is as relevant today as it was 13 years ago.

The director this time is Nathan Powell. "It is a play about the politics of the Eighties and the experience of Black Britain," he says, "about how working Britain was manipulated to blame each other for their problems, particularly pertinent at the moment. But for me, it is a play of resilience and hope, and my wish is that this hope resonates with all the generations of Black Britain that come through the doors to experience it."

As well as freelance directing, Nathan is also Artistic Director of NSDF (National Students Drama Festival) and co-founder of New Step Theatre. He is dedicated to serving new audiences and creating shows that "invite people into the theatre with open arms and a smile".



He is delighted that after two and a half weeks at QTH so many more people will get the chance to see *Sucker Punch* as it sets off on a 10-venue tour of major theatres around the country.

"It feels so important that we are able to have conversations about the country, with the country," he says, "sharing and allowing people from across the UK to respond to these stories that say so much about our world."

Sucker Punch is just as important a story for QTH, whose Havering home is one of the country's most rapidly changing boroughs, especially in terms of ethnically diverse communities and younger people.

To help QTH respond creatively to the shifting populations around the theatre in Essex and Outer East London, in 2022 Executive Director Mathew Russell appointed Maisey Bawden and Danielle Kassaraté, founders of all Black, all female Shakespeare company, Mawa Theatre, to his new Creative Leadership Team. Together, the two women focus on talent development of more underrepresented and underserved creative practitioners.

Their contribution was recognised last month at the Off West End Theatre Awards, where Danielle was among the team to pick up the OneOff Award for QTH's *Blueprint Festival of New Ideas* that took place last summer. As part of the festival, and as well as showing their own video project titled *Shakespeare on Sea*, she and Maisey commissioned micro plays under the banner *Food for Thought* from three writers from the Global Majority who got to see their work produced as script-in-hand performances.

Also part of *Blueprint* was the immersive three-course, three-act dining with theatre experience, *Rice & Peas*, written by Mia Jerome. A story of the Windrush generation and a family threatened by a secret, the production went on after the festival to tour community centres and other smaller Essex venues.

A similar local tour is planned for the new *Windrush* play by actor and writer Anne Odeke, who lives in Southend. She began her writing career at QTH more than two years ago with a composite show called *Misfits*, for which she wrote one of four interlocking monologues. Her acting CV includes roles at Shakespeare's Globe and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and she performed her own piece about



an Essex schoolgirl researching local Black heroes and finding Princess Dinubolu of Senegal who hit the headlines in 1908 when she entered the Southend beauty pageant. QTH continued to support Anne to develop the monologue into a one woman show called *Princess Essex*, which she went on to perform at the Bush Theatre in West London as well as on tour of community venues in South Essex.

"We went to places like Tilbury West, where there are only about eight houses," Anne says. "We did it in a working men's club where the oldest person was something like 97. It was a mainly white audience in those places and really eye-opening, sharing the story, but also listening to people respond, hearing what they wanted to say about it afterwards, and particularly about colour."

Anne is confident of the value of getting her work out beyond the theatre.

"It's great to get the chance to tell people my stories and try to set off conversations. If a play's a conflict, it leads to some form of debate and then from there some sort of resolution might be possible. Also, just as the original *'Misfits'* was about dispelling stereotypes about Essex, I love the fact that people on our tour came to watch a Black woman perform who is an Essex woman. In the dictionary, 'Essex Girl' is something like 'an over-sexualised materialist woman', but we're about humour, pride, dignity, strength and lots of other things besides. It's a great to have the chance to show that."

Anne's next play is called *A Place for Me?* It features 10-year-old Phyliss who lives in Essex, Jamaica and is curious about Essex, UK. "Nine times out of 10, the *Windrush* story is told through the eyes of adults," Anne explains, "but there were children on those ships, we know that, though, of course they were undocumented. The first British soil that the *Windrush* generation stepped on was Essex soil and they went on to cities like Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool etc. But to find out what happened to the undocumented you really have to dig, so I'm working with Black historian Steve Martin."

She's still working on the script so there is a way to go before QTH audiences can learn more about this Black British story, which Anne is keen to point out, will be a musical - "a story about Essex history, working class history, done in a fun way, for families".
Fiona Hughes

Sucker Punch

By
Roy Williams
Director
Nathan Powell
Designer
Sandra Falase
Lighting Designer
Joshie Harriette
Sound Designer
Duramoney Kamara
Movement Director
Asha Jennings-Grant
Fight Director
Eric Ortuño
Boxing Coach
Gary Cooke
Casting Director
Christopher Worrall

Tickets: £12.50* - £29* |
Under 26s: £8

Dates: 30 Mar - 15 Apr | 7.30pm

Preview: Thu 30 & Fri 31 Mar |
7.30pm

Matinees: Thu 6, Sat 8, Thu 13, &
Sat 15 Apr | 2.30pm

Pre-recorded Audio Description:
available at every performance
from 4 Apr

To book for an accessible
performance,
call 01708 443333 or email
boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

*+65p QNext fee.



Talking to the women behind **The Flood**

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is ready to welcome *The Flood*, a new play by Vickie Donoghue, which commemorates the real-life disaster of 1953 in which 58 people lost their lives in Canvey Island. In keeping with QTH's commitment to commissioning bold new writing, and raising the profile of working-class female theatre creatives, we talk to the women behind *The Flood* about how they will be recreating a natural disaster on stage.

The female creative team behind *The Flood* attribute their shared vision to the fact they come from similar backgrounds – and have been breaking down barriers throughout their careers.

Playwright Vickie Donoghue is Essex-born; director Stef O'Driscoll (part of QTH's Creative Leadership Team and interim Artistic Director of The Gate Theatre) is from south London; while the play's designer Khadija Raza lives in Ilford. "We love telling working-class narratives, and offering representation for those voices," says Stef.

"I think lots of people who work in theatre come from a background of privilege," says Khadija. "There's nothing wrong with that, it's just the landscape of how we've made theatre in the past, and who has access to it. But things are starting to change. We come from a working-class background and it is lovely to see these people who don't really fit the mould of what we think women in theatre look like, leading the creative team, and getting to tell the stories."

Vickie's play is based on a real historical event. "We feel an incredible responsibility to do justice to that



community and capture the spirit of the people of Canvey," says Stef.

The story begins in 1953 at the opening party of the War Memorial Community Hall in Canvey, on the stormy night just before the North Sea burst through the sea defence.

"I wanted dancing and joy and celebration before the tragedy," Vickie explains. "I mean, working class communities party like no other, you know?"

The drama then jumps forward to 2013, where the group are now in their 80s. It's another party, but more like a tea dance. Then finally we see the fate of the hall in a fictional 2053.

Designer Khadija, winner of the 2017 Linbury Prize, the UK's most prestigious award for Stage Design, has come up with a revolving set – with a stage on a stage (the real-life Canvey Hall has a stage for shows and performances). "It's like a clock that turns in order to go to different time periods. And the space around it will convey the sea wall, the water and the landscape of Canvey."

As for the flood, which is like another character in the play: "We're not going to flood the stage," she laughs. "But we're hoping to create a language with light and sound and movement that conveys a sense of it happening. Because the real-life characters were inside the hall, we don't see it with our own eyes, but we hear about it and see the devastation."

The play is grounded in the real world – love affairs and rivalries play out in front of us. "Vickie writes about big world events, ultimately this is a comment on the climate crisis," says Stef. "But she tells the story through beautiful domestic relationships; she cares deeply about people and the human experience. We get to know and love the characters before we see the impact the flood has on their lives and how these events ricochet throughout the rest of their years, and how communities deal with loss and grief."

The Flood stars Liam Bull (*Supacell*); Micky Dartford (*The Larkins*); Joan Hodges (*It's a Sin*); Sheree Kane (*Seeds: The Round Shape of all Things Red*, Arcola); Paul Lavers (*Catch Me If You Can*, UK tour); Modupe Salu (*House*, Southwark Playhouse); Adrian Stokes (*Roots*, Nottingham Playhouse & Mercury Theatre); George Whitehead (*Sam Mendes' Empire of Light*); Vanessa White-Smith (*Stamping Shouting & Singing Home*, Polka Theatre); Matilda Rae (*The Fall*, Finborough Theatre); while Sabrina Puri makes her professional debut.

And QTH has also cast two large groups – one of late-teens and the other a group of older people, to add life on stage to the parties. Performing Arts students from New City College: Arleigh Green campus make up the late-teens ensemble, whilst 18 older people make up the older ensemble.



The Flood has contemporary resonance. Several parts of Essex could be completely underwater by 2050 – climate experts have created a map showing how rising sea levels could submerge large parts of the county. In 2023 we're facing war between Russia and Ukraine, plus a cost-of-living crisis where people gather in halls for warmth and food banks.

The final scenes in the play which take place in 2053 show a world of power cuts with people carrying torches. "Costumes aren't bright and shiny and new but reused and passed down," says Khadija.

Stef hopes it will encourage us to look at our own lives. "We might think about what our relationship is to the climate crisis when it's actually on our door-step." But, overall, it's the resilience of local people that comes through. "We want audiences to have a great night out, laugh, cry be moved."

After all, Canvey has a history of rebuilding after the floods and welcoming different communities. "In WW2 people from the East End who were bombed came to Canvey and built this place. So there's an incredible sense of pride and community."

The Flood is Vickie's third commission for Hornchurch. In 2021 she adapted Beth Underdown's novel *The Witchfinder's Sister* (a Richard and Judy Book Club pick) and co-wrote *Tales From The Thames*. "What's really beautiful is Queen's Theatre Hornchurch are really investing in local voices, and local female voices," says Stef.

This autumn QTH is staging Amanda Whittington's *The Invincibles*, a piece the theatre commissioned from Amanda about female football in WW1 – with links to the success of The Lionesses last summer. It has also commissioned award-winning Essex playwright, Kelly Jones to write *Breaker, Breaker* as part of the *Blueprint Festival*, based on the Citizens' Band (CB) radio movement which was big in Havering and Barking and Dagenham.

Sadie Hasler, award-winning Southend playwright, is writing *Killing Jack* – a dark and funny feminist twist on the Jack the Ripper narrative, exploring how the world is no safer for women now as it was when the world's most famous serial killer horrified the world in 1888. Sadie wrote *Stiletto Beach* for the 2019 *Essex Girls and Boys* season.

Anne Odeke, a Southend actress and writer of *The Essex Princess* is writing a Windrush family drama, *A Place For Me* for the theatre, which is in development. While Hornchurch-based playwright Guleraana Mir is writing a follow-up to a piece she wrote for QTH during the pandemic, *Fiza Comes Home*.

Once again, QTH will be celebrating the rich diversity of stories about Outer East London and Essex. Watch this space.

Written by Liz Hoggard

Director
Stef O'Driscoll
Designer
Khadija Raza
Lighting Designer
Rajiv Pattani
Sound Designer
Dominic Kennedy
Movement Director
Annie-Lunnette Deakin-Foster
Associate Movement Director
Hayley Chilvers
Casting Director
Sydney Aldridge
Dramaturg
Rishi Trikha
Assistant Director
Manley Gavich
Executive Producer
Mathew Russell

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* |
Under 26s: £8

Dates: 3 - 18 Mar | 7.30pm

Preview: Fri 3 Mar

Matinees: Thu 9, Sat 11, Thu 16, &
Sat 18 Mar | 2.30pm

Pre-recorded Audio Description:
available at every performance
from 7 Mar

To book for an accessible
performance,
call 01708 443333 or email
boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

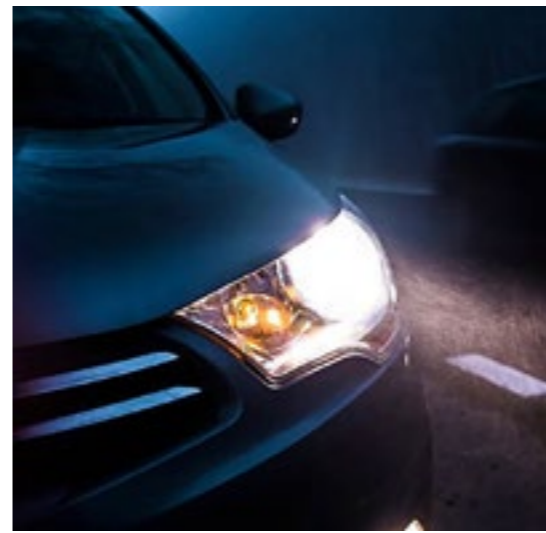


Festival of new ideas Blueprint

There's a fortnight in September set to be one of the most exciting in the Theatre's long history, as an astonishing array of artists work together to create an extraordinary festival of new and unusual theatre in different spaces, inside and outside the amazing Grade II listed building. We spoke to some of the team planning these new ideas.

'Conversations we've had with brilliant artists about Blueprint have been so inspiring' said Mathew Russell, Executive Director, talking about the festival. 'We're encouraging everyone to make theatre in some entirely different ways.'

Blueprint offers a chance to inform plays in the development during their early stages. In 2021 Queen's Theatre Hornchurch commissioned John Webber to write a new play, set in Thurrock, *Wake Up People*. John and director Beth Kapila will be staging a reading. John explained that *'he grew up a stone's throw away from Hornchurch so I'm really excited to be part of Blueprint – and this festival shows the vibrancy of the Queen's in spades – I can't wait.'*



Writer Kenny Emson was one of the team behind Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's 2020 premiere *Misfits*. Kenny took inspiration to write his new play, *A Different Class*, and with collaborator Bethany Pitts, is trailing his script in a sharing likely to blow your mind! The cast includes Simon Darwen from last year's *Beginning*. Kenny is *'super excited. I was born in Thurrock and this play really is a slice of my childhood. It's an absolute privilege to be able to share it with an Essex audience at this stage in its development.'*

Meanwhile Danielle Kassaraté, Associate Director (Talent Development), has been working with playwright Somebody Jones to commission three playwrights from the Global majority, voices new to Queen's Theatre Hornchurch to write mini plays. With an umbrella title *Food for Thought*, each will be performed in the intimacy of the Learning Space, followed by an open discussion with audiences.

Like with *Food for Thought*, much of *Blueprint* is about offering new opportunities to artists to try out ideas. Mathew Russell said, *'In testing times, as a regional producing theatre for Outer East London and South Essex, it's really important we share the resources we have, and the funds we manage to raise, with as many as we can, offering employment opportunities to the widest range of freelancers. Blueprint represents the single biggest investment in talent development in our history.'*

Laura Ann Price is making a new piece of design led performance, *In This Smoking Chaos*, consisting of 31 scenes in 31 minutes. Laura says *'Blueprint is opening doors for creatives to explore ground breaking ways of working both inside and outside of conventional theatre spaces. To be afforded the opportunity to experiment and create with the support of the technical staff at QTH is a game changer for me as an artist and designer.'*

Another practitioner Joe Lichtenstein, who directed last year's *Beginning*, is creating theatre for a secret space deep within the building. Collaborating with an actor and musician, Joe's *The Empty Chair* is performed for two audience members at a time! Joe feels that *'The opportunity to create a piece of theatre with world class collaborators and a wildly supportive team is a dream for any creative. Blueprint is providing the environment and ingredients for artistic alchemy.'*

And, Deputy Chair of the Theatre's Board, David Shearing, is devising *This Story is True For Most Of Us*, for another magical setting, enabling audiences to see our environment from a whole



new perspective. Award winning artist David, who was also behind the recent immersive installation *The Rising Sun*, has been leading Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's Environmental Responsibility group, spearheading significant green projects over the last year. David believes that *'Blueprint offers a platform to explore new forms of art - a test bed for ideas. I hope our project unlocks people's imagination as to what theatre can be and do.'*

Other members of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's new creative leadership team are focused on increasing opportunities for Essex and East London's community of D/deaf, disabled and neuro-divergent artists. Creative Associate Britny Virginia is curating our first *Centre Stage* event showcase of such talent, and Creative Associate, Kate Lovell, is trying out ideas for *Frostiana*, a free interactive sensory experience for all ages. Kate described how *'Blueprint has given me an opportunity to trial the beginnings of a show I've dreamed of making for many years. A chance to experiment and play without pressure is precious.'*

At the heart of *Blueprint* is a piece Queen's Theatre Hornchurch has been supporting for the last year, back by popular demand, touring to Havering and South Essex venues after the Festival. Blouse and Skirt's *Rice and Peas* is a three course, three act immersive dining experience by writer Mia Jerome, who described it as *'wonderful to be on the roster with so many exciting artists. I can't wait to see the Queen's transformed into a space for experimentation.'*

Finally, digital technology will be central to some extraordinary theatre. Mawa Theatre Company's *Shakespeare-On-Sea*, which explores Shakespeare's maritime imagination through the gaze of a Black female, will be on screen in the foyer. Tara Theatre's *Final Farewell* by Sudha Bhuchar is a series of moving accounts told through audio stories and experienced in promenade, and *Through The Ages* will see the historic Grade II building transformed nightly into a giant projection screen.

To be honest, everyone just can't wait to share what they've been planning!

Blueprint

Events:

A Different Class
Kenny Emson

Centre Stage
Britny Virginia

Final Farewell
Tara Theatre

Food for Thought
Danielle Kassaraté

Frostiana: A Sensory Experience
Kate Lovell

In This Smoking Chaos
Laura Ann Price

Rice and Peas
Blouse & Skirt

Shakespeare-On-Sea
Mawa Theatre Company

The Empty Chair
Joe Lichtenstein

This Story Is True For Most Of Us
David Shearing

Through the Ages
Queen's Theatre Hornchurch
Technical Team

Wake Up People
John Webber

Tickets:

£5* – £3* concession
(unless otherwise stated)

Free: *Frostiana: A Sensory Experience, Shakespeare-On-Sea, and Through The Ages*

Rice & Peas | £38*

The Story Is True For Most Of Us | £12*

Festival Pass

(with the exception of *Rice & Peas* and *This Story Is True For Most Of Us*)

Book 4 **Blueprint** events and get 50p off each ticket

Book 6 **Blueprint** events and get £1 off each ticket

Festival Pass Holders can enjoy 20% off food and drink at the Café and QBar for the duration of the festival

For the best experience when booking one of our access performances, speak to our Box Office Team on **01708 443333** or email **boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk**

*+65p QNext fee

Innovating through Partnership





Producing in Partnership

September 2022 marked the 6th anniversary of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) embarking upon an exciting series of new partnerships to make extraordinary and often life changing theatre. Since then 22 productions, the majority of QTH's produced work, have been made with brilliant theatre makers nationally and internationally. We talked to colleagues to find out more about why this is so important.

"Making theatre in partnership flows through the DNA of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch" explains Executive Director Mathew Russell. "We love learning from collaborating with the very best theatres across the world and seeing work involving Outer East London and Essex artists and communities performed nationally and internationally. In 2019/20 our co-productions were seen by a record breaking 62,325 people across 12 towns and cities. And as we emerge from the pandemic, we're reigniting important partnerships and building exciting new ones."



This season sees landmark co-productions with two of QTH's long term partners. The acclaimed regional premiere of *Kinky Boots - the Musical*, directed by Creative Leadership team member, Tim Jackson, is co-produced with New Wolsey Ipswich. This follows a string of shared hits: *Made in Dagenham*, *Worst Wedding Ever*, *The Ladykillers*, *Rope*, *Once*, and *Kiss Me Quickstep*. Douglas Rintoul, Chief Executive of New Wolsey Ipswich, formerly Artistic Director at QTH, explains that "The relationship between QTH and NWT is one of the most enduring co-production relationships in the history of our theatres. Our passion for accessible and intelligent popular live performance, our values around who we make theatre for and our determination to take on big titles and reinvent them for smaller stages is what binds us. These shared principles mean that together we can make theatre for all on a scale that wouldn't necessarily be possible. Everyone wins."

In Autumn 2018, QTH co-produced for the first time with Derby Theatre. *Abigail's Party* proved a rewarding collaboration but alongside it the theatres joined forces to commission a companion piece, Atiha Sen Gupta's *Abi*. The two theatres went on to work together on revivals of *One Man Two Guvnors* and *Macbeth*, and are now focused on something even more ambitious, the co-commission of Neil Bartlett's new adaptation of *Jekyll & Hyde*. Sarah Brigham, Derby Theatre's Chief Executive, feels that "co-productions, of course, allow us to take on larger productions but more importantly give us the opportunities to work with venues we have an affinity with. I have long admired the work Mathew and his team at Queen's Theatre Hornchurch deliver and co-producing with them means we can share knowledge, skills, and expertise. There are other benefits too: working together means we can be introduced to new artists - as well as new audiences."

Opportunities often emerge from partnerships. Unusually for a theatre of its scale, on the international stage QTH has worked with Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg to make extraordinary versions of *The Crucible*, *Abigail's Party*, and *Kindertransport*. QTH is now UK representative in Future Laboratory, 12 European performing arts institutions working together to explore shared stories, and in October participating in a Masterclass in Liege and hosting Vera Boitcova from Finland for a fortnight's artist residency. Mathew Russell said, "This is a vital project which it is really special for a regional theatre like ours to be at the heart of. We received nearly 600 applications from an extraordinary range of artists and whittled the selection down to 15 who will participate



Making theatre in partnership flows through the DNA of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch.

Mathew Russell, Executive Director

in three research residencies in three different cities. We're benefiting so much from the knowledge exchange with these world class theatres too."

Long-term relationships with commercial producers are important to the future life of brilliant plays. Last year QTH was thrilled to partner with renowned West End producer Lee Dean to revive and tour the National Theatre's *Beginning* by David Eldridge. In early 2023, Lee, Dan Schumann, and QTH are world premiering *Rebus: A Game Called Malice* by Ian Rankin and Simon Reade, the new *Rebus* story told exclusively on stage, with plans in the pipeline for productions beyond. Lee believes that "collaborating with producing theatres such as Queen's Theatre Hornchurch encourages greater creativity and releases the potential to produce more elaborate, exciting and challenging productions. QTH provides a nurturing environment that allows writers, directors, creatives, and performers to develop their best work."

But perhaps the most ambitious of collaborations is Theatre Nation Partnerships, which sees QTH working with the National Theatre (NT) and 12 other organisations across England to build engagement in theatre with audiences, schools and communities. Since 2017 the programme has engaged over 220,000 participants. It has led to QTH partnering with the National to tour NT productions of *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* and an adaptation of *Jekyll & Hyde* into schools across Havering, seen QTH as the pioneering Theatre partner on Public Acts projects *Pericles* and *As You Like It*, both extraordinary acts of theatre and community, and open an international tour of Alexander Zeldin's *Love*, which temporarily transformed the Theatre's auditorium. In Spring 2023, a new Theatre Nation Partnerships production of Roy Williams' award-winning play *Sucker Punch*, produced by and opening at QTH, will tour to 10 theatres, with similar collaborations planned for 2024 and 2025. And later in 2023 an epic multi-venue production of *The Odyssey* will mark the fifth anniversary of Public Acts on the Olivier stage at the NT with community performers from QTH creating an experience like no other.

Rebus: A Game Called Malice

By Ian Rankin and Simon Reade
Director Robin Lefevre

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

The Flood

By Vickie Donoghue
Director Stef O'Driscoll
Designer Khadija Raza
Lighting Designer Rajiv Pattani
Sound Designer Dominic Kennedy

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

Sucker Punch

By Roy Williams
Director Nathan Powell

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

To book for an access performance, call 01708 443333 or email boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

Save money with a *Jump the Q* Season Ticket.

See all three of these shows from just £15 per ticket.

Find out more at queens-theatre.co.uk/jump-the-q-spring2023

Spotlight on...

QGreen

The climate emergency is bringing cultural organisations into the spotlight in how they are responding to the challenges facing our planet. This month we share our work in reducing our impact, becoming more energy efficient, and inspiring others through our storytelling.

A recent climate report 'Act Green' (2022), stressed how 77% of theatre audiences think cultural organisations should take responsibility and influence society about climate change, whilst 93% expressed they expect venues like Queen's Theatre Hornchurch to make sure our venue is as energy efficient as possible. In 2021, we established **The Environmental Responsibility Committee** to monitor, report and develop organisational change in line with the Arts Council England investment principles. We developed a bold and ambitious strategy 'QGreen', the centre of which is a £250,000 investment in the fabric of our building. This has in part been funded by your 65p ticket contributions, and we thank you for this urgent and much needed support. Like many households and businesses who face growing energy costs, we too have felt the pinch. Our annual increase for Gas & Electric this year is £137,000, representing a 163% increase from the previous year. In March, we completed a series of upgrades that are already helping us reduce costs and our

environmental impact. We already purchase **100% green energy** and have developed **advanced monitoring systems** that enable us to target our resources. We have **upgraded our air handling unit** (our single largest use of energy), we have purchased a stock of **40 new LED lamps** for the stage, and spent over £40,000 on new **solar panels** to support our heating systems. We have conducted a review of all our lighting which have now been **replaced by LEDs**, bringing a **70% reduction in energy use** in our lighting alone. These investments have **reduced our overall energy consumption by 15% this year**. Despite our building being nearly 50 years old, we have improved our energy rating year-on-year and now maintain an energy rating of B (DEC).

QGreen is not just about reducing energy, it is a holistic approach to all we are doing on and off the stage. During 2021/22 we adopted the Theatre Greenbook – a new industry standard on benchmarking and monitoring how materials for production (set, costumes and technical equipment) are recycled and reused. We are currently meeting all baseline levels with the view to work toward an intermediate level in the next cycle. We have championed bold new storytelling, with the aim to **inspire us all to consider our relationship with the natural world: 'This Story is True For Most Of Us...'** developed as part of the *Blueprint Festival*, offered audiences the chance to enjoy a seven-course plant-based tasting meal on the roof of the theatre. Using locally sourced produce, it enabled us to consider our supply chains going forward.

50% of all the carbon emissions relating to our operation comes via audiences travelling by car to our venue.

You can do your bit too. We invite you to consider using public transport where you can, car share if possible, and help us by telling us how you've travelled to us via our post show questionnaires. So much has been achieved in just one year that we wanted to take this moment to share with you. We will continue to be creative in playing our part in not only reducing our impact but actively creating a better environment for all of us.

David Shearing on behalf of the Environmental Responsibility Committee



Spotlight on...

Performance Design

As the East London curators of the Society of British Theatre Designers' national exhibition of UK design for performance, 'Hello Stranger' (2019-2023), we are thrilled to announce that an exhibition will be on display in foyer of the theatre from March 13 to March 26.

Featuring a curated selection of regional talent, the exhibition celebrates the work of theatre designers and highlights the critical role that design plays in the success of a production. Design for the stage involves more than just set design and costume design, but also sound and lighting design, which create a multisensory experience for the audience.

Design for performance is a constantly evolving process, and there is an unfinished, messy, and white card aspect to it. We wanted to bring these aspects into the exhibition. As designers, we are constantly learning, growing, and refining our craft, and we are not afraid to make mistakes or take risks. Design is a collaborative process, and it involves communication and collaboration with the rest of the creative team, including directors, actors, producers, and technicians.

As a result, the design process can be complex, challenging, and unpredictable.

Through this exhibition, we hope to showcase the

dynamic and exciting world of theatre design between process and outcome.

The challenges of the pandemic also presented new obstacles for theatre designers,

and this exhibition is a testament to their resilience and creativity. Despite the limitations on in-person performances and reduced budgets, designers have found innovative ways to adapt to the new circumstances and continue to create impactful and immersive productions.

As part of the exhibition, we are excited to host an artist-in-conversation talk with ourselves Khadija Raza and David Shearing, on Saturday, March 18, from 5pm to 6pm in the Learning Space. During the talk, we will delve into the intricacies of the design process and explore the creative decisions that brought *The Flood* to life. It will offer a rare opportunity for audiences to get a behind-the-scenes look at the inspiration and collaboration that shaped the design of this emotive new show. The event is free to attend, but booking is required.

An exhibition catalogue is available to purchase from the box office, which celebrates over 100 UK designers

We are grateful to Queen's Theatre Hornchurch for providing us with the platform to bring these important behind-the-scenes crafts front of house, and we hope that audiences will join us for this unique opportunity to gain an insight into the design process and celebrate the role of design in contemporary theatre. We encourage everyone to visit the exhibition in the foyer from March 13 to March 26, and to take a closer look at the artistry and creativity that goes into the design of a theatre production.

For more information about the national celebration of design visit: www.hellostrangernationalexhibition.org.uk

David Shearing & Khadija Raza
East London Curators of Hello Stranger

