



40,623
TICKETS SOLD
94% INCREASE

11,497
TICKETS SOLD TO
NEW CUSTOMERS

BOX OFFICE TAKINGS
UP 155%

AVERAGE FINANCIAL TARGET
122%
PER SHOW

846 MEMBERS 14% INCREASE ON MEMBERSHIP 2022

AWARD
NOMINATIONS
12

2 NEW PLAYS SOLD
6,594
TICKETS

2,907
TOTAL BOOKERS

3,675
£15 TICKETS SOLD
TO UNDER 30s

4 NEW TRUSTEES &
BOARD MEMBERS

40 EMERGING TO MID-CAREER
CREATIVES SUPPORTED
through our artist development
schemes and partnerships

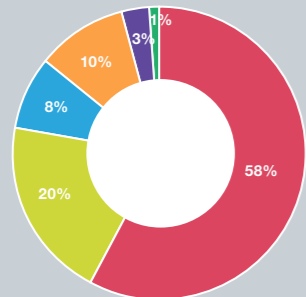
NOT EMPLOYED
PEOPLE 157

100+ NEW
MEMBERS
DONATING
MONTHLY

LARGEST EVER DONATION
£125K
FROM BACKSTAGE TRUST

1,355
HOUSEHOLDS WATCHED
OT SHOWS ON DEMAND

8 NEW WRITING
PRODUCTIONS



FUNDRAISED INCOME %

- Individuals 58%
- Trusts & foundations 20%
- Legacies 8%
- Campaigns 10%
- Events 3%
- Other 1%

Artistic Director's Welcome

Within a few minutes of my appointment last year, the questions began: what would change at the Orange Tree? But the fifty-year history of our remarkable theatre is rich with continuities. Staging new plays. Rediscovering the drama of the past. Engaging with children and young people. Championing the theatre artists of the future. Working with our local community. Gathering in a circle to tell a story. As we set about envisioning a bright new future for the Orange Tree, the single greatest source of inspiration is our past.

All theatre programming is a joint effort, but the 2022—2023 year was literally shared between me and my wonderful predecessor Paul Miller. Paul programmed *Yellowman*, *The Solid Life of Sugar Water*, *Arms and the Man* and *Two Billion Beats*. I took the baton with *Duet for One*, *You Bury Me*, *The Circle*, and *The Swell*.

New plays are this theatre's lifeblood, and just before writing this introduction we were delighted to hear that *The Swell*, Isley Lynn's bewitching story of secrets, betrayal and sacrifice, has been nominated for an Evening Standard Theatre Award – a great honour. *The Swell* is an Orange Tree play through and through: it gives the audience a kaleidoscopic view of a complex story.

Paul signed off his triumphant tenure in style with a glowing revival of *Arms and the Man* by his beloved Bernard Shaw. This production ignited the recovery in our audience numbers: after the dark days of the pandemic, the theatre was packed. Paul proved once again that the grand old man of letters can be mischievous, sexy and hilarious. My own debut production was of Somerset

Maugham's *The Circle*. Maugham is an underrated playwright, and his entertaining play is full of pain and piquancy. I was delighted (and relieved) that *The Circle* was warmly received and became the best-selling production in Orange Tree history. It goes on national tour soon.

Our new Community Director, Francesca Ellis, is leading an ambitious expansion of our community, education and participation work. This got started with a riotous production of *As You Like It* for primary schoolchildren, for many of whom this was their first visit to a theatre.

When I look back on the year, individual moments and performances shine out. A magnetic Tara Fitzgerald snarling at Maureen Beattie's psychiatrist on a slowly revolving stage. A life-raft inflating on a beach. The words of Ambedkar. The stillness of *Yellowman*. The moment a shattered Katie Edrich switched into sign language in *The Solid Life of Sugar Water*. The screaming of two hundred schoolchildren supporting Orlando in a wrestling match. The gentle removal of an earring expressing a lifetime of care in *The Swell*.

These memories come to me today, and they will be different tomorrow. They will be different for you. No matter how carefully we assemble each production, the beauty of theatre is that you get to be your own director; you call the shots. And nowhere more so than in the democratic, in-the-round space of the Orange Tree.

Tom Littler
Artistic Director and Joint CEO

FRONT COVER PHOTO: HELEN MURRAY. BACK COVER PHOTO: MARC BRENNER



Delicate but brutally powerful

The Guardian (*The Solid Life of Sugar Water*)



PHOTOS L-R: ALI WRIGHT, ELLIE KURTZ, ELLIE KURTZ

PHOTO: ELLIE KURTZ

Artistic highlights



Yellowman Dael Orlandersmith

An exploration of racial tensions and colourism through the lens of a relationship between childhood sweethearts Alma and Eugene in rural South Carolina, this production of the Pulitzer Prize nominated text by Dael Orlandersmith won three Off West End Award nominations for Director (Diane Page) and Lead Performance in a play (Aaron Anthony and Nadine Higgin), and poignantly wove themes of colourism and prejudice into a tender coming of age story.

★★★★★ **“Electrifying revival of Dael Orlandersmith’s layered study of colourism.”** The Stage



The Solid Life of Sugar Water Jack Thorne

JMK award-winning director Indiana Lown-Collins curated this brutally bittersweet production about lost connections and the fragile nature of communication within a young couple’s relationship as they navigate the widening chasm of ableism that threatens their love story. The production also won the Off West End Award for Best Production, and a Stage Debut Award nomination for Indiana.

★★★★★ **“A vital, remarkable piece of theatre.”** WhatsOnStage

★★★★ **“Delicate yet brutally powerful play about love and loss.”** The Guardian



Arms and the Man George Bernard Shaw

Paul Miller bowed out as Artistic Director with this delightfully interpreted production of Bernard Shaw’s classic text, presenting the charming romance between an idealistic young woman and a swashbuckling soldier and the ensuing moral battle when the heroine learns of the realities of war.

★★★★★ **“This production is not one to be missed... an unrivalled theatrical joy.”** WhatsOnStage

★★★★ a vital piece of
21st century theatre

The Scotsman (You Bury Me)



PHOTOS: THE OTHER RICHARD, HELEN MURRAY, PAMELA RAITH

PHOTO: PAMELA RAITH



2 Billion Beats Sonali Bhattacharyya

A second run for Nimmo Ismail's exhilarating production, which asks the question of what it means to stand up for your political beliefs as a young person. This moving play follows two very different sisters, Asha and Bettina, in an overwhelmingly empathetic yet upbeat portrayal of their coming of age.

★★★★ "Stuffed with moments that radiate warmth – including the appearance of a live hamster on stage – the play conveys the gentle unpredictability of sibling love in its purest form." *The Guardian*



Duet For One Tom Kempinski

Tom Kempinski's poignant, enthralling winner of the London Theatre Critics Award for Best Play starred Tara Fitzgerald and Maureen Beattie in their OT debuts, directed with air-crackling frisson by Richard Beecham.

★★★★ "Fitzgerald's tight-rhythmed delivery of the time-honoured jibes are cloaked in light humour but dark denial... Simon Kenny's slowly revolving set lets us view the narrative from each perspective, sometimes shielding the facial expressions to allow the sharpness of Kempinski's words reach us unencumbered." *The Scotsman*

★★★★ "Pitch-perfect" *The Times*



You Bury Me Ahlam

Written by an anonymous playwright under the alias Ahlam, this play portrayed the generation of coming of age after the revolution in their conviction to live and love freely, winning the Women's Prize for Playwriting and playing at Bristol Old Vic and the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, before arriving at the OT.

"Katie Posner directs a high-voltage cast in playwright Ahlam's politically charged portrayal of a group of teens coming of age in post-Arab spring Cairo" *The Guardian*

★★★★ "A vital piece of 21st century theatre" *The Scotsman*



PHOTO: ELLIE KURTZ



PHOTO: ALI WRIGHT

The Circle Somerset Maugham

Generational patterns threaten the marital status of a high-society family in this effervescent play written by Somerset Maugham, which saw a strong cast including Jane Asher, Clive Francis and Nicholas Le Prevost helmed by OT Artistic Director Tom Littler in his Orange Tree Theatre debut, for which he garnered his ninth Off West End nomination. Having set a new box office record at the OT, the production will embark on a national tour from Theatre Royal Bath in January 2024.

★★★★ **“A sparkling revival of Somerset Maugham’s comedy of manners”** The Times

★★★★ **“Tom Littler’s debut production as Artistic Director of the Orange Tree is strongly acted and nicely judged”** The Guardian

The Swell Isley Lynn

A sensitive and compelling play exploring the subliminal tensions of queer love and betrayal, *The Swell* spanned many years disjointed by the shock of medical trauma to celebrate and lament both what might have been and what came to be. Tenderly written by OT Writers’ Collective alumnus Isley Lynn, this sharp-witted and moving production explored the fierce love and jealousy that live intertwined in old friendships. Isley won the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright for *The Swell*.

★★★★ **“This is a dark and moving meditation on love and betrayal packed into a tight 90 minutes that’ll leave you wanting more. Lynn’s writing is genuinely exciting – this feels like the queer-but-not-about-being-queer play that the new writing scene needs right now.”** Evening Standard

PHOTO: ELLIE KURTZ



★★★★★

This exceptional cast positively sizzle

WhatsOnStage (The Circle)

Very engaging for all pupils!
Brilliant, creative way of storytelling

St Richard's School on Primary Shakespeare



OT Community

COMMUNITY PHOTOS: HARRY PLOWDEN



Primary Shakespeare

In the summer term children from 25 local schools experienced the OT's Primary Shakespeare production of *As You Like It*. Pupils aged 7-11 explored the story through a workshop in school, then watched the play at the OT. Becca Chadder directed a fast-paced, warm-hearted production, with children cheering the wrestling match, laughing at the romantic confusion and squealing with joy when the love letters they themselves had written were read out by the characters. *As You Like It* was a fun, colourful introduction to Shakespeare and theatre for over 2,000 children.

PHOTOS: DUMITRU DRAGOS



Community Groups

The OT's Community groups continue to go from strength to strength. Across four Youth Theatre Groups, the Young Company, the Adult Company and our drop-in parent and baby sessions, a total of 233 participants met weekly to learn, create, make friends and make theatre.

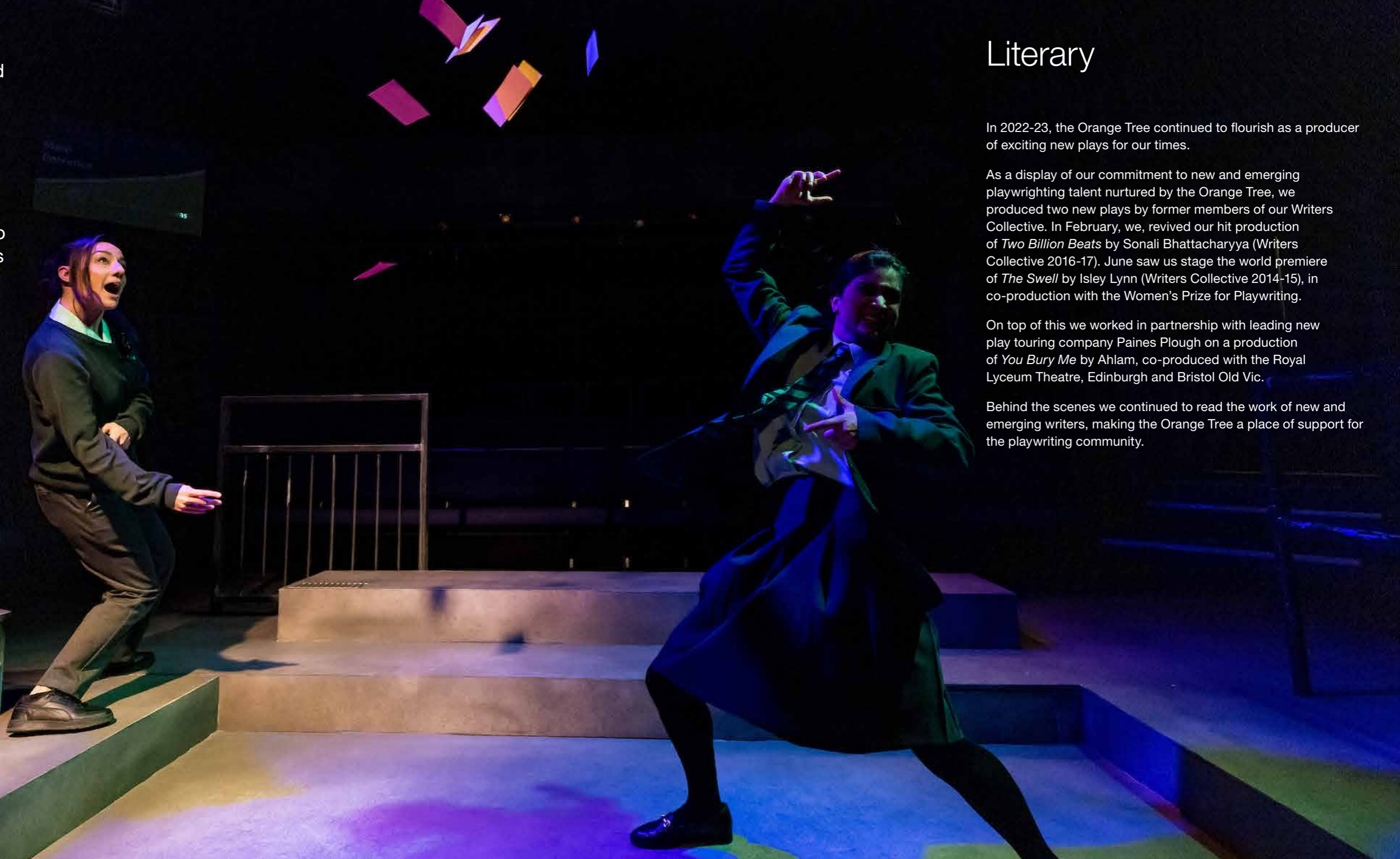
Four groups took part in the inaugural Richmond Arts and Ideas Festival, with our three youngest youth theatre groups (6-11s, 12-14s and 14-16s) presenting open air performances at Orleans House, Twickenham, and our Adult Company performing at Richmond and Hillcroft College – the OT's neighbours. Our 16-18 Youth Theatre and 18-25 Young Company performed their own devised pieces in the OT.

Next year will see the return of our inter-generational Festival, with all Community Groups performing together on the OT stage.



“In times of real struggle for playwrights, we have been proud to provide a home for writers at the Orange Tree. It’s been particularly amazing to see the success of our Collective writers Isley and Sonali: conversations begun over evening cups of tea in our rehearsal room turning into fully fledged popular productions here in Richmond is really exhilarating to behold.”

Guy Jones, Associate Director



Literary

In 2022-23, the Orange Tree continued to flourish as a producer of exciting new plays for our times.

As a display of our commitment to new and emerging playwrighting talent nurtured by the Orange Tree, we produced two new plays by former members of our Writers Collective. In February, we, revived our hit production of *Two Billion Beats* by Sonali Bhattacharyya (Writers Collective 2016-17). June saw us stage the world premiere of *The Swell* by Isley Lynn (Writers Collective 2014-15), in co-production with the Women’s Prize for Playwriting.

On top of this we worked in partnership with leading new play touring company Paines Plough on a production of *You Bury Me* by Ahlam, co-produced with the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh and Bristol Old Vic.

Behind the scenes we continued to read the work of new and emerging writers, making the Orange Tree a place of support for the playwrighting community.

Events and Campaigns



2022 saw the Orange Tree celebrate its landmark 50th Anniversary, which included both an Anniversary Fund and an exhibition at the Museum of Richmond. We closed the Fund in December, and were delighted to have raised total funds of £10,015.

OT supporters can still view our 50th anniversary exhibition online by visiting: <https://sites.google.com/view/ot50-exhibition>.

PHOTO: PAMELA RAITH



ARCHIVE



PHOTO: THE OTHER RICHARD



PHOTO: ALI WRIGHT

Event highlights included three 'Under the Orange Tree' fundraising events, in which OT audiences shared in exclusive conversations with iconic actors. We were joined by Oliver Ford Davies in conversation with Michael Billington; Dame Penelope Keith in conversation with Mel Giedroyc; Dame Maureen Lipman in conversation with Gyles Brandreth. In total, these events raised over £15,000 for the OT: our deepest gratitude to all our guests and audiences.

Ongoing funds included the Recovery Fund, which remained open to donations following the theatre's reopening in May 2021; and the Community Fund, supporting us to re-establish our work for and within the community, helping more people participate in OT Community activities following a time of great isolation. Thank you to everybody who has contributed to these funds, and everyone who has chosen to make a donation alongside their ticket purchase.

In Spring 2023 we launched a new Project Support opportunity to give people closer

access to our productions and artists than ever before, whilst raising vital support to our exciting new programming for 2023-24 and beyond. Opportunities include:

Production support

A fantastic way to help produce ambitious theatre of the highest quality, whilst gaining an unprecedented insight into the creative process.

Sponsor a character

Help us bring extraordinary characters to life. Your support covers the actor's fees for rehearsals and the run.

OT New Artists

OT New Artists has helped launch the careers of countless talented theatre professionals, including:

- Writers Sonali Bhattacharyya, Zoe Cooper, Joe White
- Directors Ned Bennett, Tristan Fynn-Aiduen, Georgia Green, Diane Page
- Designers Fly Davis, Max Johns, Georgia Lowe, Rosanna Vize

As of July 2023, thanks to support from Philip and Christine Carne, we have a new Carne Associate Director position. Natasha Rickman is with us for an 18-month period, dividing her time between us and the drama school LAMDA, and leading our artistic development work.

Our new programme is our biggest, boldest and most ambitious yet, and our philanthropic supporters are vital to creating this work. In return, they meet new artists, experience their work, and witness project development over the year. For more information please visit: <https://orangetreetheatre.co.uk/support-us/project-support/>

Our huge thanks to all the individuals who have already donated to the above fund – and, of course, to our **Members and Patrons, who continue to be the backbone of our Theatre's support.** Without each and every supporter, the work we do at the OT would not be possible.

The Orange Tree: a theatre that punches far above its weight

Lyn Gardner, *The Guardian*



PHOTO: JOHAN PERSSON (NIAMH CUSACK, THAT FACE)

Into 2023–24

Whilst we are proud to call the Orange Tree Theatre a celebrated powerhouse of independent theatre, its spirit of friendship endures from when it was founded by a group of friends in a pub 50 years ago. The intimate experience shared by our audience is magical, and we're enjoying another year that lives up to the last.

Our 2023/2024 season launched with a stellar production of Polly Stenham's *That Face* that earned a sold-out run, rave reviews and three Off West-End nominations for Best Production, and Best Newcomer. This was followed by the JMK award-winning production of Mustapha Matura's *Meetings*, which saw Kalungi Ssebandeke return to the OT after acting and writing for previous productions to direct an effervescent cast.

Our sold-out, critically acclaimed run of *She Stoops to Conquer*, directed by Artistic Director Tom Littler with our Community Director Francesca Ellis, brings together the talents of an all-star professional cast with a community ensemble of over forty local people. Becca Chadder's production of *Tiny Tim's Christmas Carol* is delighting children and parents alike in a fresh reimagination of the classic story.

The new season offers rediscovered classics such as *Uncle Vanya* directed by Trevor Nunn or Noël Coward's *Suite in Three Keys*, which offers the opportunity to watch the double-bill of *Shadows of the Evening* and *Come into the Garden, Maud* or the single show *A Song at Twilight*. Next Christmas will bring a production of *Twelfth Night* led by Oliver Ford Davies as Malvolio.

Alongside these legendary texts, the OT will continue to champion new writing, with a joyous queer retelling of *Northanger Abbey* written by Zoe Cooper kicking off the New Year's season of plays, followed by Kate Attwell's *Testmatch* telling the timely story of women's sport in England and India. Matthew Dunster will direct Lucas Hnath's pulsating account of the world of competitive swimming in *Red Speedo*, and we're thrilled to have renowned David Edgar writing a play exploring 1950s Hollywood in *Here in America*.

At the Orange Tree Theatre, we're proud to foster the talents of the next generation of artists, with our JMK production set to take place next autumn, followed by our Carne Associate director Natasha Rickman staging Hannah Khalil's *Treasure Island: the True(r) Story* with our OT Young Company.

In other community projects we are producing productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* for teenagers alongside *Hamlet* geared towards primary school children, as well as hosting Flute Theatre for autistic individuals. These are just a handful of the community driven initiatives taking place alongside our termly youth groups and holiday camps.

We consider the Orange Tree Theatre a community above all else, and that is in no short part due to your support.

As we receive no Arts Council grant, the hundreds of Members and Patrons help our charity to thrive, and in turn we offer benefits including priority booking, discounts, and access to rehearsals, backstage tours and events as well as dedicated Members and Patrons' evenings for each production.

There has never been a more exciting time to be part of the Orange Tree Theatre community; we thank you for your support and look forward to welcoming you to the theatre soon.

Thank you

As another year draws to a close, we must thank you, our supporters, once more. Despite our rapidly increasing audience numbers and exciting new opportunities, none of this would be possible without our Members, Patrons and Trusts who facilitate all the work that takes place at the Orange Tree Theatre.

Building on the success of last season both on and offstage is imperative to us, as we continue to develop our community outreach and push our theatrical boundaries. Whether this is through re-innovating classic texts, championing new writing or searching for undiscovered talent, it relies on your faith and support to become a reality.

The Orange Tree Theatre would like to thank the following for their support during the 2022/2023 season:

Trusts and Foundations

RLPC
Hampton Fund
Haskel Family Foundation
Idlewild
Garrick Charitable Trust
Fenton Arts Trust
Noel Coward Trust
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Allies and Morrison

OT Angels

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United Agents

Clarence Circle

Nina Battleday
Molly Drinnan
Richard England
Elizabeth Pryce
Derek Robinson
Marek Wakar
Nicholas Watkinson
Anonymous

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Hirsh Cashdan
Greg Dyke
John and Kate Ellis
Sue Howes

Orange Tree Theatre

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Registered charity number 266128

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Susan Salsbury
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Eva Skorski
John Stapleton
Rosalind Sweeting

And all our anonymous donors, including those who included a gift to us in their Will.



BROCHURE DESIGN ANNIE RUSHTON | PRINT IMPRESS

Company of 2022-2023 Nezar Alderazi, Aaron Anthony, Jane Asher, Pete Ashmore, Kemi Awoderu, Moe Bar-El, Maureen Beattie, Chirag Benedict Lobo, Tarrick Benham, Alex Bhat, Jessica Clark, Rebecca Collingwood, Ruby Crepin-Glyne, Viss Elliot Safavi, Katie Erich, Adam Fenton, Tara Fitzgerald, Miranda Foster, Clive Francis, Nadine Higgin, Hanna Khogali, Nicholas Le Prevost, Robert Maskell, Eleanor Nawal, Shala Nyx, Gabriela Opacka-Boccardo, Yasemin Ozdemir, Saroja-Lily Ratnavel, Kath Roberts, Jonah Russell, Shuna Snow, Jonathan Tafler, Olivia Vinal, Tanvi Virmani, Alex Waldmann, Sophie Ward

OT **ORANGE
TREE
THEATRE**
A powerhouse of independent theatre

