

# HighTide Annual Report 2018/19

## Executive Summary 18/19

### Introduction and Highlights

The year April 2018 to March 2019 saw HighTide continue its charitable mission to develop new and emerging playwrights through commissioning and producing their work.



HighTide produced seven theatre productions in total, including two touring shows and two festivals.

HighTide's core productions were written by three playwrights with compelling individual styles. We commissioned Songlines by Tallulah Brown, set in her and HighTide's hometown of Aldeburgh, Suffolk. Songlines focused on the experiences of teenagers in rural communities. We also commissioned The Trick by Eve Leigh to explore the experiences of pensioners in an ambitious and experimental form. The third play, Mouthpiece by Kieran Hurley, looked at cultural voyeurism through a middle-class playwright appropriating the story of a working-class youth.

In addition to these three productions, we served as associate producer on four more productions: Busking It by Danusia Samal, Sparks by Jessica Butcher with music by Anoushka Lucas, The Extinction Event by David Aula and Simon Evans and Thor and Loki by Harry Blake. All four productions premiered at the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe Festival ahead of transferring to HighTide Festivals Aldeburgh and Walthamstow,

Almost 10,000 tickets were processed to the HighTide Festivals in 2018/19, and the festivals generated £140,665 in gross box office income. 2,032 new bookers in total came to HighTide Festival events in 2018/19.

In Aldeburgh, we launched Summer Connect, an enrichment programme for young people running throughout the Summer school term. This culminated in a performance at the Aldeburgh Festival launch.

In Walthamstow, we curated a series of Open Mic Nights in Waltham Forest ahead of the Festival to attract local artists who then played at the festival site throughout the festival. We also built relationships with organisations such as Leyton Sixth Form College with many of their young people performing in the Stars Over The Forest talent show.

The year also marked a new and exciting partnership with LIVR, the world's first virtual reality content platform dedicated to theatre. LIVR captured Songlines which is now live on its platform for a Global audience. LIVR will continue to be a partner for further HighTide shows.

In 2018-19, we celebrated ten years of partnership with our major corporate supporter, Lansons. Lansons sponsored productions across the year and continued their generous support of office space in central London. The partnership was recognised with two prizes at the Corporate Engagement Awards.

HighTide also announced plans to launch an ongoing programme of activities in Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Finally, co-founder and Artistic Director Steven Atkinson announced he is stepping down after twelve years as AD/CEO. Following a broad search for his successor, the company appointed Suba Das who began his tenure as AD/CEO in November 2019.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Significant activities**

#### **Songlines by Tallulah Brown**

'Perfectly pitched...has a bit of magic about it.' Show of the Week, The Times \*\*\*\*

HighTide premiered Songlines at the Pleasance Courtyard Beneath, Edinburgh in August 2018 in a co-production with DugOut Theatre.

Following the Edinburgh Fringe performances, Songlines toured to Queen's Theatre Hornchurch, The Seagull Lowestoft, Hub Leeds, Theatre Deli Sheffield, Square Chapel Halifax, York Theatre Royal and finally HighTide Festivals Aldeburgh and Walthamstow.

#### **Mouthpiece - Kieran Hurley**

'A gripping, truthful play for our times.' The Stage \*\*\*\*\*

HighTide premiered Mouthpiece at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh in December 2018 in a co-production with Traverse Theatre.

In April 2019, we transferred the production to Soho Theatre, London, and this will feature in next year's annual report.

#### **The Trick - Eve Leigh**

'One of the best shows to see in 2019.' The Stage (Shows to watch in 2019)

HighTide premiered The Trick at the Bush Theatre, London in February 2019 in a co-production with Loose Tongue.

Following the Bush Theatre performances, The Trick toured to North Wall Arts Centre, Salisbury Playhouse, Marina Theatre Lowestoft, Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall, Watford Palace Theatre, Birmingham REP, Square Chapel Halifax and York Theatre Royal.

#### **Associate Productions**

HighTide was supported by Backstage Trust to launch an artist development programme designed to help new independent playwrights, directors and producers to maximise the opportunities of performing at the 2018 Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The experience proved to be a huge success for the participants and HighTide.

We selected four productions to co-produce at the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe drawn from an open-to-all application scheme. We received over 300 applications, which was a much larger number than anticipated. The four selected productions were diverse in their content and culturally diverse in the artists making them, presenting a snap-shot of the variety of new work being created at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Thor and Loki by Harry Blake: 'Thunderously good fun.' Time Out

The Extinction Event by David Aula and Simon Evans: 'Brilliantly bewildering hour of magic and mischief.' The Stage \*\*\*\*

Sparks by Jessica Butcher with music by Anoushka Lucas: 'Graphic, silly, profound and poetic.' The Scotsman \*\*\*\*

Busking It by Danusia Samal: 'Gig theatre doesn't come more authentic than this.' The Scotsman

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Resilience**

2018/19 saw HighTide maintain its track-record of fundraising which included continuing support from Backstage Trust, The Carne Trust, The Foyle Foundation, The Hyam Wingate Foundation, The Sumner Wilson Charitable Trust and The Parham Trust as well as new supporters including The Barbara Whatmore Foundation and The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation. We enjoyed the continued corporate sponsorship of Lansons, The Agency, Regional and Capital, Central Estate Agents and Fullers. We have also been successful in developing sponsorship with local Aldeburgh businesses including Clarke and Simpson and Fishers Gin.

HighTide ended the year with net expenditure of £8,310 and a closing reserve of £103,683.

As always, HighTide is exceptionally grateful to its investors, including Arts Council England through National Portfolio funding, Backstage Trust, Lansons and the many trusts and foundations, businesses and individuals who contribute their energy and investment to HighTide. The trustees extend their sincere thanks and gratitude for this support.

HighTide reserves policy is to maintain a minimum of three months running costs, in line with our agreement with our major stakeholders.

## **STRATEGIC REPORT**

### **Achievement and performance**

#### *Strategic summary*

This year we will met our goals to develop HighTide as a progressive and inclusive charity, such as achieving gender parity in our playwrights and directors by producing more work by female artists. We also exceeded our targets for producing theatre created by BAME artists, with two of our three plays written by BAME writers. Our goals and targets are intended to meaningfully contribute to Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity.

### **Future plans**

#### **2019/2020 Productions**

Our first production of the financial year was *Rust* by Kenneth Emson, directed by Eleanor Rhode, in co-production with the Bush Theatre.

Our second production was *LIT* by Sophie Ellerby, commissioned through First Commissions following from a first stage reading in HighTide Festival 2017. *LIT* is Sophie's first full-length commission. Directed by Stef O'Driscoll in co-production with Nottingham Playhouse.

We co-produced four more productions identified through our open scheme with new writers, companies and artists at the Edinburgh Festival, once again generously supported by Backstage Trust.

We partnered with BBC Radio 3 on two new commissions by alumni HighTide writers Tallulah Brown and Vinay Patel. The plays were directed by Jessica Droomgoole and will be broadcast in November 2019.

#### **2019/2020 Commissions**

This year we commissioned two writers, Yolanda Mercy and Sonia Jalaly.

Sonia's play *Oh We Do Like To Be* is structured around seaside towns in Great Britain. Yolanda's play, *Cooking With Dad*, is about her relationship with her estranged father and getting to know him through cooking.

We are also supported three more playwrights in their independent play development projects: William Drew along with Coney, Taj Atwal along with Tamasha, and James McDermott along with Eastern Angles.

#### **2019/2020 Succession**

In 2019/20 HighTide is introducing a new Artistic Director Designate Suba Das who became AD/CEO in November 2019.