



# HIGH TIDE

Annual Impact Report 23/24



## HighTide: a new Artistic Director, a new artistic mission

Reflecting on my first full year as Artistic Director, I can't believe how much we've achieved. HighTide has always been a small theatre company with a big impact but that impact is now ever-increasing, especially as we expand our work into all four counties of the East of England.

2023/24 was the first year of our new artistic mission: being a writer-centred theatre company dedicated to the East of England, touring new plays, developing playwrights, and deploying our creative writing skills in our community. The East of England is a historically underfunded and overlooked region of the UK, with strikingly low levels of arts activity and funding. At HighTide, we believe that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. We want to change that.

We are now one of the only six remaining ACE National Portfolio Organisations across England (out of 985) dedicated solely to new writing, so our value in, and impact on, the theatre sector is increasingly significant, and arguably more vital than ever.

23/24 at HighTide has been an absolute joy and privilege to oversee. My heartfelt thanks to our wonderful community of East of England playwrights, creative teams, partners, teachers, students, audience members, and supporters. The success we've achieved would not have been possible without them.

I can't wait to see what next year has in store for HighTide. See you there.

**Clare Slater, Artistic Director**



## Note from the Chair of the Board

I have been delighted to see what HighTide has achieved over the past year, especially as this has been the first full year of our new Artistic Director, Clare Slater, and the first year of the new mission and vision to support East of England playwrights.

It has been a real pleasure - and an honour - to witness the wonderful work that HighTide has produced this year, from a community choral piece about the famous herring girls protest on Lowestoft beach (taking place on the very same beach almost 90 years later!), to the spooky, sold-out run of *Ghost Stories by Candlelight*.

HighTide is truly putting writers at the heart of the organisation, with the launch of our new writer development programmes. We have built a community of over 350 writers from the East of England, showing the need and appetite for programmes like ours.

Finally, Story Worlds - our new storytelling and literacy programme in primary schools - culminated in a brilliant sharing of work from over 100 children at the Marina Theatre, Lowestoft.

As you can see, it has been a year to be very proud of - and, of course, we could not have done it without the tremendous support of our partners, donors and funders. Thank you enormously for supporting tomorrow's playwrights, today.

**Tim Clark, Chair of the Board**

# Mission, Vision & Values

## Our artistic mission

HighTide is a writer-centred theatre company, based in the East of England. We produce new plays by playwrights from our region, touring across the East and beyond. We run a year-round writer development programme that creates space for East of England playwrights to thrive. We offer creative writing programmes in schools and community groups to build confidence, wellbeing and employability.

We are committed to ensuring everyone, from all backgrounds, can participate in the joy and power of theatre. We believe that partnership and collaboration makes better theatre, as well as more lasting, positive social change.

HighTide holds the climate crisis in its name; a daily reminder of our responsibility to act now - with imagination and creativity. We see climate and social justice as inextricably linked and believe that theatre can help rehearse a better future for us all.



## Our 2030 vision

### For our playwrights:

By 2030, the East of England will be a recognised seedbed of exceptional, diverse and thriving playwriting talent.

### For our communities:

By 2030, HighTide's targeted creative writing programmes will have increased confidence, wellbeing and employability in our home region.

### For our industry:

By 2030, HighTide will have shown that it is not only possible, but creatively exhilarating, to become a Net Zero theatre company.

### For us as a company:

By 2030, HighTide will continue to be a nationally celebrated new writing company, led by our values and with strong financial resilience.

## Our values

- Inclusive
- Ambitious
- Collaborative
- Kind and candid
- Dedicated to writers
- Focussed on the East of England

# 2023/24 in numbers

Team



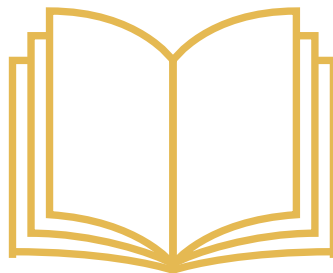
6

10

HighTide Writers Group & HighTide Rising festival playwrights

358

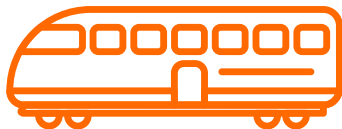
Playwrights East community members



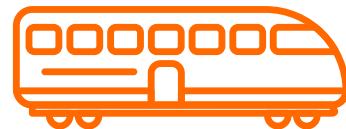
107

Primary School students; participants in *Story Worlds*

Total miles on trains



548,1162.61



4,758 Audience members

Regional Partnerships

33



197

Submissions to HighTide Writers Group

# Where we worked

- The Ancient House Museum, Thetford
- The Brewery Tap, Peterborough
- Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich
- Dragon Hall, Norwich
- The Froize Pub, Woodbridge
- St George's Theatre, Great Yarmouth
- Guildhall, King's Lynn
- The Junction, Cambridge
- Kessingland Primary School, Kessingland
- King's Head Pub, Woodbridge
- The Long Shop Museum, Leiston
- Lowestoft beach, Lowestoft
- The Marina Theatre, Lowestoft
- Monk's Barn, Harlow
- The Old Library, Colchester
- Pakefield Primary School, Pakefield
- The Pump House, Aldeburgh
- The Red Lion Pub, Manningtree
- Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, London
- Sheringham Little Theatre, Sheringham
- Station Pub, Framlingham
- Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds
- Two Sisters Arts Centre, Felixstowe
- University of East Anglia, Norwich
- Wells Maltings, Wells
- Wingfield Barns, Diss
- Worlingham CEVC Primary School, Worlingham

Playwrights East  
digital workshops:  
region-wide



# Touring Productions

HighTide commissions and produces new plays, written by East of England writers. In autumn 23/24, we piloted a new model of community touring, travelling between regional urban mainstages, market town performance halls, and 'found spaces' in villages like pubs and museums.

Our first tour in this model was a sell-out success:

## GHOST STORIES by Candlelight

Written by Kelly Jones, Shamser Sinha and Nicola Werenowska, with music and lyrics by Georgia Shackleton, *Ghost Stories by Candlelight* was made up of three short, chilling plays set across our region and woven together with live East Anglian folk music.

**Artist** *"Working on this show has been transformational. I felt really supported by HighTide to take risks."*

**Reviews:** *The Stage* "Chillingly modern horror stories, imaginatively written & performed with gothic flair"; *East Anglian Daily Times* "A tight, taut highly entertaining evening"

**Audiences:** *"Gripping, current, thought-provoking", "Unusual, entertaining, amazing, innovative".*

HighTide would like to thank East Suffolk County Council and Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grant for their funding which supported this pilot year of community touring at HighTide.



# Writer Development

In 23/24 we created two new writer development programmes: **Playwrights East** and the **HighTide Writers Group**. This first year was generously funded by the Foyle Foundation and the Noël Coward Foundation. We also piloted a new one-day festival, *HighTide Rising*, to showcase emerging playwrights from our region.

## Playwrights East

After just six months of starting Playwrights East, we had created a community of 358 playwrights across our region. This scheme is free to access and offers monthly workshops to build participants' craft and industry networks. Workshops were run by leading playwrights.

# 217

participants attended  
a Playwrights East  
workshop in 23/24.



## HighTide Writers Group

197 playwrights from across our region submitted scripts for our first ever HighTide Writers Group. A panel of experts selected six exceptional writers: Marie Cooper, Clare Currie, Ted Marriott, Anoop Singh, Rosa Torr and Esohe Uwadiae.

The first HighTide Writers Group is being run by leading playwrights Juliet Gilkes Romero (*The Whip*, RSC) and Tim Price (*Nye*, National Theatre). Over 12 months, they give our writers the tools and skills they need to launch their careers as playwrights. Each participant is paid to attend, emphasising the value of their time.

**“I am so excited to be a part of it. It just feels so special to be working with a dedicated East Anglian writing group!”**

Ted Marriott, Suffolk-based playwright

# HIGH TIDE Rising

In May 2023, a sold-out audience gathered together for *HighTide Rising*, a one-day festival in the countryside at Wingfield Barns, Diss.

The festival consisted of readings of new plays by up and coming East of England playwrights Tassa Deparis, Guleraana Mir, Eloise Pennycott and Tom Ratcliffe. The day was co-hosted by leading playwrights Juliet Gilkes Romero and Lucy Kirkwood (*The Witches*, National Theatre). Audiences were given the chance to hear from the writers and share their feedback.

*HighTide Rising* was run in partnership with the University of East Anglia.

**“It’s been so good for my practice and confidence.”**

Tassa Deparis

**“I really feel like you guide me in all the right directions when discovering what this story is and how to tell it.”**

Tom Ratcliffe

# Community Engagement

23/24 continued our commitment to Lowestoft as the hub for our community engagement activity.

## HERRING GIRLS: greater than we are alone

This year saw us commission Hannah Jane Walker and Jessie Maryon Davies to co-create a song-cycle, *Herring Girls: greater than we are alone*, with three community choirs in the Lowestoft area, comprising 50 people between 8 - 80 years old. It was performed at First Light Festival to over 1,500 audience members.

*Herring Girls* was made in partnership with six local cultural partners, including Britten Pears Arts and the Seagull Theatre, Lowestoft. It was generously supported by The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Geoffrey Watling Charity, Nichol Young Foundation and the Suffolk Community Foundation.

**"I now have so much more confidence in my singing and in controlling my Addison's Disease and that's a real gift to me, thank you."**

Choir participant

**"I watched the Herring Girls performance today. It was a very entertaining and moving occasion and you captured the essence of the story and local history perfectly."**

Audience member



## Story Worlds

This was the pilot year of our new storytelling project, *Story Worlds*, that aims to increase the literacy and oracy levels in primary school children in the Lowestoft area.

Using HighTide's expertise in creative writing and theatrical skills, and co-designed with input from North Suffolk County Council, Lowestoft LCEP and the National Literacy Trust, we worked with three targeted schools from January - March 2024. To remove barriers for participation, the project was completely free for schools.



# 107

pupils took part

**“English has expanded in quality, vocabulary, and confidence since starting the project. There has also been a much higher level of engagement and desire to write”**

Teacher

We used storytelling exercises to stimulate children's creativity and imagination. Devising and improvisation techniques helped the children to build language, broaden their vocabulary and participate in discussions so that they can now clearly articulate their opinions.

**“Watching all children being included in the performance including those with additional needs and those who previously didn't want to participate was just brilliant.”**

Teacher

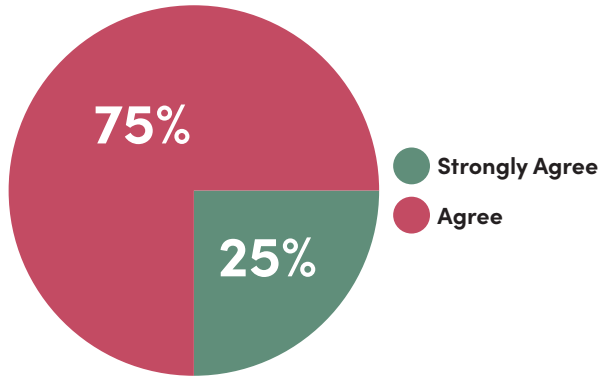
The three schools took to the Marina Theatre's stage in a celebration event, performing their stories to over 300 parents, carers and audience members.

*Story Worlds* was kindly funded by the John Horsman Trust and the Frank Jackson Community Fund through the Suffolk Community Foundation.



## Teachers' Evaluation

*"Story Worlds has helped to increase my pupils' creativity and ability to express themselves."*



## Children's Evaluation

How do you feel about writing stories?

Pre-project:



Post-project:



How do you feel about sharing your ideas and stories?

Pre-project:



Post-project:





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# Climate Dramaturgy

This new artistic practice, developed by our Associate Artist Zoë Svendsen with Clare Slater our Artistic Director, is now central to HighTide's mission. It is designed to open up the creative conversation around environmental action and is gaining momentum across UK theatre.

## Knowledge Exchange Fellowship

23/24 saw the first part of a Knowledge Exchange Fellowship, funded by the AHRC via Cambridge University, to embed Climate Dramaturgy at HighTide and train up freelancers and other arts organisations in the East.

Participants in  
this Knowledge  
Exchange  
project:

# 763

**“I want to spread  
the word. Climate  
Dramaturgy feels like  
a concrete thing I can  
do and action I can  
take for the climate –  
and for our future.”**

Theatre-Maker participant

**“We can now see  
ways to work together  
to make meaningful  
environmental  
change in our region.”**

Owen Calvert-Lyons, Artistic Director/CEO,  
Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion is the golden thread which runs through all of HighTide's work.

## Lead artists in our productions

- 69%** female-identifying (target **50%**)
- 25%** disabled or neurodivergent (target **20%**)
- 34%** from working-class origins (target **35%**)
- 34%** from the global majority (target **15%**)
- 21%** from the LGBTQ+ community (target **15%**)

## HighTide Writers Group members:

- 66%** female-identifying (target **50%**)
- 16%** disabled or neurodivergent (target **33%**)
- 50%** from working-class origins (target **33%**)
- 50%** from the global majority (target **33%**)
- 16%** from the LGBTQ+ community (target **33%**)

## Playwrights East network

- 81%** female-identifying (target **50%**)
- 31%** disabled or neurodivergent (target **10%**)
- 30%** from working-class origins (target **30%**)
- 9%** from the global majority (target **6%**)
- 9%** from the LGBTQ+ community (target **2%**)



# 23/24 was created by...

## ***Herring Girls: greater than we are alone***

Rosie Adediran - Singer  
Ezra Barnard - Costume Assistant  
Mona Camille - Associate Designer  
Lucy Cullingford - Movement Director  
Alfred Harries - Bass  
Calie Hough - Percussionist  
Charlotte Jolly - Musician  
Charly Joseph - Clarinetist  
Joseph Lochlann Smith - Pianist  
Kelly Loi - Costume Assisstant  
Jessie Maryon Davies - Musical Director and Composer  
Charlie Read - Technical Assistant  
Andrew Jack Ross - Musician  
Clare Slater - Dramaturg  
Dominic Stitchbury - Singer  
Zoë Svendsen - Climate Dramaturg  
Moi Tran - Designer  
Hannah Jane Walker - Librettist  
Sian Websdale - Assistant Movement Director

## ***Ghost Stories by Candlelight***

Robyn Addison - Online Readthrough Actor  
Lora Aziz - Wildlife and Folklore Consultant  
Katie Cherry - Performer  
Lauren Connolly - Design Assistant  
Elizabeth Crarer - Performer  
Mitch Donaldson - Production & Stage Manager  
Richard Hammerton - Sound Designer (Audio)  
Charlotte Henery - Designer  
Elayce Ismail - Director  
Kelly Jones - Writer  
Loren O'Dair - Performer  
Andy Purves - Lighting consultant  
Georgia Shackleton - Composer & lyricist  
Chris Sharp - Sound Engineer (Audio)  
Shamser Sinha - Writer  
Nicola Werenowska - Writer

## ***Story Worlds***

George Boundy - Facilitator  
Tassa Deparis - Facilitator  
Chloe France - Facilitator

## ***HighTide Rising***

Radhika Aggarwal - Actor  
Mike Bartlett - Mentor  
Tassa Deparis - Writer  
Tom Draper - UEA producer placement  
Sarah Goddard - Actor  
Yasmin Hafesji - Director  
Beth Kapila - Director  
Hannah Khalil - Mentor  
Nick Khan - Actor  
Nikhita Lesler - Actor  
Guleraana Mir - Writer  
Eloise Pennycott - Writer  
Tom Ratcliffe - Writer  
Phoebe Segal - UEA producer placement  
Lavinia Serban - Stage Manager  
Jaz Singh Deol - Actor  
Caroline Smith - BSL interpreter  
Bea Svistunenko - Actor  
Helena Wilson - Actor  
Marco Young - Actor

## ***Playwrights East***

Juliet Gilkes Romero - Workshop leader  
Kelly Jones - Workshop leader  
Vinay Patel - Workshop leader  
Vikki Stone - Workshop leader  
Nicola Werenowska - Workshop leader



**HighTide Writers Group**

Marie Cooper - Participant  
Clare Currie - Participant  
Ted Marriott - Participant  
Anoop Singh - Participant  
Rosa Torr - Participant  
Esohe Uwadiae - Participant  
Juliet Gilkes Romero - Facilitator  
Tim Price - Facilitator

**Future Artistic Development**

Robert Awosusi - R&D Director  
Tassa Deparis - Commissioned Writer  
Katie Donnachie - R&D Actor  
Molly Farley - Script Reader  
Scott Hurrin - R&D Director and Script Reader  
Dan Light - R&D Video  
James McDermott - Commissioned Writer  
Molly Naylor - Commissioned Writer  
Anne Odeke - Commissioned Writer  
Eloise Pennycott - Commissioned Writer  
Nadine Rose Johnson - R&D Actor  
Rowan Sawday - R&D Composer  
Dan Light - R&D Video  
Debris Stevenson - Commissioned Writer  
Blythe Stewart - R&D Artist  
Ben Weatherill - Commissioned Writer  
Aisha Zia - Commissioned Writer

# HighTide Alumni News from 23/24

We also continue to see amazing things from our alumni. In the last year alone:

- our alumnus director Tamara Harvey become **Co-Artistic Director of the RSC**
- our alumnus playwright Sam Holcroft enjoyed a **West End transfer** for her Almeida hit, *A Mirror*
- our Suffolk-born playwright alumnus Joel Horwood got a **second West End transfer** for his NT adaptation of *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*.
- our HighTide Rising co-host, Lucy Kirkwood, received **critical acclaim at the National Theatre** for her adaptation of *The Witches*
- the previously supported HighTide play, *The Swell* by Isley Lynn, was nominated for an **Olivier Award**
- our alumnus playwright Vinay Patel become a **Royal Court Associate Playwright**
- our alumnus playwright Margaret Perry is **opening the new season at the Royal Court** with her adaptation of *Bluets*
- our alumnus director Mark Rosenblatt will enjoy his **writing debut**, *Giant*, upcoming at the Royal Court
- our alumnus playwright Beth Steel enjoyed **National Theatre success** with *Till The Stars Come Down*
- our alumnus playwright Jack Thorne got a **West End transfer** for his NT hit, *The Motive and the Cue*, wrote the story for new **mega-hit stage adaptation** *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*, all whilst continuing to gift audiences his **long-running hits** *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and the Old Vic's beloved *A Christmas Carol*



# Finances

## Income:

Arts Council England - core "NPO" funding

Other public funding

Box Office Income

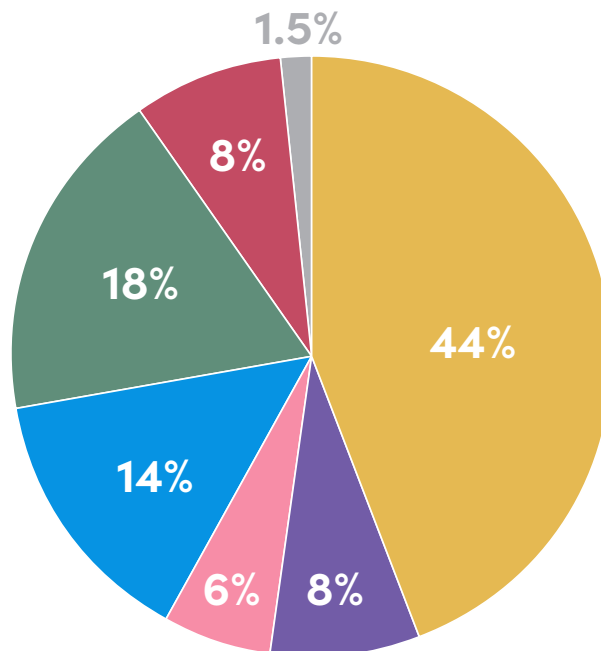
Theatre Tax Relief

Trusts and Foundations

Individual Giving & Gift Aid

Partnerships

\*Theatre Tax Relief = as a theatre company, HighTide can claim back costs from the government.



## Expenditure:

Staffing costs

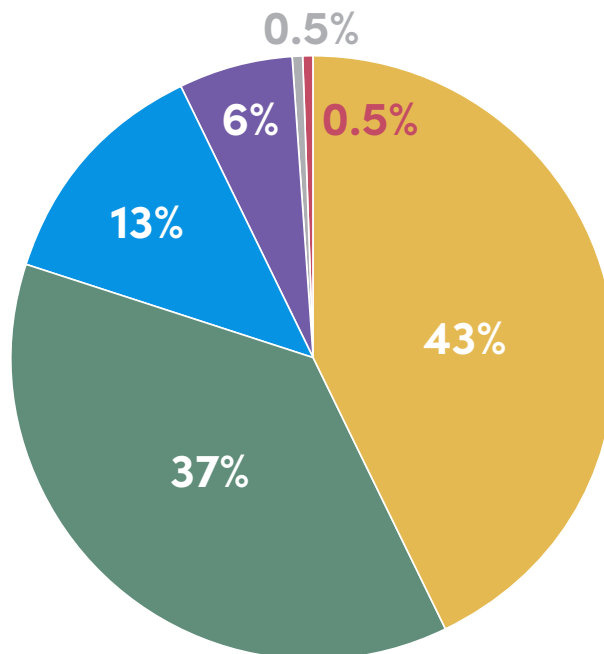
Artistic programme

Admin

Community programme

Fundraising costs

Premises costs



# Partners

## Regional and National Partners

Britten Pears Arts  
Cambridge University  
First Light Festival  
Harlow Playhouse  
Improbable  
The Junction, Cambridge

Kessingland Primary School  
Lowestoft LCEP  
The Marina Theatre, Lowestoft  
National Literacy Trust & Get Suffolk  
Reading  
New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich  
Pakefield Primary School

The Seagull Theatre  
Shakespeare's Globe  
Suffolk County Council  
Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds  
University of East Anglia  
Warehouse Digital  
Worlingham CEVC Primary School

# Supporters

## Trusts & Foundations

Backstage Trust  
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust  
East Suffolk County Council  
The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
The Foyle Foundation  
Frank Jackson Foundation via Suffolk  
Community Foundation  
Geoffrey Watling Charitable Trust  
John Horseman Trust  
Martin Bowley Charitable Trust  
Nichol Young Foundation  
Noël Coward Foundation  
Peggy Ramsay Foundation / Film 4  
Peter Schaffer Foundation

## HighTide Supporters

### Writers' Circle

Jan Hall  
Diana Hiddleston  
Clare Parsons & Tony Langham  
Leah Schmidt and David Kogan

### Best Friends

Tim & Caroline Clark

### Good Friends

John Cooper  
David & Linda Lakhdhir

### Friends

Emily Anstead  
Joanna Deakin  
Lindsey Dear  
Elizabeth Downie  
Nancy Durrant  
Nina & Roger Finbow  
Annabel and Jonathan Franklin

Liz Fosbury  
Lucy Fuller  
Jon Gilchrist  
Anne Groves  
Ros and Alan Haigh  
David Hare  
Kate Harvey  
Madeleine Hodgkin  
Sarah Holmes  
Jo and Nick Hutchison  
Rebecca Lenkiewicz  
Kathryn Ludlow  
Sandeep Katwala  
Miranda Kendall  
Vinay Patel  
Stephanie Renouf  
John Rodgers  
Mark and Georgie Rowse  
Rowan Rutter  
Clare Slater  
Graham and Sue White



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FARNER**

Principle Partner

We want to thank everyone who has generously supported and partnered with HighTide this year. We couldn't make our work and nurture playwrights in the East without you.

# HighTide Team 23/24



## **Staff**

Emma Butler Smith - Executive Director & Joint CEO  
George Boundy - Engagement Manager  
Andy Brumwell - Finance Consultant  
Hannah Dunne - General Manager & Producer  
Karen Goddard - Associate Producer  
Sarah Jane Shostack - Literary Associate  
Clare Slater - Artistic Director & Joint CEO  
Beth Watson - Development Manager

## **Artistic Associates**

Tassa Deparis  
Zoë Svendsen  
Nicola Werenowska

## **Education Consultants**

Sharon Kanolik  
Rachael Oliver

## **Trustees**

Tim Clark - Chair of Board  
Leah Schmidt - Deputy Chair  
Emily Anstead  
Liz Fosbury  
Jon Gilchrist  
Juliet Gilkes Romero  
Kate Harvey  
Sarah Holmes  
Vinay Patel  
Matthew Webb

## **Patrons**

Sir David Hare  
Sir Nicholas Hytner

## **Advisory Council**

Jan Hall  
Diana Hiddleston  
Clare Parsons  
Stephanie Renouf

## **Auditors**

Larking Gowen

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An enormous **thank you**  
to everyone who made 23/24  
such a **brilliant** and joyful year!





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[hightide.org.uk](http://hightide.org.uk)