



In Crowd News

Spring 2022

Welcome

Hello and welcome to Play to the Crowd's Spring 2022 In Crowd Newsletter.

As you will know our charitable vision is to **delight and unite** our communities and we make a difference to local people's lives by bringing them together to enjoy the power of live performance, nurturing their talent and supporting their mental health and well-being through creative participation.

These aims are achieved through the three parts of our charity, **Theatre Royal Winchester**, **Hat Fair**, our international Outdoor Arts festival and **Playmakers**, all our community participation and young people's work.

We particularly champion opportunities for local people, of all ages and backgrounds, to perform and participate with the firm conviction that this should be a fundamental human right and accessible to all.

So, we prioritise community performance on our Theatre Royal stage, we embed local performers at the centre of Hat Fair and we ensure young people can access our Playmakers Youth Theatre regardless of their means.

I am personally particularly passionate about the rights of young people to experience creative participation and completed a marathon and a half last year to raise money for our ambition to develop a home for all our Playmakers work and give that part of our charity the status that it deserves. You can read more about this dream later in this newsletter.

I do hope you enjoy reading all about how your donations are helping us deliver for local people, as an arts and education charity, every single day. Thank you for joining us on this journey to delight and unite; we really couldn't do it without you.

Deryck Newland
Chief Executive, Play to the Crowd



PLAY
TO THE
CROWD

Arts & Education Charity
Winchester

incorporating

THEATRE
ROYAL
WINCHESTER

HAT
FAIR

PLAYMAKERS



Dame Judi Dench at Theatre Royal Winchester, October 2021

Improving our heritage theatre

The pandemic has had so many challenging and traumatic impacts for our community at all levels. Particularly for venues like Theatre Royal Winchester, where the whole business model and experience is based on many people gathering in a space together; the financial and operational challenge was extreme and felt immediately.

There is no question that the pandemic has been massively challenging for Theatre Royal Winchester, and the Play to the Crowd charity as a whole, and resulted in some very difficult decisions to reduce our cost base as part of our strategy for survival in spring 2020.

However, we have been able to make significant improvements to our beautiful heritage theatre as a result of special funds set up for organisations like Play to the Crowd to respond to the challenges.

We have improved our air filtration systems and created a new accessible toilet to enable better access and more flexible use of our spaces. We were able to install cameras to livestream content to a wider audience. We have also added a cinematic quality projection screen and surround sound system which will allow us to present high quality live event cinema and film screenings, giving us more options in uncertain times for live performance.

We are now looking firmly forward with hope and ambition. Since September 2021 we have been

back at full capacity and have enjoyed some high profile visits from the likes of Professor Brian Cox and Dame Judi Dench as well as some super theatre, music and comedy. And we finally staged *Aladdin* as our panto last Christmas (it was originally scheduled for 2020!) with some familiar returning faces as well as a local young support cast.



Julian Eardley as Widow Twankey in *Aladdin*, 2021



Comedian Mark Watson with his seat at Theatre Royal Winchester

Name a Seat

The most important moments don't happen on the stage.

As one of the longest surviving cine variety theatres of its kind in the country, Theatre Royal Winchester has been at the cultural heart of Winchester's community for over 100 years.

Celebrate your or a loved one's love of the theatre by naming a seat and giving a gift to Play to the Crowd, allowing us to continue in our work to inspire those to connect with and participate in live performance.

By donating £500 to name a seat at Theatre Royal Winchester you will be part of our future.

Your seat will have a plaque engraved with a dedication of your choice and will be in place for ten years.

To name a seat, please contact:
siobhan@playtothecrowd.co.uk

"I supported Play to the Crowd by naming a seat at Theatre Royal Winchester. During the pandemic, we realised how close we were to losing these precious resources and how important it was to rally together. So thank you to everybody who donated to keep Theatre Royal Winchester alive!"

- Mark Watson, comedian



The Stacey family with their named seat.

HAT FAIR



Dizzy O'Dare, Hat Fair 2021

Hat Fair 2021 was a little different...

...but still nothing short of spectacular!

After being cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Hat Fair returned in July 2021 with a socially distanced festival. For the first time, the festival was ticketed to control audience numbers and held only at North Walls Recreation Ground for the three days of the festival.

Whilst the government's restrictions meant we faced new challenges, the event went on without a hitch and even mild showers could not dampen spirits - with audiences desperate to enjoy themselves after over a year at home.

Our covid secure festival was a huge success, entertaining audiences of all ages with circus, dance, magic, music, comedy, and more.

“Huge hats off to Play to the Crowd for bringing Hat Fair to life this weekend, and for keeping us Covid safe after a year of no theatre. Such a fabulous feeling to be part of an audience again watching live, outdoor performances.”

- festival goer, Hat Fair 2021

“It felt really special to be back at Hat Fair after many years, it's always been one of my favourite festivals and had punctuated my career over the years. To bring my creation there was a highlight this year”

- artist, Hat Fair 2021



The Enchanted Flower Globe, Hat Fair 2021

Ben Hart at Hat Fair 2021



Black Victorians, Hat Fair 2021



Tit for Tat, Hat Fair 2021

Local talent on stage at Hat Fair 2021



Strong Lady, Hat Fair 2021



The Lips, Hat Fair 2021

Hat Fair brings festive cheer!

Last Christmas, Play to the Crowd collaborated with Winchester Cathedral to bring some exciting performances to the Christmas Market. This gave us the opportunity to present two brilliant acts for festive shoppers to enjoy.

The first, *Halo*, a gorgeous glow show, featured bright LED hula-hoops and juggling sticks, as well as sizzling fire displays.

The second, Worldbeater's *Spark!*, was a surprise pop-up performance at the Christmas Market that combined high-impact drumming, dynamic choreography and beautiful lighting to create a stunning display for audiences.

Play to the Crowd also teamed up with Winchester BID to bring a little festive fun to the High Street with The Meanderthals - two festive elves, each carrying an enormous box of presents, in search for Santa.

“The collaboration between Winchester Cathedral and Play to the Crowd is pivotal in the continued recovery of cultural activity in the heart of the city.”

- Alison Evans, Chief Operating Officer,
Winchester Cathedral



The Meanderthals in Winchester.



Spark! at Winchester Christmas Market.

HAT FAIR RETURNS

Fri 1 - Sun 3 July 2022

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Winchester City Centre

SUNDAY

North Walls Recreation Ground

Full details on line-up and tickets to be announced - keep an eye on our social media channels...

@HATFAIR

PLAYMAKERS

Q&A with Tegan Gailor

Tegan has been working with Playmakers since January 2022 as an assistant leader in our Youth Theatre's musical theatre groups. She was also part of the Support Cast for Play to the Crowd's Aladdin pantomime at Theatre Royal Winchester last Christmas.

Why did you want to get involved with Playmakers?

Helping teach such a variety of ages [in the Youth Theatre] is such an amazing experience. Working with Playmakers helps me mix my love for teaching and my love for musical theatre.

How did you come to audition for Aladdin?

A friend of mine was involved in the pantomime years ago and I remember him telling me what a great experience it was. I started my BA Hons Degree in Musical Theatre at the University of Winchester in September 2021, and I knew that I wanted to get my hands on some professional work as everyone must start somewhere. I was regularly checking Theatre Royal Winchester's social media for the audition information and when I saw it, I applied. I didn't think I would be successful, but I was extremely lucky to be involved.

How was the experience of being in a professional panto?

It was like nothing I have ever experienced. It really helped with my confidence and has brought so many new opportunities. I'd love to perform again or work on the production side of the team, perhaps in choreography.

What do you hope your future in the arts to be and can Playmakers help you achieve this?

I would obviously love to end up working in the arts in some way. After finishing my degree, I would love to maintain doing something creative. Working my way up within Playmakers would be an absolute dream! The experiences and opportunities I'm being given now I'm so grateful for - I've falling in love with being in a community theatre and it's something I would love to keep doing. I can picture myself being with Play to the Crowd for a while!



“It's [Playmakers] so community focused, giving people a chance to get started in such a tough industry and allowing people to have amazing experiences.”

- Tegan Gailor,
Playmakers Youth Theatre Assistant



Writing to Play Network

Playmakers' Writing to Play Network was launched in February 2021 to provide a practical development hub for aspiring, new, emerging or established performance writers, with a special focus on Outdoor Arts and site responsive performance in non-designated theatrical spaces.

To date, the Writing to Play Network contains approximately 50 local and regional writers who have joined via a programme of practical writing projects. The network is committed to providing practical development opportunities for writers to make performance work in a supportive environment where experiment and challenge are encouraged.

All writers who participate in or express an interest in Writing to Play projects become part of the network and are mentored by Writing to Play resident writer Richard Hurford.

Projects have included a Virtual Writers Retreat over zoom and pop up performances at the Winchester Christmas markets.

WINTOPIA was also created online during Spring lockdown in 2021 and then burst into the real world at Hat Fair 2021. An imaginary version of real world Winchester, dedicated to playful, but at the same time seriously pragmatic, use of the arts to build a kinder, fairer, more creative society for everyone to live, work and visit. The Writing to Play writers were an integral part of this vibrant experiment of hopeful artistic activity.

WINTOPIA is an ongoing project and can be visited at: www.playmakers.org.uk/wintopia

“Brilliant to be pushed well out of my comfort zone... Enjoyed doing something different, meeting new people and feeling more involved in my local community.”

- Writer, Christmas Market 2021



Writers at Christmas Market 2021



Writers Retreat over Zoom



Writers performing Christmas Market 2021

Looking to the future

Our top priority is finding a dedicated home for Playmakers. Our Chief Executive, Deryck Newland, likes to call this 'a Happiness Centre' and imagines it as a place where everyone from the local community can feel welcome to participate in creative activities to benefit their sense of self-worth and confidence as well as to build their creative skills and connect with others to feel less isolated.

Finding a building that we can convert to this purpose in Winchester, within walking distance of the theatre, is a big ask but it is our settled ambition and with your help we believe it is possible. Please let us know if you have ideas or suggestions!

We also haven't finished with the improvements we want to make at Theatre Royal Winchester. We hope you agree that the Cafe Bar environment is a big step forward and now we want to see how we can improve the al fresco part of that on Tower Street in the summer months and seek to further open up our building to everyone.

We are also aware that the toilets (apart from our lovely shiny new accessible loo of course!) are in need of significant improvement and we are looking to raise the money to do that.

We were so grateful to have recently received a grant from the Wolfson Foundation to upgrade all our stage lighting as well as our front of house and backstage lighting to LEDs – significantly improving the efficiency of our environmental footprint. We are passionate about continuing to improve our footprint and are currently planning ways in which to progress this commitment.

Finally, over the next few years, we would like to develop our budget for Hat Fair programming so we can present some larger scale work as well as take some work out into communities in the wider District. This requires new ways of thinking about how we can deliver this and make it financially sustainable and we will not shy away from testing new ideas and ways of working as we recover from the shock of the pandemic and seek to use that shock as a catalyst for change and development.

Ultimately the next five years are about three words for us:

Reach, Relevance and Resilience.

We hope that you will want to continue on this journey with us,

The team at Play to the Crowd.



JOIN THE IN CROWD!

Become a Play to the Crowd Member to enjoy great benefits and support our charity's work across **Theatre Royal Winchester**, **Hat Fair** and **Playmakers**!

Save money

- Enjoy discounts on selected tickets at Theatre Royal Winchester & Hat Fair
- 2 for 1 tickets to first performances, on selected events at Theatre Royal Winchester
- Free ticket returns
- 10% off food and drink at Theatre Royal Winchester's Cafe Bar

Be first in the know

- Priority booking for selected events
- Seasonal news and updates from behind-the-scenes
- Exclusive invitations to Members-only events

The In Crowd Card

- Gives you access to local offers and discounts across Winchester

All for only
£35 a year!

To become a Member, visit playtothecrowd.co.uk/members or email members@playtothecrowd.co.uk

Champion Play to the Crowd

If you'd like to support us by becoming a **Champion** for our charity with a donation of £120 a year or more, you will receive a complimentary membership and other benefits. Email siobhan@playtothecrowd.co.uk for info.

Members get
10% off
food & drink!

Cafe Bar

at Theatre Royal Winchester
Open Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm

Did you know that all profits made in our theatre's
Cafe Bar go towards supporting Play to the Crowd?

- Specialist coffees & artisan teas
- Free wifi & laptop/USB charging points
- Pram/buggy parking
- Dog friendly

Join in

Playmakers Youth Theatre and Young Company

Empowering young people through
creativity and performance

School years 4-11
Ages 16-25

Visit playmakers.org.uk

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