



OLD VIC **NEW VOICES**

**THE COMPLETE
GUIDE TO GETTING
INTO WRITING**



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NEW VOICES

NURTURING TALENT DEVELOPING WORK GROWING AUDIENCES

Old Vic New Voices aims to support young and emerging talent, to source and develop new work for production on The Old Vic stage, and to open up the building to new and diverse audiences.

For those embarking on a professional career in theatre, the New Voices Club offers actors, directors, producers and writers, aged 18-25, the opportunity to learn from industry professionals, receive support for projects they are passionate about, and to network with like-minded peers.

Entry as a Full Member is through The 24 Hour Plays: New Voices project, offering young practitioners the chance to take to The Old Vic stage. Anyone aged 18-25 with a desire to develop a career in theatre can become an Associate Member of the Club and attend a range of events and workshops. Simply send a CV with your name, address, telephone number, date of birth and whether you are an actor, writer, director or producer to newvoices@oldvictheatre.com to be considered for membership.

For more information see www.oldvictheatre.com/newvoicesclub

INTRODUCTION

One of the most frustrating things about trying to forge a career in theatre is the fact there is no 'milkround' to give you the opportunities to make your career work; friends in other industries can do applications *en masse*, knowing that the law of averages must get them a few interviews and, sooner or later, a job. In theatre, however, it is sometimes not the law of averages but the law of luck that prevails. However hard you work, and however good you are, the industry and those that run it can from the outside often appear capricious. In the face of this it is essential to remain optimistic and, crucially, proactive. Keep on going out to events seeing theatre and take advantage of networking opportunities to forge new relationships with like minded people.

Finding out about a new scheme, opportunity or resource always elicits the same response – why didn't I know about this before? The theatre industry, for all its manic marketing when it has a show to sell, is woefully bad at letting people know how to enter its doors.

Which is why Old Vic New Voices has brought together this document, covering as many of the opportunities, workshops, seminars, groups, forums, training courses and showcases as we could find. Just two restrictions limited our search: we have only included information about Greater London, and have excluded full time training courses for all disciplines, as we felt these are well enough known and marketed – on the other hand we have included some workshops and short term courses that offer a more targeted refresher or session on a particular area or subject.

This is intended to be a work in progress, and we are always interested to hear more about opportunities that we may have missed, or that spring up later. We know this may not be an exhaustive list, but it will hopefully prove useful in being a springboard, either as a starting point for further research or in providing the information to allow practitioners to go out and start forming productive relationships, and allowing them to be proactive about their careers.

As one of our associate member actors said, "getting theatre off the ground is difficult at the best of times but when you are young and unknown it is even harder to get support." We hope that this document will go a little way in providing that support.

GETTING INTO WRITING

SHOWCASE

The opportunity to showcase new work is vital for writers, and several venues and theatre companies are dedicated to producing scratch nights and evenings featuring extracts of new work.

The Hampstead Theatre hosts **Start Nights**. Once every 4 to 6 weeks, writers of all levels are invited to submit scripts. Up to 5 short extracts are chosen, and each writer is given 2 weeks to assemble their team for a performance attended by an audience ready to give feedback. The Theatre also stages an annual **New Writing Festival**, giving selected writers the chance to see their work move to the main stage.

www.hampsteadtheatre.com

The Miniaturists hold regular events staging a collection of short plays, fully staged and costumed. They do not guarantee to read and respond to all unsolicited work, but welcome submissions from writers with proven experience.

www.miniaturists.co.uk

The Operating Theatre Company has a development arm which organises events such as **Writers' Block**, in which a series of 'near miss' plays submitted by fringe venues and agents are developed in four days of rehearsal and then shown to industry figures. Actors interested in being involved should email their CVs to ken@operatingtheatre.com. The company also runs **New Writing Surgeries**, in which submitted plays are critiqued by three different readers during an open discussion. Applications to take part in these events are open to all, regardless of experience.

www.operating-theatre.co.uk

Player playwrights is a group dedicated to writers of all levels of experience. Members can exchange views, ask questions and publicise productions and opportunities. The organisers also run showcases for their members, and the website has a mentoring service covering a wide range of aspects of theatre, many also relevant to actors, producers and directors.

www.playerplaywrights.co.uk

Simple 8 is a theatre company which runs **Lunch Date**, a new writing platform taking place at the Trafalgar Studios. Run on a monthly basis, the events are an opportunity to invite agents and casting directors to see new work live. Writers should submit scripts (unsolicited material is accepted), are encouraged to attend a Lunch Date to meet the organisers.

www.simple8.co.uk

Ten In A Bed Theatre stage **New Writing Sunday**, a regular rehearsed reading event at the Clerkenwell Theatre which provides a platform for new writing and allows writers to receive feedback and be involved in the development and rehearsal of their work. To find out more please contact Veronica Humphris at: veronica@teninabedtheatre.org with 'OVNV Writer Enquiry' in the subject line of the email.

WORKSHOPS

Many theatres and companies run writing workshops, allowing writers the chance to develop their work in the company of experienced playwrights and directors

The National Studio offers 16-20 writers a year a paid eight-week attachment, allowing each one to be a resident at the Studio, with the support and facilities necessary to work on and develop current projects. Other new writing activity includes readings, regional writers' workshops, dramaturgical support, and masterclasses. The majority of the participants on these schemes are sourced from the National's Literary Department, which accepts unsolicited scripts.

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

The Finborough Theatre receives and reads scripts, and its Literary Department also runs monthly workshops with a writer selected from these script submissions.

www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

The Theatre Royal Stratford East runs the **Young Voices** group for writers aged 16-24, holding various writing workshops throughout the year. New and established writers are supported in a number of ways by the artistic team, through Writer Attachments and writers groups.

www.stratfordeast.com/newwriting.php

Croydon Warehouse Theatre runs both regular and advanced writing workshops, offering sessions with professional writers, guest speaker events, and the chance to have work read and performed in a showcase.

www.warehousetheatre.co.uk/warehousewriters.html

The Soho Theatre offers a comprehensive variety of resources to writers. It reads scripts, offers computer access and workspace to writers developing work, and runs 3 targeted programmes: **Soho Young Writers Programme** is a 3-tiered workshop system, whereby writers have the opportunity to graduate from taster workshops to longer term script development and potentially get the support needed to write a full length play. **The Writers' Attachment Scheme** takes 6 writers and gives them a year long relationship with the Soho Theatre, nurturing their talent and exposing

them to ideas and opportunities through readings, workshops, partnerships with other theatres, research, support, mentorships, guest teachers, retreats and one-to-one dramaturgical sessions. **Starts** is an opportunity to give up to 6 writers a year a month long residency at the theatre in order to produce the first draft of a new work, possibly culminating in a rehearsed reading.

www.sohotheatre.com

The Royal Court runs playwriting groups for 18-25s led by their resident playwriting tutor, as well as staging a yearly festival of young and new writing featuring a variety of readings, productions and events.

www.royalcourttheatre.com

The Arcola Theatre runs a 10-week writers programme for both Beginner and Advanced writers. The Advanced programme culminates in a performance directed by students on the Drama Centre Directors' Course.

www.arcolatheatre.com

The Arvon Foundation runs residential courses outside London, giving writers the chance to focus totally on creating work, under the guidance of tutors with experience of playwrighting, producing and directing.

www.arvonfoundation.org

The Red Room is a politically active arts organisation which works with writers to create theatre and performance art highlighting radical topics, often in an experimental way. They also offer a series of workshops on subjects such as dramatic storytelling and structure, creating political theatre and creating subtext.

www.theredroom.org.uk/workshops.htm

SCRIPT READING

A few theatres and theatre companies who focus specifically on new writing will read scripts not sent by agents, which they may choose to develop further with the writer or use as a basis for work in the future. Theatres such as the Bush, Soho, National, Royal Court, Hampstead, Finborough, and Theatre 503 are all dedicated to new writing and some of these theatres receive a government subsidy to support this commitment. Below are some other theatres or groups worth considering as possible script readers.

The Bush Theatre only stages new writing, and runs an unsolicited script reading service for full length drafts, with a view to developing and ultimately producing work that it finds promising. The theatre also meets and advises writers whose work does not end up on the Bush stage but which might be better suited to other theatres.

www.bushtheatre.co.uk/writers.html

Paines Plough is a renowned touring theatre company, specialising exclusively in the commissioning and development of contemporary plays and their production on stage. They accept and read unsolicited scripts, as well as hold masterclasses and readings for writers whose work they find promising. Their **Future Perfect** scheme is a year long attachment that aims to help writers to explore their individual voices through practical writing projects. They also present the Rod Hall Memorial Award, which provides professional and financial support to an outstanding writer every two years.

www.painesplough.com

In addition to the workshops run by **The Red Room** (see above), they also read some unsolicited scripts. Although they state that they cannot guarantee a response to every submission, they still welcome receiving new work.

www.theredroom.org.uk/scripts_development.htm

CREATING AND DEVSING NEW WORK

A number of theatre companies are dedicated solely to creating and devising new work, and as such are always interested to hear from writers who might be interested in collaborating with them.

Zeitgeist Theatre is a company producing scratch performances of political, immediately topical theatre in fringe venues around London. A selected writer and director choose an issue to explore; the writer then has one month to create a short play to be taken on by the director. Directors, writers and actors with proven experience and/or training should send a CV, covering letter, two email addresses for references, and a short note on availability, to info@zeitgeisttheatre.com.

The Factory UK is a collaborative company running sessions for actors, writers and directors, in which weekly rehearsals are an open forum for discussion and experimentation, usually leading up to a final performance with a rotating cast. For more information contact tim@thefactoryuk.com.

Real Circumstance is a theatre company set up with the aim of creating new and innovative theatre, with an emphasis on the acting and writing processes and developing new ways of working. They are happy to receive CVs and scripts after initial contact by email has been made.

www.realcircumstance.com

WRITERS AWARDS

Awards can often provide extra funding, as well as a credential which makes it easier to get work published and read in the future.

The Verity Bargate Award is a biennial search by the Soho theatre for an unproduced, unpublished full-length play (not shorter than 70 minutes). The winner receives £5000 and a residency at the Soho theatre.

The Oppenheim-John Downes Memorial Trust makes awards to deserving artists of any kind who are unable to pursue their vocation effectively by reason of their

financial difficulties. As a general guide the maximum award would be £1,000 but, in exceptional circumstances, the Trustees may consider a larger sum. The awards are made in December of each year with the closing date for applications being 15 October.

The Brian Way Award is awarded annually to the author of a piece of children's theatre, in memory of one of the early pioneering practitioners and champions of this form of drama. Submissions should take the form of a play of at least 45 minutes in length, suitable for young people up to the age of 18.

The Rod Hall Memorial Award will be presented every two years to an outstanding new playwright, and is intended to launch a writer's literary career; the winner receives a £5,000 commission to write a play for Paines Plough, together with ongoing representation from The Rod Hall Agency Ltd. The Rod Hall Award is open to playwrights aged 18–30 who are not, and never have been, professionally represented.

www.painesplough.com

Further information is available from the following websites on a variety of subjects

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain is the body that represents and supports writers in every discipline, offering advice on matters such as pay and employment rights and holding events such as readings and industry award ceremonies. They also publish a quarterly magazine with articles, interviews and industry news round ups.

www.writersguild.org.uk

Literature Training is a website supported by the Arts Council which gathers together information about courses and opportunities for young writers. See the site for invitations for script submissions from new writing companies, funding ideas and information about a range of other organisations for writers. Actors and directors might also be interested in some of the ideas on offer.

www.literaturetraining.com

Writernet is an excellent collection of resources and information aimed at giving dramatic writers the opportunities they need to create new work. There are guides to processes such as script submission, news of writing workshops and job openings, and links to companies and organisations that might prove useful to young writers.

www.writernet.org.uk

BBC Writers Room website offers a fairly mixed bag of opportunities and updates, but it is certainly worth checking regularly for a range of radio, theatre and TV news.

www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom

GENERAL INFO

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There are a variety of sources of further information about the arts (some more helpful than others), from the government funded Arts Council to the entirely voluntary Stellar Network. Somewhere in between you should find the person able to answer your particular question.

The Arts Council has information and publications on a variety of subjects, from Touring to Copyright to providing sample budgets for funding applications. As a site, however, it can be confusing to navigate, and much of the information and funding offered is dependent on community participation and education rather than concentrating on the fostering and support of new theatre.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

A treasure trove of information is to be found in the new Arts Council funded website **Get Into Theatre**, which offers everything from a CV clinic to job case studies, a list of current work experience placements, listings for local theatre companies and an advice service.

www.getintothatre.org

Stellar Network is a general networking organisation for theatre, TV and film which organises screenings, talks and seminars, all with the intention of bringing together arts practitioners and giving them the information necessary to make their work possible. They also hold writers' showcase evenings, cold casting on the night, making them an excellent opportunity for writers and actors to be seen, and producers and directors to see the work of up-coming artists.

www.stellarnetwork.com

The Theatre Royal Haymarket runs **Masterclass**, a programme of events that offers talks, seminars and workshops for actors, producers, writers and directors. Events are regular, usually occurring every Friday. They have recently launched the Masterclass Apprentice Scheme, in which new entrants to the theatre industry work and learn alongside the resident company at the Haymarket. Current opportunities through the Apprentice scheme include understudy and assistant director opportunities for upcoming productions at the Theatre Royal.

www.masterclass.org.uk

ArtsAdmin is a resource supporting a wide variety of art forms in a number of ways, from providing advice, workshops and talks to hiring out rehearsal and office space. As the information is aimed at quite a broad spectrum across the arts much of it is not applicable to theatre, but there is some material on funding and resources and some links which are worth looking at.

www.artsadmin.co.uk

Bush Futures is a new venture from the Bush Theatre which aims to be an education, training and development programme. Although details are not yet finalised, the scheme promises to include company mentoring, Playwrights and Directors Courses, showcases, workshops and masterclasses.

www.bushtheatre.co.uk

A mentoring service is provided by **Michael Atavar** of Oval House who can advise on a range of subjects, including budgets, funding, actors, production, grants, venues, training, performers, lighting, bursaries, writing, audiences, and workshops. (www.ovalhouse.com).

Improbable Theatre Company has a group of mentors, each with different specialisms. The company has recently run its first Mentoring Fête, an informal event for emerging companies to learn from more established ones, and it also hosts Devoted and Disgruntled, an annual Open Space forum for the theatre community to address the pressing issues that often get marginalised. Satellite sessions continue on the first Wednesday of every month at Shunt Vaults. For details of upcoming mentoring events, Devoted and Disgruntled, and for the online mentoring resource visit the website or the Improbable D&D Shunt Satellite group on www.facebook.com.

www.improbable.co.uk

Player playwrights is a group dedicated to writers of all levels of experiences, members can exchange views, ask questions and publicise documents and opportunities. The organisers also run showcases for their members, and the website has a mentoring service covering a wide range of aspects of theatre, many also relevant to actors, producers and directors.

www.playerplaywrights.co.uk

Fringe Theatre Network was originally set up as an organisation to unite fringe theatres and act as a unified voice on their behalf. It contains a useful list of fringe venues, although some of the information should be checked to ensure it is up to date.

www.fringetheatre.org.uk

The National has a website called **Stagework**, which exposes the backstage workings of a theatre and gives a job description of all the roles found there. It is aimed at a slightly lower age range than OVNV (namely school leavers), but as a general rundown of the people behind every production it is still a useful point of reference.

www.stagework.org

Although the **Tyrone Guthrie Centre** does not provide training or information, it is worth noting here as a resource open to all artists to provide a space for retreat, study and development. The late, great director has a strong association with The Old Vic, and when he died his will stated that "my said dwelling-house, furniture, pictures and chattels and the income of my residuary estate to be used for the purpose of providing a retreat for artists and other like persons....so as to enable them to do or facilitate them in doing creative work." The Centre is relatively inexpensive to stay in and, with its atmosphere of creative exchange and support would, provide a valuable location for writers and directors especially.

www.tyroneguthrie.ie

SHOWCASE OPPORTUNITIES

The best planned productions will remain nothing more than pipe dreams until they are tried and tested in front of a real live audience. **Showcases** and **Scratch Nights** are brilliant opportunities to do this, often proving crucial to development and providing a platform for showing your work to the right people. They are also a great way to go and see the latest writing and performing on the fringe theatre circuit.

BAC runs Scratch Nights for performers wanting to try out ideas in front of a test audience. The audience later gives feedback, often leading to further development and the chance of a showcase performance open to press and industry. These are only open to companies who have previously worked with the theatre, but they also run **Freshly Scratched** nights, which are an opportunity for performers new to BAC to try out their work.

www.bac.org.uk

Simple 8 is a theatre company which runs **Lunch Date**, a new writing platform taking place at the Trafalgar Studios. Run on a monthly basis, the events are an opportunity to invite agents and casting directors to see new work live. Writers should submit scripts (unsolicited material is accepted), and actors interested in taking part are encouraged to send their CVs and details, and to attend a Lunch Date to meet the organisers.

www.simple8.co.uk

The Factory UK is a collaborative company running sessions for actors, writers and directors, in which weekly rehearsals are an open forum for discussion and experimentation, usually leading up to a final performance with a rotating cast. For more information contact: tim@thefactoryuk.com.

WILL WORK FOR FOOD

A few websites provide reliable sources of news about jobs going on in fringe theatres and small independent theatre companies.

The Arts job Digest from the **Arts Council** (www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/maillinglists.php) has a wide variety of news about jobs and internships, as does Arts Hub (www.artshub.co.uk). Both are good sources of news about unpaid production placements which are an excellent way to gain experience and flesh out your CV. **Arts Job Finder** is a new service from Arts Professional which is more likely to contain information about paid work (www.artsjobfinder.co.uk). Lastly, **Stage Jobs Pro** (uk.stagejobspro.com) is another useful source of work, usually technical rather than administrative, but again paid work is likely to feature and the odd acting, directing and producing job can come up.