



IMPACT REPORT 2024-25

THE THEATRE
CHIPPING NORTON

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Our ambitions, and progress

The Theatre Chipping Norton is a rural arts hub whose aims are

- to make and host inspiring performances that will transform lives in Oxfordshire and beyond.
- to make the benefits of the arts accessible to all, providing the support our community needs, and a place to belong for everyone.

In times of significant change, both across the world and in our own communities, theatres provide crucial benefits, which include:

- **a sense of escapism**, a time to switch off from daily life and any challenges.
- **relatability**, using live performances and cinema to better help us to understand our own challenges and relationships.
- **connection and shared experience**. With half¹ of the UK population describing themselves as lonely, connecting with performers and others sharing the performance experience provides a range of mental health benefits.

- **inclusivity**, building empathy and understanding by helping us to step into others shoes and experience culture alongside other members of our community; and
- **making memories**. From our annual panto to life-changing activities and workshops.

Making this accessible

In 2024-25 we worked to maintain affordable prices so that as many people in Chipping Norton and beyond could access our performances.

Over 40,000 people enjoyed 209 live performances on our stage, including 868 free community and carer tickets.

We also built on our focused community programme that ensures we are reaching, and engaging those in our community who have the most to gain from the arts, yet are the least likely to be able to access them.

Providing over 2,000 free or subsidised sessions for young people in our local rural community

This year we funded 79% of our programme of productions through tickets sales (an impressive achievement for a rural venue of 220 seats) and our community programme is supported entirely by donations. However, ensuring The Theatre remains accessible requires support from our supporters and funders. In 2024-25 we raised £461,400, which included a grant of £95,000 to replace our outdated stage lighting with a new energy efficient LED rig.



In 2025-26 our ambition is to continue making and sharing inspiring live performances and creative activities, be a driver of social change and community cohesion, and a source of joy for our audiences.

John Terry, Artistic Director

50 years of creativity in Chipping Norton

Delivering a rich programme and community benefits in a changing funding landscape

In 1968 by Tamara & John Malcolm asked every Chipping Norton resident to donate £1 to create a theatre for the town in the Former Salvation Army Citadel. Materials, skills and labour were also donated and the first panto's were fundraisers held at the Town Hall before The Theatre was open.

FUNDRAISING AND RENNOVATIONS



Goddard's Lane cottage was bought and converted to create the daytime box office, dressing rooms, rehearsal room, costume store, offices and green room.

Take Part and our first Youth Theatre was born.

GODDARDS LANE



THE THEATRE OPENS

The adjacent cottage was converted into the bar, toilets and dressing rooms and The Theatre was officially opened by Tom Baker (who was playing Dr Who) in 1975.



MAJOR REFURBISHMENT

Funded partly by the Arts Council we improved the building, stage and wing space. Graham Rust, one of Europe's finest muralists, painted our murals.

Did You Know?

The Theatre generally retains only 20-25% of the box office income for live performances, returning the remainder to the Visiting Artists.

The Theatre closed in lockdown. Our community rallied and helped us weather the storm. We began making lunches and free art activities for local families who were struggling - our community programme was born.

Afresco events became the order of the day. Panto was impossible but a one man production of Christmas Carol with David Bradbury marked an inspired return to the stage.

This year 79% of The Theatre's income came from tickets, hires and sales, with the remainder raised by fundraising. In addition, all our community work is funded by grants & donations.

Panto, and our inhouse productions make an increasingly important contribution, as do Friends, Patrons, sponsors and fundraising.

COVID LOCKDOWN

THE PICTURE TODAY



CORE ARTS COUNCIL FUNDING CUT

In 2008 Arts Council cut its £40,000 annual grant to The Theatre, half our public funding, in changes which hit over 200 arts organisations in England.



THEATRE MAKERS

Under John Terry's leadership we began producing more of our own 'homegrown' productions and taking some on tour. Theatre tax relief, introduced in 2014, was and still is, pivotal in making theatrical productions viable in the UK.



BACK TO BREAK EVEN!

Audiences were cautious to return which, added to rising costs, led to some challenging years after COVID.

In 2023-24, we achieved break even for the first time since the pandemic. We were also gaining recognition for our community work; WODC supported our outreach projects, although they no longer fund The Theatre itself. Funding models for all theatres are increasingly locally, not nationally, led.

Producing and sharing creative arts

Our theatre is known for Panto, but we are also a hub for a wide range of creativity. In 2024/25 this included

LIVE THEATRE - producing 5 in-house shows, and welcoming touring companies for 93 performances.

COMEDY - hosting 20 comedians from Rosie Holt to Frank Skinner

MUSIC - 14 live performances from Queen to the Budapest Café Orchestra.

SCREENINGS we showed 42 performances from houses in the UK and the US

FILM - from Oscar nominees to family favourites - sometimes with wine too!

DANCE - performances and events from Ballet Central to our Silent Discos!

ART - our gallery hosted four exhibitions

112
LIVE SHOWS

40,754 CREATIVE EXPERIENCES
DELIVERED IN 2024-25



AND 97
PANTO
PERFORMANCES

Our impact

Our wide ranging arts programme aims to reach as many people as possible. We continuously look to

- provide escapism
- offer performances that help people relate to different situations
- be inclusive and inspire inclusivity
- help people express emotions
- help people make memories at our theatre.

"Every time we come over we have a wonderful experience. The quality of the performances that are put on are outstanding."

"Keep doing what you're doing which is first-class."

"Venue perfect size for comedians testing new material."

"We all agreed the theatre and production punched way above it's weight."

"An absolutely fantastic show, the best we have ever seen including performances in London and the RSC."

"If the Theatre represents the community spirit of Chipping Norton area, it must be a wonderful community to live in."



Producing and sharing creative arts

Our 50th anniversary was the right time to be bold.

Our ambitious productions of Lark Rise and Barn Dance transformed the auditorium into an Oxfordshire barn, blending local, community actors with professional cast and crew to create two of our most ambitious productions to date.

5 IN-HOUSE
SHOWS
PRODUCED
IN 2024!

118 people were engaged in the creation and performance of these two productions; 42 creatives & community volunteers, 29 community actors, 15 Morris Dancers, 11 Chippy Choir Members, 8 Professional actors, 7 Great Company members, and 7 local musicians.



Lark Rise



Barn Dance

Chippy
Theatre
Original



Murder For Two



As I was 'a walking



Jack & the Beanstalk

Our impact

Early careers



Eloise Sheffield, Assistant Director, Lark Rise & Barn Dance

I never thought I could actually direct adults. It was such a unique experience. It was a whirlwind. I look back and I'm like, how did we do that! This has given me so much. I really do think that I would like to pursue this as a career, and I don't think without this experience, I would be actually looking at it.

**A play about the community,
for the community,
by the community,
put that on the poster!"**

Jonny Hosking - Lark Rise /
Barn Dance professional actor

Community involvement



Gillian Crane, Adult drama group in Lark Rise

I came along with trepidation, but really wanting to have the courage to do it and be involved. It was something completely different to anything I'd done before.

"You see, you don't think as you get, perhaps a little older, that you have opportunities. I didn't know that I needed one, but it's been a huge lift."

It really felt like a generous hearted, kind spirited community team effort. For me, that was the most wonderful thing. I'd love to do more.

Accessible productions

Everyone is always welcome at The Theatre, and so we consider as many ways as possible to help, including

- Relaxed performances and screenings.
- A dedicated break out space during relaxed performances.
- Subtitled films.
- Captioned and audio described live performances.
- An integrated hearing loop system.
- Free community and companion tickets - we gave 866 tickets in 24-25

Bloxham Grove Academy (a local school for young people with additional needs) attended a Relaxed Panto Performance as a whole school in 2024.

"The actors were amazing and our students responded well in all aspects and thoroughly enjoyed the performance. The staff were very helpful and supportive during our visit. A wonderful experience."

"This is how life should be, accessible and welcoming"



Supporting the Chipping Norton Community

We believe that creativity and expression is for everyone.

We created our 'Take Part' programme with a specific aim of inclusivity for all. This includes weekly participatory classes for 280 children, young people, adults, and those with additional needs in addition to 196 school holiday workshop participants.

ADULT DRAMA

CHIPPY SINGERS

CAN SING CHOIR

CREATIVE WRITERS

GREAT COMPANY

YT-OPEN SENIOR

280

Children &
adults
'Take Part' in
classes every
week

"Chippy Singers gives opportunities to make new friends, develop singing skills, confidence, and a sense of wellbeing."

LITTLE LIMELIGHTS

SATURDAY DRAMA

YOUTH THEATRE

**YOUTH MUSICAL
THEATRE**

YT-OPEN

YT-SEN

"Musical theatre and youth theatre classes helped me make friends and grow in confidence."

GALLAGHER
DEVELOPMENTS

Take Part Sponsor



Supporting the Chipping Norton Community

We run a range of arts-based opportunities to help the most vulnerable young people across our rural community to foster confidence, self-worth, resilience, and adaptability; vital skills for today, and for the future.

This year we have been able to support more families with additional needs by adding specialist youth theatre groups, more drama based mental health support in local schools and creative support groups for their parents.

Youth Theatre SEN & Youth Theatre Open Senior

A much-needed and asked-for provision for young people with higher needs who are often unable to access drama and after school activities. Our experienced practitioners provide these great young people with crucial development opportunities and a home at the Theatre where they feel welcomed as they are.

"I love acting and theatre is helping me improve so much. You get transported into a different world and you are put into the character's shoes. I've been part of the theatre for a while now and every time it feels like a whole new adventure."

Youth Theatre Bursary Recipient

25% OF ALL
YOUTH THEATRE
PLACES ARE
BURSARY FUNDED



Supporting Young People's Mental Health

Our Mental Health Groups and Workshops have been responding to a high level of need in our local schools.

Our drama-based mental health programmes in schools are especially important for young people who are struggling with mental health, anxiety and the impact of adverse childhood experiences. We have expanded our work at Chipping Norton School to support years 7, 8, 11 and SEN children with high anxiety, and begun a new partnership with Park School (our local special educational mental health school) supporting young people who cannot access mainstream education.

52 Young people participated in termly drama and well being courses in school.

"It was a break from school pressures and I needed that. It was something to look forward to in school, having someone to talk to."

"Thank you for being there for me and for me to talk to about what I'm feeling. I hope you go on to support other people".

This year our community programme has also provided ...

10,920
free school holiday lunches funded

866
Community Theatre Tickets

168
children provided with free arts activities every school holiday.

200
Places in Parent Mental Health Support Groups

77
attendees at free school holiday family fun days

52
Free places in School Holiday Workshops.



Our supporters

Our work could not be delivered without our supporters, funders and volunteers. In 2024-25 we raised 79% of our costs through ticket sales and commercial income, but the balance is thanks to the following supporters

FUNDRAISING INCOME 2024-25

3041 DONATIONS

738 FRIENDS

60 PATRONS

150+ VOLUNTEERS

Over 150 people volunteered this year from ushering to costume making, work experience to community events.



TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS WHO SUPPORTED US IN 2024-25

The Aird Charitable Trust, The Albion Trust, The Art Society of West Oxon, Cash For Kids, Connected Community Fund, Cotswold Arts Through Schools, CHK Foundation, Churchill and Sarsden Parish Council, Doris Field Charitable Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Elizabeth Jackson Charitable Trust, Esmee Fairburn Foundation, Enstone Parish Council, Equity Charitable Trust, HDH Wills 1965 Charitable Trust, Kingham Parish Council, Movement for Good, Oddington Parish Council, The Ormonde Foundation, Oxfordshire County Councillors Priority Fund, The PF Charitable Trust, Singer Foundation, Stella Symonds Charitable Trust, Theatre's Trust, VSCE Energy Efficiency Scheme, Walter Higgs Charitable Trust, Ward Charitable Trust, Yorkshire Building Society Charitable Trust.

OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS



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Hedges Law
Hook Norton Brewery
Kingham Hill School
Mark-making
Reform IT
Opendoorz
OxLEP
Wise Investment

We collaborate with local partners to provide support for our community in Chipping Norton and the surrounding areas. Our partners include Chipping Norton Town Council
Chippy Larder
Chippy Lido
Oxford Play Partnership Mind
The Branch
West Oxfordshire District Council

We believe in the power of the arts to bring joy and build stronger communities. We're looking forward to continuing to partner with you and your mission to bring people together, foster creativity, and provide vital support to those who need it most.

Alex Rae, CEO Wise Investment


WISE INVESTMENT
Headline Theatre Sponsors



WAYS TO SUPPORT US

DONATE

Every donation helps us produce and share creative arts and delivers our community programmes.

LEAVE A LEGACY

A gift in your will helps us improve our facilities and deliver a creative programme for our community.

SPONSOR US

Partnering or Sponsoring our work shows a commitment to the Chipping Norton Community and helps amazing creative activity through The Theatre.

TO FIND OUT HOW VISIT
WWW.CHIPPINGNOTONTHEATRE.COM/SUPPORT-US
OR CALL ON 01608 649105
Registered Charity No. 268154

