



Quotes from our supporters

Charlotte Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Theatre Council:

“ITC is delighted to work with the Writers’ Guild in making this much-needed project happen. New writing is the lifeblood of the independent sector, and we recognise that freelance writers have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. We are grateful to Arts Council England and the generous donations from theatre practitioners for supporting this project and look forward to enabling an exciting new tranche of writers to realise their potential this summer.”

Jon Gilchrist, Joint President, UK Theatre:

“COVID-19 had an immediate impact on the theatre industry internationally, but the long-term challenges are just as stark. The number of new play commissions across the country has dropped significantly, and lack of opportunity has seen talented writers move away from theatre. There couldn’t be a worse time for this, as it is more important now than ever for theatre to tell new stories that speak to the country today. The New Play Commission Scheme will help breathe new life into playwriting and support a new generation of playwrights. This partnership, driven forward by WGGB and David Edgar particularly, will be the catalyst for work on stages across the country for years to come.”

Martin Scott, Chief Operating Officer, Society of London Theatre

"Theatre Development Trust (TDT), the Society of London Theatre's affiliated registered charity, is happy to give its support to the New Play Commission Scheme. The TDT exists to support and champion initiatives that strengthen the future of the industry, and this scheme fits that objective so well as the industry emerges from such a challenging period."

April De Angelis, playwright:

“I’m delighted to be a member of the selection panel for the New Play Commission Scheme. The scheme is an excellent initiative that will encourage theatres to continue to find and produce diverse voices so that our stages are fully inclusive and represent our society fully allowing us to all experience a wealth of plurality in dramatic writing.”

Dinah Wood, Editorial Director, Drama, Faber:

“New writing is the lifeblood of Faber's drama list, which sprang into life thanks to John Osborne's incendiary *Look Back in Anger* well over 60 years ago. And so, I'm thrilled that Faber should be part of this inspired scheme. Unpublished playwrights from across the land are eligible for the Faber Prize and I cannot wait to hear what they have to say.”

Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director, Royal Court Theatre:

“This truly is the writer's commission scheme. Created and in part funded by writers for writers – this is a brilliant opportunity for playwrights to work with an organisation towards a play which will be produced. More than ever, we need these paid opportunities for writers to tell the vital stories of now, for theatres to take the plunge with new work and for audiences to be transformed by work in which they see themselves and their concerns reflected in every way. I look forward to seeing the plays.”

Erica Whyman, Deputy Artistic Director, Royal Shakespeare Company:

"The RSC is delighted the New Play Commission Scheme will begin in earnest. The pandemic has been incredibly difficult for writers, with so little support available to creative freelancers, and yet theatres remain extremely fragile economically, with very few able to take bold programming decisions as they rebuild audience confidence. At the same time our world is more in need of the stories born of this moment in our history than perhaps ever in our lifetimes. This brilliant initiative, actively endorsed by such a wonderful range of playwrights, will enable the most diverse range of new voices to be heard and supported and will give theatres the confidence to programme the most audacious and timely new work."

Suba Das, Creative Director, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse; former Artistic Director and Chief Executive, HighTide:

"It's the most stunning testament to HighTide's tireless work supporting playwrights to be invited by the Writers' Guild to deliver this incredible new commissioning scheme. The Guild and HighTide both understood at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic that writers, and especially those from diverse backgrounds, would be most at risk from the disruption of the past two years, with so many freelance artists leaving the sector due to financial insecurity, and theatres needing to make perceived 'safe' choices to help bring audiences back.

We're proud that HighTide was the first Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation to create a long-term support package for artists with our Lighthouse Programme providing commissioning, training and mentorship to over 400 artists across the UK; and our School of HighTide created a safe space for a further 52 playwrights of colour as part of our engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement.

The New Play Commission Scheme not only offers a lifeline to both writers and companies across the UK but most importantly it helps ensure new writing forms part of how we all recover and move forwards as citizens and communities. As we continue to face the challenges of climate crisis, gender violence, transphobia, racial injustice and so much more, writers are vital in helping us find common ground and joy if we're to live our fullest lives. The New Play Commission Scheme helps make this so much more possible and I'm so proud that HighTide's role will help ensure the programme reflects the very best inclusive practice in playmaking today.”

Lee Hall, playwright and screenwriter:

“The NPCS gives vital support to writers who have been hit tremendously by the pandemic. Writers have very often been left out of the government support schemes for the industry because of the freelance nature of their work, which is precarious at the best of times. The vanishing of royalties and the opportunity for theatres to make commissions has dried up as theatres fight simply to survive so it is crucial that the slow process of creating new work isn't starved to death. The NPCS is a hugely important and necessary. Half of the beneficiaries will be based outside of London which is incredibly important as this is where the infrastructure is most fragile.

New writing for the theatre is the crucible not just for work on stage but it's also where so much of our tv and film writing starts its life. So providing independent commissions at a time when the theatre industry has been devastated not only gives immediate support for writers struggling to make ends meet but represents a vital investment in the future of a whole generation of writers and writing.

Writing plays to commission is always a precarious proposition at the best of times. The time it takes to write a play means in reality you get paid pennies per hour. But it means it is possible for writers to carve out enough time to start a project which will hopefully result in future royalties and opportunities which make the effort more tolerable financially. So commissions are hugely important in bringing new stories and new voices to the theatre and beyond which would simply remain untold if they weren't fostered at the beginning. So this scheme is hugely important not only to ensure that the work that we will all love and cherish in a decade's time will exist, but also that there is a genuine diversity in who is able to tell those stories.

The richness of writing talent in this country has been fostered largely by the amazingly vital eco-system of British Theatre. Nowhere else in the world produces so many writers of comparable talent. This has happened because they have been supported to create new work in all parts of their careers. It can take years to write a play so it's the easiest part of theatre-making to neglect in a crisis which is why I am supporting this scheme.”

Jack Thorne, playwright and screenwriter:

“I remember right at the beginning of the pandemic a disabled writer saying that he hoped his regional theatre wouldn’t forget about him now. There is no doubt that, with theatres under threat, the responsibility for securing the future of diverse playwriting needs to be taken on by all of us. It’s amazing the WGGB have stepped in with the NPCCS, a vital ingredient for all our futures.”