

QTH Insights

Sept 2022 - Jan 2023

QUEEN'S THEATRE HORNCHURCH

Supported by





Talking to the women behind **The Flood**

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is ready to welcome *The Flood*, a new play by Vickie Donoghue, which commemorates the real-life disaster of 1953 in which 58 people lost their lives in Canvey Island. In keeping with QTH's commitment to commissioning bold new writing, and raising the profile of working-class female theatre creatives, we talk to the women behind *The Flood* about how they will be recreating a natural disaster on stage.

The female creative team behind *The Flood* attribute their shared vision to the fact they come from similar backgrounds – and have been breaking down barriers throughout their careers.

Playwright Vickie Donoghue is Essex-born; director Stef O'Driscoll (part of QTH's Creative Leadership Team and interim Artistic Director of The Gate Theatre) is from south London; while the play's designer Khadija Raza lives in Ilford. "We love telling working-class narratives, and offering representation for those voices," says Stef.

"I think lots of people who work in theatre come from a background of privilege," says Khadija. "There's nothing wrong with that, it's just the landscape of how we've made theatre in the past, and who has access to it. But things are starting to change. We come from a working-class background and it is lovely to see these people who don't really fit the mould of what we think women in theatre look like, leading the creative team, and getting to tell the stories."

Vickie's play is based on a real historical event. "We feel an incredible responsibility to do justice to that



community and capture the spirit of the people of Canvey," says Stef.

The story begins in 1953 at the opening party of the War Memorial Community Hall in Canvey, on the stormy night just before the North Sea burst through the sea defence.

"I wanted dancing and joy and celebration before the tragedy," Vickie explains. "I mean, working class communities party like no other, you know?"

The drama then jumps forward to 2013, where the group are now in their 80s. It's another party, but more like a tea dance. Then finally we see the fate of the hall in a fictional 2053.

Designer Khadija, winner of the 2017 Linbury Prize, the UK's most prestigious award for Stage Design, has come up with a revolving set – with a stage on a stage (the real-life Canvey Hall has a stage for shows and performances). "It's like a clock that turns in order to go to different time periods. And the space around it will convey the sea wall, the water and the landscape of Canvey."

As for the flood, which is like another character in the play: "We're not going to flood the stage," she laughs. "But we're hoping to create a language with light and sound and movement that conveys a sense of it happening. Because the real-life characters were inside the hall, we don't see it with our own eyes, but we hear about it and see the devastation."

The play is grounded in the real world – love affairs and rivalries play out in front of us. "Vickie writes about big world events, ultimately this is a comment on the climate crisis," says Stef. "But she tells the story through beautiful domestic relationships; she cares deeply about people and the human experience. We get to know and love the characters before we see the impact the flood has on their lives and how these events ricochet throughout the rest of their years, and how communities deal with loss and grief."

The Flood stars Liam Bull (*Supacell*); Micky Dartford (*The Larkins*); Joan Hodges (*It's a Sin*); Sheree Kane (*Seeds: The Round Shape of all Things Red*, Arcola); Paul Lavers (*Catch Me If You Can*, UK tour); Modupe Salu (*House*, Southwark Playhouse); Adrian Stokes (*Roots*, Nottingham Playhouse & Mercury Theatre); George Whitehead (*Sam Mendes' Empire of Light*); Vanessa White-Smith (*Stamping Shouting & Singing Home*, Polka Theatre); Matilda Rae (*The Fall*, Finborough Theatre); while Sabrina Puri makes her professional debut.

And QTH has also cast two large groups – one of late-teens and the other a group of older people, to add life on stage to the parties. Performing Arts students from New City College: Arleigh Green campus make up the late-teens ensemble, whilst 18 older people make up the older ensemble.



The Flood has contemporary resonance. Several parts of Essex could be completely underwater by 2050 – climate experts have created a map showing how rising sea levels could submerge large parts of the county. In 2023 we're facing war between Russia and Ukraine, plus a cost-of-living crisis where people gather in halls for warmth and food banks.

The final scenes in the play which take place in 2053 show a world of power cuts with people carrying torches. "Costumes aren't bright and shiny and new but reused and passed down," says Khadija.

Stef hopes it will encourage us to look at our own lives. "We might think about what our relationship is to the climate crisis when it's actually on our door-step." But, overall, it's the resilience of local people that comes through. "We want audiences to have a great night out, laugh, cry be moved."

After all, Canvey has a history of rebuilding after the floods and welcoming different communities. "In WW2 people from the East End who were bombed came to Canvey and built this place. So there's an incredible sense of pride and community."

The Flood is Vickie's third commission for Hornchurch. In 2021 she adapted Beth Underdown's novel *The Witchfinder's Sister* (a Richard and Judy Book Club pick) and co-wrote *Tales From The Thames*. "What's really beautiful is Queen's Theatre Hornchurch are really investing in local voices, and local female voices," says Stef.

This autumn QTH is staging Amanda Whittington's *The Invincibles*, a piece the theatre commissioned from Amanda about female football in WW1 – with links to the success of The Lionesses last summer. It has also commissioned award-winning Essex playwright, Kelly Jones to write *Breaker, Breaker* as part of the *Blueprint Festival*, based on the Citizens' Band (CB) radio movement which was big in Havering and Barking and Dagenham.

Sadie Hasler, award-winning Southend playwright, is writing *Killing Jack* – a dark and funny feminist twist on the Jack the Ripper narrative, exploring how the world is no safer for women now as it was when the world's most famous serial killer horrified the world in 1888. Sadie wrote *Stiletto Beach* for the 2019 *Essex Girls and Boys* season.

Anne Odeke, a Southend actress and writer of *The Essex Princess* is writing a Windrush family drama, *A Place For Me* for the theatre, which is in development. While Hornchurch-based playwright Guleraana Mir is writing a follow-up to a piece she wrote for QTH during the pandemic, *Fiza Comes Home*.

Once again, QTH will be celebrating the rich diversity of stories about Outer East London and Essex. Watch this space.

Written by Liz Hoggard

Director
Stef O'Driscoll
Designer
Khadija Raza
Lighting Designer
Rajiv Pattani
Sound Designer
Dominic Kennedy
Movement Director
Annie-Lunnette Deakin-Foster
Associate Movement Director
Hayley Chilvers
Casting Director
Sydney Aldridge
Dramaturg
Rishi Trikha
Assistant Director
Manley Gavich
Executive Producer
Mathew Russell

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* |
Under 26s: £8

Dates: 3 - 18 Mar | 7.30pm

Preview: Fri 3 Mar

Matinees: Thu 9, Sat 11, Thu 16, &
Sat 18 Mar | 2.30pm

Pre-recorded Audio Description:
available at every performance
from 7 Mar

To book for an accessible
performance,
call **01708 443333** or email
boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

Last Chance to Jump the Q

Save money with a *Jump the Q*
Season Ticket.

See *Rebus: A Game Called Malice*,
The Flood, and *Sucker Punch* from
just £17* per ticket.

*+65p QNext fee
**+£1.95 QNext fee to the season
ticket



The
BOOK
of
WILL
BY LAUREN GUNDERSON

New year, new shows

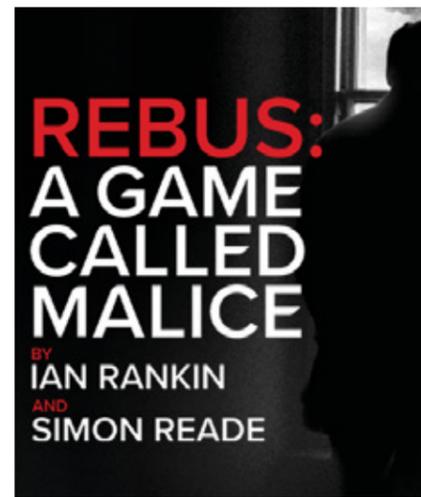
Spring 2023

Two gripping new plays, including a Rebus drama, one rollicking UK premiere from America's most performed playwright and a sporting spectacle. From boxers dodging blows to a transformed auditorium in-the-round, and a community cast of 18 year-olds and one of 80 somethings, the new season brings a taste of event theatre to Hornchurch. We ask the writers what's in store.

No one has officially defined "event theatre" but most agree that it means a dazzling production or an immersive experience, something new and exciting.

What could be more exciting than Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) as you've never seen it before, with the space reconfigured to create a theatre-in-the-round for Lauren Gunderson's *The Book of Will*?

"It will be so cool," says the playwright who, alongside Lynn Nottage, is currently America's most produced author after Shakespeare. This is her third production in the UK, including a musical adaptation of *The Time Traveller's Wife*, and she is destined to become as popular here as she is at home.



The Book of Will is directed by Octagon Theatre Bolton's Lotte Wakeham. The action is set a couple of years after Shakespeare's death. A rowdy band of his friends, actors and theatre folk, are drinking ale and reminiscing when it occurs to one of them that as Shakespeare's great plays have not yet been published they could be lost forever. They soon come up with a plan to collect the works together and have them printed. But it is a task easier said than done as they have to make sure they have all the lines down correctly.

"Much of the story is set in the Globe Tap House, where the old friends bicker and banter," Lauren says. With the audience seated around the circle of the theatre-in-the-round stage, she adds, "it will feel as though you are sharing the space and when the characters laugh or cry or gasp, you'll really be sharing that experience."

Another of the writers featured in QTH's new season, Roy Williams is looking forward to giving the audience an "as-if-they-are-there" experience, too. The first professional UK revival of his award-winning boxing play *Sucker Punch* is a Theatre Nation Partnerships production produced by QTH and will tour across the UK after opening in Hornchurch.

"*Sucker Punch* has had three productions in the States," Roy says, "so it's great, after 13 years, for it now to have a comeback at home!"

The play opens in a boxing gym in the Eighties. "The story follows the lives of two young black kids," Roy explains. "It's about their rivalry and about what it means to be black and British. They get caught up in a battle and I thought it was a good metaphor for that decade - who's the strongest, who's the fastest, who's the smartest?"

Roy sat in on a recent workshop where director Nathan Powell was working on some of his ideas for the revival with a boxing coach and movement director. "The gloves are on and everybody's out of their corner," Roy reports. "It's going to be very physical. They were really going at it in that workshop."

You can expect the same thrilling sense of event from *The Flood*, a new play by Essex writer Vickie Donoghue that commemorates the real-life disaster of 1953 in which 58 people lost their lives in Canvey Island.

"It's an exploration of a community over 100 years and, I hope, a love letter to Canvey and its brave people," Vickie says.



There are heart-in-mouth moments as the story time-hops between 1953, present day and 2053. It begins at the opening party of the War Memorial Community Hall in Canvey Island, on the stormy night just before the North Sea burst through the sea defence. "There's a close-knit group of young people and I wanted dancing, joy, and celebration before the tragedy," Vickie explains. "I mean, working class communities party like no other, you know?"

The drama then jumps forward to 2023, and the group are now in their 80s. "It's another party in the hall, years later, but more like a tea dance," Vickie says.

Adding an extra dimension to the production, QTH has been scouring the local community to cast two large groups - one of late-teens and the other a group of older people, to add life on stage to the parties alongside the play's main actors.

"The community casts idea really excites me," Vickie says. "It just feels right because in the end this play is all about people and relationships, lives and family and friendship."

All of these productions bring new theatrical experiences to QTH but the first show of the season, *Rebus: A Game Called Malice*, is an event of a different kind. In collaboration with Simon Reade, crime novelist Ian Rankin has written a stage play featuring his best loved creation, John Rebus. This exclusive Rebus drama follows 24 novels and one previous stage play, and the maverick Inspector is now retired.

"Rebus is not a team player," Ian says. "He has his own way of going about things. He's a complex character. The more time we spend with him, the more we learn about him. That, for me, is the reason I keep writing about him."

In *A Game Called Malice*, Rebus is a guest at a dinner party where he thinks he detects a crime. To say more would give too much away. Hopefully, it's enough to hear from Ian that "it's playful - we wanted to give people a night of fun at the theatre."

Written by *Fiona Hughes*



Save Money this Spring with a Jump the Q Season Ticket

See all three of the following Queen's Theatre Hornchurch productions from just £51*

That's three nights out in 2023, in the best seats, for just £17* each!

Rebus: A Game Called Malice
2 - 25 Feb

The Flood
3 - 18 Mar

Sucker Punch
30 Mar - 15 Apr

Choose your *Jump the Q Season Ticket* based on which days you want to visit:

Saver Jump the Q | £51*
Mon - Thu evenings, or any matinee performance

Premium Jump the Q | £58*
Mon - Sat, any performance

Purchase your season ticket now and book your show dates when you are ready.

Only want to see two of the shows?

Our *Jump the Q Season Ticket* is still cheaper than booking two of our productions in the best seats! You can always gift the ticket to your remaining show to family or friends.

Offer must end 25 Feb 2023

The Book of Will
27 Apr - 13 May

To book for an accessible performance, call **01708 443333** or email boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

*+£1.95 QNext fee



Oh yes it is - time for Pantomime

It's that time of year again when the whole building at Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) puts all hands to the deck to realise the Christmas Spectacular that is PANTOMIME. Following tradition here at QTH, this year will see another hugely talented cast of actor-musicians step into creative, fun-filled choreography with instruments firmly in hand.

This fresh, funny, and contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* brings Panto bang up to the minute as the loveable but fumbling Fairy undoes an evil curse with a five-hundred-year sleep, taking us from Tudor times into the madcap future of 2057 where robots roam about, and Princess Raury wakes up to a brave new world and an epic adventure.

Raury shows early signs of not being your stereotypical Princess, with a passion for football, tree climbing and adventure. Now as a time travelling pioneer, we discover what she's truly made of.



Luckily, Raury has a loyal team of family and friends. With King 'Enry of Hornchurch, Super Nanny, and a slightly hapless fairy in your corner, what could possibly go wrong? The kind and loveable son of the woodcutter, Romford Prince, has a big secret he's hiding and when he and childhood friend Raury meet in the wild woods, will the truth come out?

6-foot-long sausages, plenty of cheeky humour, and audience participation promise to make this a right royal party. Fabulous new songs, frightful frocks and a vampirical villain also feature in this funky-up feast. And when Super Nanny literally crashes the party, everyone knows the fun has really started.

The actor-musicians pick up their instruments and their feet in time to Lee Crowley's playful choreography. And, designer Dora Schweitzer takes us into a magical Essex world of woods, castles and an evil lair worthy of a James Bond villain.

Lighting designer, Stephen Pemble, recently dazzled Hornchurch when he lit up the building and a staggering number of pieces in the *Blueprint* festival. He will bring all his panache, sparkle and magic to this visual fiesta.

It's a frenzy of activity in the stage management department, workshop and wardrobe at the moment, as the whole QTH team gear up for the event of Christmas 2022.

The core creative team started working on an early draft of Andrew Pollard's hilarious first draft of this specially commissioned *Sleeping Beauty* last February. We began with the premise that we wanted everything to be as magical, surprising and joyful as possible.

We're all aware that for many of our younger audience members this might be their first experience of theatre, and that some our older audience members may have seen more than they care to remember! For both these reasons, we wanted to make sure the experience was as gripping and entertaining as possible, taking a fresh look at an enduringly brilliant story of love, jeopardy, and a worrying amount of sleep. It's such an honour to welcome a new generation of theatre goers into the audience and our main aim has been



to try to ensure that the experience will lead to a lifelong love of live performance. Pantomime has such a unique and special opportunity to really talk to its audience and we want to make sure it's the best conversation possible.

A real privilege of the process is to commission and make something that is specifically for everyone of every age in this audience for this moment in time. And for the past eight months the world around us has thrown up no end of political capers and misadventure ripe for us to satire!

For me, the process started with the characters. As regular aficionados of QTH Pantos will know, Andrew Pollard (writer of *Aladdin* and *Robin Hood* to name a few) writes hilarious dialogue and loves to put his characters into ever more challenging and ridiculous situations. The crucial thing was to find a team of actor-musicians with the comic ability to make Andrew's text zing and the playing skills to realise Composer Tom Self's brilliant and lively original songs that give the show its totally unique character.

We're pleased as punch with our excellent cast, Anna Fordham (Princess Raury), Jerome Lincoln (Romford Prince) Hannah Woodward (Vampiria), Marta Miranda (Prim), Ben Barrow (Proppa) and QTH Panto returners Alex Tomkins (King 'Enry), Laura Sillett (Fairy Falalalalalalala), Dominic Gee-Birch (Super Nanny).

Here's an insight from Composer Tom Self into his creative process:

'It has been a joy to write original songs again for this year's Pantomime at QTH. We are fast approaching the exciting stage of getting to hear these new numbers performed by our exciting and talented cast for the first time! Using original music and lyrics allows us to continue Andrew Pollard's fantastic scenes and dialogue in a much more accurate, inventive and playful way - and allows us to hear our characters sing exactly what they are feeling! It is a joy to be able to compose for such a wonderful venue again, and I can't wait for our audiences to hear what we've been up to!'

After months of gearing up to this, we're now all incredibly excited to start rehearsals, where we expect laughter to be in abundance as we put all our efforts into making a unique version of *Sleeping Beauty* that is festive, thrilling and stupendously silly for the brilliant QTH audience.

Caroline Leslie, Director of *Sleeping Beauty*

Director
Caroline Leslie
Set & Costume Designer
Dora Schweitzer
Musical Director
Tom Self
Lighting Designer
Stephen Pemble
Choreographer
Lee Crowley
Executive Producer
Mathew Russell

Tickets: £13* - £34.50*

Audio Described performance:
Sat 10 Dec 2pm

British Sign Language
Interpreted performance:
Sat 10 Dec 6.30pm

Dementia Friendly
performance:
Thu 15 Dec 1.30pm

Relaxed performance:
Thu 15 Dec 5.30pm

To book for an accessible
performance,
call **01708 443333** or email
boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

*+65p QNext fee



Producing in Partnership

September 2022 marked the 6th anniversary of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) embarking upon an exciting series of new partnerships to make extraordinary and often life changing theatre. Since then 22 productions, the majority of QTH's produced work, have been made with brilliant theatre makers nationally and internationally. We talked to colleagues to find out more about why this is so important.

"Making theatre in partnership flows through the DNA of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch" explains Executive Director Mathew Russell. "We love learning from collaborating with the very best theatres across the world and seeing work involving Outer East London and Essex artists and communities performed nationally and internationally. In 2019/20 our co-productions were seen by a record breaking 62,325 people across 12 towns and cities. And as we emerge from the pandemic, we're reigniting important partnerships and building exciting new ones."



This season sees landmark co-productions with two of QTH's long term partners. The acclaimed regional premiere of *Kinky Boots - the Musical*, directed by Creative Leadership team member, Tim Jackson, is co-produced with New Wolsey Ipswich. This follows a string of shared hits: *Made in Dagenham*, *Worst Wedding Ever*, *The Ladykillers*, *Rope*, *Once*, and *Kiss Me Quickstep*. Douglas Rintoul, Chief Executive of New Wolsey Ipswich, formerly Artistic Director at QTH, explains that "The relationship between QTH and NWT is one of the most enduring co-production relationships in the history of our theatres. Our passion for accessible and intelligent popular live performance, our values around who we make theatre for and our determination to take on big titles and reinvent them for smaller stages is what binds us. These shared principles mean that together we can make theatre for all on a scale that wouldn't necessarily be possible. Everyone wins."

In Autumn 2018, QTH co-produced for the first time with Derby Theatre. *Abigail's Party* proved a rewarding collaboration but alongside it the theatres joined forces to commission a companion piece, Atiha Sen Gupta's *Abi*. The two theatres went on to work together on revivals of *One Man Two Guvnors* and *Macbeth*, and are now focused on something even more ambitious, the co-commission of Neil Bartlett's new adaptation of *Jekyll & Hyde*. Sarah Brigham, Derby Theatre's Chief Executive, feels that "co-productions, of course, allow us to take on larger productions but more importantly give us the opportunities to work with venues we have an affinity with. I have long admired the work Mathew and his team at Queen's Theatre Hornchurch deliver and co-producing with them means we can share knowledge, skills, and expertise. There are other benefits too: working together means we can be introduced to new artists - as well as new audiences."

Opportunities often emerge from partnerships. Unusually for a theatre of its scale, on the international stage QTH has worked with Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg to make extraordinary versions of *The Crucible*, *Abigail's Party*, and *Kindertransport*. QTH is now UK representative in Future Laboratory, 12 European performing arts institutions working together to explore shared stories, and in October participating in a Masterclass in Liege and hosting Vera Boitcova from Finland for a fortnight's artist residency. Mathew Russell said, "This is a vital project which it is really special for a regional theatre like ours to be at the heart of. We received nearly 600 applications from an extraordinary range of artists and whittled the selection down to 15 who will participate



Making theatre in partnership flows through the DNA of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch.

Mathew Russell, Executive Director

in three research residencies in three different cities. We're benefiting so much from the knowledge exchange with these world class theatres too."

Long-term relationships with commercial producers are important to the future life of brilliant plays. Last year QTH was thrilled to partner with renowned West End producer Lee Dean to revive and tour the National Theatre's *Beginning* by David Eldridge. In early 2023, Lee, Dan Schumann, and QTH are world premiering *Rebus: A Game Called Malice* by Ian Rankin and Simon Reade, the new *Rebus* story told exclusively on stage, with plans in the pipeline for productions beyond. Lee believes that "collaborating with producing theatres such as Queen's Theatre Hornchurch encourages greater creativity and releases the potential to produce more elaborate, exciting and challenging productions. QTH provides a nurturing environment that allows writers, directors, creatives, and performers to develop their best work."

But perhaps the most ambitious of collaborations is Theatre Nation Partnerships, which sees QTH working with the National Theatre (NT) and 12 other organisations across England to build engagement in theatre with audiences, schools and communities. Since 2017 the programme has engaged over 220,000 participants. It has led to QTH partnering with the National to tour NT productions of *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* and an adaptation of *Jekyll & Hyde* into schools across Havering, seen QTH as the pioneering Theatre partner on Public Acts projects *Pericles* and *As You Like It*, both extraordinary acts of theatre and community, and open an international tour of Alexander Zeldin's *Love*, which temporarily transformed the Theatre's auditorium. In Spring 2023, a new Theatre Nation Partnerships production of Roy Williams' award-winning play *Sucker Punch*, produced by and opening at QTH, will tour to 10 theatres, with similar collaborations planned for 2024 and 2025. And later in 2023 an epic multi-venue production of *The Odyssey* will mark the fifth anniversary of Public Acts on the Olivier stage at the NT with community performers from QTH creating an experience like no other.

Rebus: A Game Called Malice

By Ian Rankin and Simon Reade
Director Robin Lefevre

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

The Flood

By Vickie Donoghue
Director Stef O'Driscoll
Designer Khadija Raza
Lighting Designer Rajiv Pattani
Sound Designer Dominic Kennedy

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

Sucker Punch

By Roy Williams
Director Nathan Powell

Tickets: £12.50* – £29* /
Under 26s: £8

To book for an access performance, call 01708 443333 or email boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk

Save money with a *Jump the Q* Season Ticket.

See all three of these shows from just £15 per ticket.

Find out more at queens-theatre.co.uk/jump-the-q-spring2023

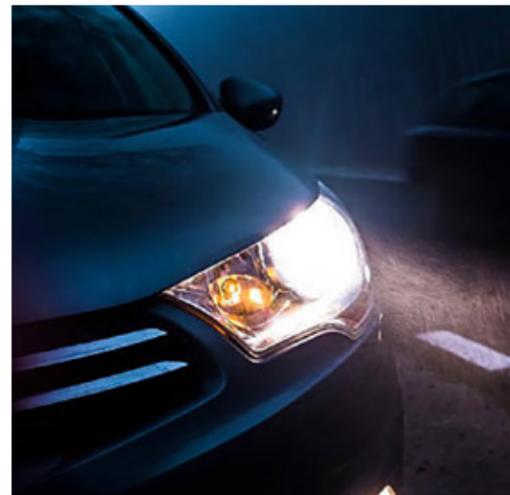


Festival of new ideas Blueprint

There's a fortnight in September set to be one of the most exciting in the Theatre's long history, as an astonishing array of artists work together to create an extraordinary festival of new and unusual theatre in different spaces, inside and outside the amazing Grade II listed building. We spoke to some of the team planning these new ideas.

'Conversations we've had with brilliant artists about Blueprint have been so inspiring' said Mathew Russell, Executive Director, talking about the festival. *'We're encouraging everyone to make theatre in some entirely different ways.'*

Blueprint offers a chance to inform plays in the development during their early stages. In 2021 Queen's Theatre Hornchurch commissioned John Webber to write a new play, set in Thurrock, *Wake Up People*. John and director Beth Kapila will be staging a reading. John explained that *'he grew up a stone's throw away from Hornchurch so I'm really excited to be part of Blueprint – and this festival shows the vibrancy of the Queen's in spades – I can't wait.'*



Writer Kenny Emson was one of the team behind Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's 2020 premiere *Misfits*. Kenny took inspiration to write his new play, *A Different Class*, and with collaborator Bethany Pitts, is trailing his script in a sharing likely to blow your mind! The cast includes Simon Darwen from last year's *Beginning*. Kenny is *'super excited. I was born in Thurrock and this play really is a slice of my childhood. It's an absolute privilege to be able to share it with an Essex audience at this stage in its development.'*

Meanwhile Danielle Kassaraté, Associate Director (Talent Development), has been working with playwright Somebody Jones to commission three playwrights from the Global majority, voices new to Queen's Theatre Hornchurch to write mini plays. With an umbrella title *Food for Thought*, each will be performed in the intimacy of the Learning Space, followed by an open discussion with audiences.

Like with *Food for Thought*, much of *Blueprint* is about offering new opportunities to artists to try out ideas. Mathew Russell said, *'In testing times, as a regional producing theatre for Outer East London and South Essex, it's really important we share the resources we have, and the funds we manage to raise, with as many as we can, offering employment opportunities to the widest range of freelancers. Blueprint represents the single biggest investment in talent development in our history.'*

Laura Ann Price is making a new piece of design led performance, *In This Smoking Chaos*, consisting of 31 scenes in 31 minutes. Laura says *'Blueprint is opening doors for creatives to explore ground breaking ways of working both inside and outside of conventional theatre spaces. To be afforded the opportunity to experiment and create with the support of the technical staff at QTH is a game changer for me as an artist and designer.'*

Another practitioner Joe Lichtenstein, who directed last year's *Beginning*, is creating theatre for a secret space deep within the building. Collaborating with an actor and musician, Joe's *The Empty Chair* is performed for two audience members at a time! Joe feels that *'The opportunity to create a piece of theatre with world class collaborators and a wildly supportive team is a dream for any creative. Blueprint is providing the environment and ingredients for artistic alchemy.'*

And, Deputy Chair of the Theatre's Board, David Shearing, is devising *This Story is True For Most Of Us*, for another magical setting, enabling audiences to see our environment from a whole



new perspective. Award winning artist David, who was also behind the recent immersive installation *The Rising Sun*, has been leading Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's Environmental Responsibility group, spearheading significant green projects over the last year. David believes that *'Blueprint offers a platform to explore new forms of art - a test bed for ideas. I hope our project unlocks people's imagination as to what theatre can be and do.'*

Other members of Queen's Theatre Hornchurch's new creative leadership team are focused on increasing opportunities for Essex and East London's community of D/deaf, disabled and neuro-divergent artists. Creative Associate Britny Virginia is curating our first *Centre Stage* event showcase of such talent, and Creative Associate, Kate Lovell, is trying out ideas for *Frostiana*, a free interactive sensory experience for all ages. Kate described how *'Blueprint has given me an opportunity to trial the beginnings of a show I've dreamed of making for many years. A chance to experiment and play without pressure is precious.'*

At the heart of *Blueprint* is a piece Queen's Theatre Hornchurch has been supporting for the last year, back by popular demand, touring to Havering and South Essex venues after the Festival. Blouse and Skirt's *Rice and Peas* is a three course, three act immersive dining experience by writer Mia Jerome, who described it as *'wonderful to be on the roster with so many exciting artists. I can't wait to see the Queen's transformed into a space for experimentation.'*

Finally, digital technology will be central to some extraordinary theatre. Mawa Theatre Company's *Shakespeare-On-Sea*, which explores Shakespeare's maritime imagination through the gaze of a Black female, will be on screen in the foyer. Tara Theatre's *Final Farewell* by Sudha Bhuchar is a series of moving accounts told through audio stories and experienced in promenade, and *Through The Ages* will see the historic Grade II building transformed nightly into a giant projection screen.

To be honest, everyone just can't wait to share what they've been planning!

Blueprint

Events:

A Different Class
Kenny Emson

Centre Stage
Britny Virginia

Final Farewell
Tara Theatre

Food for Thought
Danielle Kassaraté

Frostiana: A Sensory Experience
Kate Lovell

In This Smoking Chaos
Laura Ann Price

Rice and Peas
Blouse & Skirt

Shakespeare-On-Sea
Mawa Theatre Company

The Empty Chair
Joe Lichtenstein

This Story Is True For Most Of Us
David Shearing

Through the Ages
Queen's Theatre Hornchurch
Technical Team

Wake Up People
John Webber

Tickets:

£5* – £3* concession
(unless otherwise stated)

Free: *Frostiana: A Sensory Experience, Shakespeare-On-Sea, and Through The Ages*

Rice & Peas | £38*

The Story Is True For Most Of Us | £12*

Festival Pass

(with the exception of *Rice & Peas* and *This Story Is True For Most Of Us*)

Book 4 **Blueprint** events and get 50p off each ticket

Book 6 **Blueprint** events and get £1 off each ticket

Festival Pass Holders can enjoy 20% off food and drink at the Café and QBar for the duration of the festival

For the best experience when booking one of our access performances, speak to our Box Office Team on **01708 443333** or email **boxoffice@queens-theatre.co.uk**

*+65p QNext fee

Spotlight on...

Relaxed Performances

Throughout the year, we host a variety of additionally supported performances to enable those who might otherwise not be able to attend live theatre to experience it in a way that is more accessible to them. Perhaps you, or someone you know, could benefit?

Increasingly, theatres up and down the country are providing more and different accessible performances to accommodate the different needs of their audience. You might be familiar with captioned or signed performances for those who are hard of hearing, or audio described performances for those with visual impairments, but relaxed performances still remain a mystery for some!

A relaxed performance is a specially adapted show, where things that may seem overwhelming, off-putting or uncomfortable are adjusted to make the experience a more comfortable and enjoyable one. They primarily help adults or children with autism, sensory communication disorders, or learning difficulties.

However, many other people could benefit from the more relaxed environment of these performances, such as; anyone with epilepsy or a condition that makes them sensitive to light and sounds (such as migraines or misophonia), anyone with mental health conditions such as anxiety or panic disorder, or anyone who may need to get up and go to the toilet more frequently.

Common triggers are darkness, loud music, sudden noises and a generally unfamiliar environment in which you're expected to sit still and quiet for a long time. At a relaxed performance you can expect:

- Some technical changes such as bright lighting and loud noises being reduced, and special effects such as strobe lighting, pyrotechnics and smoke will be removed.
- The atmosphere is relaxed, the lights in the auditorium won't go fully dark, there is an open attitude towards audience noise and movement.
- You are free to leave the auditorium (and re-enter) as many times as you need, and a quiet space will be available if you need a break.
- The auditorium capacity is reduced so the theatre and foyer feel less busy, you can ask to have empty seats left around your booking.
- An information pack about the venue and the show will be sent in advance. If a familiarisation visit ahead of the performance would be helpful, this can be arranged in advance and supported by a member of theatre team.

For some audience members, the relaxed performance provided a safe environment to return to the theatre from the pandemic. For others, it allowed families to come together and share an experience in an environment that understood and supported their needs without the usual expectations of 'theatre etiquette'. These opportunities mean a lot to our audiences, as we saw from the responses to our **Relaxed Performance of *Sleeping Beauty*** this Christmas...

"Not many places do things for SEN children like this. I didn't have to spend 20 minutes explaining my daughter to people for her to be accepted. It's been brilliant."

"You just need to look at the smile on his face. He's beaming, as well as everyone around him. He's loved it. He's had a great day."

"The social story you sent out before the show, you have no idea how useful it is. It makes a trip like this possible."

Other Accessible Performances include:

Dementia Friendly Performances: Tailored to suit the needs of people living with Dementia, these performances have a relaxed environment in the auditorium, similar to our relaxed performances. Our most popular Dementia Friendly Performances are our *Down Memory Lane* matinees!

Our next accessible performance is: *Down Memory Lane* – Dementia Friendly, Wednesday 15 Feb 2:30pm

Rebus: Touch Tour (1pm) and Live Audio Described Performance (2:30pm), Saturday 18 Feb



Spotlight on...

Schools and young people

As a member of the National Theatre's Theatre Nation Partnerships Programme, we have lots of exciting projects for schools and young people running throughout 2023!

In January, the National Theatre is touring a new production, *Shut Up, I'm Dreaming*, to 4 schools in Outer East London and South Essex in partnership with Queen's Theatre Hornchurch. In collaboration with young people across the country, the production has been created by acclaimed physical theatre company, *The PappyShow*, in response to workshops with over 100 secondary school students.

Directed by Kane Husbands, the production will visit a different school every day for 11 weeks across 11 areas in England. In Outer East London and South Essex, the production will tour Dagenham Park C of E School, Gaynes School, St Edward's C of E Academy and Marshalls Park Academy. School halls across the country will be transformed with a gigantic moveable climbing frame set.

The PappyShow is a physical theatre company which aims to platform marginalized identities and create diverse, joyful and collaborative productions rooted in the lived experience of their performers, bringing people together to move, dance, create moments of radical joy and share stories.

Following a successful pilot phase that began in Autumn 2021, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch is also partnering with the National Theatre to deliver its *Speak Up* programme in five secondary schools in Outer East London and South Essex over the next three years.

"Speak Up feels like a community."

Speak Up student

Speak Up is a new secondary schools programme that aims to inspire a movement of young people who want to speak up about the issues that matter to them – in their schools, their communities and nationally. Young people will work collaboratively with their teachers, artists, local arts organisations and the National Theatre to make local artworks and creative projects.

The *Speak Up* partner schools are The Brittons Academy, Drapers Academy, Lime Academy Forest Approach, Sanders Draper and St Edward's C of E Academy. Students will take part in a variety of creative sessions to empower them to tell their own stories and connect with each other and their local communities.

The *Speak Up* Creative Associates, LUNG, deliver the national training with artists and teachers and to develop the creative ambitions of *Speak Up*. Campaign-led verbatim theatre company LUNG are Creative Associates for *Speak Up*, delivering national training with artists and teachers and developing the creative ambitions of the programme.

"We're so lucky that we get to do this every week."

Speak Up student

Keep your eyes peeled for more exciting projects, including the National Theatre's production of *Hamlet* visiting local primary schools in March and a mainstage takeover with NT Connections Festival 2023 and our 5 young company partners – Roding Valley High School, Eastbury Community School, New City College Epping Forest, Ormiston Rivers Academy and Store Room Youth Theatre.

Kerry Hunt, Education and Partnerships Producer



Spotlight on...

QGreen

The climate emergency is bringing cultural organisations into the spotlight in how they are responding to the challenges facing our planet. This month we share our work in reducing our impact, becoming more energy efficient, and inspiring others through our storytelling.

A recent climate report 'Act Green' (2022), stressed how 77% of theatre audiences think cultural organisations should take responsibility and influence society about climate change, whilst 93% expressed they expect venues like Queen's Theatre Hornchurch to make sure our venue is as energy efficient as possible. In 2021, we established **The Environmental Responsibility Committee** to monitor, report and develop organisational change in line with the Arts Council England investment principles. We developed a bold and ambitious strategy 'QGreen', the centre of which is a £250,000 investment in the fabric of our building. This has in part been funded by your 65p ticket contributions, and we thank you for this urgent and much needed support. Like many households and businesses who face growing energy costs, we too have felt the pinch. Our annual increase for Gas & Electric this year is £137,000, representing a 163% increase from the previous year. In March, we completed a series of upgrades that are already helping us reduce costs and our environmental impact. We already purchase **100% green energy** and have

developed **advanced monitoring systems** that enable us to target our resources. We have **upgraded our air handling unit** (our single largest use of energy), we have purchased a stock of **40 new LED lamps** for the stage, and spent over £40,000 on new **solar panels** to support our heating systems. We have conducted a review of all our lighting which have now been **replaced by LEDs**, bringing a **70% reduction in energy use** in our lighting alone. These investments have **reduced our overall energy consumption by 15% this year**. Despite our building being nearly 50 years old, we have improved our energy rating year-on-year and now maintain an energy rating of B (DEC).

QGreen is not just about reducing energy, it is a holistic approach to all we are doing on and off the stage. During 2021/22 we adopted the Theatre Greenbook – a new industry standard on benchmarking and monitoring how materials for production (set, costumes and technical equipment) are recycled and reused. We are currently meeting all baseline levels with the view to work toward an intermediate level in the next cycle. We have championed bold new storytelling, with the aim to **inspire us all to consider our relationship with the natural world: 'This Story is True For Most Of Us...'** developed as part of the *Blueprint Festival*, offered audiences the chance to enjoy a seven-course plant-based tasting meal on the roof of the theatre. Using locally sourced produce, it enabled us to consider our supply chains going forward.

50% of all the carbon emissions relating to our operation comes via audiences travelling by car to our venue.

You can do your bit too. We invite you to consider using public transport where you can, car share if possible, and help us by telling us how you've travelled to us via our post show questionnaires. So much has been achieved in just one year that we wanted to take this moment to share with you. We will continue to be creative in playing our part in not only reducing our impact but actively creating a better environment for all of us.

David Shearing on behalf of the Environmental Responsibility Committee



Spotlight on...

Our Relaunches QCafé

Over the past couple of months, our Customer Services and Facilities team have been working on the relaunch of our QCafé. The Café has been transformed and is now fresh, sleek, and modern, to match the style of the recently redesigned Box Office and QBar. We recently spoke to Peter Thorne and Megan Withers to find out more.

Our main aims were to create an improved culinary offering and enhance the community hub atmosphere that our Grade II listed building is already well known for.

As part of the relaunch, we've introduced a brand-new menu. Customers can choose from a wide selection of breakfast items ranging from American pancake stacks to avocado and cream cheese bagels to freshly baked pastries. Breakfast is served daily from 10am-12pm.

The daytime menu, served from 12pm, boasts an offering of vegan and vegetarian options, ranging from poke bowls to salads, to meat-free sausage rolls to the more traditional sandwiches and baguettes. The daytime menu is available up to half an hour before a performance, and we highly recommend reserving a table and booking a pre-show meal. We're delighted to have a menu that caters for all!

Whether you're vegan, vegetarian or require gluten-free food, there's a great choice for everyone.

Over the last three years, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch has been looking at ways to become more sustainable. This was an essential factor to consider during the refurbishment of the Café. The works were carried out by our own Facilities Team, materials were reused from our in-house workshop, LED lights were installed and new energy-efficient appliances, including a hot plate, chiller and state-of-the-art Lavazza coffee machine purchased.

We have introduced an extremely exciting new menu filled with a range of dishes. Vegan, vegetarian or gluten free, we cater for all!

We have also recently signed up to be a part of **Too Good to Go**. This is an app that connects customers to local cafés, restaurants and stores that have unsold food surplus at the end of the day and helps fight against food waste. A new addition to the Café is the mobile ordering service. This allows customers to place an order by scanning the QR code on the menu. Customers can then either choose for their order to be delivered to their table or collect it from the Café counter. There is an option to pre-order too!

QCafé is invaluable for many local people as it is perfect place to meet up with friends and family, for local community groups to socialise, and somewhere for local businesses to hold meetings. As many people now work from home, the café provides a comfortable space for people to escape to for a change of scenery when working remotely. With the location of the Café being situated on the ground floor of the Theatre it is wheelchair user friendly and accessible to all.

We're looking forward to welcoming you soon!

