

Chair of the Board of Trustees Recruitment Pack



WINTER 2025

WELCOME

As Stratford East celebrates its 140th year we are looking for an exceptional Chair to take over from Dame Margaret Hodge who is stepping down to lead the independent review into Arts Council England. Over the past 7 years Margaret has worked closely with the leadership team and a committed board of Trustees to strengthen the reputation of the theatre, maintain robust financial resources and oversee a strong artistic programme.

Our ideal candidate is an inspirational leader who can ensure the theatre's long term sustainability, continue to uphold our position as a vibrant civic hub for East London and build on the theatre's reputation for artistic excellence: delivering high quality, award winning theatre which draws audiences from across London while being rooted in and representing our many local communities.

Dame Margaret Hodge said: *"It has been both a huge privilege and an enormous pleasure to have chaired the Stratford East Board for the last seven years. Despite very challenging times the theatre has maintained its unique and historic reputation for producing excellent shows that are both thought-provoking and engaging and that attract a diverse audience both locally and across London. It has been a joy to work with both the Board and the theatre's many talented staff and I am proud that we have built the resilience necessary for us to succeed. With a great new leadership team now in place we can be confident that Stratford East can move from strength to strength. I won't go far and I look forward to regular visits to shows over the coming years."*

"Good theatre draws the energies out of the place where it is and gives it back" - Joan Littlewood



ABOUT STRATFORD EAST

Stratford East is an engine for bold storytelling and trailblazing talent that speaks to now. Rooted in East London, we create unforgettable experiences that challenge, inspire, and open doors for everyone. We are driven by a spirit of reinvention—expanding what theatre can be, who it's for, and how it's made. From fresh takes on classics to urgent new voices, we bring stories to life that reflect and shape the world around us.

In 2025, Lisa Spirling and Hanna Streeter will join Stratford East as Artistic Director and Executive Director. With their combined experience in running Theatre503 and The Orange Tree, their tenure will usher in a new chapter of creativity. As we celebrate 140 years, we look ahead—to the artists and audiences who will define what's next.

Stratford East sits in the heart of East London, in the London Borough of Newham, a borough that along with just four others in London was identified by ACE in 2022 as one of their Priority Places for increased investment and improved engagement. It has one of the youngest and most ethnically diverse populations in London and is an area which has undergone massive regeneration and change over the last 15 years. Newham is an exciting place to be in 2025, with the opening of East Bank as a cultural hub comprising BBC Music Studios, London College of Fashion, Sadler's Wells East, UCL and V&A East, alongside huge investment and development across the borough, bringing more people to the area.

"The Coolest Theatre in London" - The Times

OUR VISION:

We believe that brilliant quality theatre should be available to everyone

OUR MISSION:

We make theatre both for, and inspired by, our community in Newham, East London. We continue the political and revolutionary ethos of our founder Joan Littlewood as a leading London theatre and civic hub for East London. We are driven by our art, which is inclusive and bold. We tell stories that provoke discourse about the world we live in and our place within it.

OUR VALUES:

- Revolutionary – we are confident in leading change
- Inclusive – our doors are open to all
- Bold – we are willing to take risks
- Excellent – we strive to make everything of outstanding quality
- Relevant – the work we do is relevant to the place we are in, and the times in which we live
- Eclectic – we are informed by a wide range of thoughts, styles, tastes

OUR PRODUCTIONS

In 24-25, we started the year with an exuberant and acclaimed revival of *The Big Life*, which attracted a total audience of over 20,000.

Our 140th Season includes a sellout production of Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*; co-productions with Leeds Playhouse / Nottingham Playhouse (*Animal Farm* adapted by Tatty Hennessy) and Sherman Theatre Cardiff (*The Women of Llanrumney* by Azuka Oforka); a new comedy musical, *Lovestuck* by James Cooper, directed by Jamie Morton; a return visit for the extraordinary *Tambo & Bones* and a new adaptation by Suzan-Lori Parks of the cult classic film musical *The Harder They Come*. We will also—as we do every year—produce our own pantomime (in 2024 it was *Pinocchio*) and in July 2025 we will be collaborating with Sadler's Wells and local groups from Newham on a large-scale community production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

In addition to the core programme, we also host a range of hugely popular comedy, music and spoken word one-night events. Stratford East has a 455-seat auditorium, a vibrant bar and café, and a rehearsal space. In 2023-24 we welcomed over 72,000 audience members and we will exceed this in 2024-25.

★★★★★ **"Unique, challenging and oh-so necessary"** - The Guardian

Tambo & Bones Photo: The Other Richard



Our full programme of work – past and future - can be found on our website. Our produced and co-produced work from the past few years include:

2024

Pinocchio
Abigail's Party
Now, I See
The Big Life

2023

Jack and the Beanstalk
Beautiful Thing
Tambo & Bones
Village Idiot

2022

Cinderella
The Wonderful World of Dissocia
Burn It Down
After the End

2021

Red Riding Hood
Shining City
Extinct
The Sun, The Moon and the Stars
Press Play Here (online only)

2020

No Masks (film)
846 Live
846 (online only)

2019

Dick Whittington
Our Lady of Kibeho
Noye's Fludde
King Hedley II
Equus



The Big Life Photo:Mark Senior

★★★★★ *“Infectious,
heart-rendering and...
achingly resonant”* - Time Out

LEARNING & PARTICIPATION

Alongside our work on stage, we run a Learning & Participation programme that is accessible and inclusive to all. Over 9,000 young people and over 2,000 adults engaged with us through our Learning and Participation work last year. Our range of programmes creates a lasting impact for our local communities and aims to:

- Provide routes into the industry, across all theatre departments, with a particular focus on diversifying those coming into the workplace, ensuring the theatre workplace of the future is a diverse and skilled one
- Provide opportunities to people of all ages to develop their creative talents and engage with the work of the theatre, ensuring that there is a creative outlet open to the widest possible constituency

Key projects include:

Junior Youth Theatre (11-15 year olds) and Youth Theatre

(16-21 year olds): A year-round programme for young people to develop their acting and creativity.

Young Company: A 10-month programme for 18-25 year olds who are interested in developing their acting skills. Working with a range of industry freelancers, and led by a professional director, the programme culminates in a full production on the Stratford East stage.

Young Techs: A short course to develop the technical theatre skills of 16-21 year olds. The course leads to paid work experience, and potentially paid casual work.

Adult Drama: A termly course for any Newham adult above 26, to develop their acting and creative skills in a friendly environment.

Schools Programme: Offering technical theatre insight days and bespoke programmes linking to the productions and the school curriculum.

Community Ambassadors: A programme supporting 10 volunteers to work with groups in the community to introduce them to the theatre, as well as to run heritage tours of the theatre.

Community Socials: Regular light touch events to introduce local people and community groups to the theatre. Between 30 – 40 local community groups access free tickets, workshops and events with us across the year.

In July this year, over 140 local people will come together to create our production of Romeo & Juliet, involving young actors and dancers, adult community actors, a community choir and a visual art project.

Freelance Royalty Scheme: A free membership scheme to support all theatre freelancers living or working in East London. Membership includes access to space, free tickets, workshops, networking and surgery events and we currently have over 1,000 members.

“Our children aren’t able to afford theatre trips so this was particularly important for us. I loved the diversity in the cast also. It allowed the students to see themselves.”

- Newham Primary School Teacher



Young Company in SCREAM FIRE. Photo: Greta Zabulyte

REPRESENTATION, JUSTICE AND BELONGING

We want everyone who works with us to feel supported, and we want our theatre to feel accessible to anyone, no matter what their background and access needs. Stratford East's programme of work has always championed a diversity of stories, so that any audience member might see their story on our stage. We are committed to our anti-racism and anti-ablism work as a continuous journey of change and progression.

For seven years Stratford East was part of the first Ramps on the Moon consortium, a group of theatres working to increase D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent representation. Building on this work, we established a staff led Committee (RADAR) to continue to raise awareness and drive access initiatives across all areas of our organisation.

Closing the Gap, our staff led committee dedicated to levelling the playing field for Stratford East's Black, Asian and Global Majority staff and artists, was created in 2020. Closing the Gap strives to increase staff sense of belonging, increase representation at Senior Management level and make theatre a safer place for all people from the Global Majority.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We need and aspire to be an environmentally sustainable organisation and are embedding our environmental work across all departments. We want to reduce our carbon footprint by ensuring that our buildings, productions and processes are as efficient and sustainable as possible. We are in the process of updating our environmental policy and developing an action plan in alignment with our values and applying Theatre Green Book principles to all our productions.

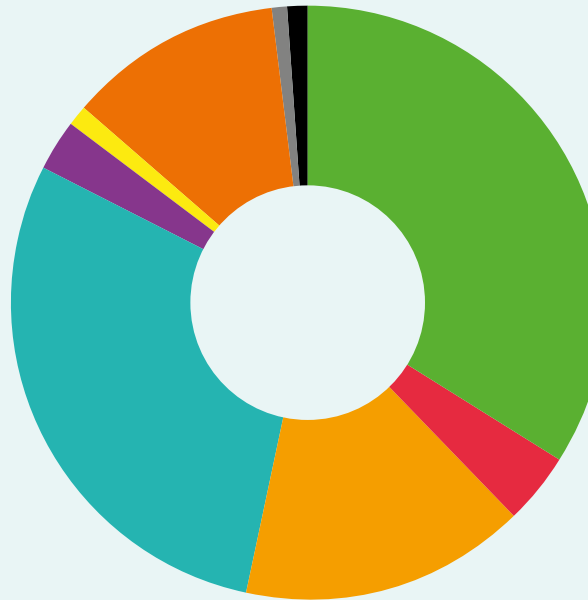
★★★★★ *"As timeless as ever"* - Evening Standard



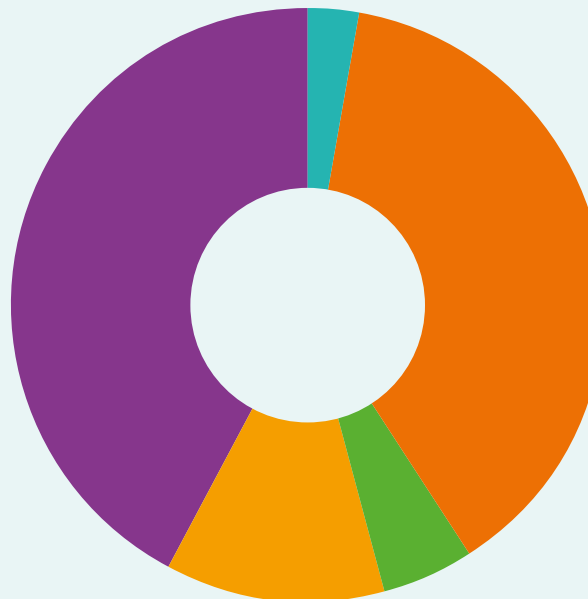
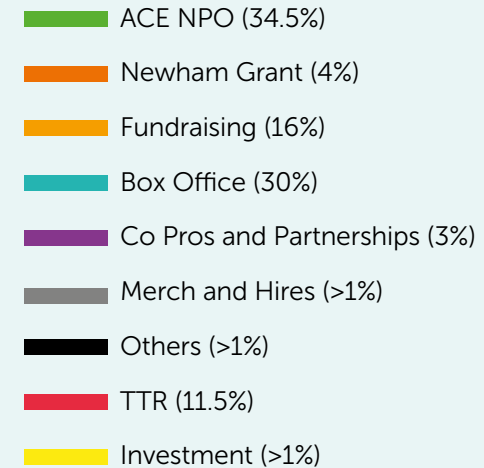
FINANCES

Our annual turnover is just over £4m. We successfully secured Arts Council England National Portfolio Funding for the 2023-2026 period. Additional income comes from ticket sales, fundraising, Theatre Tax Relief and other revenue sources.

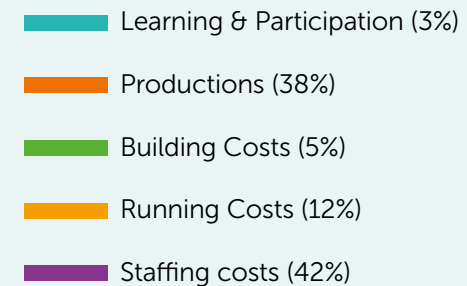
At year end March 2024 our general reserves stood at £787,472, plus designated funds of £670,000 (two funds for three months' operating costs plus capital building maintenance).



Income 2024-25 Split



Expenditure 2024-25 Split



GOVERNANCE

Stratford East is registered as Pioneer Theatres Limited with Companies House (Company number: 556251) and with the Charity Commission (Charity Number: 233801). The Charity is led by a highly experienced Board of 15 Trustees and the Board includes skilled individuals from the world of arts, local government, finance and communications. We have two Young Trustees who have come through our Learning & Participation programmes.

We have a trading subsidiary, Stratford East (Trading) Limited which operates our bar. We also have a development board, which has no formal role in governance, but supports our fundraising, and is chaired by one of our Board Members.

The Board meets quarterly, in person at Stratford East whenever possible with additional online meetings for the Finance Committee and our trading subsidiary, Stratford East Trading. Trustees are also expected to attend performances, supporters / fundraising evenings and other events taking place at the theatre.

PEOPLE

Senior Management Team

Stratford East is led by the Artistic Director and Executive Director, reporting to the Board. They are supported by the Senior Management team of six including the Learning & Participation Director, Finance and Fundraising Director, Operations Director, Director of Producing, Head of Production and Head of Marketing & Communications.

Staff Base

We have a 45-strong central staff base and a customer facing casual team of 60 working across front of house, bar and box office. We also engage a large number of freelancers to work on and off stage in our productions, as well as casual technicians.



FACTS AND FIGURES FOR THE 2023-24 FINANCIAL YEAR



174

FREELANCERS ENGAGED

225

PERFORMANCES

8

PRODUCTIONS

9,384

YOUNG PEOPLE
ENGAGED WITH US

1114

MEMBERS OF OUR
FREELANCE
ROYALTY
SCHEME

72,582

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

2,179

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPANTS

40,000

MONTHLY WEBSITE VISITORS

1 GREAT
THEATRE

9 COMMUNITY
AMBASSADORS

ROLE Chair of the Board of Trustees

Time Commitment:

- Estimated 2-3 days per month
- Initial 3-year term, renewable for a second term
- Voluntary and unremunerated position



MAIN PURPOSE OF THE POST

The Chair provides leadership to the Board, guides the Executive team, ensures legal and financial compliance and engages with stakeholders across all areas of activity. They will also take a lead role in fundraising, advocating for the organisation and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Overall objectives:

- Provide robust leadership to ensure proper governance
- Ensure long term organisational resilience and sustainability
- Act as an effective ambassador and spokesperson for Stratford East, promoting values and sharing successes
- Effective risk management

★★★★ *"frequently dazzling, acutely truthful production"* - The Times

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Effective chairing of all board meetings ensuring proper governance and scrutiny and ensuring diverse and relevant contributions from all Trustees.
- Overseeing financial management.
- Ensuring compliance with all relevant charity, company and employment legislation.
- Approval and overview of all strategic plans.
- Leading fundraising, working with Executive team and the Director of Finance and Fundraising to leverage funding through networks, individual donors, corporates and trusts.
- Sitting on the Development Board and attending meetings if required.
- Attending Finance Committee Meetings and Stratford East Trading Board meetings.
- Oversee, with the Executive Director, the effective induction for new Trustees.
- Support and challenge the Executive Team in the delivery of their responsibilities.
- Uphold exemplary ethical standards in the organisation's conduct.
- Attending performances and other events.
- Maintaining regular contact / dialogue with the Executive Team.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

ESSENTIAL:

- Strong leadership and strategic thinking
- Financial and commercial acumen / experience
- High level networking and advocacy skills
- A commitment to artistic excellence and belief in the capacity of theatre and the arts to effect change
- Knowledge of charity and corporate governance
- Experience and confidence in managing risk, change and innovation
- Understanding and awareness of broader social, political and economic issues
- Knowledge and understanding of the local communities within East London and the issues affecting Newham in particular

HOW TO APPLY

Stratford East is committed to a policy of equal opportunities embracing diversity in all areas of activity and positively welcomes applications from disabled people and people of all ethnicities.

To apply, please send an expression of interest to board@stratfordeast.com

The deadline for the applications is Wednesday 30 April 2025 at noon.

★★★★★ *"Funny, heart-warming & splendidly staged"* - The Daily Mail



★★★★ "Powerful, emotional intimacy" - The Stage

**STRATFORD
EAST**



stratfordeast.com

020 8534 7374

Now, / See. Photo: Camilla Greenwell

