

Letter from LTG Patron Jessica Swale



Dear members,

I hope that you're all well, enjoying this blissful weather and relishing whatever theatrical adventures you're currently a part of. It's always so inspiring to hear of the swathe of dramatic offerings from the membership, from inventive revisions of classics, energetic contemporary plays to brand new works made by the members. And now, more than ever, it feels crucial that we continue to create theatre with and for our communities. Shows for everyone, that are accessible, affordable and allow our whole population access to thought-provoking, heart-filling stories.

To give a little context for this remark, I've recently returned from America, where I spent a year making a movie, and lived, for the latter six months, not far from Broadway. And boy, did it make me appreciate our thriving theatre industry over here, where it doesn't cost you the price of a small car to go to the theatre! Plays on Broadway, even off-off-off Broadway, still price most regular citizens out of the market. And, as a consequence, they have to find celebrity casting in every play in order to persuade an audience to pay the ticket price. To stage a new play there without a big name attached, or to create anything which is remotely experimental or not super commercial, is a near impossibility. And whilst I saw several shows which were impressive, I saw just as many that were tired revisions of past tense plays, only staged because *insert random celebrity here* was on the billing. Uninspiring, unimaginative and sadly, sometimes, somewhat soulless. It doesn't make for a creative environment at all.

Whilst of course there are plenty of West End tickets that are maddeningly expensive, here in the UK there is always the option to go cheaper, and fill our hearts and brains with brilliant, inspiring quality work which doesn't break the bank. Most West End shows have deals and day seats, regional theatres offer discounts for certain performances, and Shakespeare's Globe still offers yard tickets at £7.50 for every performance (it's the equivalent percentage of a London wage that it cost to be a groundling back in 1599. Bargain!). And what with NT Live and our regular cinematic offerings of recorded productions, it feels like here in our bones we believe that theatre should be for everyone.

And never was that more true than in our little theatres and with our amateur companies. With the standard of your work as high as it is, you remain absolutely central to ensuring the availability of theatre across our whole country. It really lifts my spirits to know that you're as likely to spend a wonderful night watching Inua Ellams latest offering in a small theatre near Dartmoor, as you are to see it in a major London venue. For that, I thank you all. Keep up the great work and do remember how important your creativity is to all of us, now and in the future.

With all best wishes

Jess