

Making theatre matter as a force for change

National Theatre Wales Strategic Plan 2023-2027



The stories we tell ask questions, tell uncomfortable truths and bring us joy, fear, awe, magic: most importantly, as a nation, they help us to imagine.

Equality, inclusion and sustainability are at the heart of these stories.

When we first began our journey, the focus was 'place-making'. Today, our emphasis has shifted to '**change-making**'. But the same things are at our heart: we're committed to harnessing the creativity and power of individuals and communities all over Wales. And to making sure every person in Wales knows their right to access and engage with theatre, too.

In order to make it work, it's important that everyone in Wales feels represented and sees something of themselves in what we create. We have a responsibility to represent and be relevant to everyone. To do it, we need to destroy the unhelpful barriers some people face, and help create a collective national identity that celebrates and speaks to the cultures, languages and experiences of Wales - actions which carry hope for future generations. We know it's a big job.

So, how will we do it?

The foundation of our approach is simple and it will be applied across all of our projects, productions, performances and ideas.

- 1. We'll invite the people of Wales to tell their stories in different ways through performances, spaces and experiences – opportunities of all shapes and sizes**
- 2. We'll draw people closer to one another and help build meaningful relationships that create positive change**
- 3. We'll connect audiences, theatre makers and communities to ask big questions, listen and reflect upon the Wales – and the world – we all dream of.**

Our work has impacted and redefined the Welsh theatre sector in the twelve years since we started out. Now we're at a point of reflection. Our founding commitment to place-making has established a pioneering creative community engagement model. Our productions have won international acclaim, connecting with 70,000 community participants, 324,000 live audience members and a further 2.7 million people digitally since 2010. This is just the beginning and we still have lots to do. Our own experiences of recent years have sparked a period of self-scrutiny and reflection about what we're truly here to achieve and where we go next. We've listened and asked ourselves some tough questions: change is the inevitable answer.

This 2023-2027 strategy sets out the ways we'll evolve our purpose and respond to an ever-changing Wales and wider world.



Our rationale

The case for change now.

Theatre in Wales is a starkly uneven playing field, but we already knew this. Arts Council Wales' 2018-19 Arts Portfolio Wales survey showed us that fewer than 4% of the people working in the arts identified as Black, Asian or Mixed heritage or disabled. Global majority freelancers working in the arts feel insufficiently supported, describing tokenism and poor representation. During the pandemic they also lost proportionately more income than their white counterparts. And 43% of disabled arts freelancers describe feeling like irritations, rather than assets. The UK Disability Arts Alliance 2021 survey report showed that 49% of their respondents had less work than before the pandemic - or none at all.

We already know that almost 43% of people from more privileged socio-economic groups are likely to go to the theatre once a year, whilst attendance figures for their less socio-economically privileged counterparts stands at 29%. This is unacceptable - engagement in theatre can be life-changing. Those who could benefit most are also the least likely to be involved and as a result, society suffers. But we can learn from movements like Black Lives Matter, and We Shall Not Be Removed which have highlighted successful ways to bring everyone on the journey, and achieve permanent, wide-reaching change. Storytelling and self-expression are a fundamental human right.

This is also fundamental to the successful future of theatre - without representation from all walks of society we can't be relevant. In order to thrive, we must attract allcomers to get involved with NTW as makers, attendees or contributors.

Another key consideration is our environment. Human-generated climate change is the biggest threat to current and future generations. It's time to act, to limit our impact.

The Theatre Green Book has created a pan-sector approach, setting out methodologies to guide theatres and related organisations. Following it, we'll contribute to delivering COP26 goals, working with business and government to create a new norm - to limit global warming this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.



Farrow's Creative

Our vision

Making theatre matter as a force for change. Harnessing the power of Wales' stories, people and places to collectively imagine and shape a more equal, sustainable and environmentally just world.



Our mission

We'll collaborate with audiences, communities and theatre makers to:

- Tell the stories and amplify the lived experiences of Wales, exploring the challenges of our times to inspire change
- Place equality, social and environmental justice and well-being at the core of what we do
- Create essential and extraordinary experiences together that connect us locally, nationally and globally.

Our values

Connection is the lifeblood of everything we do. We gather people to listen, question, share ideas, stories and imagine futures together, to help build a collective national identity.

Courage is vital for progress. We're bold, ambitious, prepared to take risks - and even fail - in order to keep moving forward. Discomfort can be a compelling force for good - those moments are often where the most brilliant changes happen.

Authenticity is non-negotiable. We continually challenge ourselves and our assumptions along the way and we welcome truth and difference in those who work with us, at all times.

Our aims

We'll achieve our vision and mission by building in the following six areas.



Our ethos

We'll create a culture of listening and belonging, with audiences, communities and theatre-makers all contributing, together.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Including audiences and communities in our creative decision-making, our artistic development and production
- Researching the demands and needs of audiences, communities and theatre-makers - especially those who don't think theatre is for them and those most marginalised today
- Consulting on strategic decisions and activity from the start
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on our progress, transparently.

Our work

We'll stay brave and continue to produce theatre that's world-class, cohesive, bold and accessible – and that most importantly, drives change.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Creating work of the highest quality, that reflects the commitments to inclusion and relevance in our audience engagement strategy
- Pushing our own boundaries through constant innovation in our work, embracing new forms and processes, digital and others
- Actively involving communities in our planning and delivery
- Building open and accessible development processes so that people from every walk of Wales' society can tell stories in new, impactful ways
- Listening to young people – we need their voice to inform an effective strategy that will support well-being now and in the future, and open up creative pathways.

Our reach

Everyone in Wales should feel that NTW is theirs: particularly those who've never thought theatre was for them. So we'll actively build new audiences.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Building trust in our reinvigorated distinct, authentic and relevant brand
- Improving our communications to extend beyond existing audiences, reaching those who don't feel theatre's for them, in relevant ways
- Building an audience-centric approach to the way we capture and manage our data on people, so we produce work in response to the needs of our audiences
- Working in partnership across our sector to gather and share insights and data so that we'll all better understand audience needs and motivations.

Our commitment

We'll prioritise anti-discrimination, social justice and environmental responsibility across all we do – and we'll hold ourselves to account on this.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Creating the right environments for theatre-making so it'll feel inclusive and welcoming to everyone
- Improving accessibility, layering digital and physical access through our activities and learning more about the needs of individuals who identify as disabled
- Safeguarding our people, nurture our flexible working culture and accommodate needs around physical and mental well-being, and caring responsibilities
- Continuing our commitment to environmentally sustainable practices and sharing these with our sector, improving understanding of climate change as we go.

Our responsibility

We're committed not just to surviving but to thriving, for everyone. We aim to attract new and diverse income streams and make sure that we offer unparalleled financial and cultural value for the people of Wales.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Exploring the feasibility of a new commercial offer which could create new opportunities for theatre makers and brokerage or service provision fees for us
- Fostering a small number of mutually beneficial, long-term corporate partnerships with organisations who share our values, based on best practice in corporate fundraising
- Making the most of our new and extended audiences with sensitive and fair ticket pricing strategies, reinvigorated charitable donation opportunities and merchandise
- Sharing resources within the sector and beyond for everyone's mutual benefit
- Continuing to scrutinise costs, prioritising artistic expenditure.

Our identity

Being Welsh means a multitude of complex things. Being a citizen of the world does, too. We'll explore what it means to be human now, to connect us with people everywhere.

We'll demonstrate this by:

- Making sure we include lead artists from different social and geographical contexts across Wales
- Creating opportunities for new audiences, collaborators and artists to instigate projects
- Seeking emerging stories with the potential and relevance to connect globally
- Working to give our work a longer lifespan, by planning for capacity, broader reach and impact in all our projects, right from their inception.

Our people

Our focus is on three broad groups:

- Audiences
- Community participants
- Theatre makers

We love the idea that people can move fluidly across the three and believe that this is the path to incredible theatre. It opens up personal and professional opportunities for people to grow.

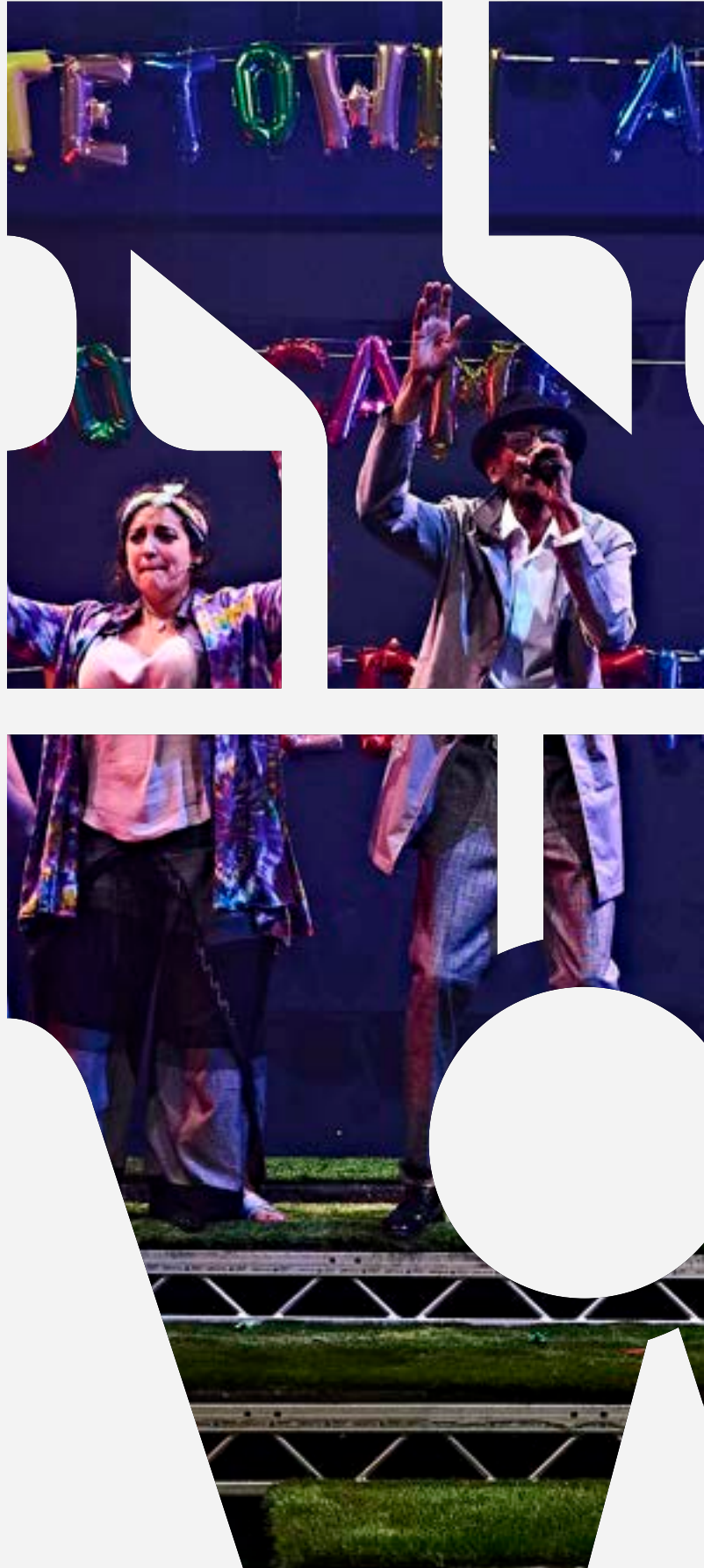
But we're particularly committed to the following people, too. We call them our Key Individuals. These are those worst hit by the pandemic, who face significant barriers and who'll benefit most from the power of theatre to bring about positive change. In broad terms, these are people who've experienced or who are at risk of experiencing:

- Racism
- Ableism
- Poverty

And also young people aged 14 – 25.

Of course, we're for everyone and that doesn't change. But we'd particularly like to encourage and welcome people who may not ordinarily get involved to join our journey.

So we'll tailor some projects to meet that need and make sure these groups are represented on our team, in our work and in our audiences. It'll generate positive change and benefit right across Wales and beyond.



Our work

Our three main areas of work are:

Collaboration – over the past ten years we've fine-tuned a programme of creative projects that boosts the power of communities, channelling stories and experiences from people from all walks of life. Now it's time to build on it, exploring models and partnerships in new ways that continue to put voices and stories at the heart of our work. It challenges the status quo and reshapes perceptions of theatre in a healthy way.

Creative Development – our big focus here is our continued work with remarkable theatre makers and collectives. But diversifying input is vital so we're relevant to everyone. We plan to open up the pathways, listening harder to audiences, communities and cultural organisations so we can attract new people to contribute to our creative output. We want to push boundaries and smash expectations – we need new voices to help us to do that.

Production – we're a free-range theatre for all of Wales. That's exciting and gives us the freedom to bring performance to new places, in new forms – we're subversive by nature and what we create is never ordinary. Our theatre is a space where people from all parts of society can join forces to imagine, dream and create together in new ways and places.

They unite to create theatre that places audiences - the Welsh public - at the heart of what we do.



Our deliverables

We've grouped these into three sections: outputs, outcomes and impact.

Our outputs

By outputs, we mean:

- Our theatre productions and creative projects
- The composition of our team and the reach of our activities
- The perceptions of the people we work with - and for
- Financial investment in our organisation and people

Our outcomes

When we talk about our outcomes, we're referring to the medium-term changes we'll generate for our people. These are specifically aligned to Wales' Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

A Prosperous Wales: Increasing employability

A Resilient Wales: Building self-confidence and increasing climate emergency awareness and activism

An Equal Wales: Increasing cultural activism

A Healthier Wales: Improving resilience to and reduce risk of mental illness

A Wales of cohesive communities: Exposing people to new worlds, philosophies and cultures

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language: Deepening access to, and the impact of, Welsh theatre

A Globally Responsible Wales: Increasing ability to empathise

We're forward-looking and forward-thinking in focus, across all we do.

Our impact

This is the long-term change we'll generate for Wales, or put simply: the way our outputs and outcomes have delivered against our Vision.

Measuring success

We'll measure our success against our outcomes, outputs and impact in a range of different ways, such as collecting feedback from our audiences and people, delivering research studies and using key performance indicators for our projects and performances.



Tim Rooney

Our delivery

The delivery principles we're putting in place to achieve our goals are:

- Following the **Theory of Change** methodology to make sure what we do is comprehensive and leaves no stone unturned.
- Mapping out a number of new **Artistic Delivery Processes** outlining key considerations when commissioning any creative activity.
- Foregrounding the **Well-being Goals** and the **Sustainable Development Principles** of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and considering how we can support others to achieve them, too.
- Committing to our own Welsh Government **Cultural Contract Pledge** to reinforce our social purpose - and deliver on it.
- Delivering on the Goals laid out in the Welsh Government's **Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan**.
- Following We Shall Not Be Moved's, **Seven Principles to Ensure an Inclusive Recovery**, making inclusion central to our activities.
- Applying the **Theatre Green Book** methodologies - we've set ourselves targets on Intermediate and Advanced levels of compliance to ensure ongoing improvement in our sustainability.
- Supporting the Welsh Government's **1 million Welsh speakers** and doubling the daily use of Welsh by 2050 target by representing Welsh language culture within our creative activity.
- Building our knowledge of **digital forms and platforms** to attract and sustain new, broader and more diverse audiences.

- Operating in the **most efficient ways** and relying less on public funding.
- Making the most of **our national role** and our place in the sector as a facilitator and partner, in line with our Aims and Objectives.

Our programme

Our programme of shows and projects for 2023-2026 will serve our Aims and Objectives while giving us enough space to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges along the way. Everything we do will apply Our Mission, to:

- Tell the stories and amplify the lived experiences of Wales, exploring the challenges of our times to inspire change
- Put equality, social and environmental justice and well-being at the heart of all we do
- Create essential and extraordinary experiences together that will connect us all, locally, nationally and globally.



Jorge Lizalde

Find out more

You'll find up to date information on what is coming and how to get involved on our website: nationaltheatrewales.org

Directors

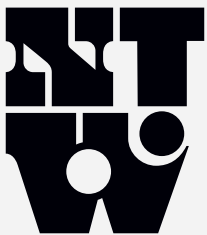
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