

Invitation to potential patrons from Nottingham Shakespeare Company CIC

Introduction

We are the *Nottingham Shakespeare Company CIC*, a dynamic not-for-profit theatre organisation committed to celebrating the timeless works of William Shakespeare. Based in the heart of Nottingham and performing throughout the East Midlands, we recognise the transformative power of theatre to foster connection, understanding, and joy within our diverse communities. In an era where access to culture can be limited, our mission is to create inclusive opportunities for all individuals, regardless of background or circumstances, to engage with the magic and relevance of Shakespeare's plays—not only as audience members but also as creators.

We take particular pride in our commitment to inclusivity, emphasizing three key principles: we are LGBTQ+ positive, disability positive, and we offer open auditions. Through these initiatives, we provide opportunities for underrepresented communities, including those from non-traditional theatre backgrounds, to perform high-quality Shakespearean works.

Our Mission

At *Nottingham Shakespeare Company*, our mission transcends mere entertainment; we strive to make Shakespeare's works accessible, relatable, and salient to our audience. Theatre should be an enriching experience for all, which is why we focus on education, community engagement, and artistic excellence through a variety of workshops, performances, and events. Our goal is to cultivate a lasting appreciation for the arts within our community while empowering individuals through creative expression.

Current Landscape

The recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have tested our resilience as an arts organisation, placing significant strain on theatre companies nationwide. Recent research by *Arts Council England* has highlighted the ongoing “precarity, mental health difficulties, and inequalities for freelance professionals across the sector.” (*Cultural Freelancers Study 2024, Arts Council England*.) In these trying times, we have persevered with a revenue growth of 72% on average and yet, as we grow from the pandemic, this modest revenue falls short of our ambitions. Our audience has grown significantly, with over 84 performances of 8 different plays reaching a total of 7,043 attendees (an average increase of 43%). This achievement reflects a thirst for cultural engagement that deserves nurturing.

The Importance of Shakespeare

Shakespeare's works are fundamental to our cultural heritage, delving into themes that resonate deeply with contemporary society, such as justice, identity, love, and power. By exploring these universal truths, we contend that Shakespeare's plays can stimulate meaningful discussions, challenge established perceptions and cultivate empathy among audiences. Our performances serve as a reflection of modern life, encouraging attendees to engage in valued dialogue and introspection.

Engagement and Community Impact

Our commitment to community engagement is unwavering. By trialling and developing abridged versions of Shakespeare texts that encompass the richness of the original language, themes and stories, we are prepared to take the youth engagement from our productions into school environments. The feedback from young participants has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting not just an increase in confidence and communication skills but also a newfound appreciation for literature.

To nurture our current momentum and expand our impact, we urgently seek stable and enhanced funding. This vital support will allow us to deepen the meaningful dialogue between Shakespeare's timeless works and our community. By investing in this initiative, you will empower young people to discover and express their unique voices through the transformative power of performance. Together, we can inspire the next generation and ensure that the arts continue to thrive in our society. Your support is not just an investment in the arts; it's an investment in our future.

Funding Goals and Objectives

To realise our vision for growth, we are seeking funding to support the following initiatives:

- 1. Expansion of Educational Workshops & Performances:** We aim to increase our impact by reaching a minimum of 500 students in the coming year, imparting a deeper understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare's works through enriched educational experiences.
- 2. Diverse Performances by Diverse Professionals:** The nature of the arts industry is such that significant economic challenges mean a lack of opportunity for those from less represented backgrounds. By obtaining the funding to pay all our core team and actors a living and Equity agreed wage, we can support our local creatives to remain in and develop this crucial industry – giving everyone a platform to tell their stories.

- 3. Accessibility Initiatives:** We will implement measures to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities, such as BSL interpretation, ensuring our performances are inclusive and welcoming to everyone in both the cast and the audience.
- 4. Community Engagement Projects:** We seek to develop initiatives that explore local stories through the lens of Shakespeare, rooting our work deeper within the vibrant tapestry of our community.

The Case for Support

Our accomplishments have established a robust foundation for future growth, as evidenced by our consistent annual increase in audience attendance and remarkable revenue growth. With additional funding, *Nottingham Shakespeare Company CIC* can expand its reach, enhancing the cultural landscape of Nottingham and the region, and bolstering the future of the arts within our community.

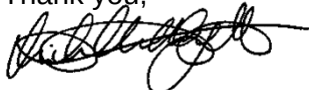
Investing in the *Nottingham Shakespeare Company* is an investment in the educational and cultural vitality of Nottingham and the East Midlands. Together, we can leverage the profound narratives found in Shakespeare's works to inspire, uplift, and empower individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

In closing, we passionately urge you to consider our funding bid. *Nottingham Shakespeare Company CIC* stands as a vital beacon of hope and creativity in Nottingham and beyond, dedicated to dismantling barriers to the arts and igniting inspiration in future generations. Your support can be the catalyst for a transformative legacy of cultural engagement, allowing the magic of theatre to flourish and profoundly enrich the lives of individuals within our community.

Together, we can cultivate a vibrant artistic future that resonates for years to come.

Thank you,



Michelle-Louise Wright, *Artistic Director*



Nottingham Shakespeare Company CIC