

## **NO HOLDS BARD: OUTREACH PROGRAMME SURGES AHEAD**

**October 2021: The award-winning Guildford Shakespeare Company's outreach programme has continued to grow despite the challenges of the last 18 months, developing wide-ranging projects to promote inclusion and address social inequality.**

Guildford Shakespeare Company (GSC) created Brave New World, a programme of outreach projects, in the Autumn of 2018 to reduce social isolation. Three years on, they are working with more disadvantaged schools and community members than ever before. Every year, some 3,500 participants take part in the programme, experiencing live theatre, workshops and welfare sessions.

The ultimate success of many of GSC's schemes lies in the fact that they are **free to access**. This ensures thousands of participants who would otherwise not be able to do so can benefit from these opportunities. The projects have had life-changing results for many participants and their extended families. Benefits for those taking part include increased confidence, sociability and well-being, improved school attendance and academic attainment, as well as better communication and team-working skills.

**Ant Stones, GSC's Head of Development for Education and Outreach:** "I think one of the reasons that our sessions work is because drama can be accessed by anyone. Our sessions are really hands-on and there's a place for everyone. Desk-work in the classroom might not be for everyone, but our participants can really find their voice. We've seen direct impact on their exam and coursework results, too."

GSC's School work currently includes three residences, at Kings College Guildford, Weyfield Primary Academy and Guildford Grove Primary School. Thanks to generous funding from The Wrentham Trust, these partnerships will last for at least another three years, allowing GSC to assist the students with their curriculum learning. They also run several school tours. With their partners Delight, they've taken Shakespeare plays to Surrey primary schools for the last 7 years. They are also in the fourth year of a free secondary schools tour for GCSE students. Both programmes are accompanied by supplementary workshops and follow-on activities'. During the pandemic these tours continued digitally, being filmed and streamed to schools. In May a brand-new play raising awareness of epilepsy and hidden disabilities, The Purple Princess, was created and toured to primary schools.

**Jasmine Mulligan, Head of English at King's College Guildford:** "The Guildford Shakespeare Company have been instrumental in keeping our children happy in another challenging year. These sessions gave children a sense of connection and fun in a very difficult time. The whole experience was one that was full of love, passion and energy and was a great reminder to me personally of why live theatre is so, so important!"

GSC's community projects include Spirit of Youth, bringing primary school children into a care home to work with the residents and With My Eyes, free dramatherapy programme for families living with from poor mental health. Additionally, the company runs a weekly after-school drama club for young carers at King's College Guildford, and this month start a new group for participants from across all clubs to come together to meet, make new friends and have a some fun.



# Press Release

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GSC Honorary Patron **Brian Blessed OBE**

**Matt Pinches, GSC Co-Founder:** “We are so proud of the work our Education and Outreach Team do. The results they achieve and the differences in lives of those who take part are truly remarkable. Schemes like these have never been more important, and will be crucial as we all look to rebuild our communities and ways of being with each other following the pandemic.”

If you would like to learn more, or would like to support GSC’s work, please visit their website.

**Page 2/2 ENDS**

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## Note to Editors

**Guildford Shakespeare Company** is an award-winning, site-responsive theatre company. Established in 2006 by actor-managers Sarah Gobran and Matt Pinches, it has produced over 40 shows in unique venues including Guildford Cathedral, Watts Gallery, West Horsley Place and a Flemish Spiegeltent. In 2015, Brian Blessed OBE played the title role in *King Lear*. Its Education and Outreach works with over 5000 people young and old every year including free-to-access social inclusion programmes. GSC is one of the largest producers of home-grown theatre in the region.