

About Chickenshed Theatre

History

Chickenshed Theatre Company was founded by Mary Ward and Jo Collins in 1974 with a vision for the future of music and theatre - that it would be open to all, both audience and performers. Begun literally in a disused chicken shed, the Company now operates from a 280 seat purpose built theatre in North London with its own recording studio. Where once 30 members, there are now over eight hundred children and young people who attend weekly workshops; where once an audience drawn from friends and relatives, now an internationally profiled company that can sell out over 20,000 seats during a seven week run. But with all this, the essence of the work - producing the right environment for creativity to flourish - is no different 37 years on. And, despite our growing success, it remains a significant challenge to meet our annual turnover with less than 15% of this raised via box office returns and a full time staff of 60 to maintain due to the intensive nature of our work.

What we do

Chickenshed is a theatre company that makes beautiful and inspirational theatre working on the basis that everyone and anyone should be included, regardless of their background, age, race or ability. At Chickenshed, everyone is welcome, and everyone is valued.

For more than 37 years Chickenshed has been providing pioneering opportunities for people to participate in inclusive theatre activities. Chickenshed is a unique organisation that exists to open minds and empower all individuals, by encouraging them to see the creative potential and ability both in themselves and in each other, on and off stage.

Chickenshed runs a Children's and Youth Theatre for 700 young people, operates three nationally accredited education courses, engages in community outreach projects and has established a growing network of satellite 'Sheds' across the country (and two in Russia) so even more can benefit. It is unique in bringing together the creative energy of people who would never meet together in life anywhere but at Chickenshed.

Every extraordinary piece of theatre created at Chickenshed shouts out the same thing: anyone can thrive in an environment where everyone is welcome.

Chickenshed makes theatre that moves, speaks, lives and breathes; theatre that relies on each other. We have a unique creative process that harnesses the creativity of each

individual, and magnifies it, to make theatre that belongs to everyone, theatre which can be enjoyed by anyone who wants to be in an environment where everyone is welcome. There is no one who doesn't fit into that group.

Not many other places are for anyone and everyone. So a lot of people, who find themselves unwelcome elsewhere in the world of theatre, come to us. We value all our members as equals. It's the way we run our theatre company, our youth workshops, our education programmes, and our outreach work. And, one day, we hope, it will be the way the world works.

Our vision and values

We go for world class quality in our art. In the outside world, differences divide. At Chickenshed, the difference makes the art. So we stand by our three strongly held values:

No compromise... on our quality

No compromise... on our principles

No compromise... on our people

Achievements

Chickenshed has had enormous, unprecedented success since its formation. Highlights include invitations to perform in venues as diverse as: the Royal Opera House, the G8 Summit at Gleneagles, The Royal Albert Hall, Ethiopia, the Queen's Golden Jubilee in the Mall, VE Day, the Edinburgh Festival, The Royal Lyceum, The BT Tower and 10 Downing Street. We have recorded over 30 CDs of our original compositions, written over 100 scripts and scores, and appeared in more than 30 television programmes or DVDs.

Chickenshed is considered to be the leading authority on the inclusive creative process and supporters over the years have included such luminaries within the profession as Dame Judi Dench, Sir Trevor Nunn, Bob Hoskins, Kenneth Branagh, Claire Skinner, Geoffrey Palmer, Stephen Mangan, Emma Bunton, Jeremy Irons, Victoria Wood and Lord Attenborough. Without their patronage and support, our vital work would not have continued.

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