

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company Artistic Policy

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company team members are in a continual process of studying, researching and improving the work. We believe that it is only by maintaining continuous professional development, that we can maintain excellent quality of our shows.

Based in the historic Devon fishing port of Brixham, on the Southwest coast of England, we have always felt and explored the value of historical and classical narratives as directly affecting our understanding of the current world.

Brixham is one of the three towns of the area of Torbay, which is ranked among the top 20% of most deprived areas in England, and the most deprived area in the Southwest region. The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, since the organisation's founding in 2005, have sought to create opportunities for artistic engagement in the Torbay area, as well as allowing a number of local creatives to embark upon, develop and expand professional paid opportunities in the arts, thereby increasing local skills and aspirations.

While classical and historical dramas, or the works of Shakespeare may, at first glance, seem far removed from the modern world and modern relevance, in reality, we strongly believe that many of the issues examined within the stories, both as explorations of the human condition, and as bringing to life events and culture which have shaped the society and world in which we now live, from language, through to buildings, culture, societal conventions, politics and economy.

As such, we consider these stories timeless, and with the historical settings of “another time”; as providing engaging drama separate from the “day to day” world outside, in line with “escapism”; a popular reason for arts engagement, in our audience surveys.

All of our audience research and feedback has also showed that audiences especially in our home area, feel most confident visiting theatre events where they have a reasonable idea of “what to expect” in terms of narrative content.

Working with historical events, classical literature and Shakespeare, provides that familiarity to engage the audiences, thus serving to reach as wide an audience as possible.

We also ensure that we keep our ticket prices as low as possible, to allow as many people as possible to access our work.

While working with these traditional stories, we also explore new ways of telling these stories, which often include, but are not limited to, creative & adventurous new ways of using the space; theming the audience spaces with décor and actors, use of immersive sound effects/ digital projection or video effects, audience interaction; as relevant to the show itself.

We strongly believe that consumption of artistic content should be able to be both participatory, and a full experience, as opposed to an act of passive consumption, should the audience member wish, and our project designs facilitate exploration of this.

In fostering innovation and pushing the boundaries of creative theatre development, The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company is committed to :

- Develop and present high-quality touring and local professional theatre work from actors and other creatives based in the Devon area, centring on the genres of heavily researched historical events, classical stories re-imagined for the stage, and unabridged Shakespeare.

- Develop work of international significance with the potential to tour widely in the UK, and stream work to viewers beyond our borders, using internet/ digital technology
- Prioritise the development and presentation of work made by creatives based in the South Devon area, regardless of gender identity, racial heritage, religion, sexuality, disability, in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Work with other established companies and artists who are keen to experiment and develop new approaches to their work; in so doing creating wider opportunities for our team members.
- Actively seek to develop new, surprising and engaging performances between artists from different disciplines to engage and delight audiences, both new and existing.
- Explore opportunities for artists to experiment with digital and new technology in theatre performances
- Create projects that develop new and exciting opportunities for audiences of diverse backgrounds, to experience and/or help create groundbreaking theatre projects, regardless of socio-economic background, gender identity, race, disability; in line with our Equal Opportunities policy.
- Continually seek to improve internal experiences for those working with us on short or long term projects, and to improve the artistic output and engagement with wide audiences and participants of all demographics, by listening to and studying feedback, critiques, and input; as well as actively seeking out learning / training for our team in an ongoing process.
- Continually work to increase the audience and participant reach of our projects by using a wide range of advertising and points of contact including (but not limited to) our own website and social media profiles on major platforms, reaching out on forums, social media chat groups, events websites, opportunities websites, local press, posters and flyers in local businesses and community spaces, inclusive of outlets with specialist interests for the specific projects.
- Promote the highest standards of professionalism, and excellence in our produced work, while recognising that there is always space to develop and improve.
- Promote a safe and pleasant working environment for all our team members.
- Encourage dialogue and engagement with new and future audiences.
- Employ our skills as theatre makers to support ongoing and existing work of under-represented community groups.
- Use professional actors, technicians and creatives to create our shows, including mentoring people who wish to embark on a professional career in the arts, as equal members of the team, wherever possible, promoting fair treatment and recognition in a fair wage to those persons.
- Advance education for the public benefit by the encouragement of the arts, including, without limitation, the arts of drama, mime, dance, singing and music.
- Work with all levels of experience, disabilities, ethnicity or racial origin, gender identification.

Selection of shows

Shows are selected by a number of criteria, in discussion with the senior production team, to fit a range of criteria. These primarily include:

- Theme (content and setting to fit with the genres and style of show that our company is known for.)
- Marketability (it is important for our shows to be easily marketable to a wide range of audiences of different ages and demographics; in line with our researched audience preferences, eg “knowing what to expect”, “escapism”, “a safe option for spending on tickets” “education” & “suitable for family & friendship groups of different ages”, coupled with an adventurous approach allowing for engaging new audiences.
- Creative expression (A show allowing for creative staging, performance and production, leading to an engaging, memorable, and exciting experience for both audience and participants.)
- Increasing engagement (Looking at shows which we feel from our research, will build participation, as well as engaging both regular theatre-goers, and attract new audiences)
- Accuracy and research. (We expect our historical and classical dramas to be well researched , including historical/ cultural/ scientific research as required. Shakespeare and shows based on classical literature must be produced with an in-depth knowledge of the text and surrounding circumstances to it's setting.)
- Castability and crewability (allowing for actors and crew to be able to participate regardless of gender identity, race, previous experience, religion, disability, etc; without being excluded from the project. We take into account local population demographics, as well as actively reaching out to groups of people who less commonly feel able to participate in theatre due to age, race, socio-economic background, disability.)
- Sensitive content (While many of our shows have strong or dark themes, violence/ action scenes, and mentions of racism, strong language & sex, we tend to keep the strong language and graphic sexual scenes to a strict minimum, with the aim of our shows being suitable for teens and adults; an equivalent to a PG to 12 rating. We do not perform shows where the primary theme or subject of the show is sexual.) Detailed guidance as to specific show content is given on our website and show posters. In shows where one or more characters express discriminatory or outdated opinions /actions, these must be depicted as a negative character trait, and clearly challenged within the story. We will not select or create a story which glorifies or promotes discrimination.)
- Impartiality (While our shows will often depict characters of specific religious, political or social-economic affiliations, or explore wider themes involving these aspects, our company remains a safe space for people of all religions, political affiliations, and backgrounds, and does not promote, as an organisation, any specific bias. Our programming is therefore impartial. Shows which are for the specific purpose of promoting a bias, will not be selected.)