

THE SOUTH DEVON PLAYERS THEATRE & FILM COMPANY

GENERAL INFORMATION



www.southdevonplayers.com





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Company Contact Details

SECURITY NOTICE:

Please be aware that any correspondence received from a contact address/ name other than those below (or that is not on headed paper and signed by hand, by a company director as registered with Companies House), should be disregarded and treated as unauthorised impersonation.

Email:

Please send all messages to the company owner, Miss Laura Jury on: southdevonplayers@gmail.com (emails checked twice daily). All messages for other persons in the company, will be acknowledged, and then forwarded to them directly.

Phone:

Call Laura Jury directly, on: 07855 090589 (If no reply please make sure to leave a text message or answerphone message). If calling from outside the UK, the country code is +44.

Post:

Non-urgent postal mail to our rehearsal venue: c/o Chestnut Community Centre, 1-3 Poplar Close, Brixham, Devon TQ5 0SA (mail to this address is collected weekly at rehearsals. If you need to send something urgently or with more security, please email or phone us directly for a home postal address)

Website and main social media newsfeeds:

Website: www.southdevonplayers.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sdevonplayers

Twitter: www.twitter.com/sdevonplayers

Contracts, and agreements in all matters, must be filled out and returned in person or via email (southdevonplayers@gmail.com) to a company director as registered on Companies House, who are the only persons authorised to countersign a contract and make agreements/ reports on a contractual, employment, copyright, financial, legal or employment basis for the company. No other person may recruit/hire/fire, make agreements or sign contracts on behalf of the South Devon Players.

*The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, is the trading name of The South Devon Players Limited;
Registered at Companies House: Company number 11569166*

Welcome to the South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company

“The power of the final scene was such that the audience sat transfixed in silence, barely able to comprehend the beauty of what they’d just witnessed ”

Rick Stone – Audience member, 2019.

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, offers a new approach to theatre-making. Involving people of all levels of experience, from beginners to seasoned professionals, the Players create full scale dramatic productions primarily focussing on historical events and classical texts, which have attracted national awards and international nominations, as well as glowing audience feedback both online and in person, for the productions performed at a variety of venues centering on, but not limited to, the region of South Devon, in the United Kingdom.

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, offers a truly unique experience; taking a pride in creating excellent productions working to the strength of the venues, with painstaking research and attention to detail in perfecting costumes, props and performance, the shows often have a strong interactive element, making the audience feel part of the action.

Based in the beautiful setting of South Devon, showcasing the diverse and considerable talents of local people, our creative use of performance space allows us to create breathtaking, world-class theatre, with our own unique style, while not compromising the production itself. We bring together talented performers, writers, technicians and costume makers, from the Southwest, with enthusiastic, loyal audiences and together, we create magic.

We invite you to be part of the magic. Read on to find out more.



What We Do



At the The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, we make theatre from some of the world's most powerful history, legends and classical texts; stories that help us see the world in new and unexpected ways, while revisiting both much loved classical texts and known historical events, coupled with also exploring commonly overlooked historical events which are invaluable insights into pivotal events which made our community, and world, as it is now.

With a rehearsal base at Chestnut Community Centre, on the edge of our hometown of Brixham, on the southwest coast of England, we seek to tour our shows out to a variety of exciting performance spaces, mostly to local theatres, but also to museum spaces, churches, and even open-air venues, facilitating accessible, approachable opportunities for people to experience theatre.

Our team members are welcomed regardless of initial experience, sexuality, religion or national origin. What we look for is the desire to create powerful new theatre productions in line with our fundamental values of excellence in performance, alongside personal empowerment; mutual respect between team members and the public; learning and improving new skills; and collaboration with other organisations.

Over the course of a typical year, we produce two to four productions, as well as also collaborating with other theatre & film production companies to help our team members find further work in the area, in the creative industries. We also take our community responsibilities very seriously and support external community events, amateur groups, historical and cultural events with our skills, wherever feasible through time and our team members availability. As we are able to build funds and the organisation, the number of productions and collaborations will be able to increase.

We also seek to build an educational, training arm to facilitate accessible training to local people, of a wide range of diverse backgrounds, enabling them to develop strong performance skills to seek employment in the creative industries, and alongside that, develop excellence in transferable skills in communication, self-presentation, self-confidence, teamwork, literacy, and technical skills.

Our productions have won national and regional awards including the all-England Epic Award 2017, the Torbay Together: Creativity In The Community Award 2014, with national and international film festival nominations for our film and video projects, including the Los Angeles Cinefest, Miami Epic Trailer Film Festival, UK Screen One International Film Festival. We are also nominated for an international theatre award in New York.

We are passionate and determined to create high-quality theatre featuring local and regional performers, proving that local people can put on world-class performance.

“Consistently high-quality shows and films created by a powerhouse of up and coming local talent” Gerard Christiaans - 5 star Google page rating

“It was educational, and entertaining in equal measure ”

Simon Parks – 5 Star Google page rating



Our Audiences & Marketing Reach

Awards:

Our productions have won international, national and regional awards including the Theatre Partner Award at the Long Island Theatre Awards New York in 2019, the BrixAward for community contribution in 2019, the All-England Epic Award in 2017, the Torbay Together: Creativity In The Community Award in 2014, with national and international film festival nominations for our film and video projects, including the Los Angeles Cinefest, Miami Epic Trailer Film Festival, and the UK Screen One International Film Festival.

Audience Figures for The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company are growing:

- Between June 2018 and Oct 2019, our physical audiences increased by 490%.
- Online followers on social media increased to over 22,000 from 44 countries.
- Audiences grew with both many new attendees, and a high retention of returning audiences from previous shows.
- Audiences are also building abroad with those who cannot attend our shows in person, viewing our stage productions online. These include private individuals, and schools, primarily in the Americas, Middle East, and Asia.

Marketing Reach:

- Online newsletters and social media posts reach over 23,000 people internationally, directly, and many more with shared posts and forwarded messages.
- Printed theatre programmes for each show reach all audiences, around 63% of audience members purchase one. They are often shared when people make group bookings.
- Online sales have increased year on year although box office sales “in person” remain popular.

Audience Profile:

- We have a local physical audience based on regional demographics.
- The average local age is 44, with a higher number of retired people
- An average of 91% of residents are UK born, however in the summer we see an increased footfall from people on holiday due to being a high-tourist area.
- We have a large international following, who follow our shows online using such tools as YouTube or social media feeds. Our current social media following is over 22,080, before counting an organic reach.

Location & physical footfall:

While our rehearsal venue is a small community centre out-of-town, we ensure that our performances take place at central locations in towns and cities, close to public transport as well as parking.

Show / project advertising in physical locations is centred on, though not in any way limited to, the town centres & city-centre locations where the shows are taking place. Current shows typically tour South Devon, and then go on to Bristol. We are hoping to expand further as funding and venues permit.

Where it all began: Brief history & Background of the South Devon Players

We were founded during the winter of 2005-2006, by four local actors. Struggling to find opportunities beyond those offered by annual amateur musicals, we decided to start our own.

We started with very little; one of us, who owned a car, was recruited to transport as much as the rest of us could “clear out” at home to a car-boot sale. This gave us starting funds of £80. In the meantime, we also found a small rehearsal space at the local Royal British Legion social club. Researching local history and discovering the court records of a 17th Century scandal in the nearby town of Totnes, provided material for our first script. And thus we began our journey.

Over the years we have encountered many challenges. Despite good reviews for our work, we found it very difficult, as a new organisation, for many years, to find good venues, and were heavily limited by public perceptions of what the quality of a show in a church hall would be like, thus finding ourselves usually performing to audiences of around 10 or 12 people, and unable to attract the programme managers of actual theatres so that they could see our work.

The first big change came in 2013, when we first performed our production of Les Miserables; The Memoirs of Jean Valjean; a script we wrote ourselves, based on Victor Hugo's novel. During our tour to local church halls, a producer from London came to see our show. Within 24 hours, he had emailed us, telling us how impressed he was with the show and how more people should see it. He paid for us to take the show to the Palace Theatre in Paignton. We reprised the show, to excellent full-house audiences, who now willingly came, now that they could see us in a theatre instead of a church hall.

The glass ceiling of finding venues was broken. We were slowly able to move away from church halls, and into theatres. More and better venues began to accept us, although some continued to avoid us until more recently, due to our small beginnings, and we continued to slowly grow.

While we have never been able to successfully obtain grant funding to expand as we would have liked, we have survived and managed to grow with scrimping and saving from having stands of plants & bric-a-brac at table top sales, sponsored activities, etc, and learning how to recycle and repurpose clothing and items obtained from charity shops and on websites such as Freecycle.

We have worked on films, creating our own Arthurian feature film centring on the “dark knight” Mordred, which is now in post-production, and have now completed our production of William Shakespeare's Macbeth, to unfailingly strong reviews, some likening the quality of our productions to those at the Globe Theatre.

We have won national awards such as the All- England Epic Award winner in 2017, a national award which celebrates innovation in grassroots arts, as well as local awards like Torbay Together's Creativity In The Community award.

We have worked with a number of other local organisations, providing actors, historical recreations, photographers, voiceovers, and anything that we could help with, towards a shared goal of increasing participation and opportunity in the local arts.

The ultimate aim is to continue to grow into a successful self- sustaining regional theatre company which is not only providing work for local creatives, but also provides a significant contribution to the creative community of our home region. We welcome anyone who would like to join us on this journey.

Our work during Covid-19 & looking to the future

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to work, moving our productions online, using digital broadcast software and Zoom to create exciting new forms of theatre and performance, to ticketed “online” streamed events and projects.

As a result during the pandemic, working from our home studios, we have created, and continue to create, a high number of our own online productions on a profit share basis (equal shares of ticket sales), as well as additional fully funded pieces that our team were commissioned to create, continuing to create paid work for actors and crew, even during the most challenging time that the theatre industry could face.

This is also allowing us to look ahead to the future, and explore technologies, where, increasing potential accessibility as for those who cannot visit venues in person, and audience numbers by reaching people on a global basis, we are looking towards being able to provide (paid) streaming access to our future shows when we can return to theatre stages.

When we are able to return safely to the stage, we have 18 months of exciting stage shows planned, and many more under consideration.

We will be looking to expand on our production teams, crew and actors, in the South Devon area when this pandemic is abating.

"I've just watched the production, and really enjoyed it, well done! I didn't realise virtual theatre would be so fantastic.

"- S

"What an ingeniously devised and wonderfully performed piece. It really made our Halloween. Looking forward to the next one.

"- I.K"

What to expect when working with us

We are committed to following best practice guidelines; you are able to read our inhouse policies, as well as union (Equity/ BECTU) guidance which we follow and regularly review, on our website, in the Governance section.

Our senior staff members regularly familiarise themselves with the latest guidance in best practice. Ultimately, we are a safe, supported space where we expect all of our team to feel safe mentally & physically, and when we are working with outside companies, venues, productions, etc, for them to have the very best collaborative experience possible.

Our cast and crew (everyone working with the company, on a regular or one-off basis), are required to have the ability (and desire!) to work seamlessly in a professional, calm, and supportive team, where everyone is respected regardless of their previous production experience, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, racial background, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

There is very little day to day hierarchy in the team; we work under the belief that whether you are making the tea, directing, rigging the lights, playing the lead role, or in one crowd scene at the back, you are equally critical to the show's success and quality, and equally important. Equally, the actions of each person in the team, reflect upon the company as a whole.

When we work in a space, whether that is in our rented rehearsal hall, or touring to a performance venue, or on a promotional event, we take care that the venue, and venue staff, the space and all items in the space are treated with the same respect as we afford our own team and belongings.

We do operate a series of contracts (samples of our in-house contracts are available on our website), for actors, crew, and when touring to venues, agreeing all pertinent details of the project. We are very open about financial (payment/ "in kind"/ expenses) details for our cast and crew, as detailed on our website in the auditions and crewing sections.

Communication is critical in our team. For each project, we have a Facebook-based locked "project group" where work, resources, information, research, questions can all be put on one central place. We require that cast and crew remain familiar at all times with the contents of these groups, and that nobody involved in a production is barred or made to feel "pushed out". Company directors/owners must also have unrestricted access for oversight.

People working with us are expected to keep regular notes on their scripts/ work/ roles, work to deadlines/ required expectations of work quality, be fully aware of safety and other production laws, be actively involved in the work, and be pleasant, and respectful of others at all times.

In cases where things have gone wrong, and someone feels bullied, attacked, abused, or that there has been impropriety their way, they are asked to contact the company owners as a matter of urgency, with any evidence available, for investigation, advice, signposting, and if necessary, action to be taken. If unable to deal "in-house" with the issue, the company owners reserve the right to seek union advice/intervention, (and to contact law enforcement authorities if someone is in danger) to resolve the problem.

“Every single one of us working on this project is entitled to work in a safe space: a space free of fear, a space free of bullying and harassment of any kind. We will work together honouring our differences and celebrating the gifts we each bring to the table. We will treat one another with politeness and respect at all times and, if we are subjected to or witness bullying and harassment, we will speak out knowing that our voices will be heard and we will be taken seriously. Together we can create a Safe Space.”

(above) Taken from Equity's "Safe Spaces" policy, which we follow.

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company Artistic Policy

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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.)

