

**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

**ANGRY
INNOCENT**

**REPORT
JUN - NOV 2024**



SUMMARY

Across 11 weeks in Autumn the Almeida presented its very first Repertory Season, featuring two plays that changed British theatre forever:

✦ **LOOK BACK IN ANGER** by **JOHN OSBORNE**
Directed by **ATRI BANERJEE**

✦ **ROOTS** by **ARNOLD WESKER**
Directed by **DIYAN ZORA**

We set out to investigate whether these two iconic plays could hold up the same confronting mirror to society today as they did in the 1950s.

To challenge their relevance further, and to create a platform for young working class voices, we appointed **14 Young Producers** to co-curate an ancillary festival of events, **ANGRY & YOUNG**.

From Jun - Nov 2024, the highlights included:

2 plays performed by one company attracted 13,000 audiences to the Almeida

14 Young Producers aged 18-25 participated in weekly creative planning sessions with the Almeida Team to create **ANGRY & YOUNG** which included

23 events across 6 weeks

45 young and working class artists platformed

1,471 young audiences and participants

YOUNG PRODUCERS

By putting Young Producers at the heart of programming the Repertory Season, we aimed to:

- ✦ **Invest in our future creative leaders**, nurturing young artists with critical producing and curatorial skills including budgeting and scheduling
- ✦ **Champion young working class artists**, giving them a platform to share their work and challenge the relevance of the two plays today
- ✦ **Attract young and diverse audiences to the Almeida**

Introducing the 14 Young Producers who took part:



Gabi has since returned to the Almeida as a paid assistant



Jade & Deepali will work as paid creatives on the next Young Company production

YOUNG PRODUCERS



SAM GLYDE-REES

Sam is currently assisting on our Primary Playwrights programme



FLEUR SIMPSON



HANNAH BALOGUN



SAVANNA PATEL



IZZY MACPHERSON

Izzy supported the curation of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof's For Free Festival*



GRAY ENEVER



GIGI DOWNNEY

Gigi has returned to the Almeida as an assistant facilitator



MACELLA GRADY

It was inherent to the project that we engaged a diverse group of Young Producers, showcasing their creative voices and perspectives, and reflecting the emerging artists of London. Consequently:

- 57%** identified as working class
- 43%** identified as global majority
- 43%** identified as disabled

THE PROCESS: CO-CURATION

For this first time in Almeida's history, this project was a true collaborative process between young people and the Artistic Team. Across **6 months**, the Young Producers met weekly with the Almeida Team to co-curate ANGRY & YOUNG.

Together they:

- ✦ Set project and personal goals
- ✦ Created event proposals with budgets, schedules, access and inclusion strategies
- ✦ Built marketing plans and curated digital content
- ✦ Met with the Almeida Team for skills sessions, and one-to-ones for tailored career and artistic guidance.

Feedback from Young Producer:

"The very first session I walked in and was like, damn, I have to rise to the level because the quality of people and expertise was just unbelievable."

"I felt challenged not in an intimidating way, in a very beautiful way. And that didn't stop until our very last session."

From the first roundtable meeting in June, the creative process resulted in **23** events programmed under four umbrellas:

UNEARTHED

Uncovering the lesser-known letters, plays and archive extracts of working-class and underrepresented writers from the 50s and 60s.

STAGES

Dedicated performance spaces to celebrate the work of young working-class artists from across the UK.

REVIVE

Panels examining the legacy of ROOTS and LOOK BACK IN ANGER and their relevance today.

FOR FREE

Free performances, workshops and events to give young people special access to the artists and productions.

UNEARTHED

EVENTS

The Almeida Young Company kicked off *UNEARTHED* with a special performance on **Sun 10 Nov** of unpublished works from the 1950s and 60s giving voice to the unheard and often overlooked from this period.

14 Young Company alumni and community artists performed scenes from plays, letters, spoken word poetry and more, sourced by the Young Producers from the London archives. **168** people attended the performance. It celebrated the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences during the period, featuring artists such as:



- ✦ **Maureen Duffy, Irish British working-class writer**
- ✦ **Zulu Sofola, first female Nigerian published playwright**
- ✦ **Alexander Baron, Jewish British writer from the East End of London**

Feedback from Young Producers:

“It was a pleasure to watch the participants work with texts that they felt seen in, and to celebrate stories that so rarely are given the money, time, and recognition on main stages.”

“I was really pleased that the Almeida committed the funds to challenge the canon.”



In addition, **3** renowned but rarely heard readings were performed by our Repertory Season cast and other professional actors in November 2024.

Sun 17 Nov

SERJEANT MUSGRAVE'S DANCE by **JOHN ARDEN**

An anti-war play about a group of army deserters radicalised by their pacifist serjeant. The play caused a stir amongst reviewers of its 1959 premiere, prompting them to demand of the public: "What kind of theatre do you want?" This performance asked whether the play retained its daring idealism.

THE LION IN LOVE by **SHELAGH DELANEY**

In this 1960 play, a multigenerational immigrant family, living and working in Salford, ask: "What makes a happy life?"

Fri 22 Nov

SKYVERS by **BARRY RECKORD**

Barry Reckord is one of the first Caribbean playwrights to have plays produced on the London stage. Following a group of underprivileged boys in their last week of school, this 1963 play questions the value of an education system that writes off students before they even enter the classroom.

33 actors performed including



Michael Abubakar



Conor MacNeill



Eliot Salt



Sophie Stanton



Ariyon Bakare

230 audiences attended

REVIVE

As part of REVIVE, we brought together artists, academics and young people to reflect on the 1956 revolution in theatre. **Asking, do we still feel the aftershocks of this moment in playwriting today? And can a revival ever be as radical as a new play?**

Tues 15 Oct

EVERYTHING SINCE THE KITCHEN SINK: WHY REVIVE POST-WAR PLAYS?

Playwright and academic, Dan Rebellato was joined by a guest panel to explore the challenges and opportunities in reviving British post-war plays in 2024. The panel included directors Atri Banerjee and Diyan Zora, actors Claire Price and Jessica Raine, and arts critic Michael Billington. **71** audiences attended in person and **510** online.



DOCUMENTARY

As an educational and archival tool for students and theatre makers, we created **Angry & Young: Now & Then**, a documentary drawing on the experiences of artists and young people to interrogate the relevance of *ROOTS & LOOK BACK IN ANGER* today.



1,900 audiences
have watched the
documentary to date

Quotes from **Angry & Young: Now & Then:**

DAN REBELLATO, ACADEMIC:

“The students I teach are probably the first generation who will have a worse deal than their parents. I feel young people have been abandoned... and that is something these plays really articulate.”

DIYAN ZORA, DIRECTOR:

“We’re in a time where Gen Z are on the front line of conveying their point of view... trying to get their point of view out there through social media, and I think Beatie feels very current in that way.”

ATRI BANERJEE, DIRECTOR:

“Anger is a generative force. If enough people are angry about injustice at home or abroad, there can be a real momentum to create change”



ALMEIDA YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD



“Anger is not just about violence, anger can be galvanising.”

“Watching these plays shows how these discussions have moved on... We now get to speak truth to power, we get to name things.”

Zahra Jassi, Selena McGuinness, Angelica Meneely, Hetty Opayinka and Kieton Saunders-Browne.

STAGES

Angry & Young created space for young working-class artists from across the UK to create and platform new work, respond to the themes and politics within the plays, and to connect with peers and the industry.

HOMESTAGES

In September, the Young Producers issued a national call-out to artists to create short films inspired by the famous passage: **'Roots! The things you come from, the things that feed you. The things that make you proud of yourself - roots!'**

From applicants from 20 countries, **8** young working-class artists from Devon, Dorset, Lothians, South Yorkshire, Carmarthenshire, Bristol, North Lincolnshire and London were selected and paid a £500 bursary to create **10-minute films**. These were curated and woven together in a special screening on **Sun 10 Nov** at the Almeida to **140** audience members. See below for the highlights reel:



THE FILMMAKERS

DANIEL SINCLAIR

ARCHIE ROWELL

BEN RAMSAY

ADA URBANIAK

LUCA NEWMAN

HEATHER LAMBOURN

GRACE WAGA GLEVEY

SAMRA MAYANJA



SATURDAY STAGES

As an antidote between the matinee and evening performances, we hosted **5 Saturday Stages** across October-November in the Theatre Foyer, championing the creativity of young working-class artists from across the UK.

✦ **17** artists including actors, spoken word poets, musicians and song writers, performed one hour sets responding to renowned quotes within *Roots* and *Look Back in Anger* such as “*You’re too young to start giving up. Too young, and too lovely.*”

✦ The artists represented a range of ethnic and gender identities, and *one third* identified as disabled.

Feedback from Young Producers:

“I feel really proud of the opportunities we gave up-and-coming working class artists.”

I think it achieved the anticipated goal of the Repertory Season but in a more realistic way.”

“Saturday Stages was a great way of capturing audiences of all ages and exposed them to something different... a possible tonic from what they saw on stage.”

FULL LINE UP
AUTUMN 2024

EMILY ALICE AMBROSE YASMIN NOVA
BEHKAM MICHAEL SOOKHAN
DAISY BOI SCARLETT STITT & IKRA ALI
MIO LOBBAN TEONIX
LEAH COUGHLAN TEDDY WALKER
TESSY APHENI MARIE
ALEX DOVER & PASHA FINN
OLIVIA SIKORA & MAX VINER

Free performances in the foyer from 6pm on selected Saturdays



Daisy Boi

ALMEIDA FOR FREE

For the first time in Almeida history, the Young Producers bookended a production run with **2** epic **Almeida For Free Festivals**: free performances and event exclusively for U25's curated by young people for young people.

Through For Free, we aim to invest in a new generation of diverse audiences and artists, and provide space for emerging artists to learn new skills, connect, and network with professional artists.

2 free performances, including **Roots** and **Look Back in Anger**

10 free events featuring the actors and young creatives

attracting

762 attendees aged under 25, of which

✦ **28%** identified as Global Majority

✦ **40%** identified as working class

✦ **16%** identified as disabled

Feedback from Young Producers:

“Watching the plays has allowed me to consider how working class theatre has evolved since the 50s, and to situate more contemporary working class voices within the lineage.”

“My understanding of British theatre has broadened so much... These plays have inspired me to research and pass on the history, context and reason behind them. In order to learn from it properly, we need to understand our past, so I do believe these plays are really important, especially for young people.”

Spotlight on sessions:

Unlike an average For Free, the Young Producers worked intensively with the Artistic Team to interrogate and elevate their event concepts, so they truly reflected the high quality of the Almeida. As a result, the **10** events were **ambitious, multi-disciplinary** and **acutely socially relevant**.



An Acting Masterclass with Billy Howle and Ellora Torchia

Archive Workshop: Performing Queer History led by young archivist Maxi Himpe



Black History Month: Workshop and Networking led by Tian Brown-Sampson (Associate Director)

Upcycling Workshop with Tomás Palmer (Costume Designer)



Public Studio: On Class and Culture a debate on the relationship between class and cultural capital led by the Almeida Youth Board

FEEDBACK

At the beginning of the project, the Young Producers established their own personal and professional goals, focussing on building:

- ✦ **Confidence** in communicating ideas effectively with peers and industry professionals
- ✦ **Understanding** of how the Almeida and arts organisations run
- ✦ **Essential transferrable skills** such as creating project plans, budgets and timelines.

Through a **3 stage evaluation process** and **one-to-one support** we ensured that **every** Young Producer met their goals.



Deepali, Young Producer of Unearthed Extracts:

What made you want to take part in this project?

I wanted the opportunity to learn and to be able to mess up. If you're producing work in your own time, self-funded or with funds you've applied for, it's not always sustainable or a place where you can ask questions... this was a really pressure-free way to learn.

What were your highlights?

It was so exciting as a Young Producer having agency within the room but also being trusted by participants. It was a huge thing to see them come to you for support, creative and logistical advice. It was also wonderful to be able to collapse the hierarchies [in arts organisations] and realise that people want to support others in their theatre journeys... being taken seriously, not being coddled, but being pushed felt amazing.

'[I've] left feeling optimistic about a career in theatre.

I now feel motivated and reassured about how to continue.'

Gabi, Young Producer of Home Stages:

What made you want to take part in the project?

I've had an event management and community sector background which gave me so many transferrable skills... but I wondered how on earth do you become a producer? I started looking for development opportunities and this [Young Producers] was the very first thing I found. I started reading about it and I was like, this is the dream, this is exactly what I want. This is going to absolutely help me excel.

What was the most valuable part of the experience?

Meeting all the teams and the one-to-ones were literally life changing. Honestly, the notes I've made, the ideas that they've opened up... I've learned that my capacity is huge and that I am capable full stop.



WHAT'S NEXT

We've maintained supportive relationships with many of our Angry & Young Young Producers and artists. Here are just a few to watch out for:



Taiwo Oyebola, Assistant Director on Unearthed

.....➤ is now working alongside Oliver Award-winning director, Lyndsey Turner as Assistant Director on *1536*



Mio Lobban, Saturday Stages Artist

.....➤ will perform in the next Almeida Young Company production (successfully auditioning against 250+ young artists)



Maxi Himpe, Unearthed Archivist & Producer

.....➤ in addition to Maxi's contribution to Unearthed, Maxi also led a 'Queering the Narrative' workshop at For Free and continues as an Almeida Youth Board member



Heather Lambourn, Home Stages Filmmaker

.....➤ Heather's film will be screened in schools during Traveller History Month



Samra Mayanja, Home Stages Filmmaker

.....➤ Samra's film was adapted into a musical at Battersea Arts Centre and is looking to tour internationally



Fleur Simpson, Young Producer

.....➤ returned in a paid administration role, supporting on Angry & Young evaluation, and will be Producer on the next Young Company production. Additionally, Fleur has also been accepted into a Masters of Arts for Creative Producing

THANK YOU

**THE NOËL COWARD
FOUNDATION
&
THE REPERTORY
SYNDICATE**



For more information on how you can support Almeida Participation, please contact:

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