

**BRIGHTON
PEOPLE'S
THEATRE**

Annual Report
April 2023 – March 2024

BELONG



HELLO

Contents:

- 2 A message from our Chair
- 3 A message from our CEO & Artistic Director
- 4 The BPT Story
- 6 Key achievements
- 12 Funding and Finance

A message from our Chair



The past year has seen the activity of Brighton Peoples Theatre grow and grow. The charity is starting to become part of the fabric of Brighton. Publicly BPT's work has been seen on stage at the Attenborough Centre with the brilliant *Born and Bread*. The production summed up everything BPT is about, using the power of food as a way of exploring the different communities and cultures who all live side by side in Brighton. The play was playful, political, and a real celebration of the citizens of Brighton.

Whilst BPT's public productions are our most visible work, they are just the tip of the iceberg. Every week hugely diverse groups come together at our workshops, where they play, learn new skills, improve confidence, tell stories and create theatre. A brief look at the range of people we work with shows how diverse our community is. I have seen first-hand the value of BPT's work when my own father, retired and recently moved to Brighton, decided to join the company. The weekly workshops have given him a creative outlet, and a like minded community to engage with.

I continue to be astonished at how much our small team of three staff are able to do. The work of BPT remains focussed on the people of Brighton, and the care our team of staff take when working with a large group coming together from different backgrounds, with different needs, different stories to share is where the power of Brighton Peoples Theatre is.

Thomas Hescott, December 2024

98%

98% of participants say being part of BPT has given them a sense of belonging.



A message from our CEO & Artistic Director

Our second year as a registered charity was busy and energising. Our amazing members, participants, freelance artists, staff team and board of Trustees really pulled together around our new business plan.

Our artistic work

We saw the fruits of our creative work blossom into Born and Bread being performed at ACCA in September/October 2023. The reception from the audience was so positive, with standing ovations at every show that it caught the eye of the Brighton Festival which commissioned it for its 2024 Festival.

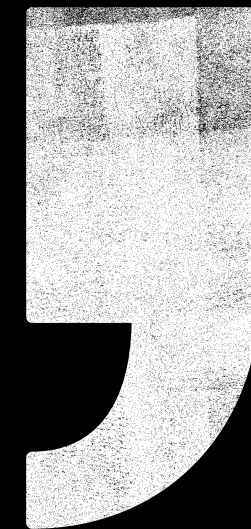
71%

71% had never done theatre before.

100%

100% of people involved in our work would recommend us to a friend.

Our cast of non-professional performers could not have been more dedicated and we are incredibly proud of all that we achieved together.



Our team

Our wonderful Company Manager moved on to a new job, leaving us operating as a team of 3 part-time staff. Again, we are indebted to the continued support of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and this year, the People's Postcode Lottery, whose core funding has enabled us to thrive.

We have also created work for 13 freelancers; sound designers, writers, movement directors, lighting designers, set designers, assistant directors, stage managers, composers and writers alongside specialists carrying out administrative, evaluation, finance and fundraising tasks for the organisation.

Our reflection

Throughout the year we implemented our Evaluation Framework to capture what we learnt. The staff team reviewed the monitoring and evaluation data regularly and applied lessons learnt to the design and delivery of our work.

At the start of 2024, we were able to turn this learning into a training course for professionals making co-created theatre. We designed and advertised our first ever People's Theatre Summer School, getting bookings from across the country by the end of the financial year.

Naomi Alexander, December 2024

The BPT Story...

We are a theatre company that brings people together. Owned and loved by the people of Brighton. We make our work over a cup of coffee, a shared story, a workshop, a show, a magical world appearing in a local park.

Who we are

Brighton People's Theatre was started by Naomi Alexander in 2015 out of a desire to create theatre in a way that was more relevant and accessible to everyone. Brighton People's Theatre is open to everyone in the Greater Brighton area who is over 18 and doesn't earn their living as a professional artist. Everyone is welcome, however, we prioritise our resources on ensuring that people with the lowest socioeconomic status can get involved. We think this is the fairest way of organising what we do. We pay childcare and bus fares for those who need it so they can join in.

Brighton People's Theatre
Annual Report April 2023— Mar 2024



100%

100% of our participants say taking part in our activities has increased their sense of belonging

Why we exist

Theatre should bring people together but analysis of the Arts Council's own Taking Part data shows that public subsidy of the arts reinforces and recreates social division.

Our research led by communities in Brighton shows that people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often feel excluded from publicly subsidised arts. Research led by the Warwick Commission shows that it is the most wealthy, least ethnically diverse and most well educated 8% of the population who are the main consumers and producers of publicly subsidised arts.

We think this is a social justice issue and we want to change it.

Our Team

CEO and Artistic Director	Naomi Alexander (4 days a week)
Company Manager	Fran Masey O'Neil (left May 2023)
Associate Director	Jack Parris (4 days a week)
Communications Manager	Niamh Hicks (2 days a week)

Our Trustees


Thomas Hescott Chair
Helen Rice Vice-Chair
Jenni Lewin-Turner
Munya Muchati
Lily Einhorn
Paul Hughes
Anna Jefferson





Our Vision and Mission is simple

**We bring people in Brighton Together...
...to play, to laugh, to create, to think, to talk,
to perform, to applaud, to agree, to disagree,
to empathise, to sing, to dance, to cry, to listen,
to learn, to connect, to understand, to be
understood, to be seen, to belong, to trust,
to be part of something bigger than ourselves.**



Key Achievement...

Workshop programme

Between April 2023 and March 2024, BPT continued running its drop-in workshops to provide a space to play and connect, in two locations: the City Centre (36 workshops) and in East Brighton (12 workshops). These workshops are the place where most people first get to know BPT and what we do. All workshops were Pay What You Decide with travel provided by bus vouchers for those who need it. These workshops provide a space for participants to take the first steps into a creative community, meeting other people in their community who are interested in performance and theatre, but who have different lived experiences from one another.



Brighton People's Theatre
Annual Report April 2023 – Mar 2024

We ran several workshop series across the year, including workshops on monologues, speaking text and actor training, and toward the end of this year, we re-oriented our workshops to focus exclusively on Play and Improvisation.

61%

61% of our cohort reported having a disability.

39% reported having mental health challenges, 25% reported living with Autism, or Autism Spectrum conditions and 25% reported living with with ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADD: Attention Deficit.



68

We ran 68 workshops, attended by 223 people, 616 times.

Our weekly workshops were a place of creativity and connection for lots of new people who had never done anything like this before. 71% of people who came to our workshops had never done any theatre or drama before coming to the workshop. Participants from these workshops subsequently got involved in the development of Born and Bread and Carry on Ageing.

During this period we also successfully trialled our BPT Get-Togethers, which have become a regular feature of the BPT calendar. They now happen three times a year. They have become a space for people to connect, and take creative risks in front of a supportive audience. We have seen over 60 acts take to the stage this year. They are also a space where we welcome new members into our community.

"I haven't let go as much I have tonight, in a long time, and when I let go I feel much happier."

—
Weekly workshop participant

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It has brought amazing people into my life. People I feel I can be myself with and connect with on a different level as we would maybe have never crossed paths if it weren't for BPT. I have friends for life from this process. I feel like I have better mental health as I have opportunities to express myself and better wellbeing in general, and so much more confidence.

”

Born and Bread

In 2023, with the support of Arts Council England, we took Born and Bread to full production at the Attenborough Centre for the Create Arts.



Brighton People's Theatre
Annual Report April 2023 – Mar 2024

The script for this ambitious show was co-created through 100 conversations across the city and developed in workshops throughout 2022. The story followed Amina and her arrival at 'the community cafe', her search for food and friendship. The show explored themes of belonging, community and issues surrounding food poverty and the cost of living crisis in Brighton.

In April we cast 30 local non-professional actors to play the part of a team of Bakers who were tasked with making bread and soup for our audience of 150 per night. Many in the cast had never done any acting before. We decided to double-cast the show to give more opportunities to be involved.

30

30 local people, all non-professionals were cast in the show.



700

700 people came to watch Born and Bread at The Attenborough Centre.

Over the course of 6 months, we rehearsed every Tuesday evening, giving cast members one-on-one support and creating small group sessions to enable them to master the material.

In September 2023 we shared this feast of soup, bread and stories from across the city in 5 sold-out performances. The show was a great success and resulted in a commission from Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival to re-stage the show in May 2024.



Artist Tim Crouch came to see Born and Bread and said this afterwards:

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This is what hope looks like.

Small seeds, conversations, meetings, consultations, casting wide nets, workshops, open minds, gradually piecing out a shared vision, identifying partners, allies, collaborators, genuine inclusion, inspired leadership.

And then you make a show.

A show that wears all those values on its sleeve. A show that exists for all the right reasons; that gives its participants a voice; that gives its audience soup & a good night out. A light in the darkness.

Thanks Brighton People's Theatre. More, please."

”

Membership

This was the first year that we opened up membership to anyone who was cast in a show or who had attended 12 drop in workshops.

Being a member is a sign of commitment to BPT but like all of our activities, it is sold on a Pay What You Decide basis. We ask people to sign up to embody our Way of Being - open, fearless, respectful and playful.

Members can opt in to being part of the BPT Crew, which enables them to get involved in the running of the organisation on a voluntary basis if they want to. They also get to choose the themes for our shows and actively participate in co-creating the content for our shows.

In November 2023 we took our members out for Injera at Abysynnia restaurant in central Brighton. We had interviewed the owner for Born and Bread. We took over the whole restaurant one night to have a conversation about what theme we would like our next show to explore. After an inspiring conversation we voted on the most popular ideas and the theme of Ageing got the most votes.

In the Spring term of 2024, for six weeks before rehearsals for the Brighton Festival version of Born and Bread began, we explored this theme in our weekly member workshops through games, conversations and collage making.



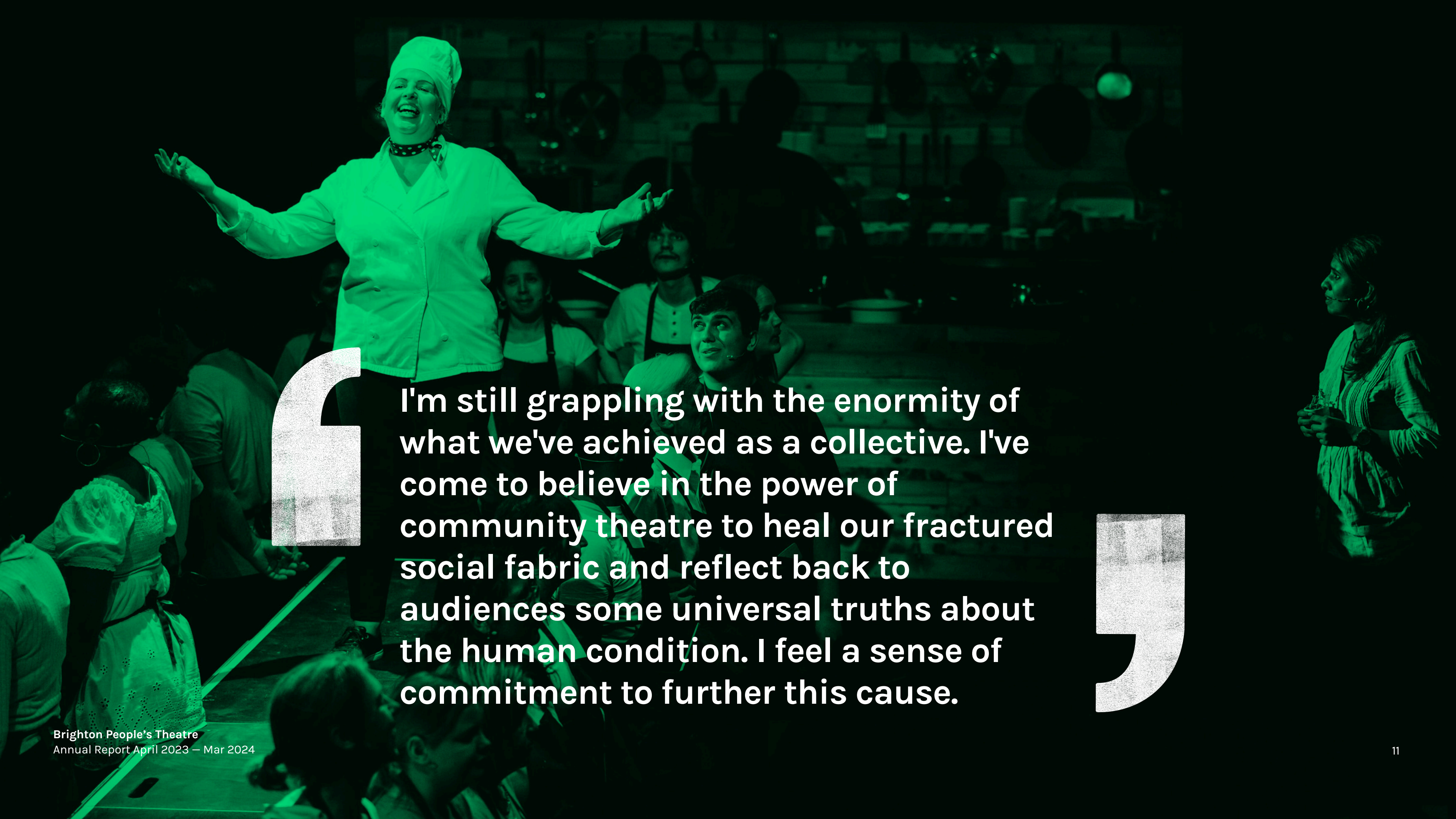
Mabrouk

Under the new approach we are testing in the 23-26 business plan for seeing who is missing from our membership, we cross reference the census data for the city with the data for who is participating in BPT activities. We noticed that Arabic was the second most commonly spoken language in the city, but that we only had a couple of Arabic speakers in our community.

So we decided to work with our partners, The Trust for Developing Communities, to invite a group of people from a wide range of Arabic speaking backgrounds to come together to explore the idea of inviting these communities into BPT.

A group came together and decided that it would be a good idea and that they would be interested in exploring the theme of Celebrations or Special Occasions. We received a small grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable 2 freelance artists to have conversations with people with heritage from Arabic speaking countries from across the city about Special Occasions.





I'm still grappling with the enormity of what we've achieved as a collective. I've come to believe in the power of community theatre to heal our fractured social fabric and reflect back to audiences some universal truths about the human condition. I feel a sense of commitment to further this cause.

Funding and Finance

In our first 12 month financial accounting period as a registered charity, BPT had:

- **Income of £155,547**
- **Expenditure of £151, 336**
- **Just under 3 months running costs of £19,000 held in reserves**

Whilst the overall financial climate for small arts charities like ours has been challenging this year, we are incredibly grateful for all the income we have received from our funders and from people who have been to see our shows or attended our workshops.

We are very grateful for the continued support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England without which we would not have been able to operate over the last 12 months. We are also grateful to the People's Postcode Lottery, a multitude of Charitable Trusts and Foundations, the City Council and Brighton Dome and Festival for supporting us with a range of small grants and commissions.

We are also very grateful for the in kind support that we received from our partners, in particular the Trust for Developing Communities and ACCA.

We are pleased that we managed to increase our percentage of earned income to 13.5% up from 8% last year. This is due to ticket sales from Born and Bread at ACCA. We are very grateful to ACCA for receipt of the box office takings for our show.

Our full annual accounts are available on request and on the Charity Commission website.

Trustee statement

The trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Public benefits

Brighton People's Theatre recognises and celebrates the creativity inherent in everyone. We want to build and sustain mutually beneficial, collaborative relationships with people living in the City. We place a special emphasis on involving those who have had the fewest opportunities to make and consume publicly funded culture.

We believe in the intrinsic value of the arts and culture and want to extend this value to as many people as possible. We also want to democratise the way the arts are funded, produced and consumed in the UK.

Governing document

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Reference and Administration details

Registered Charity Number 1196082

Registered Office The Old Courthouse
118 Church Street
Brighton
BN1 1UD

Independent examiner F1 CRT Limited
Flat 24
Wellingtonia Court
Laine Close
Brighton
BN1 6TD

Interview with...



What is your name?

Kyle Oakley.

How old are you?

24 years old.

Where were you born?

In Luton.

Where do you live now?

In Shoreham by Sea.

What is your job?

Linen porter for Leonardo Hotels.

How did you first find out about BPT?

I first found out about BPT a few years ago, during the Songbird Cafe, a random email and I signed up, and I came to one workshop, but couldn't come to many others.

What were your first impressions?

This is exactly what I have been looking for. It's such a lovely place and everyone is so friendly.

What have you done with BPT?

Two goes of Born and Bread, I've worked on the Songbird Cafe and the new show, The Museum of Life, and I can't wait to keep on going.

What impact has BPT had on your life?

BPT has had one of the biggest impacts on my life as when I left uni I just felt lost. I didn't have anywhere to go, I had no drive, everything was a bit of a shitshow. I needed some sort of light, so as soon as I found BPT properly when we started doing Born and Bread, it just made me so happy and brought so much into my life. I was in a really bad place, but now I am feeling better and I know what I want to do.

Is there anything else you want to say?

I just want to say thank you so much for everything you guys have done. To anyone out there who hasn't come to a workshop - come and try it out. Come and meet these amazing people that I am so happy to call my friends and my family.



Interview with...



What is your name?
Nina Bhirangi-Bishop.

How old are you?
48 years old.

Where were you born?
In Southend, Essex.

Where do you live now?
In Lancing.

What is your job?
IA Youth Worker.

How did you first find out about BPT?
I saw the audition call out for Born and Bread and I came along.

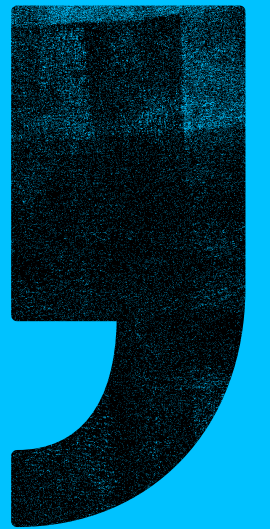
What were your first impressions?
It felt like coming home. When I went to my first audition I loved being in the present moment and playing. It gave me a sense of joy which was really needed for me at that time.

What have you done with BPT?
I performed in two productions of Born and Bread, I come to drop in workshops, members workshops and also end of term Get Togethers. I have also accessed training and networking opportunities through BPT.


What impact has BPT had on your life?
Genuinely the impact on my life has been massive. It's really helped me to rediscover my creativity. I was at a difficult point in my life and it has helped with my wellbeing and mental health, with my confidence and given me a creative community and a sense of belonging which I had missed.

Before you joined BPT had you ever done anything like this before?
I had done theatre before about 20 years ago, so it was nervewracking to come back to it but it was the best thing I could have done, so I am truly grateful.

Is there anything else you want to say?
Joining BPT was the best and most life affirming thing that I could have done. I found joy in my life in the midst of a very difficult time in my life. I am so thankful for the opportunity as it has helped me to forge a different path in my life. I would encourage anyone to do the same as it's a great community to be a part of and is super accessible and welcoming.



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hello@brightonpeoplestheatre.org

Thanks to our funders and supporters



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