



LIVERPOOL'S
**ROYAL
COURT**

Business Plan 2022 - 2023

September 2021

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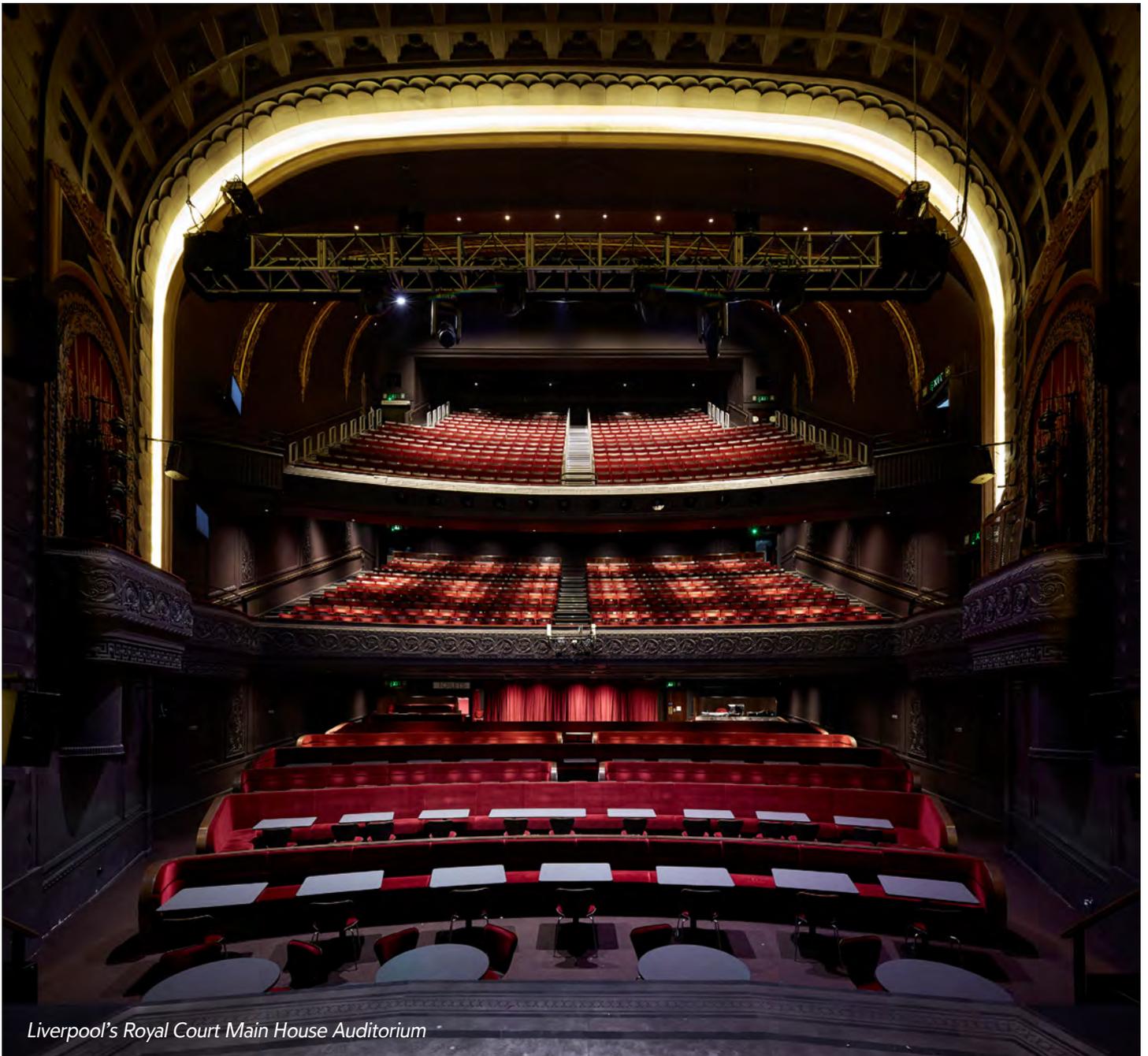


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Liverpool's Royal Court Main House Auditorium

Executive Summary

Liverpool's Royal Court (LRC) Business Plan 2022-2023 consolidates four years of business development as a Band 1 Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation and sets the scene for our journey towards the next round of National Portfolio funding.

The plan summarises our successes over the past four years, sets out our direction of travel and highlights key strands of work that we are keen to start pursuing throughout 2022-23 in preparation for our 2023-2027 plan. The twelve months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 are transformational for the organisation as we establish our leading role within Liverpool's theatre ecology.

Our Business Plan 2022-2023 reflects the effects of the pandemic on LRC's business model in particular and the cultural sector in general. It sets our course to build the business back to pre-pandemic levels and prepare it to move forward.

Particular strands for development during 2022-2023 include:

Capital Developments

The Everton Mint

Developing plans to create a new theatre production facility for the region on the site of our LRC current workshops in Everton. The Everton Mint will enable more culture to be created in the region by local communities and professionals making theatre production more accessible, affordable and relevant. The project will cost an estimated £3.5m and will help to regenerate a particularly deprived area of the city, create new jobs in the sector and act as a catalyst for theatre development across the region.

The Nabe

Developing plans for The Nabe, a community hub in Liverpool city centre offering free to access arts activity for local communities. The Nabe will create a safe space in the city centre for young people to gather, share experiences and learn new skills. The Nabe will also provide a range of health and wellbeing programmes for all ages. It also responds to the recent ACE report 'A High Street Renaissance' by repurposing empty high street retail space.

Act V/The Happiness Centre

Developing plans and securing funding to extend the Royal Court's backstage facilities to enable it to accommodate larger touring shows and productions as recommended in the 2020 Theatres Review by Bonnar Keelyside. Exploring the possibility to further develop this site into The Happiness Centre, a new tourist attraction for the region.

Programme Development

Collaboration

- Working with national theatre companies to premiere new work at the Royal Court including Red Ladder co-production, **Homebaked**, in 2021 and a co-production with Stockroom (formerly Out of Joint) of the first theatre adaptation of Alan Bleasdale's seminal **Boys from the Blackstuff** in 2022.
- Working with other regional theatres, Everyman & Playhouse, Shakespeare North Playhouse and Unity to produce new work for the region which complements each theatre's programme and adds to the body of work being made in the region.
- Supporting all aspects of Boisterous Theatre Company to develop more Black-led work across the region
- Cured by Laurence Clark with Dada and Birds of Paradise

Talent Development

- Retain acting talent as the sector recovers from the effects of Covid through guaranteed work schemes (Acting Staff Project).
- Encourage more people from Black, Asian and ethnic heritage to develop careers in the sector (Mentorship Programme)
- Develop a new staff post to work across the region and potentially North of England to create new talent development models (Talent Development Role)

Partnership Development

- Working with other theatres in the region to developing a new model for youth engagement which will ensure that more young people across the region have access to arts activities irrespective of social and economic backgrounds and location
- Developing partnerships with grassroots organisations including Positive Impact, Catalyst, Capoeira for All and The Comedy Trust to deliver more free to access arts activity for young people across the city region and in their own communities.
- Working collaboratively with organisations like Liverpool John Moores University and Shift (sustainability network for cultural organisations) to achieve more environmentally sustainable theatre buildings and operation to help deliver regional environmental targets

2. Background



2.1 History and purpose of the organisation

Liverpool's Royal Court (LRC) has been at the heart of Liverpool's cultural life for nearly 200 years. It was first opened as Cooke's Amphitheatre of Arts in 1826, presenting a programme of opera, music, theatre and ballet. It was renamed the Royal Court Theatre in 1881 and was the number one touring venue in Liverpool for popular theatre until the 1970's. The Royal Court has a rich theatrical history with names including Dame Vivien Leigh, Sir John Gielgud, Sir Laurence Olivier, Yul Brynner, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Ken Dodd and Sir Ralph Richardson performing on its stage. Dame Judi Dench made her acting debut at the Royal Court in 1957 and has been Patron of the theatre since 2008.

The theatre was destroyed by fire in 1933 and rebuilt in 1938 in the Art Deco style of the era. The theatre has exemplary acoustics and sightlines and boasts the biggest revolve stage outside of the West End (the revolve renovation was part of Act III in 2018). After 1976, when Merseyside County Council stopped funding the theatre, the building was let on a series of short-term licences to commercial operators. It was primarily used as a rock venue in the latter part of the 20th century, then as a comedy venue.

The Royal Court began producing theatre in 2006 and since then has undergone something of a renaissance. It has developed a unique style of theatre for Liverpool audiences (and increasingly audiences from outside of the region). Theatre that is produced in Liverpool, featuring a mix of Liverpool actors, written by Liverpool writers is increasingly popular. In 2018/2019, over 180,000 people visited the theatre and experienced the unique cabaret-style stalls seating, offering dinner and drinks before the show.

Alongside a programme of popular theatre, LRC has established wide-reaching community engagement programmes most of which are free to access with no waiting list and no auditions. Engagement programmes provide arts activities to some of the most vulnerable communities in the region for all ages.

2.2 Achievements 2018 – 2022

Since becoming a Band 1 Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation in 2018, Liverpool's Royal Court has:

- Completed the renovation of the art deco, 1150 seat, grade II listed theatre, in normal times, with Act III funded by Arts England (£1.9m of £3m)
- Created a new 150 seat studio space which can operate concurrently with the main auditorium (part of Act III)
- Completed the renovation of Courtyard Bar & Kitchen adjacent to the theatre. Successfully developed a pre-show dining offer with full bar and garden spaces which are operated in-house
- Played an active role as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation locally and nationally. In particular leading on implementation of key recommendations from The Theatres Review by Anne Bonnar 2020
- Developed links with other theatres across England touring work including **Judy & Liza**, **Terriers** and **Terriers 2: Eve's Story**
- Continued to engage with audiences and participants from lower socio economic backgrounds than other venues in the region especially during the pandemic with our free to access youth theatre for 11-25 yrs

- Increased income from ticket sales, food and drink thus making the theatre more resilient and sustainable
- Improved physical access to the theatre (Act III) resulting in increased ticket sales and improved facilities enabling us to expand and increase community engagement programmes
- Created opportunities for the next generation of cultural entrepreneurs to ensure future operation of the theatre
- Developed pathways for talent development through our free to access community engagement programmes
- Increased the number of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse people working within the organisation increasing diversity on and off stage
- Engaged the Board and staff with Arts Council Let's Create principles to ensure that the organisation delivers against these principles going forward
- Worked with external consultants to create a new business model to future proof the organisation and ensure it remains sustainable and resilient over the next 10+ years

2.3 What we learned during the pandemic 2020-2021

- We are an important part of people's lives. They depend on us.
- Staff were keen to return to work as soon as possible (evidence - back to work interviews).
- In a pandemic lockdown - support from DCMS/ACE was essential
- Staff were keen to do more training and respond positively to additional pastoral care support to help them cope better with changes in their lives as a result of the pandemic (evidence – back to work interviews, over 200 training courses completed online)
- Audiences were keen to return to the theatre (evidence – 4,352 attenders over 16 shows, 100% capacity of social distancing limit).
- Audiences felt safe inside the theatre when they did return (evidence - audience feedback Christmas 2020).
- Actors, musicians and creatives were keen to start working again as soon as possible and felt safe inside the theatre (evidence from Christmas 2020)
- Audiences will support work online if it is free to access but prefer to attend in person (evidence from audience surveys)
- Young people were keen to meet in person (evidence summer school numbers and from phone support during lockdown)
- Choir members were keen to return as soon as they can (evidence - uptake for Christmas show and from ongoing phone support)
- Cultural organisations in the region were keen to discuss issues of race inequality and to work to actively increase the number of Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups employed across the sector (evidence LCR What Next sessions held monthly from August 2020)
- Cultural organisations continue to address issues of mental health and wellbeing across employees in the sector and would benefit from additional resources over the next two years as people return to work and buildings reopen
- Everyman & Playhouse and Unity Theatres were keen to discuss joint ventures and initiatives to address the recommendations set out in the Theatres Review.

2.4 Background to the strategy

Liverpool's Royal Court Business Plan 2022-23 aims to:

- Provide a map for the period 2022-2023
- Outline successes from NPO years 2018 – 2022 that the plan is built on
- Communicate our course of action for the period 2022-2023 in detail and the context for future plans
- Provide funders and stakeholders with a clear and robust financial plan and strategies to ensure good management and financial control of the organisation
- Lay out clear governance and management structures to deliver the 2022-2023 business plan in particular and future plans

3. Identity and Purpose

3.1 Identity

Mission: To be known throughout the UK as a leading producer of quality theatre and inspiring engagement programmes for non-traditional theatre audiences. To be a key organisation through which audiences can develop a love for theatre in all its forms.

Purpose: Putting our audiences and participants at the heart of all we do. We bring joy and laughter to people by putting real Liverpool lives on stage, presenting our work in a unique way to engage non-traditional theatre audiences.

Belief: That our brand of theatre production and participation programmes can be enjoyed by most people whether they have had previous theatre experiences or not.

Core Values:

Liverpool's Royal Court:

- Discovers and nurtures Liverpool talent on stage and off
- Creates high quality, made-for-audiences entertainment and participation activities
- Includes all audiences, especially those from low socio economic backgrounds
- Shows the best of Liverpool to the world

Our Brand:

Ambitious	Environmentally Responsible	Inclusive	Quality
Dynamic	Friendly	Irreverent	Quick witted
Electric	Family Fun	Playful	Relevant
Entertaining	Homely	Proud	Vibrant

3.2 Unique Selling Points

Liverpool's Royal Court provides a unique theatre experience not replicated in any other theatre in England. We provide pre-show dining in the stalls area of the auditorium for up to 180 people each evening with additional dining options for selected matinee shows. This provides a relaxed atmosphere in the auditorium with audiences arriving up to one and half hours before the show begins to give them time to eat and drink. Desserts are provided in the interval. Audience members who are not dining are seated cabaret-style in the stalls area and in rowed seating in the circle and balcony. Recent renovation to the theatre has enabled bar and public areas to be upgraded to cater for large numbers of people ensuring smooth service for audiences that helps to maximise income from food and drink sales.

Community participation programmes are free to access with no waiting lists, no auditions and no fees. Food is provided on residential courses, Youth Theatre summer, Easter and half term activities. Free sessions and workshops include the youth theatre, community choir, People's Players adult drama group, SWPDP (Stage Write Playwright Development Programme) and a range of health and wellbeing sessions.

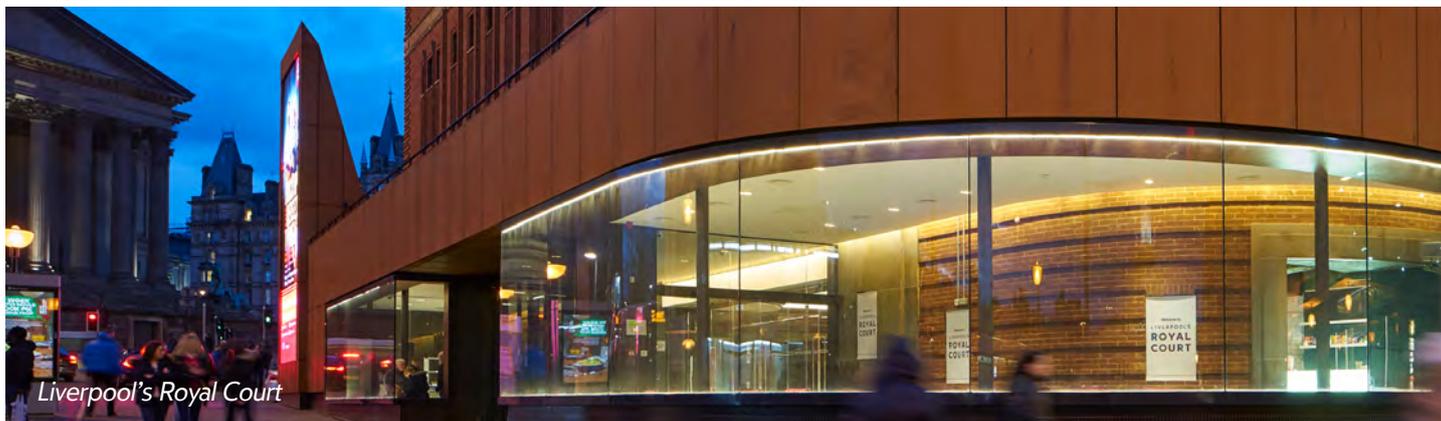
Terriers and **Terriers 2: Eve's Story** are both delivered free to schools with funding from Merseyside Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside. Schools are invited to contribute but this is not mandatory. **Terriers** and **Eve's Story** reaches over 10,000 young people aged 11-15 each year.

3.3 Vision

Our vision is to:

- Develop our role as the region's major theatre producer
- Create opportunities to develop better facilities for theatre production and presentation across the region
- Encourage those who have had little or no engagement with theatre or the arts to start taking part. According to Audience Agency data there are at least 960,000 people across Liverpool City Region who have never seen or participated in theatre or cultural activity before.

4. Aims and Objectives



4.1 Aims

1. To develop, create and present more high quality, accessible theatre for the communities we serve.
2. To develop, create and present inspiring, accessible, free to access engagement programmes for the communities we serve.
3. To create new opportunities for talent development across the region to help retain existing talent and encourage the next generation of theatre creatives.
4. To play a leading role in developing theatre across the region making it more productive, relevant and sustainable.
5. To continue to develop our business model and governance to ensure we achieve aims 1-4.

1

Aim 1: To develop, create and present more high quality, accessible theatre for the communities we serve

Objectives:

- Achieve pre pandemic levels of theatre production for LRC main house and Studio
- Work in partnership and collaboration with other theatres locally and nationally to create more theatre product for audiences across the region and beyond
- Upgrade Liverpool's Royal Court Theatre further to ensure effective presentation of accessible theatre in a relaxed setting that is as Covid safe as possible

Success will require:

- No further Covid restrictions to be imposed during 2022-23
- Strong leadership by LRC to encourage other theatres in the region to work collaboratively and in partnership to achieve a shared goal
- Capital investment in LRC - seating, lighting and cooling

How success will be measured:

- Numbers attending theatre at LRC main house and Studio will return to pre-pandemic levels
- Theatre audiences across the region will grow to pre-pandemic levels and the number of actors and creatives employed will also return to pre-pandemic levels
- More theatre product and activity will be created across the region through co-productions and collaborative working led by RCL including commissioning new work in 22/23

2

Aim 2: To develop, create and present inspiring, accessible, free to access engagement programmes for the communities we serve.

Objectives:

- Work in partnership and collaboration with smaller arts organisations to deliver more free activity in the community
- Engage more young people in youth activity provided by LRC
- Work with the schools, police, councils and youth agencies to deliver issue based activity (*Terriers/Eve's Story*) to young people across the region and UK

Success will require:

- Investment in our partnership with Catalyst, Positive Impact, Capoeira for All, Homebaked and The Comedy Trust
- Investment in LRC free to access programmes throughout the year
- Investment to deliver *Terriers* and *Eve's Story* into schools, PRUs and youth agencies across the region and develop supporting digital resources including TV film

Success will be measured by:

- Grassroots organisations continuing to exist and grow engaging people in their local communities
- More people and young people in particular will be supported through collaborative youth activities such as LRC Holiday School, Youth Music, health & wellbeing sessions and The Nabe (see aim 3)
- Number of young people engaging with *Terriers* and *Eve's Story* across the region and nationally

3

Aim 3: To create new opportunities for talent development across the region to help retain existing talent and encourage the next generation of theatre creatives

Objectives:

- Develop plans to deliver The Nabe, a community hub in Liverpool city centre for LRC participation programmes and use by other arts organisations across the region
- Develop and start to implement programmes to support actors with a regular wage over a 12 month period while the sector returns to pre-pandemic levels
- Establish a new Talent Development post that will help create talent development initiatives across the region and North of England
- Establish the mentoring programme throughout 22-23 to encourage more people of colour into the sector

Success will require:

- Investment in a suitable city centre building to create The Nabe
- Investment in staff resources to support actors programme
- Investment to create the new talent development post
- Investment to continue the mentoring programme scheme into 22-23.

Success will be measured by:

- The amount of theatre and arts activity (mainly free to access) taking place in the city centre at a new central hub
- Number of actors living and working in the region
- Number of new small theatre companies being created and sustained in the region
- Number of people with a Black, Asian or ethnic minority heritage entering the sector

4

Aim 4: To play a leading role in developing all aspects of theatre across the region making it more productive, relevant and sustainable

Objectives:

- Create a more cohesive voice for all aspects of theatre across the region as recommended in the Theatres Review (2020) and Augere Report (Dec 2021)
- Work towards delivering The Everton Mint in collaboration with West Everton Community association creating a new theatre resource for the region with employment and training opportunities
- Develop plans for the final phase of capital work to Royal Court Theatre in line with recommendations made in the Theatres Review to create a mid-scale theatre for the region capable of attracting quality touring work (Royal Shakespeare/National Theatre) and producing larger co-productions and LRC shows

Success will require:

- Strong leadership from LRC and collaboration between funded theatres across the region
- Investment to further develop plans and fundraising strategy for The Everton Mint as well as capital investment post 2022-23
- Development of a strategy to deliver Act V with additional capital investment post 2022-23

Success will be measured by:

- Theatre in the region developing a stronger united voice to help promotion and attracting additional funds into the sector
- Realisation of a new theatre resource in a deprived area of the city centre in partnership with the local community and other theatres across the region
- An extension to the Royal Court Theatre creating a new tourist attraction for the region (The Happiness Centre) and a fit for purpose mid-scale venue for the region

5

Aim 5: To continue to develop our business model and governance to ensure we achieve aims 1-4.

Objectives:

- Put in place plans to increase capacity within our finance team to ensure financial accounting and procedures are robust, providing the level and detail required to meet aims 1-5
- Work towards increasing pay levels for all staff and senior staff in particular to comparable levels of other regional theatres to maintain stability within the organisation
- Explore ways of increasing funding to increase staff levels to adequately support the organisations ambitions during 22-23 and beyond
- Continue to strengthen governance through training and skills development

Success will require:

- Investment in finance team and systems to ensure aims 1-5 can be achieved
- Investment to ensure staff retention across the organisation
- Investment in staff resources to ensure aims 1-5 can be achieved and that the organisation has the ability to achieve its full ambition post 2022-23
- Providing training opportunities for Board members to help them achieve their full potential

Success will be measured by:

- CEO and Executive Producer having more time to focus on leading the organisation forward to achieving aims for 2022-23 and beyond
- Senior management team will be more robust and sustainable and the organisation well placed to lead on theatre production across the region
- Achievements and goals reached during 22-23 and beyond
- Board membership and its role in leading the organisation to deliver its ambitions for 2022-23 and beyond

5. Governance and Management

5.1 Governance

During 2020-2021 the Board of Trustees has worked with external consultant Anne Bonnar of Bonnar Keelyside to oversee:

- a. **Understanding and embedding Arts Council Let's Create Principles in the organisations planning and delivery**
- b. **Skills development to continue to ensure the Board has the relevant skills to deliver its plans**
- c. **Implementing evaluation scoping strategies to monitor programmes and activities more effectively, supported by Board member, Joanna Hargreaves of Morris Hargreaves McIntyre**
- d. **Embedding Board processes to ensure plans are delivered on time and to budget**

In addition, Anne Bonnar has worked with the Board to action a new operational model to ensure that the organisation can continue to grow and develop over the period 2023-2027 and beyond. This work was carried out with support from auditors Duncan Sheard Glass (DSG) using the last four years experiences of theatre operation and capital building investments to inform the process.

As a result of this work a new charity has been formed to run the theatre operation, production, front of house and box office operations with a building preservation trust responsible for the theatre buildings. The buildings estate consist of the Royal Court Theatre and Courtyard Bar & Kitchen both on Roe Street, L1 and Birkett Street workshops, L3, (The Everton Mint). The building preservation trust has the ability to bring other buildings into the estate as and when required. For example the former H&M building on Williamson Street as a possible site for The Nabe (proposed city centre community hub) and other theatre buildings should it be required.

The new charity running the theatre, Royal Court Liverpool Ltd, will have a Board of Trustees with the full range of skills necessary to lead and manage the growing £5m theatre operation. The building preservation trust, Royal Court Liverpool Trust Ltd, will have three trustees with experience of building renovation and management.

[Link: Companies structure and list of trustees \(Appendix\)](#)

5.2 Leadership

Honorary Positions

Dame Judi Dench CH

Patron

Sir Terry Leahy

Ambassador

Professor John Godber OBE

Ambassador

Professor Gerrard Pillay

Honorary Vice-President

Cherie Booth QC

Ambassador

Trustees

Professor Nigel Weatherill

Chair

Excello Law

Councillor Wendy Simon

Liverpool City Council

Maurice Bessman

Playwright

Jude Bird

Curious Minds

Jonathan Falkingham

Urban Splash

Mark Featherstone Witty

LIPA

Joanna Hargreaves

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

Martyn Best

Tranmere Rovers FC

Stephen Rebbeck

Royal Shakespeare Company

5.3 Management and Administration

Senior Team

Gillian Miller

CEO

Kevin Fearon

Executive Producer

Jess Bolger

Creative Producer

Miriam Mussa

Head of Community Participation/Founder of Boisterous Black Theatre Company

Iain Christie

Head of Marketing & Sales

Sean Gannon

Head of Technical & Production

Thomas Wright

Head of Operations

Kevin Dunn

Head of Finance

David Assall

Head of Catering

Management

Clare Carlucci

Production Assistant

Maria Schumann

HR & Wellbeing Manager

Lauren Macauley

Box Office Manager

Kathy Hutson

Front of House Manager

Alison Ward

Finance Manager

Uma Ramanathan

Youth Theatre Manager

Kathryn Heffron

Front of House Manager

Paul Imrie

Front of House Manager

Emma Keig

Courtyard Bar & Kitchen Manager

Mick Bawden

Workshop Manager

Bob Smith

Building Manager

Volunteers

Volunteer activities include:

- Front of house support
- Supporting staff with general project tasks
- Collection of data and survey information
- Workshop supervision (choir)
- Research into heritage and history of the theatre
- Gardening (terrace & Courtyard)
- Working with archive materials

We have over 20 volunteers engaged with the theatre, an increase of 10 during the last four years. They will re-engage with the theatre throughout 22-23 as activities return to pre-pandemic levels.

[🔗 Link: A full Board, management and staff structure can be seen in Appendix 11.6](#)



5.4 Staff development

During the pandemic the majority of staff were furloughed according to government guidelines. Back to work interviews were conducted in November 2020 before reopening in December. Many staff were anxious about returning to work and had suffered mental health issues during lockdown. We offered a range of one-to-one sessions with our Wellbeing Officer, a new post created during closure, and put in place additional support from a qualified counsellor.

While the theatre was closed, we invested in staff by offering free training online. Training included time management, health & safety, diversity and inclusion, leadership, Covid safety and fire marshalling. Over 200 courses were completed and an ongoing training programme has been introduced for all staff.

The theatre closed again in December 2020 and further back to work sessions were held in March/April as the theatre again began to prepare to reopen. One-to-one sessions and additional counselling has continued throughout this period and staff will continue to be supported in this way throughout 2022-2023.

In addition we will introduce:

- Employee of the month with incentives including complimentary tickets and meals to shows
- Regular staff recruitment events where potential employees (especially front of house and catering) can come and see a show and have a tour of the building
- A birthday bonus for all staff who have worked for a year or more with meals and tickets to mark the anniversary of them joining the Royal Court Family
- A birthday bonus for trustees to mark their anniversary as governors of the company with bonuses including tickets and meals



Bouncers (2018)

6. Programme and Participation Activities

During 2022-23 we plan to reconnect with our audiences to ensure that they come back to the theatre and that we reach post-pandemic audience numbers by March 2023.

“

What a performance from Lindzi Germain and Andrew Schofield. What a night. Our first night out since lockdown one started, and it didn't disappoint. The staff were brilliant and the food was delicious and great portions. When my bowl of Scouse arrived, I thought that they were going to bring a ladle and serve everyone from it. I actually said to my wife during the interval that there can't be many places (if any) other than The Royal Court where you can have a meal and a show for what we'd paid. It felt great to feel normal again and see the two stars of the show in fine form. We've already booked more shows and can't wait to come back. 10/10 for cracking performances all round from the staff, technical guys and of course the cast.

Audience member attending *Ellen & Rigby* by Gerry Linford, the theatre's opening show July 2021

”

6.1 Artistic Programme

Liverpool's Royal Court operates two spaces within the building. The main auditorium, seats 1135 and produces 8 full scale shows a year utilising Liverpool based talent with each production running for an average of four weeks. The Studio is our new basement space, seating 150 and offering an alternative programme focussing on supporting new writing and offering opportunities and professional debuts for newer creative talent in the city.

Main Stage

Miracle of Great Homer Street *June 2018*

In 2018 LRC produced this debut play by local writer Gerry Linford, which had recently come runner up in the Liverpool Hope Playwriting Prize. The play tells the story of a Liverpool man who becomes embroiled in a gambling plot with a Catholic Priest all the while trying to come to terms with the tragic loss of his young son and the crisis of faith that ensued.

Bouncers *September 2018*

In 2018 the adaptation of John Godber's classic **Bouncers** by Maurice Bessman was moved up to the main stage, having previously sold out the Studio space. This Black-led production by Boisterous Theatre Company written for Liverpool's diverse communities in particular, the show achieved a 50/50 split of existing Royal Court audience and new attendees from Liverpool's black and ethnically diverse communities.

Girls Don't Play Guitars *October 2019*

Telling the true but little known story of the world's first all female rock and roll group, The Liverbirds, Ian Salmon's **Girls Don't Play Guitars** was a highlight of LRC's 2019 programme. Featuring live music and the band's hit songs the production was an inspirational tale of female determination and empowerment in the 60s. This production was the subject of our first NPO artistic and quality assessment with the report available on Grantium.

Online

Jigsy *August 2020*

Previously having been performed on the main stage, when lockdown hit, this one-man show starring Les Dennis was the ideal candidate for a digital alternative for the audience. Filmed with strict social distancing and offered for free, the show was welcomed by our regular audience members who felt the absence of the theatre when it was forced to close.

Cured *October 2020*

When plans for a staged reading of Laurence Clark's **Cured** had to be abandoned due to Covid-19, the play was given a zoom workshop and reading. Featuring a disabled-led cast and creative team, **Cured** is in development, with plans for a full production and tour. The zoom reading was a new experience for all but enabled valuable script work to take place, even without the in-person reading going ahead. We continue to develop this co-production with Liverpool-based Difference Matters and Scottish-based Birds of Paradise.



Masquerade at Liverpool's Royal Court Studio

Studio

Masquerade *Sept 2019*

A professional debut for writer Laura Lees, **Masquerade** told the story of the iconic Liverpool gay club through the coming out of a young Scouse lad. Linking with Liverpool Pride weekend, the show struck a chord with the local LGBTQA community and has since gone on to a subsequent larger production.

Pig *October 2019*

Originally submitted through our open access script work programme Stage Write, **Pig** was initially given a reading at a showcase night and then a full studio production. It featured an all female creative team of writer Sarah Power, Director Olive Pascha and Designer Ellie Light all making their professional debuts.

April 2022 - March 2023

In our first full producing year post-Covid we have opted for a programme including several remounts of successful past shows as well as an exciting joint venture. The programme includes:

Mam I'm Ere *July 2022*

A remount of Stephen Fletcher's feel good family musical, originally planned for July 2020, moved to July 2021 then again to 2022 due to the pandemic.

YNWA *August 2022*

A remount of the successful musical telling the history of Liverpool Football Club, originally planned for May 2020, moved to August 2021, then again due to the pandemic.

Boys from the Blackstuff *September 2022*

A co-production with Stockroom (formerly Out of Joint) of the first theatre adaptation of Alan Bleasdale's seminal **Boys From The Blackstuff**. The script is being written by James Graham and there are plans for the production to tour. There was a reading of the script first draft at The National in autumn 2019 which helped develop the script.

Studio Programme

By Spring 22 we plan to have the Studio back at full capacity and the year will include two productions originating from the first Stage Write Playwright Development Programme (SWPDP), a course offered to local writers on an entirely free access basis. We will also be hosting shows as part of Black History Month, the Liverpool Irish Festival and Arabic Arts Festival throughout the year as well as showcasing our youth theatre, People's Players adult drama group and community choir.

Hope Playwriting Prize *April 2022*

The fourth winner of this prestigious award will be announced in April 2022. Hope Playwriting Prize is a biennial national playwriting prize presented in collaboration with Liverpool Hope University who sponsor the event with prize money totalling £20,000 including a first place prize of £10,000. Judges over the years include; Kathy Burke, Amanda Whittington, Frank Cotterell-Boyce, Maurice Bessman and John Godber.

Ambition April 2023 - March 2027

We currently have several pieces of work in development as we aim to continue to foster new writing by way of a stronger commissioning structure for the main house.

A piece we have been developing for a number of years is **Cured** by Laurence Clark. This ambitious piece is a mainstream style comedy about a group of disabled young people who are taken to Lourdes. The cast and creative team is disabled led and features integrated BSL, captioning and audio description. We aim to premiere a full production of the piece in April 2023 and explore opportunities to tour the production to other theatres across the UK. **Cured** is being developed with writer Laurence Clark of Difference Matters and Robert Softley Gale of Birds of Paradise.

We are currently working with Liverpool writer Karen Brown on researching a production about the **Vernon Girls** – a singing group who worked at Liverpool's Vernon Pools, which we aim to show in 2023 to coincide with the Everyman & Playhouse new production about Littlewoods Pools to celebrate the anniversary of the beginning of the pools in the city.

South by Maurice Bessman and Tayo Akinbode is a joint commission with E&P. South is a musical telling the story of the black GIs who came over to Liverpool during the war and the impact they had on the communities in L8. LRC has initiated the first co-production with Everyman & Playhouse with a view to staging the show at the Everyman Theatre.

The Studio will continue to foster new creative talent and we aim to increase in-house Studio productions to 4 per year. The Stage Write programme will be developed to add workshop time for promising pieces and social activities for the writing community.





Liverpool's Royal Court Youth Theatre Summer School 2021

6.2 Community Participation

Highlights April 2018- March 2021

Youth Theatre – weekly workshop sessions in drama, music, dance for 11-25 year olds. The youth theatre delivers a range of opportunities and activities for young people to improve their personal skills, overall mental health and wellbeing and professional skills for future prospects in the industry. To eliminate any barriers young people may face, the youth theatre is free to attend. Throughout the year members will experience a vast array of learning from acting to stage management; fundraising to writing scripts. Youth Theatre members have opportunities to gain work experience within the theatre including box office and front of house, stage management and wardrobe. They can participate in residential retreats to learn skills to become peer mentors and be offered support in taking the next steps in their careers / education (e.g. CV writing, personal statements, bursary applications), take part in masterclasses with professionals and learn the skills to lead youth theatre sessions themselves.

Since summer 2020, classes have been supported by a pastoral care worker who provides one to one support with members working towards better mental health and personal resilience.

Youth Theatre School Holiday Programmes

LRC has been running a free to access Summer School for young people aged 11-25 for several years. In previous years the Summer School has ended with several public performances on the main stage of the Royal Court. The production is supported by the theatre's technical crew and performances are open to the public with tickets being given to other summer school programmes running in the city. In 2020, the Summer School ran in the theatre with social distancing for 66 young people. Different groups worked on stage, in the Studio, in the circle and balcony bar areas. Workshops were delivered in partnership with Capoeira for All, Positive Impact and Catalyst. Young people from these organisations mixed with youth theatre members and practitioners from LRC and partner organisations worked together to deliver three weeks of free to access sessions. Lunch was provided for all participants by LRC chefs. This partnership working worked well and we were able to continue delivering youth theatre workshops in the theatre throughout September and October with a week of half term activities and a week of activities over Easter 2021 for over 60 young people. We will continue to use this model to deliver free to access youth provision during school holidays to ensure young people have something to do whilst not at school.

In summer 2021, with the theatre open again to the public, we hired Liverpool Community College to deliver a three week long programme for over 130 young people aged 6 – 25 years. Funding from Youth Music helped to deliver more music workshops and increase the number of activities from three to five days each week. We will further develop our partnership with Liverpool Community College during 2022-2023 to develop free to access Saturday activities for young people providing high quality arts activity for young people throughout the year to supplement on going weekly youth theatre sessions.



Community Choir

Weekly sessions for 100+ members led by professional musical director, Jay McWinnen who had led the choir for over six years. The choir is free to attend with no waiting list and no auditions.

In 2021 we formed a new strand of the choir in Anfield. The ‘ Homebaked Choir’ are working with LRC choir leader and Red Ladder creatives on our joint production of the new musical **Homebaked**, the story of the community bakery in Anfield, which will be staged at Liverpool’s Royal Court in autumn 2021. The musical will feature members of the Homebaked Choir performing alongside professional actors. The Homebaked Choir will continue after the production has ended and will meet weekly at Anfield the home of Liverpool Football Club. The Homebaked choir will become part of the Royal Court Family.

Our community choir provides a constant source of support for over 100 older members of the community many of whom have been shielding throughout the last year, have lost relatives and friends to Covid and have been living in isolation on their own for months. During 2022-2023 we will increase support for choir members with additional health and wellbeing sessions. These sessions will be delivered by The Comedy Trust and will take place at the theatre and at our community hub The Nabe when a suitable venue is found.

People’s Players

Weekly amateur drama sessions for adults that meets weekly in the Studio. The People’s Players work towards at least one public performance each year and are invited to dress rehearsals along with community choir members. Sessions are free with no waiting list and no auditions. During 2022-2023 we will create more performance opportunities for People’s Players to perform in the Studio.

All those taking part in community participation activities are part of the Royal Court Family. They are invited to dress rehearsals for all main house shows throughout the year and have access to our Wellbeing Officer who can provide advice and support for any wellbeing issues they may have.

All participation groups have suffered as a result of Covid-19. Although workshops and support was provided online throughout lockdown and freelance practitioners kept in touch with members via phone and email, participants are desperate to get back into the theatre to see their friends. During 2022-2023 additional support workshops will be provided for all participation groups to support ongoing health and wellbeing issues individuals have as a result of lockdown and Covid.

Terriers and Terriers 2: Eve’s Story



LRC continues to develop the **Terriers** project which tours two plays by Maurice Bessman into schools, Pupil Referral Units and prisons throughout the UK. Funding from the police and Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside enables over 10,000 young people aged 11 – 15 to engage with the project each year. Highlights included performing both plays at The Old Bailey and City Hall in 2019 and Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds 2018. A pilot film of **Terriers** will be shot during autumn 2021 with support from BFI with a view to presenting it on free to view TV. During 2022-2023 we will continue to develop additional digital resources to accompany the plays and to develop the project’s potential to tour to theatres across the UK in addition to schools, PRU’s and prisons.

Ambition 2022-2023 and beyond

We will continue to deliver all our participation programmes keeping our policy of free access for all to enable people from lower social economic backgrounds to be able to access high quality arts provision as well as develop the following:

Youth Engagement Model

Working with other theatres in the region we aim to create a new model for youth engagement across the region to ensure all young people have equal access to arts activity and that entry barriers such as cost, location and relevance are removed. The new model will require collaboration between all theatre providers in the region and responds to recommendations made in the Theatres Review 2020 and Augere report 2019. (🔗 [Link: See appendix for LRC proposal](#)).

School Holiday Programmes

Deliver free to access daytime workshops and sessions for 6 – 25 years in school holiday periods including half term holidays = 6-8 weeks per year.

Erasmus Oasis Programme

Partnership with other organisations across Europe. Our youth theatre practitioners will visit other European organisations to deliver work with partners. Partner organisations will visit Liverpool by way of an exchange programme.

Homebaked Choir

Continue to deliver community choir sessions in Anfield and include members of the Homebaked choir in all Royal Court Community Choir activities.

Coffee & Chat

Start regular drop in sessions to encourage participants to discuss how they are feeling and talk about any mental health issues they have. Sessions will take the form of coffee mornings with qualified practitioners.

6.3 Talent Development

“

‘I’m Clara Mbirimi, 22 years old, a member of the youth theatre as well as the social media marketing officer at the Liverpool’s Royal Court. I have quite a few interests including, acting, dancing, fashion and marketing, which have all played a part in leading me to where I am now.

I first joined the Royal Court when I was 14 years old, after seeing a performance of *Terriers* at my school, I was then introduced to Miriam Mussa by a friend who attended the youth theatre and I was invited to attend the classes. I had a growing interest in drama and acting and I took Drama as a GCSE. I felt I needed more confidence so I decided to come along to the youth theatre classes. As I joined I was introduced to Zain and Kelly who taught the classes and everyone else who attended them. I was instantly welcomed with open arms and lots of fun games and workshops which made me feel comfortable and relaxed, I was never made to feel any less because I was new to the youth theatre but was treated as an equal. This has remained the same over the years, with everyone being treated with mutual respect and new people being warmly welcomed.

As the years went by and with each youth theatre show I participated in, my confidence grew massively, along with that of many other members. The Royal Court has played a massive part in how I have grown into the person I am now, I have gained so many new skills and my confidence has gone through the roof. When it came to the time of going to university I took a course in Fashion Promotion and although it’s not drama related, I received a massive amount of support from the Royal Court and the staff there. I was offered the use of the spaces in the theatre for any university based projects I needed to do, one of which I filmed in the studio space. I was also still encouraged to come to the youth theatre classes and participate with shows and was offered the opportunity to work in the costume department twice for the youth theatre productions.

Now I have finished my degree I have been given an amazing opportunity to work with the marketing department of the theatre as the social media marketing officer and I am beyond grateful. I am receiving a lot of support with the new job and learning many new things that will help me to gain experience whilst still being able to attend and participate in the youth theatre classes.

Thanks to the Royal Court I have learned skills in the performing arts, communication and even a bit of fashion with the costume department in addition to now learning about marketing. I am so thankful for all of the help and experiences I have received so far and I hope to continue to learn many more skills from the theatre and of all the people in it.’

”

LRC recognises the lack of talent development across the region and will continue to deliver a range of programmes that help to address this issue while developing new strands for 2023 and beyond.

6.3.1 New Writing

Stage Write Programmes (SWPDP)



Stage Write is an initiative to develop new talent and existing writers. Director Paul Goetzee and Producer Jess Bolger select a range of scripts to perform in the Studio on a regular basis throughout the year. 5-6 x 20 minute excerpts are performed each night in the Studio to the public. The director works with each writer to develop the script, choose the actors to perform the excerpt and direct each piece. This process gives the writers the chance to see their work on stage and get valuable responses from the public about their script. There is a Q&A session at the end of each event where writers and public can discuss the work with the Director and Producer.

Stage Write Development Programme is a nine month programme for up to 16 new and emerging writers. The course is free and takes the form of fortnightly sessions with professional writers with the opportunity for a rehearsed reading of participants work at the end of the process.

“

The Royal Court Stage Write playwrights development course has been a joy from start to finish, I have learnt so much and enjoyed every minute of it...I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in writing for the stage ... The sessions were fun and informative , the feedback from industry professionals was invaluable, and it was great to meet and exchange ideas with fellow writers at a similar stage on their journey. My only disappointment is that it had to come to an end... and even then, the follow up sessions mean that we won't lose touch completely. Long may you run.

Bernie Winston SWPDP participant 2021

”

LRC aims to produce 4 pieces of new work by SWPDP participants in the Studio during 2022-2023. This will create a new platform for writers to have their work produced for a public audience using local creatives and performers.

National New Writing Competition – Hope Playwriting Prize



The Hope Playwriting Prize with a prize of £10,000 and the potential to have your play produced by LRC is the second largest new writing prize in the UK (The Bruntwood Prize offering the largest prize). The Hope Playwriting Prize is the largest new comedy play writing prize on offer.

The winner of the fourth national competition will be announced in April 2022. Winning plays are produced for the most appropriate theatre. For example, in 2016, **Omnibus** was produced by LRC for Unity Theatre and the 2018 winning play, **The Last Act of Love of J B Moliere** by Simon Bradbury was offered to Everyman & Playhouse as a co-production for the Playhouse. Highly commended finalist Gerry Linford's comedy play from 2018, now entitled **The Miracle of Great Homer Street** was produced by and ran at LRC in 2018 starring comedian and actor Les Dennis.

6.3.2 Young People

Progression routes are offered to all young people taking part in community participation activities and include:

- Arts Award opportunities
- Work Experience
- Mentorship Programmes
- Employment Opportunities

6.3.3 Diversity

LRC will:

- Create opportunities for more people from Black, Asian and ethnic minorities to engage with and be employed in theatre.
- Continue to support Boisterous Theatre Company to produce more Black-led productions for LRC and for other theatre venues through collaboration.
- Develop the Mentoring Programme to provide more places for mentees and help those who go through the programme into employment in the sector



Royal Court Selection Box

6.3.4 Acting Talent

The pandemic has been particularly hard on actors who find the majority of their work in theatres in Liverpool City Region. Conversations with regular Royal Court actors following the pandemic are sobering with many seriously considering leaving the profession to retrain for jobs with more regular pay or being forced to find alternative jobs outside the creative sector because of lack of acting work. The lack of theatre production across the region continues to be a major issue.

The opening of Shakespeare North Playhouse in 2022 will help provide work with its ambition to co-produce with other regional theatres. However, to maintain levels of talent in the region, more theatre needs to be produced. LRC has the ambition to do this and will continue to discuss co-productions with Everyman & Playhouse and other theatres to help increase the amount of work on offer for local actors. The danger of this lack of producing is that we will fail to retain high quality emerging talent within the region and lose those with established careers because of lack of acting jobs in the region.

Acting Staff

LRC will work towards creating a new role for actors which will guarantee work for a 12 month period with actors being trained to work on other LRC projects when not part of the main stage or Studio cast. For example the actor may be in 2-3 main house shows and 1-2 Studio shows then work with the youth theatre, People's Players and community choir the other months of the year.

Talent Development Role

LRC will work towards developing a new post during 2022-23 with the aim of it becoming full-time from 2023 onwards. This new role will look at all aspects of talent development across the region and North of England. Additional resources will be required to implement talent development programmes that emerge from this new role.

Ambition 2022-23 and beyond

- Continue to encourage new writing for stage through SWPDP programmes
- Produce 2-3 new pieces of writing in the Studio each year by writers emerging from SWPDP programmes
- Create opportunities to help retain acting talent in the region
- Create opportunities for more people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority heritage to enter the sector
- Create new opportunities for talent development across the region and North of England

6.4 Diversity

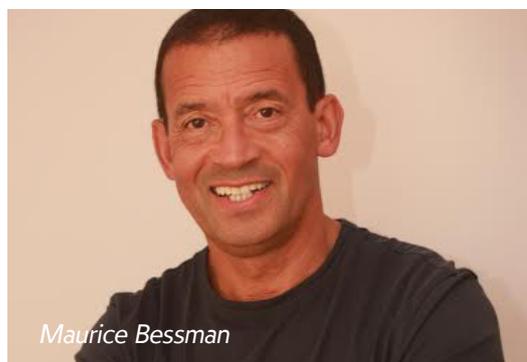
LRC continues to produce theatre that attracts more people from lower socio economic backgrounds than other theatres and cultural venues in the region. Data collected from The Audience Agency show that our audiences are classed as non-traditional theatre audiences in that they do not generally engage with cultural activity outwith the Royal Court.

Highlights for increasing diversity since becoming an NPO include:

- **Boisterous Bouncers** transferring from the Studio to the main auditorium in 2018 and being presented again in 2021. Audience demographics have shown increased number of people identifying as having Black, Asian or ethnic minority heritage and new audiences to the theatre.
- Working with young people in a range of schools with special educational needs to improve skills and encourage creativity
- Developing more daytime activities for older people in the community by adding **Variety Film Club** to our main house programme
- Developing a programme of discussions through the Liverpool City Region What Next group which CEO Gillian Miller co-chairs with Madeline Heneghan of Writing on the Wall to encourage debate around lack of diversity within the sector
- Mentoring Programme – initiated by board member, Maurice Bessman in response to the lack of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups working in the cultural sector in Liverpool and the wider region. A pilot programme will begin in April 2021 and will run throughout 2021-22 with 8 professional mentors paired with 8 mentees.

Ambitions for 2022-2023 and beyond

- Creating work for more creatives from Black, Asian and ethnic backgrounds through increased activities by Boisterous and the establishment of our mentoring programme
- Creating more opportunities for people from low socio-economic backgrounds to engage with arts activity in their local community and at the Royal Court
- Ensuring our workforce and governance structures represent the communities we serve
- Ensuring Black-led grassroots organisations thrive in their local communities by working in partnership with them and using our resources to raise additional funds to support them



Maurice Bessman



Variety Lunch Club



Boisterous Stage Write



7. Market Analysis and Competition

7.1 External

From the turn of the 21st Century, Liverpool has been a beacon of culture-led regeneration. The cultural and economic life of the city has been catalysed by major events, including Capital of Culture 2008, which have transformed external perceptions of the city and with it the performance of its visitor economy.

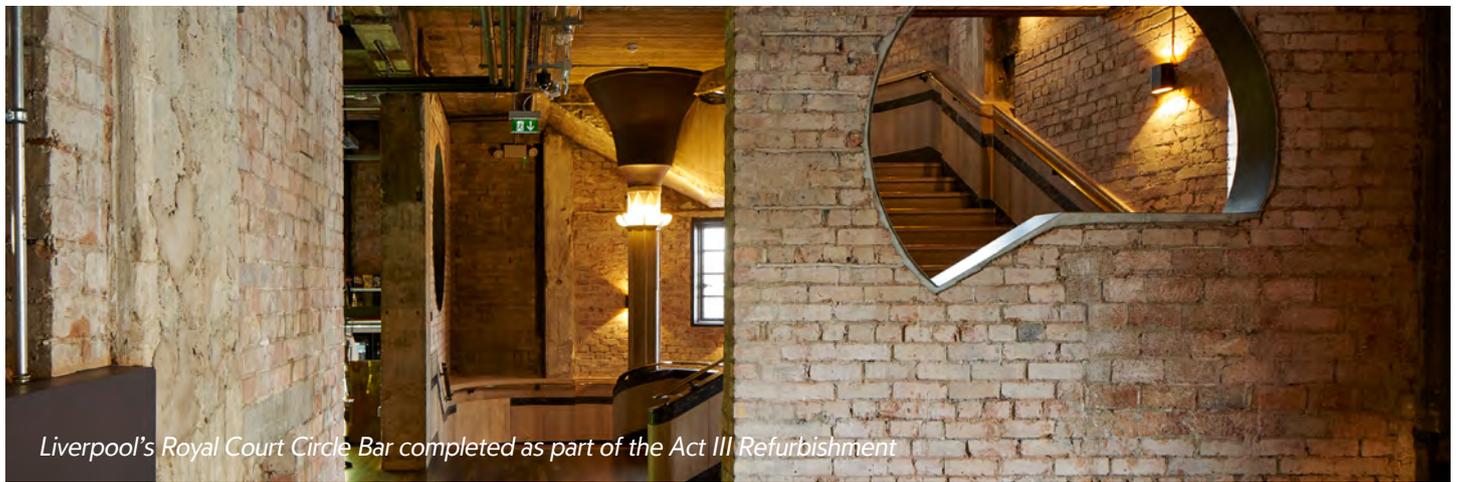
At the same time, a strong core of arts and cultural organisations spanning all creative art forms and representing all the city's diverse communities has built a formidable track record and consistent quality of delivery. The cultural sector has played a crucial role in Liverpool's renaissance and became a key element of the economy, with tourism and leisure accounting for around half of the business rates income in the city in 2019/2020.

Between 2008 and 2018, Liverpool's visitor economy enjoyed a period of continual and uninterrupted growth. This was catalysed by the success and lasting impact of the 2008 EU Capital of Culture and driven by consistent investment in the city's outstanding cultural offer, annual festivals and one-off events. In 2018 Liverpool City Region's Visitor Economy was worth over £4.9bn, welcoming 67.3m visitors to the region and supporting over 57,000 jobs.

Success in growing audiences for culture has been backed up by sustained investment in cultural production and infrastructure. At a time when many local authorities have made cuts to cultural provision, Liverpool City Council has continued to fund a diverse range of arts organisations and cultural activity. Arts investment has gone into film/video screenings, festivals and carnivals, combined arts/multi-disciplinary arts, creative crafts, dance, drama, literature, music, visual arts & public art, digital arts, theatre and comedy.

2019, with uncertainties over Brexit, the city saw the first slowing of growth in visitor numbers in a decade. In July 2019, Liverpool City Council declared a Climate Change Emergency and called for collective action to make Liverpool a net zero carbon city by 2030. Climate emergency presents the most fundamental set of structural and human challenges – including how we make, consume and travel to culture. Then, in 2020, coronavirus struck, inflicting serious damage on Liverpool's creative and visitor economy and irreversibly altering previous economic certainties. During the 2020 pandemic and lockdown the visitor and leisure economy sectors have been the hardest hit and are likely to be the slowest to recover. This is a nationwide issue, but particularly crucial to Liverpool where the economy and the city as a whole are particularly reliant upon visitor spend.

LRC will work in partnership with other cultural organisations in the city to ensure that Liverpool's visitor economy begins to recover and grow again.



Liverpool's Royal Court Circle Bar completed as part of the Act III Refurbishment

7.2 Internal

Liverpool's Royal Court offers a unique theatre experience not found anywhere else in the country. We provide high quality entertainment in a more informal setting than found in traditional theatres. The stalls area has a bespoke cabaret-style layout, offering pre-show dinner, interval desserts and drinks at tables. It meets with the Arts Council of England's aim of presenting theatre in a more relaxed way to encourage wider access.

An independent survey (The Audience Agency) confirmed that Royal Court audiences were 'different' to those of other cultural venues in the city. They concluded that fewer 'wealthy achievers' attend the Royal Court than attend other cultural venue in the city and more people with 'moderate means' are more likely to attend the Royal Court than other cultural venues.

As a result, the price structure at the Royal Court is kept very simple. The prices start low at the beginning of the run, rising to mid-price for the middle of the run and then top price for the end of the run. Top price is below that of comparable venues.

We recently introduced segregated pricing for the most popular seats (the stalls). This has worked well for high demand shows and has a negligible impact on low demand shows. Audiences look at the prices in the stalls first and choose a cheaper day, rather than a cheaper area. We are determined to keep prices accessible for all shows as we feel that this is an important part of the Royal Court identity.

The recent refurbishment in the balcony has temporarily created some restricted view seating. We are currently offering these at a flat rate of £10 regardless of the show.

The theory behind keeping the pricing simple is to appeal to the low-engaged audience. A more complicated structure is more likely to create a barrier to entry. Higher prices will be a barrier to entry.

The venue has recently added a Studio space which has allowed a more varied programme. Shows that were perceived as too high risk to produce in the 1,000 seat main house can run in the lower-risk 150 seat space.

Our target market includes:

- Royal Court Theatre audiences developed over the last ten years (medium-engaged)*
- Local communities especially from north Liverpool areas of the city (low-engaged)
- Traditional theatre audiences (high-engaged)
- Cultural tourists (increasing in number to the city with various levels of engagement)
- Young people living in north Liverpool and the wider Liverpool City Region (low-engaged)
- Older people living in the Liverpool City Region (medium/low-engaged)
- A more ethnically diverse audience from specific postcodes in the Liverpool City Region (low-engaged)

* See audience development strategy for a more detailed look at our audience as well as a strategy to reach them (Appendix 3).

The theatre relies on ticket sales and self-generated income from food and drink sales to support the artistic programme. In addition, funds are raised from a wide range of trust funds and foundations and public funding bodies to support education programmes and community engagement initiatives as well as capital improvement scheme.

7.3 Audience Characteristics

The Audience Finder Survey 2019/20 (venues throughout the UK data collected by The Audience Agency on behalf of The Arts Council of England) concludes:

Our audience is:

- 78% over age of 45
- 58% of bookers are female
- 93% white
- 11% having some form of disability
- 50% within an 8km catchment area around the venue

The 2019/20 Audience Finder survey showed that the percentage of first time attenders has remained consistent at 15%. There are significant attendance hotspots in North Liverpool and Riverside areas as well as Southport, South Wirral, Skelmersdale, St Helens and Runcorn. There has also been a significant rise in the L8 area of the city, which has been steadily increasing since 2017/18 as the venue's programming has become more diverse. The map showed that we had retained our core audience while reaching a wider geographical and cultural audience.



We can draw the following conclusions from the Audience Finder data:

1. The Royal Court is attracting more lower engaged segments in the community than other venues in the Liverpool cluster do. Additionally, Royal Court audiences were the biggest spenders of all of the other Liverpool audiences with most being spent on food, drink and shopping.
2. Royal Court audiences wanted value for money, and although they did not come out that often, when they did they wanted to be entertained and make an occasion of their visit.
3. Royal Court audiences are, proportionally, drawn from less affluent areas of the community than audiences of other venues to a significant degree.

Box office data reveals that the top ten postcode areas from which Royal Court Liverpool attenders are drawn are:

L12	West Derby	L12	Croxteth	CH66	Hooton
WA8	St Helens	L36	Huyton	L20	Bootle
WN8	Skelmersdale	L9	Aintree		
CH66	Ellesmere Port	L4	Walton		

Source: Liverpool's Royal Court box office data 2019/2020

4. The catchment area for the venue (defined as where 80% of the audience is from) has been maintained at a 45 minute drivetime.
5. The audience has a strong emotional connection with the building with a net promoter score of 86, way above the Liverpool Cluster average of 77. Our surveyed audience also believed that the quality of shows and service were high with 97% giving us "good" or "very good" for quality.
6. Audiences come to the Royal Court: to be entertained (91% compared to a 75% group average); to spend time with friends and family (65% compared to 43%) and to enjoy the atmosphere (60% compared to 50%).

Source: Audience Finder Survey 2019/2020



7.4 Demand

Demand for shows is rising, having fallen from a peak in 2008 to a low in 2013 when the economic situation in the region became bleaker. There has been an increase in attendances every year from 2013/2014 to 2019/2020 resulting in increased ticket sales and capacity percentage.

Factors Influencing Demand:

Price

Price plays the most significant part in managing demand. There are noticeable price breaks at £15, £18 and £24 when deciding on ticket prices for a show. The price structure that is in place drives people towards early shows to facilitate word of mouth marketing. The theory behind keeping the pricing simple is to appeal to the low-engaged audience. A more complicated structure is more likely to create a barrier to entry. Higher prices will be a barrier to entry. Matinees are always in the lowest possible price band as they are aimed at low income audiences (pensioners, unemployed etc). The matinee audience has developed as a more traditional evening audience drawn in by the lower prices.

Audience Income Levels

The average salary in Merseyside is now beginning to rise after several static years. Although Royal Court audiences are largely low income, there is an increase predicted for lower income jobs as well. Audiences with less disposable income are risk averse and this helps to explain the success of either repeat productions (*Bouncers, The Royal*) or productions with a consistent brand (Christmas shows).

Taste

Changing tastes and preferences can have a significant effect on demand for different products and theatre is no different. The Royal Court strikes a balance between serving the existing preferences of our traditional audiences and introducing new types of productions to develop that audience and introduce a new one. The introduction of the Studio space in 2018 has helped us to provide a wider range of productions for audiences with more niche tastes.

Competition

The Royal Court has no direct competitors for the audience that it has chosen to pursue within the theatre sector but there are segments of the audience that overlap with other venues. As a venue that attracts audiences that are primarily driven by a desire to be entertained, competition comes from other areas such as cinema, eating out and comedy/music gigs. Also some productions at the Empire Theatre.

Fashions

A traditional influence on demand, fashion is less relevant to an established theatre with an established product. The redevelopment of the front of the building creating a visible box office and café for daytime use has made the venue more fashionable, attractive and popular. This has had a positive impact on primary (box office) and secondary (bar/food) income.

7.5. Influencing Factors (SWOT)



Challenges & Risks

Ability to have high level conversations
Distractions to core business
Diversity of product might alienate core audience
Enough time and resources to move forward effectively
Lack of space to achieve growth (youth theatre)
Revenue funding withdrawn
Resistance from existing theatre community
Increasing activity levels without increasing dependency on public purse

Opportunities & Strategies

Use Board members more in conversations
Leadership and resource
Audience development – shift demographics with small steps
Increase staff and strengthen Board
Develop partnerships to help deliver more
Attract additional funding to help achieve ambition
Plan for uncertainty
Capital developments
Talent development programmes
Make core activity more resilient by developing a wider funding base

8. Finance

The budget and cashflow show that by March 2023 we aim to have reserves of £1.09m which represents approximately 11 weeks of turnover. This assumes that our recent CRF3 bid to DCMS/ACE is successful (£340,000). We think this is prudent at the time of writing this (2.9.2021) to try and mitigate risk going through an extremely uncertain time for the business as Covid rates rise once more. Should the business have to close again due to government restrictions, reserves will need to be used.

During 2020-2021 we appointed a full-time Wellbeing Officer as a result of back to work interviews and ongoing requirements for wellbeing support from staff and participants. This post is held by a qualified youth worker and will continue throughout 2022-23 and beyond.

Our 2022-2023 budget makes provision to try some of the initiatives we intend to implement in 2023-2027 should funds be available. These include:

- Technical Manager (full-time)
- Mentoring Project Manager (part-time)
- Youth Theatre Manager (full-time)
- **Terriers** Project Manager (part-time)
- Acting Staff (2 x full-time)
- Talent Development Manager (full-time)
- Fundraising Officer (full-time)
- Finance Support (Full-time)
- CEO Assistant (full-time)
- Evaluation Scoping Manager (part-time)

The 2022-23 budget and cashflow is based on audiences returning to near pre-pandemic levels by April 2022. This will be monitored closely by the finance team, CEO and Executive Producer. The Board Finance sub-committee will meet regularly as it does now and will meet monthly should further lockdowns be imposed. The Finance sub-committee will report directly to the Board and will recommend extra Board meetings as and when required to discuss any issues relating to cashflow and budgets.

	Budget 2021/22	Budget 2022/23
Total Income	£3,693,880	£4,965,069
Total Cost of Sales	£1,733,583	£2,470,657
Total Overheads	£2,289,126	£2,363,142
Operating Profit	-£328,829	£131,271
Reserves	£7,730,540	£7,861,811

[🔗 Link: A full budget and cashflow can be seen in the appendix.](#)

9. Evaluation

10.1 Principles & Methodology

The most successful and impactful cultural organisations are those that are resolutely vision-led and relentlessly outcome and audience-focused. Liverpool's Royal Court is both these. At the heart of the theatre there is a vision to make positive changes in the lives of those in Liverpool and beyond. This process allows us to see the theatre as the sum of all its parts; driven by this purpose. The development of an Evaluation Framework is a way of articulating these things strategically and visually in a way that helps the organisation focus its activities and provide evidence of achievements for external stakeholders. To date, the process has involved reviewing existing documents such as The Workshop Pre-Investment Study, our Business Plan and previous **Terriers** and Youth Theatre reports. Reviewing existing documents allowed us to map where the organisation is now and start to articulate where it intends to go. Whilst our focus has been on reviewing past activity, this process has been a valuable tool for planning the future.

For Liverpool's Royal Court, this process has resulted in:

- The adoption of a more strategic approach to evaluation, to enable the theatre to realise how it is meeting its own ambitions, as well as those of key stakeholders.
- The ability to undertake holistic evaluation to capture data across a full range of activity and provide an overall assessment of impact.
- The development of an evaluation framework for the organisation in its entirety, enabling evaluation of individual activities in addition to the impact as a whole.
- Create a culture of evaluation so that evaluation is firmly embedded into the activity or project, rather than being undertaken on an individual level.
- Staff to develop skills in evaluation and research so that evaluation can be undertaken within existing resources.
- Explore how other types of evaluation can be undertaken, such as longitudinal evaluation.

The framework comprises two documents: a strategy tree and a methodology matrix. This is a deceptively simple but visually compelling presentation of the why, what and how of all Royal Court's activity – our vision, aims, objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes.

The methodology matrix takes the outputs and outcomes from the strategy tree and turns them into indicators that can be measured. The matrix also identifies the monitoring or research method through which the data for each output and outcome can be collected. To date we have developed a draft strategy tree. This is split into two; one part for the cultural activity of the organisation and another for the business operation. Once the strategy tree is finalised, we will use this to develop the methodology matrix.

This evaluation scoping activity allowed us to take a step back and review everything we do. Coincidentally a global pandemic put the brakes on the majority of activity we had to 'assess and reset'. The outcomes of this work are shown in the Strategy Tree and Methodology Matrix.

10.2 Strategy Tree

10.3 Methodology Matrix

The Strategy Tree and Methodology Matrix will continue to be developed during 2021 by Board and staff working together. Continuous monitoring will take place throughout 2022-2023 and the process will help to inform our future Business Plan for 2023-2027.

[🔗 Link: The Strategy Tree and Methodology Matrix can be seen in the appendix.](#)

11. Appendices

[🔗 All appendices can be seen online via this link.](#)

- 11.1. Summary of 2022-2023 Artistic Programme and Community Engagement
- 11.2. Budget Summary and Cashflow
- 11.3. Audience Development Strategy
- 11.4. Organisational Structure
- 11.5. Risk Analysis
- 11.6. Companies Structure Diagram
- 11.7. Youth Engagement Model
- 11.8. Strategy Tree
- 11.9. Methodology Matrix