

Background to Watford Palace Theatre (WPT)

WPT is a 21st century producing theatre, working across the artforms of theatre, dance, outdoor arts and digital.

WPT shares all of its resources with artists, including dramaturgy, skilled technical staff, a workshop building sets and a Rehearsal Studio, making WPT a creative hub where new work can be nurtured.

WPT has a track record of artistic excellence. Many of its productions have won or been nominated for nationally significant awards.

Within regional producing theatres, WPT is unique in the range of new work it produces: 18 new productions in 2013/14.

Creative Associates, some of which are resident at the Theatre, are central to WPT's vision – currently these are Rifco Arts, nabokov, Mahogany Opera Group, Scamp Theatre, Kate Flatt, Shona Morris, Charlotte Keatley, Gary Owen, Stacey Gregg and Alice Birch.

WPT is a national exemplar in terms of its commitment to diversity. It works closely with Resident Company Rifco Arts, the first British Asian theatre company based in a producing theatre, and Tiata Fahodzi will relocate to WPT in December 2014.

Outdoor arts reaches audiences new to the arts, and WPT produces Imagine Watford, an annual free outdoor festival now in its fourth year, which in 2014 reached 105,339 people.

Installation of state of the art screening equipment in 2011 has enabled WPT to screen an increasing range of Live/Recorded theatre, opera and ballet, as well as independent film, extending access to world class arts (15,643 attendances in 13/14).

WPT has rapidly increased its Reach and in 13/14 reached 334,391 people (29% increase on 12/13 and 157% increase since 09/10).

WPT has increasingly toured co-productions nationally, building touring audiences from 13,000 (09/10) to 111,547 (13/14).

WPT has increased engagement with non white British users from 3% in 09/10 to 21% by 13/14.

WPT has been increasing engagement with young people aged 18–24, including launching Rumour, a discount membership scheme.

WPT has a long standing track record in providing activity with children and young people as audiences, participants or makers, including offering 21,327 participatory opportunities onsite, in public spaces, through community hubs, or in schools, in 13/14.

Over the last five years, WPT has made substantial cost savings (including a 21% reduction in Overheads) and implemented robust financial systems. It has achieved a year end surplus each year since 09/10.

WPT is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation, being described as 'outstanding' in meeting Arts Council's goals, and has a 3 year agreement with Watford Borough Council (local authority funding which has not been reduced).

Historically fundraising from private sources has proved difficult. Recently progress has been made - in 13/14 WPT generated £87k of contributed income (4% of turnover) and is growing this figure annually.