

National Theatre

THE PRINCESS ROYAL VISITS NATIONAL THEATRE TO CELEBRATE AWARD-WINNING APPRENTICESHIPS SCHEME



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Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited the National Theatre on 28 April to celebrate the organisation's Apprenticeships Scheme following it receiving the prestigious Princess Royal Training Award alongside a special DEI Commendation. The National Theatre is the only theatre to have ever received this award, recognising its pioneering work to expand access to careers in the creative industries.

During the visit, The Princess Royal toured the National Theatre's backstage workshops and its Dorfman Theatre, meeting 17 current and former apprentices alongside key backstage and technical theatre staff. Her Royal Highness visited the props, scenic art, and carpentry workshops, and in a particularly special moment as a keen equestrian, The Princess Royal met 'Joey' one of the renowned puppets from the smash-hit production *War Horse* which returns to the Olivier stage this summer, offering a vivid insight into the craft and innovation that underpin the National Theatre's world-class productions.

The National Theatre is the largest employer in the not-for-profit theatre sector and a skills incubator for the entire creative industries, creating a more inclusive and resilient future for theatre. It has recruited over 60 entry-level apprentices across 21 different departments, with an outstanding 90% progressing directly into paid employment upon completion. From carpentry to finance, props to automation, its apprentices are gaining hands-on paid experience, building confidence, and developing the skills that will springboard their future careers.

Its Apprenticeships Scheme was recognised with a Princess Royal Training Award, run by The City & Guilds Foundation, and a special DEI Commendation in 2024, celebrating its impact in breaking down barriers to entry and addressing critical skills gaps across the creative industries. Established in 2016, the award honours organisations delivering exceptional learning and development programmes that drive real, lasting change. As president of The City & Guilds of London Institute (CGLI), known as the City & Guilds Foundation, The Princess Royal is a longstanding champion of skills and vocational training.

Central to this success is the National Theatre Skills Centre, which this month marks the one-year anniversary of its partnership with Bank of America. This transformative collaboration has offered over 8,000 hours of training and over 2,300 sessions, helping to build a more resilient and sustainable future for theatre and the wider economy. The partnership is a flagship example of the public and private sector working hand in hand to strengthen the creative industries by unlocking opportunities for people all over the country. The National Theatre Skills Centre has supported over 6,000 people nationwide over the past year, nurturing the specialist skills that power the UK's creative industries.

The tour was led by Yamin Choudury, the National Theatre's Director of Learning, and Kath Geraghty MBE, Head of Technical Qualifications, who oversaw the creation and delivery of the NT's Apprenticeships scheme in 2012. Other guests included Deputy Lieutenant of Lambeth, Mr. Christopher Wellbelove DL; the National Theatre's Chief Development Officer Kathryn Marten; NT Board member Elizabeth Pryce; Fernando Vicario, CEO Merrill Lynch International (Bank of America); and representatives from the City & Guilds Foundation, including Frank Douglas and Mike Adamson CBE.

Kath Geraghty, Head of Technical Qualifications at the National Theatre, said *"When we started the apprenticeship scheme back in 2012, we never could have imagined the impact it would've had, not just on those undertaking apprenticeships, but also on the wider organisation and across the sector. Having this work recognised by the Princess Royal Training Award is a testament to the dedication of our staff and partners, and to now have Her Royal Highness with us this afternoon, celebrating our apprentices' achievements further, is an honour. I'm so proud*

of what all our past and present apprentices, have and continue to achieve and through the NT's Skills Centre we look forward to continuing to build a more diverse, skilled, and resilient creative sector for the future."

Lily Cleaver, Scenic Art Apprentice at the National Theatre said, *"Doing an apprenticeship at the National Theatre has opened pathways for me I only could have dreamed of. Working on the job whilst learning and gaining a qualification has been fantastic and being surrounded by industry professionals, I have learnt so much! Just from working within a workshop environment my skills have improved tremendously. I have had the opportunity to meet so many brilliant people from different departments, all with an extraordinary range of knowledge and skill. Understanding these individuals' roles and how each team works together has not only made me more appreciative of the industry I get to work in, but a more well-rounded employee too".*

Fernando Vicario, CEO of Merrill Lynch International (Bank of America) and Country Executive for UK said, *"The creative industries continue to be recognised as a major driver of growth in the UK, with huge potential to evolve, expand and importantly, to nurture upcoming talent. In partnership with the National Theatre's Skills Centre, we aim to help unlock key creative skills, training, and opportunities for young people from across the UK. Through this public and private partnership, we are working to support the next generation of creative professionals to thrive in life and work, while strengthening the long-term resilience and global competitiveness of the UK's creative industries."*

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Notes to Editors

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Images [HERE](#).

With Thanks

The National Theatre Skills Centre, in partnership with Bank of America.

The National Theatre Skills Centre is also supported by Foyle Foundation, CHK Foundation, Goldsmiths' Foundation, The Maurice Hatter Foundation, Surgo Foundation, The Clothworkers' Company, The Leverhulme Trust, J Leon Philanthropy and Susan Miller & Byron Grote.

Apprenticeships at the National Theatre are supported by The de Laszlo Foundation, The Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation and The Eggardon Trust.

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre offers the widest access to high-quality theatre in the world. This year, we will produce 18 plays, following over a thousand shows that have shaped British theatre since 1963.

Our productions transfer from our home in London to the West End, Broadway and beyond, winning awards on both sides of the Atlantic. We champion bold storytelling that inspires, challenges and entertains, bringing the world to the National Theatre, and taking the best of British theatre to the world. Through our online streaming service NT at Home; our education platform, the NT Collection in schools; and in cinemas with NT Live, we reach audiences digitally in almost every country worldwide - 184 out of 195 and counting.

We operate as a registered charity with a deep social purpose and a nationwide footprint. We partner with regional theatres to tour our shows, are active in more than 90% of state secondary schools, and our Skills Centre trains 5,000 people each year.

Our dedicated NT Studio champions new writing, and we are central London's 'biggest factory' with workshops that craft every aspect of our productions. We host the world's most extensive theatre archive, and our Green Store houses more than 150,000 reusable props and costumes as part of our sustainability commitments.

For more information, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk

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About War Horse

War Horse, first staged at the National Theatre in 2007, has become the most successful play in the history of the organisation, winning more than 25 major awards including the Tony Award for 'Best Play' and has been seen by over 8.8 million people worldwide.

Based on Michael Morpurgo's beloved novel, adapted by Nick Stafford and originally directed by Marianne Elliott and Tom Morris, *War Horse* returns to its original home nearly two decades after its debut and following a recent acclaimed tour of the UK and Ireland.

War Horse tells the remarkable story of a young boy called Albert and his horse Joey, set against the backdrop of the First World War featuring astonishing life-sized horses from Handspring Puppet Company. It returns to captivate a whole new generation from 16 May until 30 July 2026.

About City & Guilds Foundation

The City and Guilds of London Institute, known as the City & Guilds Foundation is Royal Chartered body with a legacy dating back to 1878. As a catalyst for social change, the Foundation invests its surplus into high-impact programmes that remove barriers to employment, celebrate best practices in workplace training, and advocate for the jobs of the future.

Operating independently, the Foundation champions skills development as a powerful lever for individual, organisational, and societal progress. Its initiatives include social investment, employer recognition awards, fellowships, and advocacy efforts - all designed to increase access to skills and create opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

With deep historical ties to the City of London's Livery Companies and ongoing Royal patronage, the Foundation continues to honour its heritage while driving forward innovation in skills and education. From empowering young carers to recognising excellence through the Princess Royal Training Awards, the City & Guilds Foundation is committed to making a measurable impact on lives and communities across the UK and beyond.

To learn more, visit cityandguildsfoundation.org