ALMEIDA THEATRE



PARTICIPATION

2025 - 2026



Photos by Mark Dawson & Minji Suh

PARTICIPATION

A MESSAGE FROM DANI PARR, DIRECTOR OF PARTICIPATION:

"In the past year, the Almeida has continued to deliver and develop an ambitious programme of free-to-access Participation work for our Islington community, at a time when need is greater than ever: since we last reflected through this report, Islington's child poverty rate has grown from **38 to 43%**. At the same time, we've been working with schools to significantly grow our outreach offer, taking the transformative power of drama to more young people in our borough.

My highlight from the year has got to be our second Trilogy show, ***81 (Life)***, which brought Islington neighbours from all walks of life together to make friends and create a truly joyful show that celebrated what it means to be human. **Thank you** to everyone who supports our Participation work – together, we're making an enormous difference."

ACROSS 2025-26:

8,443 people of all ages took part in Almeida Participation activities

Across all three strands, projects reached **28%** more participants than in the previous year



Photo by Minji Suh

SCHOOLS **4,525** school students experienced drama through our outreach work and saw Almeida shows for free

YOUNG ARTISTS **3,824** young people developed as artists or saw our shows for free, and 2279 audience members came to see our Young Artists perform on the Almeida stage

COMMUNITY **94** local people were part of our community production, ***81 (Life)*** and 1,058 people watched them perform on the Almeida stage

SCHOOLS



A MESSAGE FROM SEB & IZABELLA, SCHOOLS PRODUCER & COORDINATOR

"The Almeida's schools programme is focused on developing strong relationships with all of our local Islington schools. With 4 in 10 secondary schools in the borough no longer offering GCSE drama, we can make a huge impact by taking the Almeida directly into the classroom. This year we've built on our existing schools offer by launching Almeida Every Child, which is taking the benefits of drama to every Year 7, 8 and 9 student in Islington."

ALMEIDA EVERY CHILD

Every Child is a major investment in our borough's young people, improving their experience of school now, while also sparking lifelong relationships with theatre and creativity. Running for the first time in the 2025-26 school year, Every Child is taking artist-led devising workshops directly into schools. By trying out the role of actor, director or writer, students can get a taste of what drama and the Almeida can offer.

We're working with every year 7, 8 and 9 student in Islington and we're committed to maintaining this level of delivery into the future, taking the Almeida to Islington young people during formative times in their school life. We've also extended Every Child to SEND schools with a tailored workshop offer. By the end of the school year, we'll have delivered 200 Every Child workshops in the programme's first year, inspiring 4,000 young people.



PRIMARY PLAYWRIGHTS


Photo by Minji Suh

This was Primary Playwrights' second year and we took the programme to a new school, Laycock Primary. Across 6 creative sessions in their classroom, 10 children wrote their own short scenes that were later performed by professional actors on the Almeida stage to an audience of 277 peers, parents and – for the first time – other local schools.

"The hardest part about writing a play is not knowing what you want to write about, but ***the more you do it the more confident you get****."*

Primary Playwrights participant

FREE TICKETS

We commit to giving away 1,000 free tickets to students and teachers from local schools each year and, this year, we distributed **1,009** to **25** schools: ***our highest number of schools partners to date.***

1 in **7** Islington students experienced theatre at the Almeida this year because of our free tickets scheme.

ALMEIDA UNLOCKED

Between January and March 2026, we worked with **115** secondary students from **4** Islington schools to devise original work and perform it on the Almeida stage. In January, the young people were given free tickets to the phenomenally popular ***American Psycho***, revived by Rupert Goold 12 years after its Almeida premiere. Taking this show as inspiration, the students then developed their own pieces of work responding to the show's themes of excessive consumption and the pursuit of wealth.

Through ***Unlocked***, local young people accessed theatre, collaborated with artists and had the investment of a professional-quality show on the Almeida stage.

"With your help, there has been real engagement with drama at SMMA over the last year and we hope to continue in the same vein next year."

Teacher at St Mary Magdalene Academy



Photo by Minji Suh

YOUNG ARTISTS



A MESSAGE FROM ALICE & TAKIYAH, PARTICIPATION COORDINATOR & ASSISTANT:

"Young Artists creates supportive infrastructures that genuinely respond to the challenges of navigating the sector for young artists today. This year, alongside our programme delivery, we've been incredibly proud to have also created pathways into rigorous placements and paid work for our Young Artists alumni.

We've also established our **Young Artists Alumni Scheme**, which brings together over **100** recent participants into a community that offers peer support long after their initial programme is complete.



This free programme, which includes a digital network as well as exclusive live events, has enhanced our ability to provide meaningful engagement and support for our Young Artists for more extended periods of time. It's been co-designed with our young artists, and will continue to grow in the years to come."

ALMEIDA FOR FREE

During each of our six main house production runs this year, we ran an Almeida for Free. As well as investing heavily in future theatre audiences by offering free tickets to under 25s, these events featured a wraparound series of workshop masterclasses, networking events and panel discussions, programmed to **build skills**, unlock the creative process and **de-mystify** careers in the arts.

We engaged lead creatives working on Almeida shows to share their expertise: some examples include Omar Elerian (*Rhinoceros*) who gave a workshop on directing and Ava Pickett (*1536*) on new writing.

Across the year, we welcomed **1,937** under 25s to the theatre with a free ticket and, on average, a third of all tickets distributed this year were through targeted outreach to young people who are local, D/deaf, disabled or from the Global Majority.

YOUNG PRODUCERS
THE LINE OF BEAUTY



A cohort of 13 Young Producers programmed their own Almeida for Free festival in response to ***The Line of Beauty,*** featuring:

7 in-person events, reaching over 160 young people

5 major digital legacy projects including a short film, an interactive map, inclusive theatre-making resources and a reading list, which reached 300 people within the first three days of launching

This programming came out of 12 weekly sessions, which developed the participants' skills in producing, budgeting, fundraising, marketing and access. This dedicated programme, led by Almeida experts sharing their skills, grew young people's confidence and understanding of working in the arts.

"I feel that my confidence is growing and I am feeling invigorated and encouraged after each session. This programme has made me feel so excited about my future and my potential to succeed in the industry."

Almeida Young Producer 2025

YOUNG COMPANY
REVERB

Reverb was performed on the ***American Psycho*** set by a group of **26** emerging artists aged 18-25, featuring fourteen extracts from the most significant Almeida productions from the last decade.

The young actors explored and performed material of an exceptional standard, which is rarely, if ever, available to license. They were empowered to tackle complex textual themes within a safe and supportive environment, working alongside training with Almeida staff and a Dramatherapist, inhabiting characters and stories that have shaped the landscape of British theatre over the past decade.





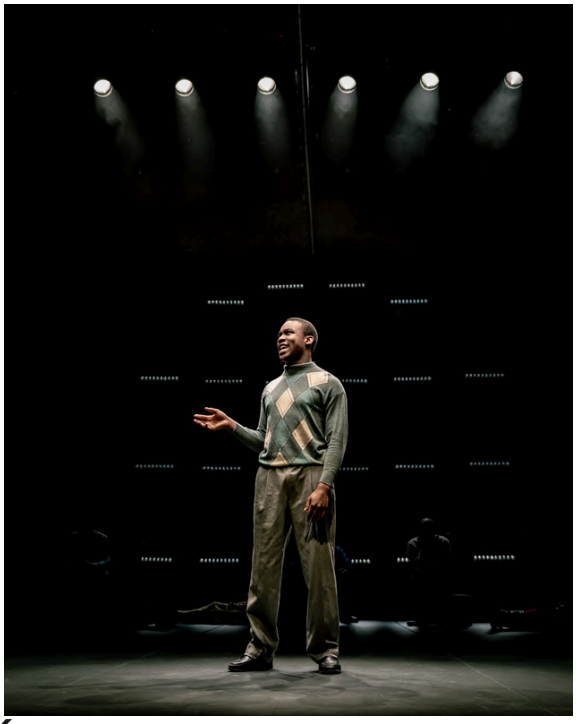


Photos by Mark Dawson

"The company tethered me when I really needed it and I've made new mates honestly"

"I'm excited to bring this experience, with all that it's taught me, and apply it to my future projects"

***Reverb* participants**



Reverb was performed on the Almeida stage for **1,110** audience members over five performances.

Among these attendees were key contacts from major agencies, including Curtis Brown, A&J Artists, and United Agents, who have since shown interest in representing a number of young artists.

Of the 26 on-stage participants:

43% were from local boroughs

57% identified as Global Majority

30% identified as disabled

100% were engaging with the Almeida Young Company for the first time

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Each year, we use our Participation productions to create career-launching professional opportunities for talented young creatives who've taken part in Almeida projects in the past. Hear from Deepali and Jade about the impact these opportunities have had for them this year:

Meet Deepali Foster (she/they)

"After my time as a Young Producer, I was offered the opportunity to assistant direct the Almeida Young Company show ***Against the Tide*** *which I consider the richest experience of my career so far.*

At the time of being offered the position, I knew that I had an interest in directing, but was unsure how to develop the skills and creative confidence for the role alongside my full-time job. This opportunity provided invaluable learning and, as my first paid role in theatre, opened many doors.



Working alongside two professional directors (Georgia Murphy and Nicola Chambers) was incredibly exciting. They generously shared their knowledge and experiencing how they led their rehearsal rooms provided me with a clear example of what ***imaginative*** *directing looks like.*

Assistant directing on such an ambitious project gave me many opportunities to discover what excites me most about theatre-making and to try out these elements in a low-stakes and supportive environment. The experience was ***creatively invigorating and helped me to gain tools*** that have already been useful, from specific rehearsal room exercises to tips for structuring directors' notes.

Since working on ***Against the Tide*** *, I have worked as a runner on* ***81 (Life)*** *and as an assistant facilitator for an Almeida For Free workshop. My work over the past 2 years with the Almeida's Participation Team, both as a Young Artist and participant, has enabled me to transition into an arts job as the Community Practitioner at Curve Theatre. Working with the Almeida has been a* ***key catalyst to beginning my career within the theatre industry.***

Earlier this year, I joined the Almeida's Youth Advisory Board and, already, it has felt enriching and full of potential. I hope to continue to learn about the intricacies of running a theatre and, alongside my determined and curious peers, contribute to shaping the future of the Almeida."

Meet Jade Hassan (she/her)



"After being a participant on the Almeida's Young Producers programme, I had all the tools and knowledge to get straight into producing, but my placement as a Production Assistant on ***Against the Tide*** *is what really what* ***boosted my confidence*** *as an emerging producer.*

Working in a smaller cohort, and directly with a small cast and creative team, I was given complete agency to manage the space; organise logistics, make creative decisions (and come up with solutions!) and facilitate where needed. This responsibility gave me the ***hands-on experience*** *I needed to solidify all I had learnt as a participant.*

Being involved in the full production process, from initial production meetings to final bows, meant that I then had a blueprint timeline to go on to create my own work. Freelancing began to feel possible and a lot less scary! The support offered throughout the placement, with ***1-1 mentoring*** *sessions helped me navigate a new-found professional environment and reminded me it was ok to still be learning, everyone's got to start somewhere!*

The project completely reignited my passion for participation producing and paved the way for the most rewarding career path that I now feel more capable of achieving. I am truly grateful for the Almeida's commitment to further develop participants; looking for ways to provide opportunities for progression beyond the end of participation programmes, which is exactly what this placement did for me."

COMMUNITY



A MESSAGE FROM BETH, PARTICIPATION PRODUCER & CREATIVE PRODUCER FOR 1000 (MILLENNIA):

"We are thrilled to be performing the final part of our performance project, ***1000 (Millennia)***, this summer – marking nearly **5** years of exciting, creative and embedded work with the local Islington Community.

We could never have imagined the impact and reach of the **Trilogy** project – in building a sense of community, creating a space for creativity, sharing what makes Islington unique, and building strong, lasting partnerships with local organisations.

The ambitious trilogy of productions has brought together professional creatives, local artists, local organisations, and community performers – all to **explore together** what it means to live, work, love, remember, celebrate and mourn in Islington through a day, a lifetime, and millennia of time."





In the summer, we staged the second of our Islington Trilogy community productions, ***81(Life)***.
By partnering with local arts organisations **All Change** and **Cardboard Citizens**, we recruited a cast for the production who typically ***face major barriers to the arts*** – including older adults and people who experience homelessness. This group also collaborated with Islington residents (recruited through an open call) to co-create a piece of theatre for the Almeida stage. Part poem, part gameshow and part play, the project brought our community together and reflected life in Islington today.





"August felt tough, because of the political state of the country. With protests, and division everywhere. But I thought at one point during that time, we were creating in rehearsals, that was like the real Britain. People of all backgrounds, sexuality, nationalities, you know all that. All people who'd never otherwise meet. All coming together."

81 (Life) **participant**

WHAT NEXT?

SCHOOLS

Following a hugely successful pilot first year in terms of scale and impact, we are committing to a further three years of our Every Child initiative, taking the benefits of drama to year 5, 7, 8 and 9 students in Islington. On top of this, we'll also be launching Almeida Discourse, a free-to-access theatre review group for 14-18s studying in Islington, providing free tickets, behind-the-scenes invitations and facilitated discussions to help young people get more out of the work on our stage.



Photo by Minji Suh

YOUNG ARTISTS

A highlight of Autumn 2026 will be our 14-18 Young Company production. In response to Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, which will be staged at the Almeida in Autumn 2026, we'll commission a writer to co-create an original piece with local young people. The piece will be developed by a newly recruited Almeida Young Company, culminating in professionally produced performances on the Almeida stage.

COMMUNITY

The final of our Trilogy community shows, *1000 (Millennia)*, came to life in July 2026. Journeying deep into our borough's history and far into its future, *1000 (Millennia)* told an original story of how we got here and offered a vision for Islington's future. Participants were made up of local people recruited by the Almeida through an open call and community members from Arsenal in the Community (14-18 girls group), Cardboard Citizens (people who experience homelessness, inequity or poverty) and All Change (a company of older people aged 55+).


Photos by Ali Painter

THANK YOU

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For their vision and generosity in 2025-26, we thank:

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