

# GRAEAE

Brings together major UK theatres  
for groundbreaking transformative initiative



## Invitation issued to Deaf and Disabled artists across the country to take part

**Embargoed to 21.07.20 – 8am**

Today **Graeae**, the UK's leading disabled led theatre company launches a major new initiative, designed to remove barriers and transform the careers of Deaf and Disabled artists across the UK. The announcement of **BEYOND**, although many months in the planning, comes at a time when the debate around equality in the theatre industry has moved to the top of the agenda and the need for social and institutional inclusion has increasingly become an urgent topic of conversation.

Championed by Graeae patrons **Dame Harriet Walter** and actor / musician **Mat Fraser**, **BEYOND** brings together a network of partner organisations from the Midlands through to the North East and North West of England to offer development support, advice, training, mentoring and use of creative spaces for Deaf and Disabled artists at every stage of their careers. **BEYOND** will act as a bridge for these artists to reach organisational leaders and national venues in order to enable them to realise their creative potential and have their voices heard. The aim is to develop greater access to regional opportunities across England and ensure that Deaf and Disabled artists are at the forefront of new and emerging work. The initiative also recognises the immense value of Graeae's intersectionality across its communities, which include Black, Asian, ethnic minority and LGBTQIA+ artists.

Partnering Graeae will be **Octagon Theatre** in Bolton, **Curve** in Leicester, **Nottingham Playhouse**, **Cast** in Doncaster, **Hull Truck**, **Shakespeare North Playhouse** in Prescott, **Live Theatre** in Newcastle and **Northern Stage** in Newcastle. Each venue has pledged to provide skill development and advice and each will actively offer support for a new wave of Deaf and disabled-led work. Specifically **BEYOND** participating theatres will offer the following to the individual artists who enrol on the scheme:-

- Creative space and support to explore theatrical ideas.
- Shadowing opportunities within R&D and rehearsal processes.
- Mentoring support
- Support in sourcing funding and bursaries
- Access to existing artist development schemes

There will be at least 100 hours of mentoring and 600 hours of rehearsal space across **BEYOND**. In addition to space, time and people, we will be offering a number of targeted micro-grants to unlock additional resources and help projects achieve their full potential.

Over the coming months, with hands-on guidance from Graeae, each of the participating theatres will be preparing to meet these undertakings, ready for their re-opening after the current pandemic restrictions are lifted. Once the scheme is underway the theatres will take guidance by Graeae who will liaise with both organisational and individual participants at every step of the way.

Deaf and disabled artists at all stages of their career are being invited to enrol onto the **BEYOND** programme, by any means accessible to them, via Graeae's website [www.graeae.org](http://www.graeae.org), where information will also be provided in BSL, audio and easy read formats. If there is a project or idea that needs a boost, that would benefit from the support of others' experience or resources, artists are encouraged to submit it now.

Participating artists will have the opportunity to build lasting relationships with one or more of the theatres based on a shared learning process as both navigate through the changing cultural landscape. These relationships will provide further career development possibilities beyond the programme and support to create work that is sustainable and responsive to the current climate and beyond.

**BEYOND** is supported by Arts Council England, Foyle Foundation, Sir James Reckitt Charity, Helen Jean Cope Charity and Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust.



davidburnspr

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT DAVID BURNS  
DAVID BURNS PR  
07789 754089  
[david@davidburnspr.com](mailto:david@davidburnspr.com)

### **Jenny Sealey Artistic Director of Graeae says –**

*'The last few months have been truly terrible and everyone in the arts is struggling to make sense of it all emotionally and economically. There has been a silver lining as we received the news of our Arts Council England Transforming Leadership funding before lockdown and we were acutely aware if we did not act fast starting up with the programme, Deaf and Disabled artists in this current landscape would be absent from artistic conversations, would fall by the wayside and be left behind. This is NOT going to happen. I'm so thrilled we're launching this programme now, giving Deaf and disabled artists the space, time and money they need to have the artistic breakthroughs that they deserve. We are working with our brilliant partner theatres, some new to the Graeae family and others who it's great to be working with again. Together, we are well and truly going BEYOND!*

### **Dame Harriet Walter - Graeae Patron says –**

*"Once again Graeae is leading the way in connected and connective thinking with its new artistic development venture - BEYOND. Theatre post-Covid is never going to look the same and Graeae is in the vanguard of re-shaping the future for Deaf and disabled artists. Graeae has always been in the business of knocking down barriers and building bridges and its undaunted optimism is what we all need"*

### **Mat Fraser - Graeae Patron says -**

*"At a time when Disability Arts and disabled artists are in danger of regressing because of "Covid fallout", Graeae come forward with this great new initiative for would be disabled creative artists. BEYOND has got many theatres on board, pledging to improve their relationship in real terms with Deaf and disabled creatives. The initiative will hopefully lead to an impressive increase in work by and with Deaf and disabled theatre creatives across the Midlands and North of the UK especially. Applying to the programme could lead to a new you, and even exceed your dreams, to go BEYOND!*

### **Chris Stafford, Chief Executive and Nikolai Foster Artistic Director – Curve say –**

*"The incredible work of Graeae is even more urgent and vital than ever before. All of us at Curve believe theatre can only truly succeed when representation and inclusion sits at its heart. We are proud to participate and support Graeae's brilliant BEYOND programme."*

### **Jill Adamson - Director of Participation, Northern Stage says -**

*'Northern Stage are thrilled to be working as a partner of the BEYOND programme. It's an initiative which is needed across the whole of our industry. Only through collaborating with artists from diverse backgrounds and communities will we bring about the positive systemic and methodological changes which we all know are necessary for a more equitable cultural sector and society.'*

### **Nottingham Playhouse says –**

*'Nottingham Playhouse is proud to be a partner venue of BEYOND, building on our historic commitment to champion diverse voices. It is vital that Deaf and disabled artists receive the support they need to flourish, especially in light of recent events. We're really looking forward to building connections and working with the artists involved.'*

### **Lotte Wakeham – Artistic Director – Octagon says -**

*'We're thrilled to be part of Beyond with Graeae. The Octagon is currently undergoing a £12m redevelopment, one of the outcomes of which is to significantly improve accessibility. We're looking forward to creating development space for brilliant D/deaf and disabled artists.'*

### **About Graeae**

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre - breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing Deaf and disabled artists centre stage. Artistically led by Jenny Sealey, Graeae's signature characteristic is the compelling creative integration of sign language and audio description, which engages brilliantly with both disabled and non-disabled audiences. Championing accessibility and providing a platform for new generations of artists, Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre.

Recent productions and co-productions include *One Under*, *This Is Not For You*, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Blood Wedding*, *The Iron Man* and *The Threepenny Opera*. Graeae are a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England. [www.graeae.org](http://www.graeae.org)

**For Graeae's media language guide please visit <https://graeae.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Media-Language-Guide-update.pdf>**

**davidburnspr**

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DAVID BURNS PR  
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[david@davidburnspr.com](mailto:david@davidburnspr.com)