

# GRAEae

## Ground-breaking Transformative Initiative Goes Online



A year on from the launch of **Graeae Beyond**, the major initiative designed to remove barriers and transform the careers of Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists across the UK, **Graeae** launches the next phase of the programme, increasing its reach even further.

**Graeae Beyond Online** is a new digital library of resources designed to offer practical help for and inspiration to artists at all stages of their careers. Going live on July 29, this new facility will make available a wealth of material that shows examples of how other Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent theatre practitioners have defied access barriers and created their own unique aesthetic, whilst illustrating that there are routes into the industry other than the 'traditional' methods. This new digital library can be found at [www.graeae.org](http://www.graeae.org).

Aimed primarily at young artists seeking to break through, **Graeae Beyond Online** will also serve other groups including students, artists, organisations and those who have a particular interest in the work of the UK's leading theatre company of Deaf and disabled artists.

Central to the digital initiative, the company has filmed five insightful videos presented by Deaf actor/comedian Rinkoo Barpaga that provide a window into how a range of theatre makers entered the theatre industry and how they now work within it. These case study videos are made by **filmpro**, an organisation of digital artists led by disabled people. The first two films - interviews with multidisciplinary artists Sonny Nwachukwu and Chisato Minamimura – will be released on 29 July. This will also be the first opportunity to view a three-part a three-part documentary charting the creation process of the 2019 tour of *One Under*. Another three short case-study films with David Ellington, Dave Young (aka The Shouting Mute) and Amelia Cavallo, as well as a full-length documentary of Graeae's work, will be released later in the summer and autumn. All films will be captioned, audio described and British Sign Language interpreted.

The site will also include practical guides for professionals wishing to make their work more inclusive. These will include: Auditioning for Deaf and disabled Artists and Inclusive Practice Teachers' Guide.

Graeae Beyond Online and the new materials contained within it are funded by Arts Council England's Transforming Leadership Fund, Foyle Foundation and Garfield Weston Foundation.

Championed by Graeae patrons **Dame Harriet Walter** and actor / musician **Mat Fraser**, the **Beyond** initiative was launched last July, bringing together a network of partner organisations from the Midlands through to the North East and North West of England. It offers development support, advice, training, mentoring and use of creative spaces for Deaf and disabled artists at every stage of their careers. **Beyond** acts as a bridge for these artists to reach organisational leaders within national venues enabling 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, disabled and neurodivergent 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 LGBTQIA+ and Black, Asian, and global majority and artists. Graeae is committed to an anti-racist approach throughout all of its work, and recently adopted the anti-racism rider as a statement of intent.

Beyond and Beyond Online are delivered in partnership with seven regional venues (**Octagon Bolton, Leicester Curve, Nottingham Playhouse, Hull Truck, Cast, Shakespeare North Playhouse, Live Theatre and Northern Stage**). To date, 48 Deaf and disabled artists have – and continue to be – supported to develop their work through a mix of mentoring, online training, networking, rehearsal space and grants.

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
- Access to a digital toolkit on Graeae's website that will provide practical guidance and learning resources (available from autumn/winter 2020).

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



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

*In a year of so much uncertainty and anxiety in the arts and theatre sector, I am so happy that we've been able to work with a cohort of 48 glorious Deaf and disabled artists through our Beyond programme, mentoring and supporting their talent with our seven brilliant partner theatres across the North of England and West Midlands. A year on since the scheme started, it's brilliant that we can now launch the next phase of Beyond with our new digital library full of insightful case-study videos and useful resources, to enable us to reach and support even more artists. Huge thanks to Arts Council England and their Transforming Leadership fund, as well as Foyle Foundation, Sir James Reckitt Charity, Helen Jean Cope Charity and Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust for supporting the Beyond programme.*

### **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>**

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