

The Old Vic

Great plays, great performances and great nights out



The Old Vic has adopted a variety of guises throughout its history – from theatre for the nobility to a temperance music hall. Now it's back doing what it does best: producing thought-provoking plays, nurturing creative talent and bringing theatre to as wide an audience as possible.

The Old Vic's home has been a London landmark for over 200 years, having started life as the Royal Coburg in 1833 with the promise of an 'entirely new entertainment'. Since then the iconic building has played host to a range of productions starring leading actors of the stage – from Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* to Ian McKellen's *Widow Twankey*. In 2004 Kevin Spacey was appointed artistic director of the newly-formed Old Vic Theatre Company, continuing the actor/manager tradition of Olivier, who led the National Theatre at The Old Vic in the 1960s and 1970s.

This reincarnation marked a new beginning for the Theatre, with more people than ever passing through its doors – testament to its imaginative programming and social entrepreneurship. The Old Vic's 2007/08 programme includes the world premiere of a new play based on Pedro Almodóvar's acclaimed film, 'All About My Mother'; the return of The Old Vic panto with Stephen Fry's witty new version of 'Cinderella'; Kevin Spacey in David Mamet's Hollywood satire, 'Speed-the-Plow'; and a double-bill of classic works directed by Sam Mendes for 'The Bridge

Project' – a unique three-year transatlantic collaboration between Mendes, The Old Vic and the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York.

2006 marked the largest community initiative ever undertaken by The Old Vic. Working with the Imperial War Museum, a new play was commissioned to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The cast of 50 local residents and school children learnt new creative skills as they went from auditions to rehearsals and the final public performances at the Museum.

Innovative community projects such as these are an essential part of The Old Vic's aim to offer a range of learning opportunities to encourage new and diverse audiences. For the under 25s, £12 seats are available at each performance, reduced-price tickets are offered to Lambeth and Southwark residents throughout the year, and each production is partnered by a series of workshops aimed at giving young people the opportunity of working with established actors. The Old Vic presents the perfect hands-on environment for promoting and nurturing up-and-coming talent and offers help and guidance to young actors, directors, writers and producers taking their first steps in theatre through its New Voices Club. Members attend a series of year-round workshops and receive support for projects that they can then go on to develop with like-minded peers.

The 24 Hour Plays gala, staged annually at The Old Vic, helps to fund ongoing work with young people and the community. Over the course of just 24 hours, celebrated actors, writers and directors are challenged to create six short plays. It's the ultimate theatrical challenge, culminating in a unique evening of entertainment as the well-known faces test their talent in front of a

packed Old Vic auditorium. Previous participants have included Gael García Bernal, Joseph Fiennes, Rufus Sewell, Michael Sheen, Meera Syal, Catherine Tate and Vince Vaughn.

Under the inspirational leadership of Kevin Spacey, The Old Vic is gaining strength as a theatre with the artistic vision to attract the best creative talent, produce memorable work and provide a great night out.



All photography by Ellis Parmer

