



**The Optimists
Bespoke Offer**

About China Plate

Launched in 2006, China Plate is an independent theatre studio that collaborates with venues, festivals, and funders to develop, make and present engaging, entertaining and accessible new work. With the expertise gained from over 17 years of producing theatre, we collaborate, make and co-create with artists and communities, listening to their stories, looking for what is important to them and then working with them to build creative teams to realise their ideas. The theatre we make is adventurous and imaginative; it has popular appeal and a social purpose.

We take shows into theatres and community spaces, onto the streets and to festivals in the UK and internationally. This is supported by a suite of highly regarded development and producer training programmes designed to uncover and nurture ideas, develop skills and artistic practice, facilitate collaboration, commission work, increase access and widen diversity across scales.

Based in Birmingham, China Plate works nationally whilst having a particular focus on activity in the Midlands. We are Associate Producers at Warwick Arts Centre and operate a number of significant partnership and co-production models with theatres, funders and other producing companies across the UK.

'Working with China Plate is a dream, their level of rigour and clarity is refreshing and makes working with them very effective when you're time poor and trying to make good (and often bespoke) development happen. The Optimists is the recognised fast track to producing for your local independent sector, if you want to develop your local arts ecology giving the gift of The Optimists is one of the best things you can do.'

Ben Anderson, Director of Lincoln Arts Centre (formerly of In Good Company)

The Team



Fiona Bradley
Producer



Ed Collier
Co-Artistic Director



Chloe Courtney
Executive Director



Leena Gandhi
Administrator



Andrea Pieri Gonzalez
Engagement &
Participation Producer



Kristina Hall
Training & Development
Producer



Sarah Isaacs
Digital &
Data
Manager



Susan Wareham
Producer



Paul Warwick
Co-Artistic Director

The Optimists

Bespoke offer

The Optimists is China Plate's reputable producer training for creatives working within the theatre or wider arts sector.

Do you have a group of people that you feel could benefit from:

- Learning the nuts and bolts of producing?
- Being empowered with the tools to make their own projects happen?
- A dedicated period of time to develop their core producing skills?
- Learning as part of an inclusive and diverse group of individuals?

Find out how we could help below!

WHAT IS THE OPTIMISTS?

China Plate's The Optimists offers an introduction to the craft of producing professional theatre and arts projects and demystifies the financial, administrative and organisational aspects of producing. Drawing on China Plate's extensive experience, the Optimists provides knowledge and insight into the practicalities of making, funding, touring and promoting work.

The course aims to nurture and develop those interested in making art happen – whether emerging producers, administrators, artists, creative practitioners or community champions. Using theatre producing as the vehicle, we hope to arm participants with the transferrable and entrepreneurial skills to make their ideas a reality.

The content can be tailored and adapted to the needs of an organisation/group. We will work collaboratively with an organisation to ensure the course is catered to the experience level of the cohort, as well as cover/expand upon areas of producing that are of particular interest.

We offer a safe space for each participant to learn, develop, and discuss topical areas; and provide support outside & and beyond the course.

“The Optimists is an incredible resource for early career producers. I don't know any other programme which achieves what China Plate does with this programme. Those who attend come out with a full understanding of the industry, touring and how to produce work. For us at Derby Theatre it's allowed us to supercharge those new artists who need that advice on how to get their work on the road.”

Sarah Brigham (she/her), Chief Executive and Artistic Director

WHAT DO WE BRING?

- Tried and tested course content that is constantly reviewed and updated based on changes in the sector
- Delivery from our producing team, providing first-hand skills and reflections from our own on-the-ground experience as theatre producers within the subsidised arts sector
- High calibre guest speakers in discussion with your needs and budget
- Tailored content/speakers specific to the group - whether adjusted for:
 - Age/experience-level
 - Art form/context
 - Learning styles/access considerations
 - Any other that can be discussed with us

We would work in collaboration with a partner organisation to understand your priorities and your cohort to ensure the content is adjusted to meet these needs.

For example, in the past we have adapted The Optimists to be delivered with students at Universities and Drama Schools (University of Birmingham, East 15, Rose Bruford), theatre-makers enrolled in regional development programmes, for example, In Good Company; Derby Theatre; and a group of Assistant Producers as part of Shoot Festival.

We have a track record of successfully adjusting our training and artist development models to work in different contexts, such as within musical theatre, rural dance and when exploring co-creative practice:

“The Place worked alongside China Plate as two of the founding partners of the Rural Touring Dance Initiative. China Plate brought huge producing expertise, as well as masses of care and love for the artists & audiences that the project served. They adapted their tried and tested models for artist residencies and labs to suit the dance and rural touring contexts, giving the artists and producers taking part the tools and confidence to tour their work to rural places. It was a joy to work with Ed and all at China Plate.”

Christina Elliot, Head of Programming & Producing, The Place

'It's been a delight to partner with China Plate for several years on the Musical Theatre Darkroom initiative. China Plate have adapted their pre-existing Darkroom format to suit the needs of independent theatre creatives specialising in musical theatre, bringing together their effective approaches to artist development with specialist musical theatre expertise, sourced internationally. The blend of new approaches and highly experienced mentors/tutors in a residential context has been a really winning combination; we've been delighted with the alchemical impact on the participating artists.'

James Hadley, Executive Director, Musical Theatre Network

IMPACT FOR PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

Participants gain:

- Support and career development
- Transferable skills in articulating and promoting a new piece of work, budget management, principles of fundraising, working with audiences and in partnership.
- Core skills and knowledge specific to their medium
- The opportunity to learn as part of a cohort in a safe environment

The Optimists alumni have gone to secure financial support, produce live events, theatre shows and programmes, to work freelance in the industry and for organisations, such as The Belgrade Theatre, Birmingham Hippodrome, and OPUS. Others have set up their own organisations, e.g. the co-founders of RE-CREATE Agency.

China Plate has continued to employ alumni as associate producers, and project consultants, supporting their professional development and development of new work.

'The Optimists is invaluable for anyone wanting to navigate the arts industry. I have learned more than I could imagine possible and met so many inspiring (and very useful!) contacts.'

Optimist Alumni

'The knowledge, guidance, and resources (given) over the complete course are simply amazing. I have grown as an artist, producer, and all-round theatre-maker, and learned a plethora of transferable skills along the way.'

Optimists Alumni

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Please get in touch to get a quote.

The cost of The Optimists will factor in:

- China Plate planning and delivery time (two facilitators usually provided per session)
- External guest speaker costs

How much this will be is dependent on the length of the programme (usually 10 sessions), location (whether online/face to face/hybrid) and number of guest speakers.

It is anticipated that costs associated with participants (marketing/access requirements) will be sourced separately by the partner organisation.

INTERESTED?

Please get in touch with Kristina Hall, Training and Development Producer
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