

**THE**

**CHARLIE**

**HARTILL**

**FUND**



**EARLY CAREER ENSEMBLE  
TRY OUTS 2025**

**•PLEASANCE•**

# Welcome

Join us this Tuesday and Wednesday evening in championing these extraordinary early career artists as we take a first look at their innovative and ambitious new productions. From 13 finalists, one will be chosen as the recipient of the early career ensemble strand of the Charlie Hartill Fund.

The Charlie Hartill Fund is a designated fund to support early career theatre makers in bringing their ensemble work to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. For over 20 years the fund has enabled artists to hone their talents and focus on their creativity, by offering vital support in the form of cash investment and mentorship.

The fund was established in 2004 in memory of Charlie Hartill.

# Pleasance Futures

The recipient of the Charlie Hartill Fund will be co-produced by Pleasance Futures.

Pleasance Futures is the artist development strand of the Pleasance, acting as an incubator for bold new theatre makers to make their mark. Pleasance Futures is committed to discovering and supporting the most exciting new theatrical voices, nurturing the development of emerging companies, young performers and new writers.



Pleasance Theatre Trust is a charity. All the work carried out by Pleasance Futures is funded directly through donations from Trusts and Foundations, individuals and business. We are hugely grateful to our Charlie Hartill Special Reserve Patrons, Ellie MacKinnon and Christopher Richardson. Without their generous and consistent support we would not be celebrating these artists this evening.

If you would like to donate to the Pleasance and support these valuable programmes please visit...

**[Pleasance.co.uk/support-us](https://pleasance.co.uk/support-us)**

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# TUESDAY

## **FLITCH**

PINCHY theatre

## **Two Tribes**

Grey Castle Productions

## **Fem Club**

Ricochet Theatre

## **DYKE Systems Ltd**

Fag Packet

## **Managed Approach**

Open Aire Theatre

## **American Candy**

Mango Ensemble

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# FLITCH

PINCHY theatre

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*FLITCH* is a new musical about the Dunmow Flitch Trials. Through a Kurt Weill-meets-Lily Allen inspired score, we explore how provincial traditions survive when the world is outgrowing them.

*PINCHY theatre have created new work since 2020. We are a non-hierarchical artist collective; our aim is to create work that lives between mediums, and stretches notions of genre. We make work that is irreverent but challenging, and definitely not boring.*

**[BACK TO TUESDAY'S RUNNING ORDER](#)**

# Two Tribes

Grey Castle Productions

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Set in Leeds, in 1987, two rival football hooligan firms descend on the city to watch football, support and fight. But when a pair of street-fighting lads fall in secret love, they are forced to confront the question: Can Love Survive Where Masculinity Thrives?

*Grey Castle Productions is a new writing theatre company. Our mission is to tell the queer stories we wish we heard as children, to inspire the next generation of LGBTQIA+ creatives to tell their stories freely. Our most recent producing work includes: 'Is the WiFi Good in Hell?' & 'Dead Dad Show', both with Underbelly at Edinburgh Fringe, 2024.*

**BACK TO TUESDAY'S RUNNING ORDER**

# Fem Club

Ricochet Theatre

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Jane is stuck in the loop of a romcom. But what if Jane doesn't want to play the game? What happens when we start to deconstruct those parameters? *Fem Club* uses puppetry, comedy, lipsync, narration and a banging pop soundtrack to make an explosion of bisexual feminist rebellion. It's a tearing up of the rom com rulebook, and it's an offer of joyful communion. But it's not going to be easy - Jane's going to have to break a sweat, and there may be some casualties.

*Ricochet creates meticulously crafted text-based work that finds new perspectives on familiar stories and ideas. We believe rehearsals should be full of play, collaboration and questions. We treat failure as an opportunity for discovery, and centre wellbeing and anti-oppressive practices to produce work that is compassionate, decisive and playful.*

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# DYKE Systems Ltd.

Fag Packet

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Sally and Susan aren't your average repressed, suburban American women, they spearhead a community of 'Dynamic, Young, Knowledgeable Entrapreneurs', or as they call it, *DYKE Systems LTD!* A mysterious but potentially lucrative business opportunity, that could help you get filthy fucking rich! Sally and Susan invite you to attend their latest seminar, but as mistakes of the past catch up with them, they find themselves in a race against time to sell their product and evade the law.

*Fag Packet is a queer double act mainly found in the basements of gay bars across London. Formed in 2022, we burst onto the scene by winning third place at Man Up, Europe's largest drag king competition with '2 Indie Boys from Reading'. Since then, we have continued to push at the boundaries of comedy, theatre and drag, adding an array of bewitching, deranged and downright ghastly characters to our catalogue. We have produced and performed in 3 sell-out shows including Strip-Sleaze and DYKE Systems LTD at The Divine and Shoreditch Town Hall.*

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# Managed Approach

Open Aire Theatre

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In 2014, the UK's first legalised red-light district opened in the Holbeck area of Leeds. Sex workers in Holbeck were able to operate with police supervision and without fear of arrest between the hours of 8pm-6am. This initiative was known as the Managed Approach.

*Managed Approach*, the stage play, merges verbatim interview material into a plotline that portrays the dynamic between a mother and daughter who live in Holbeck.

*Open Aire Theatre is a company founded in Leeds, making productions that interweave verbatim material with fictional plotlines and characters. We are telling Northern, non-male stories by strong, Northern, non-male voices. Our plays are created with an investigative lens, providing audiences with a nonpartisan portrayal of what can be divisive subjects. By grounding our shows in individual, human stories, we anchor these broader discussions in person-centred plotlines.*

**BACK TO TUESDAY'S RUNNING ORDER**

# American Candy

Mango Ensemble

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A new American candy store opens in a rural town, nobody asked for it. Most just walk by it. But you can't help but wonder: What is it really for? American Candy is a fast-paced crime comedy about things that aren't what they seem. What if the shops, jobs, and marriages on your High Street were fronts? The play explores capitalism, corruption, and the resulting distrust of immigrants and institutions.

*Mango Ensemble's goal is to amplify underrepresented voices and stories.*

*Established post-Covid-19, we aim to address the imbalance in theatre caused by national underfunding, which limits creativity and leaves many societal groups voiceless. We strive to produce theatre that reflects society's diversity, supports emerging artists, and breaks down financial, discriminatory, and geographic barriers. Recently, we worked on two projects as an ensemble: 'North Star', which won the RSC 37 Plays Award from over 2,000 applications, and 'Forgotten in the Land of Egypt', supported by the Peter Shaffer Foundation and published by Methuen Drama.*

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# WEDNESDAY

## **The Unstoppable Rise of Ben Manager**

Bunkum Ensemble

## **FLUSH**

Launch Box

## **Barking Mad**

Sam MacGregor

## **Level Up!**

Goldspun Media

## **Terry's:**

**An American Tragedy About Cars,  
Customers, and Selling Cars to Customers**

Brillig Theatre

## **Dean Street**

Anther

## **Brainsluts**

Dan Bishop

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# The Unstoppable Rise of Ben Manager

Bunkum Ensemble

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All BEN WEAVER wanted was a job. But on the day of his big interview at THE MONOLITH he witnesses a death. In the chaos of sirens and blue lights, BEN picks up the dead man's lanyard and decides to keep it safe - just for a while. But with the lanyard around his neck, BEN begins to transform into someone, or something. A more confident, authentic version of himself - BEN MANAGER., who is promoted up the hierarchy of the MONOLITH to executive level where a dark truth of the building is revealed. There is no work. It's all in hand. Can Ben 'manage' the truth? *The Unstoppable Rise of Ben Manager* is a dark take on making an impact in the world of bullshit jobs.

*Bunkum are a UK based international ensemble making physical and comedic work through interdisciplinary improvisation. Led by Jack Parris, the company met and formed at RADA on the MA Theatre Lab and have shared background in blending physical and comedic improvisation with live music, corporeal mime, clown and Grotowski based practices. Our ensemble is made up of members from Brighton, London, Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Greece, Australia and Estonia.*

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# FLUSH

## Launch Box

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*FLUSH* is a comedic and dynamic snapshot into the sanctity of sisterhood and what it means to be a young woman today. Taking place in a lady's bathroom over one night and following protagonist Holly's journey as she experiences a sexual assault, all the characters in *FLUSH* unite in their shared situational circumstances and lived experiences to find a combination of solace, isolation, friendship and unity

*Launch Box is an all-women team of dedicated, enthusiastic and ambitious actors and producers who have come together to take FLUSH to the Edinburgh Fringe. The team consists of April Hope Miller (writer/actor/producer) Madeleine Akua, (actor/producer), and Joanna Trafford (actor/producer).*

**BACK TO WEDNESDAY'S RUNNING ORDER**

# Barking Mad

Sam MacGregor

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Set within the bustling environment of a 111 call centre in East London, we are offered a fly-on-the-wall perspective into the lives of four dedicated colleagues—three health advisers and one nurse—during a seemingly routine shift. The ordinary quickly spirals into the extraordinary when a patient dies during a telephone assessment. As the characters grapple with the harrowing aftermath and the ensuing investigation, the audience is drawn into a raw and unfiltered exploration of the current state of the NHS through a uniquely human lens. Based on true events, this powerful narrative not only sheds light on the challenges faced by healthcare professionals and the emotional weight of their responsibilities in a system under strain.

*Our team boasts a remarkable lineup of actors, all alumni of the prestigious London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA). The director brings a wealth of experience, having successfully showcased multiple productions at the Edinburgh Fringe. The writer's previous full-length play made a significant impact at the 2023 Fringe, premiering with Pleasance and receiving outstanding reviews alongside strong sales. His upcoming work draws from his personal journey as a health adviser for NHS111.*

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# Level Up!

Goldspun Media

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“What if life were like a game?” *Level Up! The Musical* is a fast-paced, new musical comedy about three young gamers who try to treat life as if it were a video game. Jo wants to rule the world, Raff wants to save it, and Bobby just wants to escape. But levelling up—whether through cryptocurrency (Jo), charity (Raff), or purpose (Bobby)—turns out to be far more challenging than they imagined. Featuring a dazzling mix of retro-futuristic beats, old-school swing, and 8-bit gaming melodies, *Level Up!* playfully satirises the blurred lines between virtual and real worlds.

*Goldspun Media is a female-led production company. Originated in Bristol, we unite early career writers, composers, and directors to bring bold new musical stories from across the UK to life. Our development pages on our website outline our intention to produce one new musical per year. We are supported by a mixture of gifts, corporate sponsors and venues but we desperately need this network to grow and increase in scope. We believe that vibrant, entertaining fringe shows are an excellent and accessible way to attract new audiences to the theatre.*

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# Terry's: An American Tragedy About Cars, Customers, and Selling Cars to Customers

Brillig Theatre

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Like if David Lynch created 'The Office', *Terry's* is an absurd tragicomedy featuring original live music, acrobatics, and one very special balloon. The motley, motor-mouthed sales team at Terry's Cars & Automobiles has gotta sell like hell to shift 66 cars over Memorial Day weekend. If they don't, the dealership ends up in the red... again. Will hitting the target cost them their sanity?

*BRILLIG makes funny, virtuosic, big-hearted original work. Inspired by primary sources, we create affecting characters, razor-sharp texts, and explosive theatrical transpositions of everyday life. BRILLIG was formed in 2023 by four theatre-makers from three different countries, after two years of training at Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Our name comes from Lewis Carroll's poem 'Jabberwocky', and speaks to our love of the absurd, dark, funny, and strange. Our creative process is rooted in improvisation, play, and collaboration - we all write, direct, and perform. Complementing our physical theatre training, our members bring experience in puppetry, dance, circus, classical theatre, and opera to the company.*

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# Dean Street

Anther

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*Dean Street* is a piece of verbatim theatre exploring the work of 56 Dean Street, an iconic sexual health clinic in Soho. We will focus on all of the different people brought together by the clinic, using their stories to interrogate big themes such as shame, sex, and self-acceptance.

*Anther makes bold, original, and politically-driven work. Our focus is verbatim theatre, making work based on detailed research and personal interviews in order to offer new insights into untold stories. This approach is elevated by our visually-striking productions, using complex and innovative design, including sound, video and movement. In order for audiences to listen, we believe you have to make them sit-upright. After a successful run at Underbelly in August 2024, Tending was the recipient of a Derek award and a SIT-UP award for social impact and is billed for a run at Riverside Studios in Spring 2025.*

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# Brainsluts

Dan Bishop

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*Brainsluts* is a comedy about five strangers who meet in a clinical drugs trial. Across five Sundays, they navigate conflicting personalities, the side-effects of the medication and the disorganised doctor overseeing the study. As the hours go by, they feel the need to fill the silence, swapping stories about what led them to sign up for the study, as well as divulging details of their bizarre personal lives as they search for common ground. Although they all come from different worlds, they have a shared experience: they're struggling to get work that either feels meaningful or pays well. The play returns to the idea that our current economic model doesn't work, especially for young people, creating precarious lives and uncertain futures.

*Our company is led by Dan Bishop, a writer and comedian whose comedy short, 'Have You Seen This Man?', has been selected at five international film festivals, and who was the lead writer on a BBC Comedy Science online series last year. He is also one half of the double act Mudfish with Molly Windust and together they have been developing scripts for film and TV with a Bafta Nominated producer at After Party Studios, as well as QITV and Hat Trick Productions.*

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